

RPA18

Regional Planning Affiliation - Region 18 Policy Board and Technical Committee Meeting

Feb 12, 2025 11:00 AM Virtual ▾

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82759245829>

MINUTES

In attendance:

Policy Board Voting Members

- **Richard Crouch** - Mills County
- **Gervas Mgonja** - City of Harlan
- **Charlie Parkhurst** - Shelby County, Policy Board Chair
- **John Rasmussen** - Pottawattamie County
- **Angie Winquist** - City of Glenwood

Technical Committee Voting Members

- **Jacob Ferro** - Mills County, Technical Committee Chair
- **Chris Fredericksen** - Shelby County

Non-Voting/MAPA Staff

- **Lindsey Button** - MAPA
- **Rachel Goettsch** - MAPA
- **Brad Grefe** - MAPA
- **Carlos Morales** - MAPA
- **Latifa Moro** - MAPA

All attendance was virtual

Charlie Parkhurst called the meeting to order at 11:10am

The slides noted the meeting was held in accordance with Chapters 21 and 22 of the Iowa Code and was live-streamed on MAPA's YouTube page.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Approval of the Agenda (Policy)

Charlie Parkhurst called for a motion to approve the agenda. No changes were made to the agenda.



Policy Board: John Rasmussen motioned to approve the agenda. Motion was seconded by Gervas Mgonja. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of the Minutes: November 13, 2024 Meeting (Policy).

Charlie Parkhurst called for a motion to approve the minutes. No changes were made to the minutes.

Policy Board: Richard Crouch motioned to approve the minutes. Motion was seconded by Angie Winquist. Motion passed unanimously.

C. 2024-2027 Civil Rights Policy

Lindsey Button discussed the updated Civil Rights Policy and requested that the board approves it. She provided an overview of the updated Civil Rights Policy, emphasizing MAPA's responsibility as a recipient of federal funds to ensure compliance with Title VI, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) requirements, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). She explained that the policy is a formal document outlining how these regulations are implemented, the complaint procedures, and MAPA's commitment to ensuring non-discrimination and equitable participation in transportation planning. Key updates included incorporating the latest American Community Survey (ACS) demographic data, adjustments based on updated guidance from Iowa and Nebraska DOTs, and introducing a fillable complaint form available in both English and Spanish for improved accessibility. MAPA is also exploring website translation options and has begun formalizing staff training and onboarding materials to enhance compliance. A resolution of the approval was provided to Charlie Parkhurst to sign on behalf of the membership.

During the discussion, Gervas asked about the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies on the Civil Rights Policy, given recent federal changes. Lindsey clarified that while some executive orders related to DEI have been revoked, Title VI, LEP, and ADA remain legal requirements, and MAPA remains committed to equity in planning. Another question concerned how environmental justice considerations would be handled in future updates, given potential shifts in federal priorities. Lindsey noted that, for now, the environmental justice analysis remains part of the civil rights policy, but future updates may be adjusted based on federal guidance.

Joint Policy and Technical Committees: Jacob Ferro motioned to—

- Approve and adopt the updated Civil Rights Policy

Motion was seconded by John Rasmussen. Motion passed unanimously.



DISCUSSION ITEMS

D. FY 2026 RPA-18 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TASA) Call for Projects

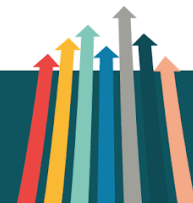
Rachel Goettsch provided an update on the FY 2026 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Program, noting that no applications were received during the most recent call for projects, which was open from October 2024 to January 2025. As a result, there will be no public comment period or project selection process for this funding cycle. She reviewed the available funding and emphasized the importance of utilizing these funds for eligible transportation projects, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, Safe Routes to School programs, and other non-motorized transportation initiatives. She encouraged members to identify potential projects before the next TASA application cycle in October 2025, emphasizing that MAPA staff can assist in guiding project development, application requirements, and funding strategies.

Carlos Morales also provided insight into how some communities struggle with securing funding for preliminary engineering (PE) work, which can delay project implementation. He stressed the importance of early planning to ensure projects are ready for funding opportunities. Members were encouraged to contact MAPA staff for assistance in preparing competitive applications for the next funding cycle.

