

# MOVING FORWARD



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## Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund issues 2026 grant awards

For Peace Haven Administrator Fran Branan, the grants her nonprofit, senior independent living community in Walnut, Iowa, has received from the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund are not just a game changer for the complex; they are a lifesaver.

"I don't think we would still be in business," said Branan. "We wouldn't have been able to do anything we've done without the funding."

Trust Fund grants have helped Peace Haven retrofit heating and cooling systems and replace a failing boiler, among other updates.

This year's funding will replace 10 exterior doors with push bar doors and coded entry to boost accessibility for residents and add cameras outside the exterior doors for additional security.

In 2026, the trust fund awarded grants totaling \$479,403 to these organizations and projects:

- **Connections Area Agency on Aging and Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs**  
Owner-occupied housing rehabs, repairs, and accessibility improvements: \$100,000
- **Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs**  
Down payment assistance: \$80,000
- **Heartland Family Service, New Visions Homeless Services, Peace Haven Association, and Vodec**  
Rehab of rental housing units, emergency shelters, or transitional units: \$224,403
- **Connections Area Agency on Aging, InterFaith Response, and Iowa Legal Aid**  
Rental assistance, including deposit, rent, and eviction aversion services: \$75,000

Each year the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund allocates funding to organizations or individuals that serve the housing needs of low to moderate-income residents within Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

MAPA is the grant administrator for the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund. Find out more at [pottcohtf.org](http://pottcohtf.org)



## Comments sought on RPA 13 & 18 Safety Action Plan

Reduce all traffic fatalities to zero by 2050. That is the goal of the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan released for public comment by Iowa Regional Planning Affiliations (RPA) 13 and 18. The public comment period through May 31, 2026.

Iowa RPAs 13 and 18 developed the draft Comprehensive Safety Action Plan as part of a joint Safe Streets for All project.

The data-driven plan, which was developed with extensive community outreach, includes recommendations and identifies projects aimed at improving safety for all roadway users in the communities of Atlantic, Clarinda, Glenwood, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Red Oak and Shenandoah.

It identifies a high priority network of locations within the seven communities where projects can help improve road safety, and strategies to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes.

Access the Draft Comprehensive Safety Action Plan and complete a comment form on the project website:

[rpa-safestreeets.mapacog.org](http://rpa-safestreeets.mapacog.org).



Regional Planning Affiliation 13, administered by the Southwest Iowa Planning Council, is the organization responsible for transportation planning in Cass, Fremont, Montgomery and Page counties.

Regional Planning Affiliation 18, administered by MAPA, is responsible for transportation planning in Harrison, Shelby and Mills counties and the eastern, non-urbanized portion of Pottawattamie County.

## MAPA seeks grant for regional EMS post-crash care capacity building

In 2024, 66% of people killed in crashes in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area died either on their way to the hospital or at the hospital.

Severe blood loss is the leading cause of preventable death in trauma cases like crashes. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data shows mortality in trauma patients drops by 37% if they receive pre-hospital blood transfusions from first responders.

Omaha and Bellevue have whole blood transfusion programs with their fire departments.

The grant MAPA is applying for would fund equipment and training required for improved rapid extrication, vehicle stabilization, and pre-hospital blood transfusions on a limited, trial basis. This comprehensive approach is meant to not only improve outcomes for individuals involved in crashes, but also to improve safety for first responders.

This demonstration will include the Bennington, Waterloo, Gretna, Omaha, and Council Bluffs Fire Departments, with each department trying out one or more improved post-crash care capabilities.

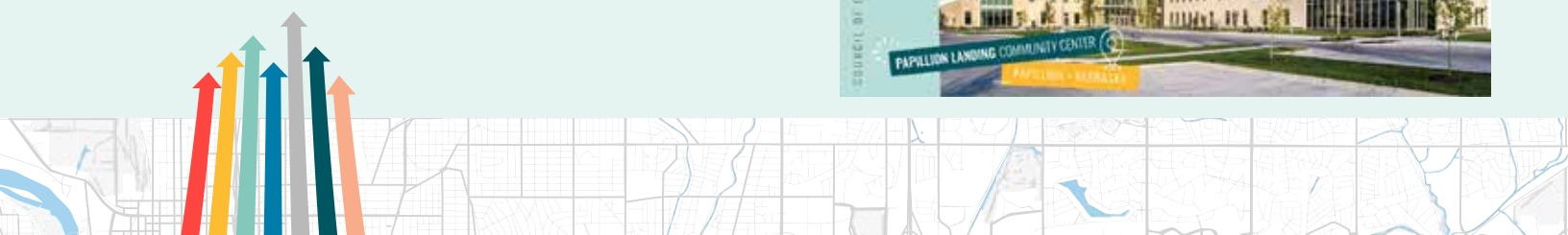
In 2025, MAPA led the development of a Safe Streets for All Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for Douglas, Sary and western Pottawattamie counties. This plan laid the foundation for safety improvement projects across the region, but did not specifically include EMS post-crash care activities. Once updates to the plan developed through grant are approved, these activities will be eligible for future Safe Streets for All implementation funding.



