

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



MAPA

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS

WASHINGTON

DOUGLAS

SARPY

CASS

MILLS

HEARTLAND 2050
MINI-GRANTS:
270TH & MEIGS
ST. TRAFFIC
STUDY - PAGE 20

HEARTLAND 2050
MINI-GRANTS:
BENNINGTON TRAIL
& PARK PLAN
- PAGE 20

THRIVING
COMMUNITIES
TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE
- PAGE 12

TRANSFORMATIVE
INVESTMENT
PRIORITIZATION
SYSTEM (TRIPS)
- PAGE 12

COUNCIL BLUFFS
LINKAGES STUDY
- PAGE 16

POTTAWATTAMIE
COUNTY HOUSING
TRUST FUND
- PAGE 15

5-2-1-0
HEALTHY
CHOICES
COUNT
- PAGE 18

EQUITY
IMPACT
INVESTMENTS
- PAGE 13

HEARTLAND 2050
MINI-GRANTS:
BELTLINE TO
FIELD CLUB TRAIL
EXTENSION STUDY
- PAGE 20

HEARTLAND 2050
MINI-GRANTS:
OMAHA SAFE
ROUTES TO
SCHOOL
PROGRAM
- PAGE 20

SAFE
STREETS
FOR ALL
- PAGE 7

HEARTLAND 2050
MINI-GRANTS:
WESTERN DOUGLAS
COUNTY TRAIL PLAN
- PAGE 20

MARKET
VALUE
ANALYSIS
- PAGE 16

WESTERN SARPY
TRANSPORTATION
ENHANCEMENT
PLAN (WE-STEP)
- PAGE 11

HEARTLAND 2050
MINI-GRANTS:
LAVISTA ACTIVE
MOBILITY PLAN
- PAGE 20

HEARTLAND 2050
MINI-GRANTS:
FORT CROOK
TRANSIT STUDY
- PAGE 20

MILLS
COUNTY
HAZARD
MITIGATION
PLAN
- PAGE 17

REGIONAL PROJECT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BLOCK GRANT-DISASTER
RECOVERY AWARD - PAGE 17

POTTAWATTAMIE

SAFE
STREETS
FOR ALL
- PAGE 7



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03** NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
THOUGHTS FROM OUR COMMITTEES
& WHAT'S NEXT
- 05** GUIDING THE WORK
LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
- 07** A FOCUS ON SAFETY
NEW APPROACHES IN TRANSPORTATION
- 09** CONNECTING THE DOTS
ENHANCING CONNECTIONS THROUGH REGIONAL TRAILS
- 11** INNOVATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP
GETTING IT DONE TOGETHER
- 13** MAKING STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS
INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE AND PLACES
- 15** COMPLETING THE PICTURE
BUILDING COMMUNITY
- 17** SERVING OUR MEMBERS
RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY NEEDS
- 19** IMPLEMENTING THE VISION
MOVING TOWARDS 2050
- 21** FUNDING OUR WORK
A LOOK AT MAPA'S BUDGET AND SPENDING
- 23** CELEBRATING SUCCESS
SHOWING APPRECIATION FOR EXEMPLARY WORK
- 25** OUR PEOPLE
COMMITTED TO THE WORK

The preparation of this publication is financed through planning grants from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation through Iowa DOT and the Nebraska Department of Transportation as provided by the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration and the Economic Development Administration and through local funds from member jurisdictions. The views and opinions MAPA expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Department of Transportation or the Economic Development Administration.

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MAPA made significant progress towards its long-term goals over the past year and noted some major successes in our work with our members. Notably, the adoption of our regional Comprehensive Safety Action Plan helps ensure we will be making progress towards MAPA's goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2040. This bold goal adopted by the Board of Directors puts our region on a path to preserve our quality of life enjoyed in our region through proactive safety investments in our transportation system.

Within the ranks of MAPA's members, we see multi-jurisdictional partnerships delivering collaborative approaches to complicated local issues. The Western Sarpy County Transportation Enhancement Program (WE-STEP) is a great example of this kind of partnership, delivering a program of projects, priorities and policies to support and coordinate the long-term growth for communities. From thoughtful mini-grant applications to strategic planning and goal-setting workshops in our small communities—our team is fortunate to get to work alongside local leaders stepping up to think long-term about the opportunities to invest in their communities' growth, prosperity and safety.

In our interactions with MAPA members, we also see tremendous resilience and service to communities by elected and appointed officials. Local governments have faced significant challenges driven by long-run inflation and supply chain disruptions that impact projects large and small. Additionally, over the past two years, each of MAPA's six member counties has faced multiple presidential disaster declarations

from increasingly frequent severe weather events. MAPA staff have worked closely with communities on these recovery efforts and the MAPA Board has allocated new resources to help MAPA plan and support our members to ensure that gaps in coordination are addressed in communities across the region.

We've also entered a period where the long-term partnership between the federal government and local governments is being reimagined. MAPA's work is often centered on federal funding and helping leverage the investment of local governments within our region. Our Strategic Plan calls us to serve as a trusted regional convener to problem-solve with our members and partners to adapt to changing budgets and reauthorization priorities at the federal level. With investments in planning, coordination and staffing resources, we continue to reorganize ourselves to adapt to this changing landscape.

I'm honored to serve this agency and the Omaha-Council Bluffs region as a whole. Thank you to everyone who served on MAPA's committees, attended a meeting, or grabbed a cup of coffee with us to talk during the past year. Our team is looking forward to the next opportunity to work alongside you on your next project.

With gratitude,



Michael Helgerson
MAPA Executive Director



FROM OUR COMMITTEES

As an organization led by and created for local governments, MAPA is a shared resource that strengthens the region's capacity to address the complex challenges facing our communities. We build partnerships through collaboration and engagement—creating a network of local leaders working to support the region's growth and vibrancy.



