

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 27 No. 2

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Feb — Mar. 2016

NIACOG STAFF

641.423.0491

Email— first letter of first name followed
by last name @niacog.org (i.e.
jmyhre@niacog.org)

Laurel Clement — Ext. 27
Planner

Teresa Collins — Ext. 22
Operations Manager

Chris Diggins — Ext. 15
Local Assistance Director

Dana Heimbuch — Ext. 28
Comm. Dev. Planner

Todd Hull — Ext. 24
Maintenance Supervisor

Kevin Kramer — Ext. 17
Transit Administrator

Joe Myhre — Ext. 11
Executive Director

Myrtle Nelson — Ext. 16
Senior Planner

Matt O'Brien — Ext. 14
Regional Planner

Kris Urdahl — Ext. 12
Fiscal Officer

Steve Wendt — Ext. 13
Community Dev. Planner

Jodi Wyborny — Ext. 10
Administrative Assistant



EMERGENCY

Home Repair & Renovations

**EMERGENCY HOME REPAIR
FUNDING REQUESTED
BY NIACOG**

NIACOG frequently receives calls from individuals who have critical home repair needs, like a furnace or hot water heater that quit working. The people who call are, more often than not, elderly widows or disabled people, who are physically unable to secure a decent paying job and/or make repairs themselves.

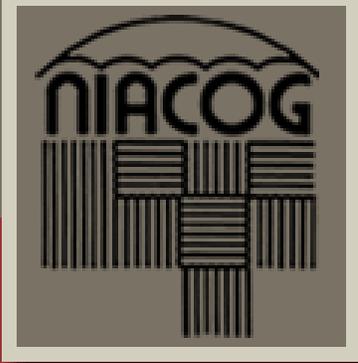
The frequency of the emergency repair requests in our region is not surprising in light of the advanced age of housing in North Iowa. 21,009 homes (1 in 3) are over 77 years old¹, which means, of course, that one-third of homes require a high degree of maintenance. When that figure is combined with a high level of elderly home owners (1 in 3 homes) and a high level of elderly homeowners who also have low incomes (5,747), emergency repairs are more or less constantly needed by a group of people who cannot afford them. Additionally, 15,481 disabled homeowners frequently struggle with low incomes as well; the median level of earnings for disabled individuals is only \$17,875¹.

If you're thinking, "Why don't they just sell their home and rent?" The answer is that rents have escalated in recent years such that a 'low' rental price is \$600. At \$600 per month, their \$50,000 home would not even cover the first 7 years of rent. As confirmed by Kim Doughty of Elderbridge Agency On Aging, the elderly and disabled simply can't afford rent prices, and they desperately wish to stay in their own home.

To try to address the problem, the NIACOG Housing Trust Fund is submitting an application to the United Way of North Central Iowa for funding. The program would potentially fund up to \$2,250 for emergency home repairs per project. To be eligible homeowners must be elderly or disabled and have incomes below \$22,650 for a single person household, \$25,850 for a 2-person household, etc.

The United Way will notify our agency in April of determination about funding this program. If awarded funds, NIACOG will announce the program's availability on its Facebook page and inform Elderbridge, North Iowa Community Action Organization, and other social service agencies of funding availability. You can 'Like' us on Facebook to receive an e-mail when we post announcements for the program.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, Tables S1810, B25007, B19037, GCT-HS, B25107)



REGION 2 TRANSIT SYSTEM RECEIVES 5 NEW BUSES

The Region 2 Transit System recently has taken delivery on five new buses.

The buses are all equipped to meet the Americans With Disabilities Act and can accommodate sixteen seated passengers or five passengers using wheelchairs. These will also be some of the first buses in the system that have on board video surveillance systems in them. The buses are powered by a “flex fuel” V8 engine that allows them to burn either regular ethanol fuel or E-85. The buses were constructed by Winnebago Industries of Forest City, Iowa under the “Metro Link” brand name.