## Council of Officials meeting set for June 10

Join us for the MAPA Council of Officials meeting next month! On June 10, hear directly from project partners about progress toward regional goals to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero by 2040.

Register for Council of Officials: [tinyurl.com/COOJune2026](http://tinyurl.com/COOJune2026)



## Regional bike projects highlight National Bike Month

May is National Bike Month, which showcases the benefits of bicycling, and encourages riding. It promotes safer streets, community events and nationwide participation.

MAPA received a special designation in August 2025. The American League of Bicyclists designated MAPA as a Gold-level Bicycle Friendly Business. This national designation recognizes organizations with a strong, ingrained bike culture and robust policies promoting cycling that are leaders in creating a safer and more accessible environment for bicyclists.

As part of National Bike Month, we're highlighting developments in several bike-related projects in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region.

### Railroad Highway Trail

Construction is underway on another portion of Pottawattamie County's Railroad Highway Trail.

The .7-mile segment will stretch from the County's border with the City of Council Bluffs at Hawthorne Ave. to the Smith Wildlife Refuge when completed this summer. Meanwhile, Pottawattamie County Conservation is working to raise the remaining \$2 million needed to complete a 4.2 mile segment of the trail from Weston to Underwood. The Railroad Highway Trail is part of the larger Great American Rail Trail, a cross-country route that will span more than 3,700 miles from Washington, D.C. to Washington State when complete. MAPA is a funding partner for the Railroad Highway Trail.



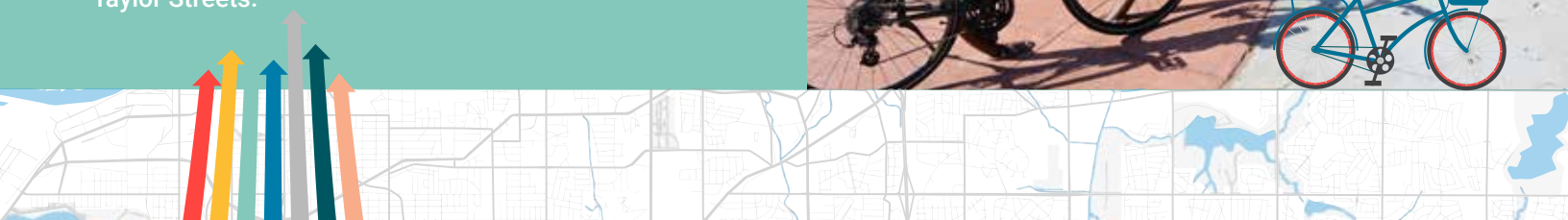
### North Omaha Trail Phase 2 Groundbreaking

In mid-April, the City of Omaha, Spark CDI and community leaders broke ground on phase two of the North Omaha Trail. Once completed, this phase of the trail will stretch from 24th & Ohio Streets to the Baby Bob Bridge downtown via Creighton University. The North Omaha Trail is a cultural trail, an investment in public health infrastructure, and a catalyst for community development.



### Beltline Trail Trailhead

The Beltline Trail Connection at Hamilton Street and Military Avenue in Omaha provides the community with a playground, recreational opportunities, amphitheater/outdoor classroom, safe route to schools, and active transportation. The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District and the City of Omaha marked the opening of the trail in September 2025. When it's completed, the Beltline Trail will be a continuous trail through North Omaha connecting to the North Omaha Transit Center near 30th and Taylor Streets.