In an era of rapid change, regional collaboration has become even more important. Our communities face interconnected issues—from economic development and transportation to housing and environmental sustainability. These kinds of issues benefit from coordinated approaches and a regional perspective allows us to help develop solutions that individual communities may struggle to achieve independently.

We also remain responsive and adaptable to change. Local leaders must continually adapt to new requirements and demands on public services; MAPA's staff are here to help communities navigate uncertainty and move projects from idea to implementation. **The region's investment in MAPA creates local capacity to help communities address the long-term challenges and emerging issues that they face.**



As a trusted convener, MAPA leverages its distinctive position to facilitate dialogue and coordinate comprehensive responses. Our Safe Streets for All work in both the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) region and Regional Planning Affiliation 18 (RPA-18) exemplifies how this coordination can result in new projects and opportunities benefiting the entire region.

As we build on our past successes, we are excited to know that MAPA's work is never done. We are grateful for the partnerships with local governments and community organizations that help us continue to build a vibrant region that supports a high quality of life for all.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the coming year, MAPA is focusing on:

Surface Transportation Reauthorization As Congress works on a bill to reauthorize federal transportation funding, we are communicating with members of Iowa and Nebraska's congressional delegations to emphasize the need to build on the higher funding levels and successful programs in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Navigating the Changing Funding Landscape Our members have many questions about the availability of funding programs for current and future projects. We will continue to seek guidance from our state and federal partners on proper procedures in securing and allocating funds in this new environment.

Disaster Recovery Legislation With multiple recent disaster declarations across our region, we are closely monitoring potential changes to federal disaster recovery funding. MAPA is also working to help local communities find additional resources and finance recovery efforts until federal disaster funds become available.

GUIDING THE WORK

Metropolitan Planning Organizations like MAPA are required to develop a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) every five years. This plan covers Douglas and Sarpy Counties in Nebraska and the urban portion of Pottawattamie County in Iowa, and is due to be complete by October 2025.

Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA-18) in Iowa is required to develop a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for Harrison, Shelby, Mills and the non-urban portion of Pottawattamie County. This plan is due to be complete by November 2025.

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

MAPA staff are finalizing major regional planning documents that work together to align and prioritize investments across the region and support local decision-making.

Long range transportation plans assess the region's transportation system and its needs 25 years into the future. These plans take into account the impact of future transportation investments on the environment, land use, and economic development; and are developed in conjunction with MAPA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (see page 13).

Public engagement efforts for our long range plans have included:

- Surveys
- Pop up engagement
- Public Meetings
- Stakeholder Groups
- Focus Groups
- Websites
- Media engagement
- Social media

Thank you to those that have shared their thoughts and feedback with MAPA!

Several regional planning efforts provided direction and feedback to these plans:

- MetroNEXT Transit Survey (2021)
- Highway 75 Corridor & Freight Study (2021)
- Southside Terrace-Indian Hill Multimodal Study (2022)
- City of Omaha Vision Zero Action Plan (2023)
- City of Omaha Active Mobility Plan (2023)
- La Vista Active Mobility Plan (2024)
- Western Sarpy Transportation Enhancement Plan (2024)
- Safe Streets and Roads for All (2025-2026)

LEARN MORE:

mapacog.org/projects/lrtp
mapacog.org/projects/rpa18-lrtp/

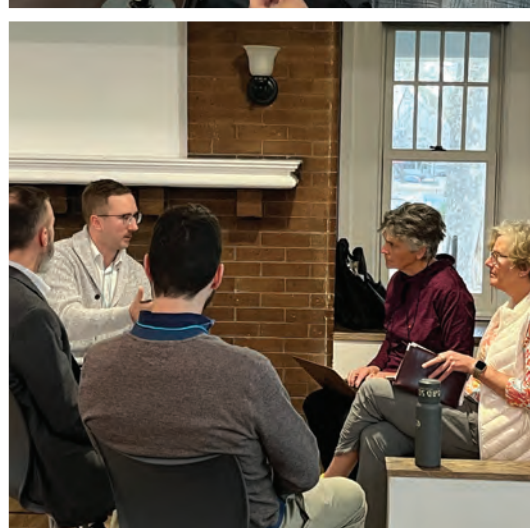
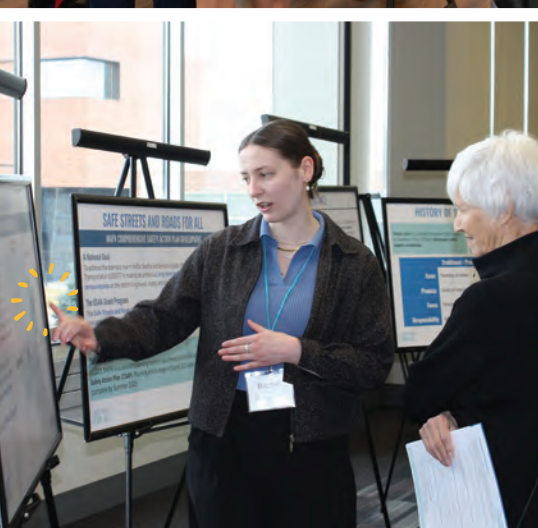
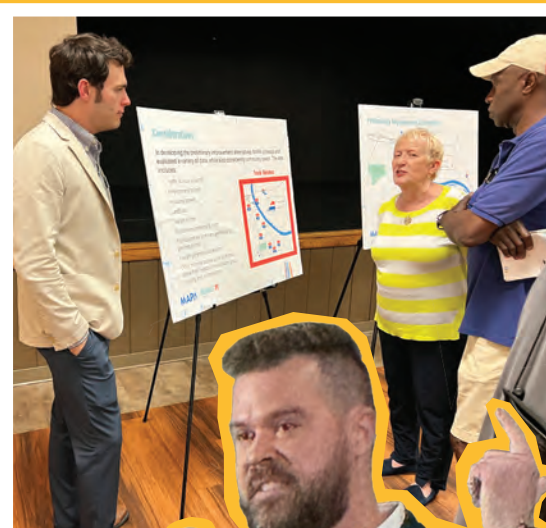




DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

From analyzing traffic data and compiling project lists to hearing local perspectives, MAPA relies on local partners and community members to ensure our projects are successful and relevant.

