

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 26 No. 2

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Feb. 2015 – Mar. 2015

GOVERNOR PROPOSES IowaNext PROGRAM



The Iowa Legislature started its 2015 session on Monday, January 12th and the Governor unveiled his policy and budget priorities on Tuesday, the 13th during his annual "Condition of the State" speech. One item of particular interest and worth following is the proposed elimination of the Great Places Infrastructure grants (\$1 million) and Community Attractions & Tourism grants (\$5 million) and replacing it with a new \$20 million Iowa NEXT initiative, a quality of life initiative to enhance recreational, cultural, entertainment and other opportunities for Iowans and their families. This new initiative includes an IowaNext website as a tool for stakeholders, citizens and communities to stay informed on funding opportunities; a new position (IowaNext Liaison) in the Department of Cultural Affairs to serve as central point of contact for collaborative initiatives; an interagency IowaNext Commission in the Department of Cultural Affairs (to include other agency directors as well as public members); and the formation of an IowaNext Fund to provide financial support for quality of life efforts (which will require substantial local and private sector match). The \$20 million recommended would be from bonds, and would be a one-time appropriation.

NIACOG staff will monitor this and other new programs as the 2015 session unfolds. Stay tuned!

RPA 2 FUNDING NEWS

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 2016-2019. STP and TAP funds are federal funds through the Federal transportation program, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21).



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.

There is another source of funding that cities and counties may be interested in. That source is Transportation Alternatives funding. Transportation Alternatives include the former Enhancement, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and Scenic Byway Programs. These programs have not been eliminated, but will now compete with each other at the Regional level. If you have a SRTS question, feel free to contact Chris to discuss potential projects further.

Some Enhancement eligibilities have been eliminated. Under the new Transportation Alternatives funding, projects in the following categories are what were most commonly funded in RPA 2:

MULTI-FAMILY NEW CONSTRUCTION AWARDS

In 2008, 88% of Iowa's counties received disaster declarations. And, although that would seem like old news, the State was able to award a final round of grants by 'clawing back' unused funds from previous rounds of grants. This final round of funds was in the form of a 6th round of multi-family new construction projects.

Of the 10 projects funded in the under 50,000 population category, four (4) are located within the 22-County NIACOG SuperCOG region (a larger region appointed to NIACOG by the state for flood recovery efforts). 8 of the 10 projects funded were conversion of existing commercial spaces into apartments. The only two new construction projects were funded as infill within the NIACOG SuperCOG region.

One of the proposed buildings is 'The 101', located in downtown Hampton. The 3-story apartment building has a sustainable design including things like very efficient heating/cooling, energy star appliances, and water-conserving fixtures. The site for this project has been vacant in downtown Hampton since the 1980's when it was demolished after a fire destroyed the building. Project costs total about \$4 million with \$3 million funded by the grant.

In previous rounds of this program, the following projects were funded in the NIACOG region:

- Parker Opera House (13 upper story apartments, conversion, Mason City)
- Willow Creek Apartments (7-unit town homes, new construction, Mason City)
- McQuillen Place (3-story building with 33 apartments, new construction, Charles City)



Former Parker Opera House Building in Mason City, IA.

- 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 when the applications 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 or by e-mail at cdiggins@niacog.org.

HOUSING ACTIVITY IN THE NIACOG REGION

HOME Partnership Program

The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) announced last month that two HOME projects in the NIACOG Region were successfully closed out. These were the Oak Court Rentals project in Osage and the Liberty Ridge Rentals project in Riceville. The HOME recipient for the Oak Court project was Common Ground Duplexes, LLC., and the HOME recipient for the Liberty Ridge Rentals project was Liberty Ridge, LLC. Common Ground Duplexes, LLC., was awarded total HOME assistance in the amount of \$548,500 in 2011 for its Oak Court project which resulted in the construction of 8 new apartment units (4 twin homes) on the southeast side of Osage. Liberty Ridge, LLC., was awarded total HOME assistance in the amount of \$280,000 in 2011 for its Liberty Ridge project which resulted in the construction of 4 new apartment units on the east side of Riceville. NIACOG staff administered these HOME projects for both developers, and congratulates them on their efforts to provide more affordable rental housing in the NIACOG region.