Funding for this purchase was through two grants from the Iowa DOT. Three of the buses were funded by Iowa’s Congestion and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) while the other two were funded through the FTA Bus and Bus Facilities Project.

IARC HOSTS LEGISLATIVE EVENT AT CAPITOL



Iowa Association of Regional Council (IARC) representatives held a legislative breakfast at the Capitol in Des Moines on Thursday, January 14th. NIACOG’s Executive Director, Joe Myhre attended the session and met with area representatives to request financial support for COG work. COG’s provide valuable and unduplicated services to cities and counties across the State. COG staff members provide boots on the ground that know and understand the communities in their region.

HOUSING ACTIVITY

Last month, three cities in the NIACOG region submitted CDBG Iowa Housing Fund grant applications that would fund owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs. These were the Cities of Fenton, LuVerne, and Manly. These grant applications are for the Housing Fund Program Year 2016 and were due at the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) on January 15, 2016.

A change that the IEDA made for Program Year 2016 is that all applications are limited to a maximum of 6 homes to be rehabilitated. However, funds may be awarded for additional homes based on performance and as funding is available. The Cities of Fenton, LuVerne, and Manly all applied for the 6 home maximum. NIACOG staff assisted all three cities in the preparation and submission of their 2016 grant applications. The housing committees in these 3 cities spent many hours in helping to develop their respective grant applications. NIACOG staff appreciates their efforts.

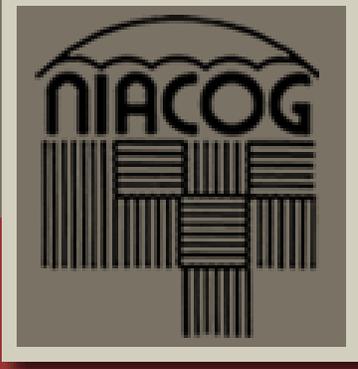
The 2016 grant awards are tentatively scheduled to be announced by IEDA in mid-May, with the recipient workshop scheduled for mid-June.

The CDBG Housing Fund, now officially known as the CDBG Housing Sustainability Program, provides funding from the U.S. Department of HUD in order to expand or retain the supply of decent and affordable housing for low and very low-income households in Iowa through single family owner-occupied rehabilitation programs.

For other communities in the NIACOG region who are considering applying for Iowa Housing Fund assistance for Program Year 2017, please contact the NIACOG staff if you have not done so already. It’s never too early to begin the grant application planning process. In fact, several Cities in the NIACOG region have already inquired as to the possibility of submitting grants for Program Year 2017.

Views of New Buses





FAST Act

The **Regional Planning Affiliation 2 (RPA 2)**, which is made up of the same counties as NIACOG will soon be accepting applications for STP and TAP funds for the Federal Fiscal years 2017-2020. STP and TAP funds are federal funds through the Federal transportation program, **Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)**.



STP funds are used for typical road projects, planning, bridges, and transit. STP projects must meet certain minimum criteria to be eligible for funding. Many cities in our Region do NOT have roads that meet federal-aid eligibility requirements and if they do, most are under County jurisdiction already. Contact your county engineer or Chris at the NIACOG office for more information or to determine if you have a federal-aid eligible project.

Transportation Alternative Program funds or **TAP Funds** include the former **Enhancement, Safe Routes to School and Scenic Byway Programs**. These programs have not been eliminated, but will now compete with each other at the Regional level. As **Enhancements** have been the more common of the programs, I will explain that further here. **If you have a SRTS question, feel free to contact Chris to further discuss potential projects.** Under the TAP funding, projects in the following categories are what were most commonly funded in RPA 2:

Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.

Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized transportation users.

Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.

Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising.

Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.