Clear, accurate data is the basis of MAPA's planning efforts. MAPA's GIS & Data team continues to coordinate with local partners and develop new tools to help communities better understand trends and plan for the future. Reach out to our team with your questions and see how we can support you!



THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED
THROUGH DETAILED DATA ANALYSIS
AND BUILDS ON EXTENSIVE
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS.

- Mike Helgerson



A FOCUS ON SAFETY

SAFETY IS A MAJOR FOCUS IN MAPA'S TRANSPORTATION WORK

In the past year, MAPA completed a regional Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP), which identifies and prioritizes projects aimed at improving safety for all roadway users. This project was funded through the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) Safe Streets for All competitive grant program.

Aligning with the City of Omaha's Vision Zero Action Plan, the goal of the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan is to reduce all traffic fatalities and serious injury crashes to zero by 2040 through policy changes and traffic safety projects. Strategies and projects included in the plan will be eligible for future implementation funding.

The plan, developed in collaboration with MAPA's Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) and Safety Committee, follows the USDOT's proactive Safe Systems Approach, which focuses on designing transportation systems to be forgiving of human error and minimize the impact of crashes.

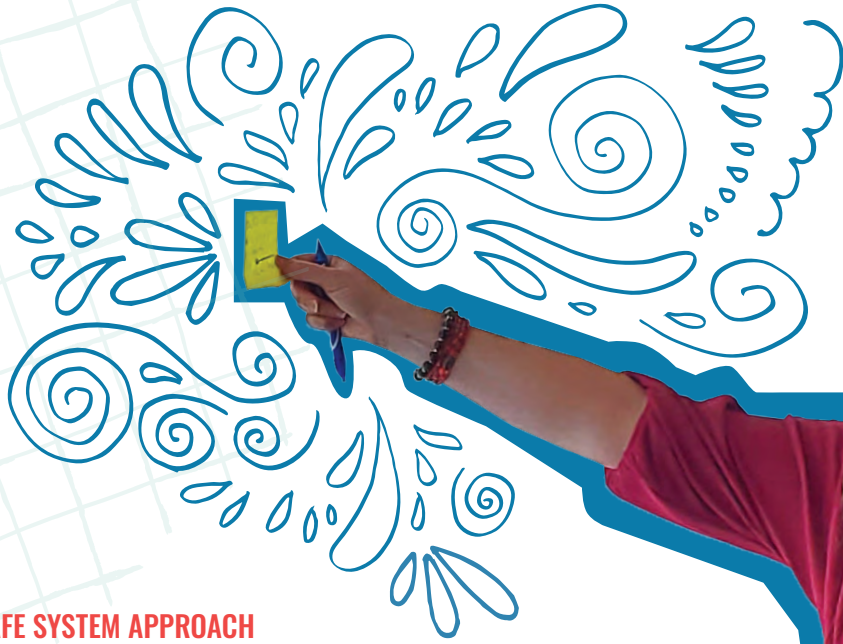
This plan includes Douglas and Sarpy Counties in Nebraska as well as the cities of Council Bluffs, Carter Lake, Crescent and McClelland in Iowa.

View the final Comprehensive Safety Action Plan at

mapacog.org/projects/ss4a

A second Safe Streets for All grant is funding work to develop Community Safety Action Plans for cities in Iowa Regional Planning Affiliations 13 and 18. Those plans are expected to be finalized by July 2026. Find more information at mapacog.org/projects/ss4a-rpa/





SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH

The US Department of Transportation (USDOT) recently adopted a new Safe System Approach as the guiding paradigm to address roadway safety.

Rather than waiting for accidents to happen before making roadway improvements, this proactive and comprehensive approach to safety works by building and reinforcing multiple layers of protection to both prevent crashes from happening in the first place

and to minimize the harm caused to those involved when crashes do occur.

To better understand this new guidance and incorporate it into plans and projects, MAPA hosted a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) training on the Safe System Approach for MAPA and staff from other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). This training was held in August 2024 at the National Parks Service building in Omaha.



SAFE SYSTEM
APPROACH
TRAINING



CONNECTING THE DOTS



I CAN'T EMPHASIZE ENOUGH [HOW] IOWA AND NEBRASKA MAKING PROGRESS ON THE GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL, HOW TRANSFORMATIVE IT IS TO CONNECT YOUR TWO MAJOR CITIES IN A STATE BY TRAIL.

- Kevin Belle, Great American Rail-Trail

WASHINGTON

POTTAWATTAMIE

SARPY

MILLS

CASS

In October, we celebrated the progress that Iowa and Nebraska are making in completing portions of the Great American Rail-Trail, the first cross-country multi-use trail in the United States that, when complete, will span more than 3,700 miles from Washington, D.C. to Washington State.

MAPA hosted a trail planning workshop with Pottawattamie County trail partners and Kevin Belle, Great American Rail-Trail project manager, who was also keynote speaker at MAPA's Council of Officials Annual Meeting.



MAPA's Heartland 2050 Mini-Grant program supports several trail and mobility projects.

☐ Bennington Trail & Park Plan

This plan update will include potential routes for walking and biking and will align with the City of Omaha and Western Douglas County trail plans.