## Girard Trail Connection

On April 27, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, City of Omaha and CHI Health celebrated the opening of the Girard Trail Connection, a half-mile path near 72nd and Girard Streets that increases recreational and transportation options in North Omaha. The project converted an abandoned railroad corridor and is the first step toward an east-west trail connecting the Keystone Trail and Lake Cunningham to the Missouri River.

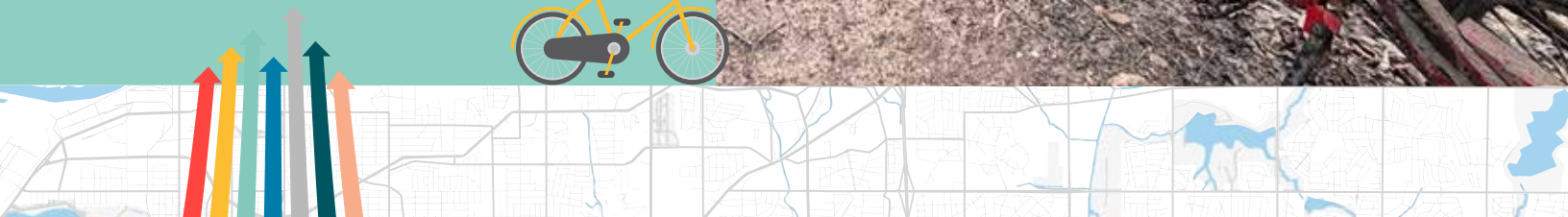


## Heartland Bike Share Free Rides

One-hour rides on Heartland Bike Share's entire fleet of pedal-assisted ebikes bicycles are now free through the end of 2026 to anyone 16 years and older who lives in the cities of Omaha, Bellevue, Papillion, LaVista, Ralston, and Council Bluffs. Heartland Bike Share announced the pilot program on April 21, which covers rides on all of its 400-plus fleet of pedal-assisted ebikes and is made possible thanks to corporate and philanthropic sponsors.

## eMoto Policy Planning RFQ

The rapid rise of high-powered electric motorcycles, known as eMotos, creates safety challenges for the region's trail system. Due to this situation, MAPA and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District are partnering on the development of a regional eMoto policy to guide usage of these electric mobility devices in the region and address safety issues occurring currently on the trail network. Contact MAPA staff to get involved!



## Heartland 2050 committee members tour Housing Stability Clinic

Members of our Heartland 2050 Engagement and Housing & Development Committees recently toured the Housing Stability Clinic and food pantry at Together.

Those participating gained a deeper understanding of the critical food and housing services Together provides for community members experiencing housing instability, imminent eviction, utility shutoffs, or homelessness.

The group also learned more about the ongoing work connected to the City of Omaha's Poverty Elimination Action Plan.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and to Together for hosting an informative and impactful tour! Check out [heartland2050.org](http://heartland2050.org) to learn more or join a committee!



## MAPA Staff Updates

MAPA is happy to announce two new additions to the Transportation and Data team:

Matt Bolander joined MAPA as a Transportation Planner in late March, coming from the Parks and Recreation Department in the City of Lincoln. Matt has a Bachelor's degree in Geography and earned his Master's degree in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2024. In his free time, Matt loves hiking and climbing, finding a particular enjoyment for Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue.



Adia West returns to MAPA as a Transportation Planner after spending time with us as an intern in the Summer and Fall of 2025. Adia has since graduated from Creighton University with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, concentrating in Research Design and Research Analysis. In her free time, Adia enjoys hiking, visiting coffee shops, reading and is looking for a makers space to make furniture for her apartment, a skill she learned from her father.



We'd also like to thank Maggie Weigle, Community and Economic Development Planner, who left the agency in April. Maggie was a tremendous asset to the team and instrumental to the 2025 update to MAPA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). We wish Maggie well in her future endeavors! .



## CALENDAR

### MAY 2026

- 22** **Transportation Technical Advisory Committee**  
10:00 a.m.
- 25** **Memorial Day**  
*MAPA offices closed*
- 28** **MAPA Board of Directors**  
1:30 p.m.

### JUNE 2026

- 05** **Regional Planning Advisory Committee**  
10:00 a.m.
- 10** **Council of Officials**  
11:00 a.m.
- 12** **Transportation Technical Advisory Committee**  
10:00 a.m.
- 19** **Juneteenth**  
*MAPA offices closed*
- 25** **MAPA Board of Directors**  
1:30 p.m.

