

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 25 No. 3

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

June - July 2014

TRANSPORTATION HAPPENINGS

The Transportation Alternative (formerly Enhancement) Committee recently accepted applications for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Transportation Alternative Program Flex (TAP Flex) funding. Better known as TAP and TAP Flex, these funds came out of the federal transportation program MAP-21. TAP funds include Enhancement, Safe Routes to School and Scenic Byways funding at the Regional level. TAP Flex are STP funds that can fund TAP projects, but can also be used for more typical transportation related projects. The RPA 2 Policy Board has decided to dedicate TAP Flex funds for TAP projects, unless a specific circumstance would justify using those funds elsewhere. With that said, there were four applications for TAP funds this year with recommendations for funding as follows:



City of Algona - Phase III Trail

Construct a Ten foot wide, 6,020 feet long trail connecting the YMCA to the Algona Middle and High School facilities. The City of Algona requested \$330,000 in TAP funds for a total project cost of \$580,000 in FY 2018. The City was directed to re-apply next year due to questions on the project.

City of Clear Lake – East Main Ave Street Reconstruction and Bike Lane Extension Project

Construct 2 - 5 foot wide bike lanes and striping between 20th Street and 24th Street as part of an overall street reconstruction project. The City of Clear Lake requested \$70,000 in TAP funds for a total project cost of \$96,239 in FY 2018. The Committee recommended funding the application in FY 2017 to coincide with a street reconstruction project.

Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board

Construct a 12 foot wide, 6 miles long trail and bridge project from 240th Street in Mason City to Walch Wildlife Area (approximately 190th Street). Cerro Gordo County requested \$343,942 (all remaining funds in 2016) in TAP funds for a total project cost of \$514,350 in FY 2016. The Committee recommended funding of \$372,600 in FY 2017.

Mitchell County Conservation Board

Surfacing 2 trail segments within the Wapsi Great Western Line Trail alignment. Mitchell County requested \$138,780 in TAP funds to be added to an already approved \$100,000 for a total project cost of \$238,780 in FY 2015. The Committee recommended funding of \$138,780 to be added to the already approved \$100,000 in FY 2016.

Surface Transportation Program (STP) applications were also recently accepted. STP funds are for the more typical road, bridge, planning and transit projects. Applications submitted this year included resurfacing roadway, reconstruction of roadways and transit vehicle replacement as follows:

NIACOG	Planning	\$56,000	2018
Cerro Gordo Co.	Road	\$50,000	2016
IDOT	Road	\$800,000	2016
Franklin Co.	Road	\$1,000,000	2018
Region 2 Transit	Vehicles	\$152,000	2015
City of Clear Lake	Road	\$450,000	2017

These projects will be included in the FY 2015-FY 2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) along with projects that were approved in previous years. In total, the FY 2015-FY 2018 TIP for RPA 2 will include approximately \$68,000,000 of projects for the Region 2 jurisdictions as well as IDOT. Of that amount, approximately \$41,000,000 is federal funds.



CONGRATULATIONS GARNER!

On April 29, 2014, Garner was awarded a \$500,000 grant through the Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Downtown Revitalization Program for a Downtown Façade Project. The grant will assist in the rehabilitation of 17 downtown buildings. Additional funds for the project will come from the City and the building owners. NIACOG staff worked closely with the Garner City Administrator, Randy Lansing, to prepare the grant application and will perform grant administration for the project.

The CDBG Downtown Revitalization Fund provides grants to communities for a variety of projects and activities contributing to comprehensive revitalization in city centers. To date, the program has primarily funded façade improvements to privately owned buildings.

All incorporated cities and counties in the state of Iowa, except those designated as HUD entitlement areas, are eligible to apply for and receive funds under this program. The maximum grant award is \$500,000. Communities with populations less than 300 are limited to \$1,000 per capita, those with populations between 300 and 999 may receive up to \$300,000, and those with populations of 1,000 or greater may receive the maximum award.

Applications are evaluated on the following criteria:

- The project must meet a CDBG national objective;
- It must be eligible under the CDBG program;
- Positive impact on the community;
- Readiness to proceed with the proposed activity and likelihood that the activity can be completed in a timely fashion;
- Level of community support for a downtown revitalization effort;
- Degree to which downtown revitalization fund assistance would be leveraged by other funding sources and documentation of applicant efforts to secure the maximum amount of local support for the activity;
- Degree to which the activity meets or exceeds the minimum building and site design criteria established by IEDA to be eligible for funding;
- Level of planning completed for comprehensive downtown revitalization efforts.

If your city is interested in pursuing a CDBG Downtown Revitalization Project, please contact NIACOG to discuss how we can assist with the application process. FY15 applications are due in January and it's never too early to start the planning process.

CONGRATULATIONS NORA SPRINGS!

Congratulations to the City of Nora Springs on their recent CDBG award for a sanitary sewer system improvement project. NIACOG assisted the City of Nora Springs with an application for a sewer main and manhole lining project. The project amounts to nearly 17,000 linear feet of main and manhole lining of the City's sanitary sewer collection system. The City requested \$500,000 to aid in completing the approximate \$1,495,750 project.