☐ Beltline Trail to Field Club Trail Extension Study

This study will determine possible routes to connect the south end of the future Beltline Trail to the north end of the Field Club Trail in Midtown Omaha.

☐ Fort Crook Transit Study

This study outlines the economic feasibility of enhanced transit services along Bellevue's Ft. Crook Road Corridor and its economic impacts on the city.

☐ LaVista Active Mobility Plan

Adopted in January, this plan focuses on connecting people to destinations via walking, biking, rolling, and electric-assisted technologies like ebikes and scooters.

☐ Western Douglas County Trail Plan

This plan update underway will reflect current trail conditions and connections to Western Douglas County communities.

☐ Valley - 270th & Meigs Traffic Study

The project will focus on finding a more efficient traffic solution for this intersection.

☒ Baby Bob

Omaha's North Downtown Pedestrian Bridge, known as the "Baby Bob," opened in April. The bridge links the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge plaza on the Omaha Riverfront to 10th Street, providing a connection to Charles Schwab Field, the CHI Health Center, the streetcar route and popular venues on both the Nebraska and Iowa sides of the Missouri River.

☐ MOPAC

Discussions continue between Cass County and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District to identify the best route to connect the last eight-mile gap in this trail, which would connect Omaha and Lincoln.

Learn more at heartland2050.org/mini-grants/

SHELBY

CASS



THE ABILITY TO HAVE LOCAL JURISDICTIONS COME TOGETHER TO ADOPT COMMON CRITERIA THAT CROSS JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES IS RARE YET NOTEWORTHY!

- Paula Dennison, Gretna City Administrator

The Western Sarpy Transportation Enhancement Plan (WE-STEP) is one example of how MAPA works to align communities and build coalitions across jurisdictional lines.

WE-STEP is a strategic transportation plan for western Sarpy County, developed in collaboration with the City of Gretna, City of Papillion, City of Springfield, Sarpy County, and MAPA.

This innovative, proactive and award-winning approach provides a framework for development of

the transportation network in these rapidly-changing communities, with shared design standards that allow for future growth but can be flexible and responsive as that growth occurs.

In March, the American Planning Association (APA) Nebraska Chapter awarded WE-STEP its Planning Excellence Award at their annual conference (see page 23).

The WE-STEP project was funded by a \$100,000 Heartland 2050 Mini-Grant made to the City of Gretna.



Blair's South Bypass opened to traffic in August 2024. MAPA helped secure a \$7.56 million BUILD grant to fund construction of this project, which reduces heavy truck traffic and increases pedestrian and bicycle safety in Blair's busy downtown business district.

INNOVATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP





The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) awarded MAPA \$2 million to implement a prioritization process project known as Transformative Regional Investment Prioritization System (TRIPS).

The program provides funding for MAPA and the Nebraska Department of Transportation to develop and implement a publicly accessible, transparent prioritization process for the ranking and selection of projects for inclusion in short and long range transportation plans throughout the state.

This pilot program will bring a revolutionary decisionmaking model to Nebraska's largest transportation planning organizations, and will enhance selection efficiency and ensure that projects align with community needs and values. Follow this project at mapacog.org/projects/trips

The USDOT awarded a total of \$10 million through the program for this fiscal year, with MAPA receiving the maximum award amount of \$2 million.

Through the Thriving Communities Initiative, MAPA, Spark CDI, the City of Omaha, Metro Transit and community members examined the impacts of Highway 75 on the North Omaha community and ways to reconnect the historically Black community that was displaced and separated by this infrastructure project.

Key goals included:

- Restoring trust of transportation-based planning decisions
- Encouraging community engagement & enacting change through urban planning and design
- Addressing past harms by discussing and evaluating impacts of
- North Freeway corridor on surrounding neighborhood
- Securing future investment by leveraging public and private funding for projects that enhance North Freeway corridor

During project meetings, community members identified impacts from the construction of Highway 75 including displacement of residents, loss of local businesses, reduced property values, increased traffic, and environmental issues. Residents also identified projects to help enhance the corridor and revitalize the area surrounding it.

Find project deliverables at mapacog.org/projects/thriving-communities

To continue this work, MAPA applied for and was awarded a \$1.5 million Reconnecting Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to advance conceptual and preliminary design of improvements along the North Freeway. That project is expected to start in late 2025 or early 2026.

MAKING STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

In its role as an Economic Development District, every five years MAPA develops a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to serve as an economic roadmap for creating jobs, fostering a more stable and diversified economy, and improving living conditions within the region.

Feedback from stakeholder engagement and outreach helped shape the 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, which will be released for public comment in November, with formal MAPA Board of Directors approval expected in December before the plan is submitted to the U.S. EDA.

Learn more at mapacog.org/projects/ceds/



MAPA is partnering with the Latino Economic Development Council (LEDC), Canopy South and the 24th Street Business Improvement District as part of a three-year capacity building program called Equity Impact Investments. This U.S. Economic Development Administration program is intended to boost economic development in underrepresented communities.

The group's work brings together diverse community stakeholders to foster equitable growth and unity throughout Douglas County by sharing knowledge and resource coordination as ways to address key urban challenges. They have also provided stakeholder feedback for MAPA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

In June, staff from the Greater Omaha Chamber, City of Omaha, LEDC and MAPA attended the Learn, Explore, Active in Place (LEAP) economic development conference in Cleveland. The conference focused on wealth-building and inclusive capital for historically disinvested communities.



CHE BARNETT

As an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, Che Barnett provides technical assistance to the North 24th Street Business Improvement District (BID) in the implementation of the district's transformative Streetscape Master Plan.

Che supports the plan through participation in multi-agency coordination meetings ensuring alignment with the BID's vision for improved transportation options in the district and integration with other area infrastructure and commercial development projects.