The HOME Partnership Program (HOME), administered by the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA), and funded by the U.S. Department of HUD, provides funding for Homeownership Assistance, Rental New Construction, Rental Rehabilitation, and Tenant-based rental assistance.

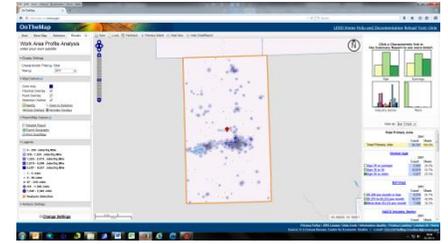
Pilot Housing Rehabilitation Project in the NIACOG Region

In June of last year, the City of Britt received a CDBG award from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) in the amount of \$317,400 to help fund a program that would provide rehabilitation assistance to 10 owner-occupied homes in the community. The IEDA also established the Britt program as a Pilot Project for Deep Energy Retrofit (DER) rehabilitation. The intent of the Britt DER project is to rehabilitate homes that will result in very low post-retrofit energy use and also provide benefits to the homes' durability, comfort, and indoor air quality beyond what is normally accomplished in IEDA rehabilitation programs. NIACOG staff is administering the City of Britt DER project as part of its overall administration of the City's Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program. Several homes to be given rehabilitation assistance in the Britt program will

be selected for DER rehabilitation. NIACOG is currently working with IEDA staff in the selection process and hopes to announce the first DER project in Britt soon. NIACOG congratulates the City of Britt, firstly on their CDBG grant award and, secondly, for being selected by the IEDA for this DER pilot project.

OnTheMap

The U.S. Census Bureau has several tools available on its website. One of these tools is OnTheMap. OnTheMap is an interactive mapping tool that allows both novice and experienced computer users to create, print and download workforce related maps, charts, profiles and reports.



The tool's data can also help you analyze the concentration of workers in a selected area and provide comparisons of employment areas by workers' residences, ages and monthly earnings. The specific types of analyses are below.

- **Area Profile Analysis** shows the location and characteristics of workers living or working inside the selected study area.
- **Area Comparison Analysis** shows the count and characteristics of workers employed or living in locations (cities, counties, tracts, etc.). The Areas to Compare dropdown menu determines unique types of locations to be compared, such as military bases, secondary school districts, tribal lands and more.
- **Distance/Direction Analysis** shows the distance and direction totals between residence and employment locations for workers.
- **Destination Analysis** shows the home or work destinations of workers employed or living in the selected study area.
- **Inflow/Outflow Analysis** shows the count and characteristics of worker flows in to, out of, and within the selected study area.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February

- 3rd & 4th – NoRISC Safety Training – 8:30 AM, NIACOG Office
- 9th – NIACOG Exec. Board Mtg - 12:00 pm, NIACOG Office
- 16th – President’s Day – NIACOG Office is Open

March

- 9th – NIACOG Board Mtg – 7:00 pm, Bennigan’s in Clear Lake, IA
- 20th – City Clerk’s Mtg – 9:30 am, NIACOG Office

BEAUTIFICATION GRANTS

Keep Iowa Beautiful is announcing the deadlines and information for the 2015 grant programs. “This is an opportunity for community groups and organizations to apply for funds, paint and tools to help with beautification and cleanup projects,” said Gerry Schnepf, Executive Director of KIB. “These grants help build stronger communities by improving the economic vitality and cultural climate of our Iowa communities.”

This is the 12th year Diamond Vogel Paint has awarded over 7,000 gallons of paint to Iowa communities in the Paint Iowa Beautiful program. Application process is simple with a letter outlining the project. Details to include in the letter, along with additional information can be found at keepiowabeautiful.com/grants/paint-iowa-beautiful . Deadline to apply is February 20, 2015.

This is the second year for KIB to partner with Iowa tool manufacturer Yeoman & Company in Monticello. The grants are for \$200 worth of YO-HO Quality Tools to assist community volunteers in beautification and cleanup projects. Details on what to include in the application letter, and additional grant information, can be found at keepiowabeautiful.com/grants/yo-ho-tool-grant. Deadline to apply is March 6, 2015.

This is the fifth year of a partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the funding of \$80,000 for communities of under 5,000. This program has provided a boost for community beautification and enhancement in over 70 communities. Additional information and grant application are at keepiowabeautiful.com/grants/beautiful-grant. Deadline is March 20, 2015.

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