E. Rural Discretionary Grant Program

Rachel Goettsch presented information on the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program grant opportunity. This is a federal discretionary grant opportunity provided through the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). She explained that the grant is open to state governments, counties, and cities, making it a relevant funding source for communities within RPA-18. The program provides funding for transportation planning, design, and supportive activities, such as hiring consultants or acquiring necessary software for project development. Notably, this grant does not require a local match, making it an attractive option for smaller communities that often struggle to secure matching funds. The application deadline is April 3, 2025, and since funding is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, she urged communities interested in applying to begin their applications as soon as possible.

Carlos Morales highlighted the potential for multi-community applications, where multiple jurisdictions within the RPA could collaborate on a joint proposal, increasing efficiency and funding potential. He also emphasized the importance of securing funding for preliminary engineering (PE) work, as having a solid project plan can lead to faster



implementation and better cost estimates. John Rasmussen asked whether this grant could be used to hire someone to write other grant applications, but Rachel clarified that this would likely be outside the program's intended scope. However, MAPA staff, including Brad Grefe, can assist communities with the grant-writing process and application submissions. Members were encouraged to explore potential projects that could benefit from this funding and reach out to MAPA for assistance in developing strong applications.

F. Review/Update of Bylaws

Rachel Goettsch led the discussion on potential updates to the RPA-18 bylaws, focusing on membership qualifications and small community representation. She explained that the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) had recommended that RPAs consider adding representation for smaller communities lacking a direct voice in decision-making. The conversation centered around where to set the population threshold for representation and how to structure small community participation without complicating the membership structure or affecting quorum requirements. Several options were presented for consideration:

- **Option One** proposed maintaining the current membership structure but adding one rotating small community representative to alternate between communities under the chosen population threshold.
- **Option Two** suggested assigning one small community representative per county, ensuring each county had a designated voice for its smaller municipalities.
- **Option Three** proposed a hybrid model where Glenwood and Harlan, historically part of the RPA but now falling below the 5,000-population threshold, would serve as permanent small community representatives, with additional representation allocated to smaller towns in Pottawattamie and Harrison Counties.

During the discussion, John Rasmussen questioned whether communities without eligible routes for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) or other federal funds should be included in membership, expressing concern that participation might lead to frustration when smaller towns realize they are ineligible for many funding opportunities. Others, including Carlos Morales, emphasized that beyond funding, representation could provide education and resources to help small communities navigate grant opportunities and planning processes. The discussion also touched on the challenge of ensuring small communities understand federal funding requirements and how they could leverage alternative funding sources that do not require a local match.

The membership did not come to an agreed consensus on the topic, but was



encouraged to continue considering the presented options. Rachel noted that in future meetings, further discussion would take place to determine the best approach for small community representation while maintaining effective governance and funding eligibility within RPA-18.

G. Public Comment

The floor was opened to give members of the public the opportunity to comment. No remarks were made.

H. Additional Business

a. MAPA Staff Introduction

Mia Haschenburger has transitioned roles, and Rachel Goettsch has replaced her as the lead for RPA-18, with Latifa Moro acting as second.

b. Funding and Grant Opportunities

- Carlos Morales discussed potential opportunities for securing additional funding from state, federal, and alternative sources. One key program he noted was **Destination Iowa**, which could provide funding for regional projects. He noted that further discussions on this topic are planned for the next meeting.
- Carlos also highlighted MAPA's ongoing collaboration with the Pottawattamie County Conservation District to leverage grant funding for the expansion of the Great American Rail-Trail. Efforts are focused on connecting trails through Pottawattamie County to Avoca and further east. MAPA is working with the Conservation District to explore ways to move the project forward efficiently.

c. RPA 13 & 18 Safe Streets for All Project Update

MAPA staff are proceeding with consultant procurement to be held on Tuesday, February 18.

d. IA Elected & Appointed Officials Training

Rachel Goettsch provided details on the upcoming IA Elected Officials Meeting, including the registration process, location, and scheduled time. She encouraged those interested in attending to complete their registration in advance.

I. Adjournment

Charlie Parkhurst called for a motion for the meeting to adjourn.

Richard Crouch motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:55am. Motion was seconded by John Rasmussen.



FUTURE MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **MPO/RPA Quarterly Meeting:** February 12, 2025
- **Iowa Elected & Appointed Officials Training:** February 13, 2025—POSTPONED
 - Rescheduled for March 6, 2025
- **RPA-18 Policy Board and Technical Committee Meeting:** March 12, 2025
- **RPA-18 Policy Board and Technical Committee Meeting:** April 9, 2025