MAPA and the City of Omaha supported the BID's application to the Economic Recovery Corps for technical assistance, a collaborative initiative

to accelerate pandemic recovery in distressed areas.

Learn more at www.north24thstreetbid.com/





COMPLETING THE PICTURE

In January, MAPA facilitated a strategic planning session for the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund, which allocates funds to organizations and providers which serve the housing needs of low-to-moderate income county residents.

Through group discussions, Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund board members clarified the organization's vision and developed a strategic plan with a prioritized list of activities and a timeline for implementation.

Board members are implementing initial priorities such as reviewing and updating bylaws, developing a fundraising committee, expanding marketing and outreach efforts, and developing a program impact dashboard for the agency website.

Learn more about the trust fund at pottcohtf.org





The Council Bluffs FIRST AVE Transit Alternatives Analysis, completed in 2020 and funded by a Heartland 2050 Mini-Grant, laid out options for transportation investments along the former railroad corridor and included an analysis of the economic development and land redevelopment impact of each alternative.

We are now seeing the impacts of that study coming to life!

The City of Council Bluffs has since completed the FIRST AVE trail, creating

a multimodal link to downtown Omaha and supporting opportunities for redevelopment. The 712 Initiative followed up with The Row on First, the first housing project along the renewed FIRST AVE corridor. Thanks to a partnership with the Iowa West Foundation, the FIRST AVE trail will soon be home to a total of fifteen murals, showcasing the talents of local artists and transforming the corridor into a vibrant canvas.

Find out more at councilbluffs-ia.gov/2347/FIRST-AVE

MAPA and the City of Council Bluffs are working to identify opportunities to enhance bicycle, pedestrian and transit connections between downtown Council Bluffs and downtown Omaha as part of the Council Bluffs LINKAGES Study.

Alternatives are being examined to accommodate integration with the Omaha Streetcar and Bus Rapid Transit (ORBT) and a potential new bridge crossing over the Missouri River which connects multiple modes of transportation.



To help our members and partners tackle the shortage of affordable housing in the region, MAPA has been working to complete a regional Market Value Analysis. This data-driven tool can be used to analyze residential real estate markets, understand current housing conditions and support local decision-making in housing investments.

In May, consultants facilitated focus groups with philanthropic funders, affordable housing developers, local planners and policy makers.

MAPA's regional Market Value Analysis is expected to be completed in Fall/Winter 2025.

Learn more at mapacog.org/projects/mva



In February, consultants from CommunityScale toured communities in the metro to compare data inputs and assumptions made about regional housing conditions with actual housing conditions on the ground.





Minden, Iowa, took a direct hit from a 2024 tornado outbreak, which killed one man and severely damaged 50 homes in the town.

DISASTER RECOVERY

The MAPA region is still recovering from the impact of the 2024 tornadoes and other severe weather outbreaks. In fact, in the last two years every one of the six counties in the region had a federal disaster declaration due to damage caused by severe weather.

Because of the regional impact, MAPA is looking at ways to support more disaster recovery services to assist communities.

One effort - the Mills County Hazard Mitigation Plan - received approval from FEMA and MAPA will now be seeking adoption by all participating jurisdictions so they will be eligible for future federal disaster funding.

Construction begins in Fall 2025 on three duplexes, creating six new affordable housing units to replace some of the housing stock lost.

Minden received a Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery award in the amount of \$1,172,042 from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) to support the construction.

MAPA prepared the successful grant application and is administering the grant to construct the new homes.

MAPA assisted the City of Omaha in the development of its Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP).

The plan focuses on ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution in the eight-county Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

MAPA conducted broad regional public engagement, developed a regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory for the plan, and facilitated discussions to ensure local priority projects were included in the plan and eligible for federal implementation funding.

Read the final PCAP at tinyurl.com/RegionalPCAP

SERVING OUR MEMBERS

5-2-1-0 AWARDS

Council Bluffs is receiving \$60,000 across three years to implement projects to improve community health and wellness.

A needs assessment offered through the Iowa Department

of Health and Human Services and coordinated by MAPA identified the projects.

Projects funded this year include:

A new turf field and recess equipment at Edison Elementary School	\$8,750
Supplies for community gardens at two elementary schools	\$3,000
Vouchers to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at the city's farmer's market	\$500
Wagons for food pantry users to carry their goods	\$3,750



CASS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MAPA staff are partnering on economic development work in Cass County.

- ☒ MAPA secured a \$260,000 Community Development Block Grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to replace deteriorated asphalt on 1st Street in the Village of Alvo
- ☒ Staff wrote a grant application for rural workforce housing funds for Plattsmouth
- ☒ Submitted a regional USDA Rural Business Development Grant application to support small business development and retention in Plattsmouth and Glenwood, Iowa
- ☒ MAPA secured \$2,000 in funding for a downtown development plan for Elwood, being created by the University of Nebraska Lincoln-Extension
- ☒ Executive Director Mike Helgerson also serves on the Cass County Economic Development Council

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION



Heartland 2050 hosted a series of field trips and social events in support of the work its committees are performing.

The annual **December Social** event gave members of different committees

MAPA's Heartland 2050 Regional Vision is a shared road map for the six-county Omaha-Council Bluffs region with strategies to help build and connect thriving, vibrant communities.

the opportunity to meet and enjoy some fellowship over food and bowling at Blue Sky Bar & Patio.

In April, Infrastructure Committee members **toured the Saddle Creek Retention Treatment Basin** and learned how it improves water quality by storing and treating combined sewage and stormwater.

Get involved by joining a Heartland 2050 Committee, attending an upcoming event or connecting with MAPA staff to find ways to collaborate.

Learn more at
heartland2050.org



In June, Engagement and Housing & Development Committee members participated in a **North Omaha Legacy Tour**. Attendees learned about the rich cultural history and legacy of this predominantly African-American community.