The cities of Marble Rock, Stacyville and Thornton have all conducted bid lettings and are expecting to start construction very soon. Obviously, the weather has delayed most everything involving construction in North Iowa.

CITY CLERKS' MEETING

On May 16th, an informative program from the Office of Auditor of State was presented to the North Iowa City Clerks Association. The presentation overviewed the new city requirements for annual audits versus periodic examinations, including population and budget thresholds, the fee structure, the RFP process and the procedures and report filings. The Auditor's office highlighted areas of accountability and compliance issues often discovered in their examinations including the need to include separately maintained accounts such as fire departments, library boards and municipal utilities. The program was well received by the city clerks and everyone came away with a better understanding of the municipal oversight law including suggestions to help increase accountability and compliance and reduce the opportunity for fraud.



Mary Gaston, CPA, from Office of Auditor of State, presented Municipal Oversight Law to the North Iowa City Clerks Association.

2014 IEDA/CDBG HOUSING REHABILITATION AWARDS

In April, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced conditional awards through its CDBG Iowa Housing Fund, for Program Year 2014. The CDBG Housing Fund, now officially known as the CDBG Residential 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. A single-family property occupied as the principal residents by a qualified homeowner is eligible for rehabilitation assistance. This includes single family detached units, attached/townhouse (zero lot line) units, and condominium units. Manufactured homes are also eligible when the land and the home are both owned by the owner-occupant, when the home is installed on a permanent foundation, and when it is taxed as real property.

One city in the NIACOG region was given a conditional award by the IEDA in order to assist in the funding of an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program. The City of Britt received a conditional award of \$371,400 for the rehabilitation of 10 homes. NIACOG staff assisted the City in the preparation and submission of their application to the 2014 Iowa Housing Fund. The final award letter and contract will not be issued until the IEDA receives an official funding agreement from HUD. Upon official award, NIACOG will be providing administrative assistance to the City of Britt in carrying out the rehabilitation program. NIACOG staff looks forward to working with them.

CURRENT CDBG HOUSING REHABILITATION ACTIVITY

NIACOG currently is assisting 5 communities that are implementing CDBG Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Programs. The Cities of Charles City, Thompson, and Whittemore were awarded CDBG funds by the IEDA in 2012. The City of Charles City is in process of rehabilitating 10 homes, and the Cities of Thompson and Whittemore are in process of rehabilitating at least 8 homes in their respective communities. CDBG Housing Rehabilitation funds were awarded to the Cities of Garner and Grafton in 2013. The City of Garner will rehabilitate at least 10 homes, and the City of Grafton will rehabilitate at least 6 homes.

The Cities of Burt, Sheffield, and Thornton recently completed their CDBG housing rehabilitation programs. NIACOG also provided administrative assistance to these

three communities. Congratulations go out to them for successfully completed their housing rehabilitation programs.

UPPER MIDWEST APA CONFERENCE – SAVE THE DATE

Mason City will be the host site for the 2014 Upper Midwest American Planning Association Conference. The conference planning team is working to bring you a creative and helpful learning experience. The theme focuses on *‘Making Places Great: Embracing The Past & Staging the Future’*.

The keynote speaker for the conference, Ron Sims (former Deputy Secretary of HUD), was deemed the ‘best keynote speaker I ever heard’ at a past conference. His engaging presentation will focus on the impact of strategic approaches for community growth and development.

The conference sessions (three concurrent tracks) will take place in the unique and popular Music Man Square in Downtown Mason City, which features an indoor turn-of-the-century streetscape, a movie theatre (with videos highlighting community projects from the Upper Midwest), and a working popcorn cart & ice cream parlor.

You will be able to experience the impact of planning efforts in tours that will include:

- Charles City (an Iowa Great Place) with the first net zero subdivision in the Midwest, a unique whitewater course on the Cedar River, and enhanced riverfront.
- Downtown Mason City (a national APA Great Place) with a revitalized streetscape, façade renovation, sculpture walk, and the adjacent Rock Glen/Rock Crest subdivision, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the largest collection of Prairie Style homes surrounding a natural setting.
- Clear Lake (a locally known great place) with the historic Surf Ballroom, several development projects and initiatives.

Additionally, the conference reception will take place in the Historic Park Inn, which is the only remaining hotel designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. If you want to stay in the Historic Park Inn during the conference, be sure to book your room soon because half of the rooms are already reserved (historicparkinn.com or 641-422-0015).

With all this to offer, you won’t want to miss it, so be sure to ‘SAVE THE DATE’ on your calendar for October 22-24, 2014!



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Calendar of Events

June

9th – NIACOG Executive Committee,
 NIACOG Office

July

4th – Fourth of July, NIACOG Office Closed

9th – Transportation Policy Board,
 NIACOG Office, 2:30pm

9th - Haz-mat Meeting
 NIACOG Office, 1:00pm

14th – No NIACOG Board Meeting
 (Summer schedule)

18th – No City Clerks Meeting
 (Summer Schedule)

22nd – RAGBRAI – Forest City

23rd – RAGBRAI – Mason City

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