

**OMAHA–COUNCIL BLUFFS METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING AGENCY  
COUNCIL OF OFFICIALS MEETING MINUTES**

March 12, 2025

The March 12, 2025 Council of Officials Meeting was held at The Old Mattress Factory Bar and Grill 501 N 13th Street, Omaha NE 68102. Registration and lunch began at 11:00 a.m.

A. Welcome and Introductions:

1. Call to Order and Introductions – President Festersen called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m.

Members Present:

Patrick Boyle	Director of Community Engagement, Metropolitan Community College
Steve Dethlefs	Supervisor, Washington County
Pete Festersen	City Council President, City of Omaha
Michael Holton	City Administrator, City of Treynor
Rusty Hike	Mayor, City of Bellevue
Don Rowe	Councilman, City of Omaha

Other Guests:

Timothy Adams	Transportation Engineer, WSP
Jeff Beierman	Community Development Planner, City of Blair
Daniel Carpenter	Project Manager, Benesch
Meridith Dillon	Director of Strategic Growth and Innovation, Blair Freeman
Meghan Engberg	Community Development Planner, City of Ralston
Bruce Fountain	Director of Community Development, City of La Vista
Cameron Gales	City Administrator, City of Valley
Michael Holton	City Administrator, City of Treynor
Karen Gibler	President, Sarpy County Chamber of Commerce
Alec Gorynski	SVP of Economic Development, Greater Omaha Chamber
Doug Holle	Executive Vice-President, The Schemmer Associates
Jody Holston	Executive Director, Front Porch Investments
Mark McLaughlin	City Planner, City of Omaha
Chris Meeks	Government and Community Relations Strategist, OPPD
Craig Mielke	Senior Project Manager, Benesch
Derek Miller	Long Range Planning Manager, City of Omaha
Stephanie Muller	Vice President, Customer Experience MUD
Terri Pohl	Advocacy and Communication Manager, Front Porch Investments
Bart Pugh	Business Development, Schemmer
Eva Roberts	Director of Operations and Impact, Front Porch Investments
Keith Station	Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Omaha
Mark Stursma	Deputy City Chief, City of Papillon
Julie Thacker	Director, Business Development, MUD
Ross Van Dongen	Chief Infrastructure and Workforce Development, Accelerator for America
Jarrod Walker	Highway Planning Manager, Nebraska Department of Transportation
Denny Wilson	County Engineer, Sarpy County Public Works

MAPA Staff:

Grant Anderson	Natasha Barrett	Sue Cutsforth	Elise Emanuel	Laura Heilman
Michael Helgerson	Connie Viner	Elizabeth Zeller		

B. Welcome City of Omaha –

Councilman Pete Festerson welcomed members and guests to the March 12, 2025 Council of Officials Quarterly Meeting.

C. Business – (ACTION)

1. Approval of the December 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes

No vote was taken as there was not a quorum. The item was tabled and will be voted on at the June meeting.

D. Director's Remarks - (Information)

Mr. Helgerson provided an update on MAPA projects and activities. MAPA staff and Board members traveled to Washington D.C. for the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) National Conference of Regions. The group received updates on federal programs and initiatives, and spent a day on Capitol Hill for Congressional visits. MAPA was recently awarded the 'Planning Excellence Award' at the APA/NPZA conference for the Western Sarpy County Transportation Enhancement Plan (WE-STEP). MAPA has hosted several public outreach meetings for MAPA projects, including: Minden and Alvo Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects; and safety projects including Safe Streets For All (SS4A) and Draft Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP). MAPA hosted two member trainings for newly elected and appointed officials in the MAPA region to provide training on the topics of Open Meetings, Open Records, and Parliamentary Procedure. Mr. Helgerson presented the results of the FY 2025 member survey, and reviewed FY 2026 Work Program priorities.

E. Featured Speaker – Ross Van Dongen, Chief - Infrastructure and Workforce Development at Accelerator for America (AFA)

Mr. Van Dongen presented to the Council an assessment of the shifting landscape of federal funding and the impacts to local transportation and economic development efforts. Recent actions taken by the new administration show a push for policies that emphasize market-driven investments, state autonomy and deregulation; and a shift in focus on expanding highway infrastructure while scaling back federal support for transit and Electric Vehicle mandates. Deregulation of emerging transportation technologies is expected, with a shift away from mandatory data collection and bureaucratic oversight. Infrastructure funding could shift away from discretionary grants toward direct allocations to states and user-fee-based models. Shift in Federal Role: decentralization and state empowerment; market-driven infrastructure investment and private sector involvement; regulatory reform and streamlining bureaucracy; Infrastructure Prioritization: highways over transit; Energy and Vehicle Policy: reducing regulatory burdens; encouraging innovation without overregulation; and reducing federal subsidies and market distortions.

F. Featured Speaker – AJ Herrmann – Accelerator for America

Mr Herrman presented to the Council an update on federal actions and the regional impacts; actions steps for grant recipients and project owners; FAST ACT vs IIJA; and impacts on economic development and housing.

G. Adjournment – President Festersen adjourned the meeting at 12:36 p.m.