INDY MPO PEER EXCHANGE

MAPA hosted staff from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), for a peer exchange.



Like MAPA, the Indy MPO plans and programs federal transportation funds for a variety of regional projects such as roads, transit, trails and pedestrian infrastructure.

During the peer exchange, MAPA staff shared information about the agency's structure, projects and programs and arranged tours of regional community development projects.

MAPA's relationship with the Indy MPO began in 2022 when the MPO hosted a Heartland 2050 Learning Site Visit.

HEARTLAND 2050 MINI-GRANTS

Each year MAPA earmarks a portion of its Surface Transportation Block Grant funding for the Heartland 2050 Mini-Grant Program.

efforts to create vibrant communities and help implement the Heartland 2050 Regional Vision.

The Mini-Grant Program funds projects that support local governments in their

Since its inception in 2018, the program has awarded more than \$1.96 million for 16 projects.

IN
PROCESS

FORT CROOK ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY

Sponsor: City of Bellevue Year Awarded: 2022

\$100,000

Federal Award

IN
PROCESS

WESTERN SARPY TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Sponsor: City of Gretna Year Awarded: 2023

\$100,000

Federal Award

STARTING
FY2026

BELTLINE TRAIL TO FIELD CLUB TRAIL CONNECTION STUDY

Sponsor: City of Omaha Year Awarded: 2023

\$120,000

Federal Award

IN
PROCESS

COUNCIL BLUFFS MULTIMODAL CONNECTION & EXPANSION PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES STUDY

Sponsor: City of Council Bluffs Year Awarded: 2022

\$350,000

Federal Award

STARTING
FY2026

VALLEY 270TH & MEIGS INTERSECTION STUDY

Sponsor: City of Valley Year Awarded: 2022

\$42,000

Federal Award

STARTING
FY2026

WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

Sponsor: Douglas County Year Awarded: 2025

\$157,500

Federal Award

STARTING
FY2026

CITY OF BENNINGTON TRAIL AND PARK PLAN UPDATE

Sponsor: City of Bennington Year Awarded: 2025

\$46,200

Federal Award

STARTING
FY2026

CITY OF OMAHA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Sponsor: City of Omaha Year Awarded: 2025

\$218,400

Federal Award

Heartland 2050 committees have several working groups, which support their goals. The Solid Waste Working Group, which operates under the Natural Resources Committee, has tackled several issues in the past year.

Work has included raising awareness about many topics:

- Increasing prevalence of fires in waste management equipment and facilities caused by lithium batteries and legislation to regulate disposal and recycling of these batteries
- Vape recycling
- Organics management, including tree debris from storms
- Solid waste-related management

FUNDING OUR WORK

Below is an overview of direct grant support provided by MAPA throughout FY2025. This chart combines MAPA's roles as a Metropolitan Planning Organization, Economic Development District and Council of Governments.