To see if a potential project may be eligible in the additional categories please contact Chris in the NIACOG office. The eligibility list is exclusive in that a project **MUST** fall into at least one of the categories, and **MUST** be transportation related. Projects must be sponsored by a local government entity, which will make a twenty-year commitment to maintain the project and provide, at least, the necessary 20% minimum local match for the project in addition to all engineering or architect costs. Projects must be constructed to federal specification. Approval of the project from RPA 2 is conditional upon approval from the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. In addition to the above, specific criteria to help determine application funding recommendations has also been developed and will be available with the applications when they are available. These criteria are important, but are not the only factors in determining funding recommendations.

A submission deadline for applications has not been determined as of this writing. Keep an eye open for additional information. Questions about a potential project should also be addressed to Chris at 641-423-0491 Ext. 15 or by e-mail at cdiggins@niacog.org.

Calendar of Events

February

4th - NoRISC Safety Training, NIACOG Office, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

5th - NoRISC Safety Training, NIACOG Office, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

8th - NIACOG Board Meeting Bennigan's Grill, Clear Lake, 7:00 pm

11th - NoRISC Safety Training, NIACOG Office, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

12th - NoRISC Safety Training, NIACOG Office, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

March

14th - NIACOG Board Meeting Bennigan's Grill, Clear Lake, 7:00 pm

18th - North Iowa City Clerk's Meeting, NIACOG Office, 9:30 am



DERELICT BUILDING PROGRAM

The Derelict Building Program provides funding to address neglected structures in order to improve the community's appearance and revitalize the local economy. The funds can be used for investigations and assessments of environmental contamination (such as asbestos inspections and Phase 1 environmental studies) for renovation (including adaptive reuse), and for demolition using a process called deconstruction. A feature of the grant program is the diversion of construction materials from the landfill. IDNR staff can help develop a plan for this at no charge to the project. The application must also show a plan for the end use of the property.



In collaboration with other grants, such as State brownfield programs, the program can seriously reduce local expenses in addressing buildings. The City or County must own or have an ownership interest or be able to gain interest in the building by the time the grant application is due on February 26th, 2016.

Contact Scott Flagg at (515) 725.8318 or scott.flagg@dnr.iowa.gov with any questions or comments.

PLANNING AND ZONING WORKSHOP

Registration is now open for the Spring 2016 Introduction to Planning and Zoning Workshops. For more information and the link to online registration, go to the link below and click on the "Intro to Planning and Zoning Workshops" tab at the top left of that page.

<http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/planningBLUZ/>

Note that ISU Extension has moved exclusively to an online registration

system for the workshops. When you register you will have the option to pay by credit card, or to be invoiced via email.

The dates and locations are:

Monday, March 21 - Okoboji - Arrowwood Resort, 1405 Highway 71

Tuesday, March 22 - Clear Lake - Best Western Holiday Lodge, 2023 7th Ave North

Tuesday, April 5 - Decorah - Hotel Winneshiek, 104 East Water Street

Wednesday, April 6 - Cedar Rapids - Clarion Hotel & Convention Center, 525 33rd Ave. SW

Monday, April 11 - Sioux City - Bev's on the River, 1110 Larsen Park Road

Tuesday, April 19 - Creston - Super-tel Inn & Conference Center, 800 Laurel Street

The Introduction to Planning and Zoning for Local Officials workshop is a three-hour session designed to introduce the basic principles of land use planning and development management to elected officials, planning and zoning officials, and board of adjustment members without formal training in the subjects. Using case scenarios in a highly-interactive format, the workshop highlights issues frequently faced in the land use process.

The workshop is offered annually in multiple locations across the state. Locations change from year-to-year so that city and county officials are able to attend a location near them at least once every two years. All workshops begin with registration and a light supper at 5:30 p.m. The program begins at 6:00 p.m. and concludes by 8:45 p.m. The registration fee is \$65 per individual. This fee is reduced to \$55 per individual if a city or county registers 5 or more officials to attend. The fee covers the workshop instruction, workshop materials, and supper.

The workshop has been pre-approved by the Iowa Municipal Finance Officers Association and the Iowa League of Cities for credits toward certification.



*Happy St.
Patrick's
Day!*