Housing

\$3,633,318

Infrastructure

\$260,000

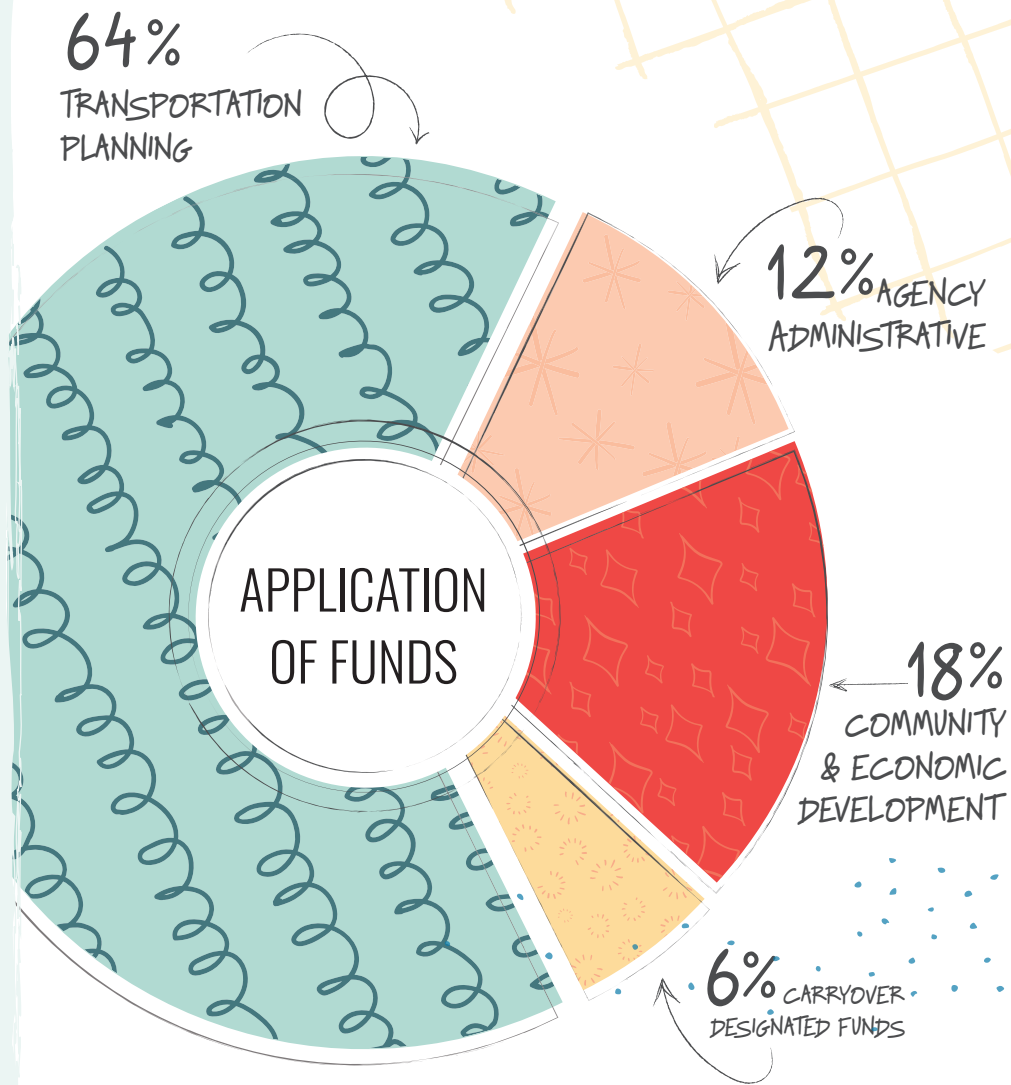
Planning

\$437,900

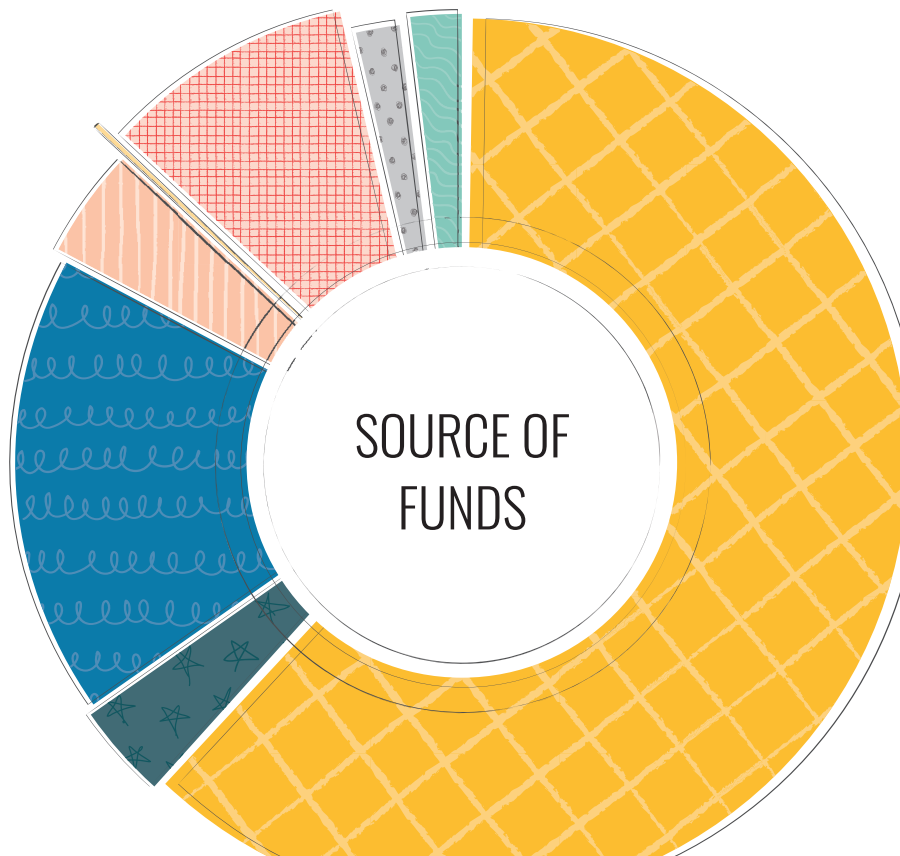
Hazard Mitigation

\$11,000

Amounts are derived from preliminary fiscal year-end financial records, which are subject to corrections prior to publication of MAPA's official annual financial statements.



Federal	61.77%
State	3.55%
Direct Support	17.51%
In-Kind Support	4.25%
Non-Member	0.06%
Fees for Service	9.50%
Miscellaneous	1.50%
Reserves & Adjustments	1.86%



CELEBRATING SUCCESS

We are proud to both give and receive recognition for outstanding work in our region!



Each year MAPA recognizes individuals and organizations that have worked to benefit the Omaha-Council Bluffs region by presenting them with awards.

In 2024, **Pottawattamie Conservation** received MAPA's Regional Service Award.

Mayor Cindy Grove of Valley, Nebraska, received MAPA's 2024 Regional Citizenship Award.

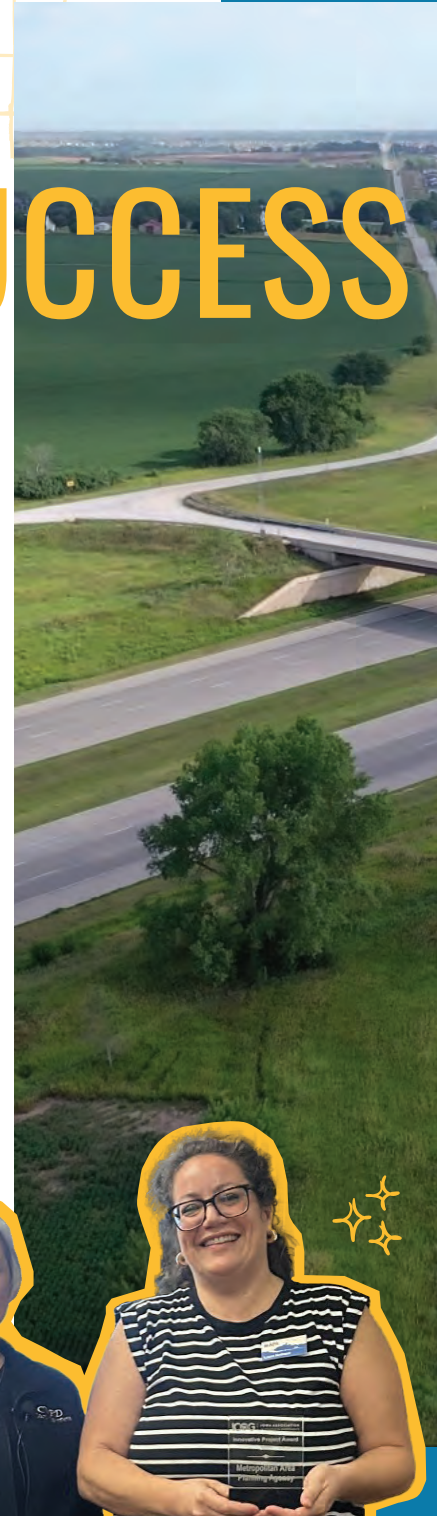


In March, the American Planning Association (APA) Nebraska Chapter awarded the Western Sarpy Transportation Enhancement Plan (WE-STEP) its **Planning Excellence Award** at the annual APA Nebraska conference.



On May 1, the Iowa Association of Councils of Governments (ICOG) presented MAPA with its **Innovative Project Award** for developing the Impact Map. The map increases the visibility and effectiveness of COG projects statewide and public and governmental recognition of the critical roles COGs play in economic and community development.

Check out the map at www.iowacog.com/impact-map





MAPA's Sarpy County Planning & Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study received the 2024 Gordon Frank Outstanding Accomplishment in Government Award at the SAVE International Value Summit in recognition of its innovative use

of Value Planning during the environmental review process. The PEL Study evaluated the need and locations for a potential new interchange along Interstate 80 in western Sarpy County. mapacog.org/projects/i80pel/



In late 2024, MAPA Executive Director Mike Helgerson received special recognition.

In November, the Iowa State University College of Design presented Mike with the 2024 Design Achievement Award. The award recognizes outstanding creative and professional achievements of alumni in all the college's disciplines. Mike graduated from Iowa State in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Community and Regional Planning.

In December, the Midlands Business Journal recognized Mike as one of its 2024 40 Under 40 Award winners. The 40 Under 40 Awards recognize emerging leaders who are reshaping the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area's professional landscape. Award recipients are selected from a competitive pool of nominated professionals under the age of 40. Nominees represent diverse industries across the metro—from entrepreneurs and executives to nonprofit visionaries and innovators.

OUR PEOPLE

MAPA serves in a variety of roles throughout the region:

- Regional Council of Governments
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Economic Development District
- MAPA Foundation

Many committees operate internally and externally to support the work MAPA does in each of these roles. The following chart outlines MAPA's organizational structure.

Learn more about MAPA at www.mapacog.org/about/what-is-map/

MAPA would like to thank the following people for their volunteering their time and sharing their expertise to lead MAPA's committees for the upcoming year.

MAPA's Council of Officials meets quarterly to hear about matters of regional importance and conduct agency business. Meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to join!

At the annual meeting in October 2024, we heard from Kevin Belle, Project Manager for the Great American Rail Trail. (see page 9)

In December, Col. Patrick Kolesiak from Offutt Air Force Base spoke about coordinating with local partners to support military readiness and future planning.

In March, representatives from Accelerator for America provided an

update on navigating changes in the federal government.

Omaha Airport Authority CEO David Roth discussed Eppley Airfield's Terminal Expansion & Modernization Program at the final meeting of the fiscal year in June 2025.



Steve Dethlefs, Washington County
Council of Officials President



Allen Hadfield, City of Treynor
Council of Officials Vice President



Douglas Kindig, City of La Vista
MAPA Board of Directors Chair



Matt Walsh, City of Council Bluffs
MAPA Board of Directors Vice Chair



Todd Pfitzer, Douglas County
Transportation Technical Advisory
Committee (TTAC) Chair



Austin Rowser, City of Omaha
Transportation Technical Advisory
Committee (TTAC) Vice Chair



Keith Station, City of Omaha
Regional Planning Advisory
Committee (RPAC) Chair



Chris Gibbons, City of Council Bluffs
Regional Planning Advisory
Committee (RPAC) Vice Chair

FY2025 MAPA STAFF



MICHAEL HELGERSON
Executive Director



MATTHEW EASH
Director of Finance



AMANDA MORALES
Fiscal Officer



GRANT ANDERSON
Community & Economic Development Manager



ELISE EMANUEL
Grants & Agreements Specialist



CARLOS MORALES
Transportation & Data Manager



COURT BARBER
Transportation Planner & Local Projects Liaison



AYODELE FADOJU
GIS Analyst



LATIFA MORO
Transportation Planner



NATASHA BARRETT
Fiscal Analyst



BRADLEY GREFF
Community & Economic Development Planner



JULIE SMITH
Community & Economic Development Planner



JAMES BOERNER
Transportation Planner



RACHEL GOETTSCH
Transportation Planner



CONNIE VINER
Accountant



CHRISTINA BROWNELL
Director of Administration



LAURA HEILMAN
Communications & Outreach Manager



MAGGIE WEIGLE
Community & Economic Development Planner



LINDSEY BUTTON
Transportation Planner



ALEX JOHNSON
Transportation Planner



JODI WOOLERY
Art Director



JOSH CORRIGAN
GIS Coordinator



ANDREW KRESIN
Communications & Outreach Intern



ELIZABETH ZELLER
Administrative Assistant



SUE CUTSFORTH
Information Officer



SAUL LOPEZ
Communications Project Coordinator

Employees who contributed to FY2025 programs but are no longer employed by MAPA:

HELEN CORRIGAN, Communications & Outreach Intern
MIA HASCHENBURGER, Transportation Planner
RYAN OSSELL, Community & Economic Development Planner
OWEN STUCKEY, GIS Coordinator
ELLE WARD, Transportation Planner
ADIA WEST, GIS & DATA Intern

