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Federal Legislative Agenda

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the regional transportation planning entity for Greater Des Moines. It is a membership organization comprised of 23 local governments and the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority. As a service to its members, the MPO has developed a legislative agenda to advocate for regional planning issues of importance to local governments in the Des Moines metro area. This is not an exhaustive list but rather reflects items anticipated to be considered in 2017.

Transportation Policy

The MPO supports the development of a complete, multimodal transportation system. Its long-range transportation plan, *Mobilizing Tomorrow*, outlines four key goals: 1) enhance multimodal transportation options, 2) manage and optimize transportation infrastructure and services, 3) improve the region's environmental health, and 4) further the health, safety, and wellbeing of all residents in the region. The MPO supports the following public policy priorities that relate to transportation:

- **Surface Transportation Funding** – The MPO supports increased federal transportation funding to Iowa and advocates against reductions in federal funding or redirection of funds to larger metropolitan centers outside the state. The MPO also supports increased flexibility in the use of federal funds by local communities.
- **Restore Highway Trust Fund Solvency** – The MPO supports continued improvements to the existing Highway Trust Fund, which finances roughly one-quarter of all public highway and mass transit spending in the US. The MPO supports the development of a sustainable, dedicated, and sufficient funding solution for the Highway Trust Fund to ensure federal resources are adequate for the ongoing needs of transportation infrastructure.
- **Infrastructure Stimulus** – A federal infrastructure stimulus package has been proposed and likely will be considered by the new administration and new Congress in 2017. The MPO supports a stimulus package to help infuse much needed funding into the transportation system. The MPO encourages that any stimulus program be well planned, that funding be made available for all modes of transportation with a primary focus on critical infrastructure maintenance, and that steps be taken to limit wasteful spending.
- **Purple Heart Highway Interstate Designation** – The MPO supports designating the US 65/Iowa 5 beltway, also known as the Purple Heart Highway, as part of the US Interstate System. Designating this part of the beltway as an interstate would open up economic development opportunities for communities along the route and help to defer congestion on the existing interstate system in the metro area. Designation must be approved by both the Federal Highway Administration and the Iowa Department of Transportation. Although no new construction is necessary, new signage and a minimum speed limit would be required, and future maintenance and upgrade responsibilities will need to occur.

Altoona • Ankeny • Bondurant • Carlisle • Clive • Dallas County • Des Moines • DART
Grimes • Johnston • Mitchellville • Norwalk • Pleasant Hill • Polk City • Polk County
Urbandale • Warren County • Waukee • West Des Moines • Windsor Heights

- **Transit Funding** – The MPO supports increased funding for the Bus and Bus Facilities program. This funding is essential for the long-term safety and reliability of public transportation systems in Iowa. Funding for the program has been reduced significantly in recent years. The MPO supports funding at or above FY 2012 levels.
- **Aviation** – The MPO supports efforts by the Des Moines International Airport and the Ankeny Regional Airport to increase the capacity for commercial airline travel, air cargo, and general aviation in Greater Des Moines. Accordingly, the MPO supports:
 - Increasing the current Airport Improvement Program (AIP) spending levels to \$3.75 billion and increasing the Passenger Facility Charge cap to \$8.50.
 - Eliminating the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) penalty on all airport revenue bonds.
 - Privatizing air traffic control towers through the Contract Towers program.
 - Ensuring the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office fully staffs its office at the Des Moines International Airport by adding staff positions to match staffing levels with other comparable airports in the Midwest, such as Omaha (four fulltime staff members) and Sioux Falls (two full-time staff members).
 - The Ankeny Regional Airport FY 15 – FY 16 request of \$536,000 to construct a south hangar apron to accommodate 40+ aircraft on a hangar waiting list, constructed by the Polk County Aviation Authority or others and \$992,130 to construct a wildlife fence to reduce or eliminate deer incursions.
- **Alternative Fuel/Power Vehicle Readiness** – The MPO supports federal policies and programs that ease the introduction and widespread adoption of electric vehicles, including policies that simplify the establishment of more charging stations nationwide.
- **Technology** – The MPO supports policies and programs that ease the introduction and widespread adoption of emerging transportation technologies. These technologies include, but are not limited to, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, transportation network companies, and vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure Smart City technology necessary for autonomous vehicles.
- **Safer, Complete Streets** – The FAST Act made significant strides in directing states and metros to build safer streets by including Complete Streets policy in federal surface transportation for the first time. The MPO supports continued federal support for Complete Streets, including increased flexibility to allow multimodal transportation amenities on streets and roadways.
- **Multi-Use Trails** – Multi-use trails are utilized as an alternative mode of transportation and provide significant quality of life enhancements and recreational opportunities for Iowans. To help Central Iowa become the “Trails Capital of the World,” The MPO supports continued investment in the Federal Recreational Trails Program as well as the Surface Transportation Program Block Grant Set Aside program.

Transportation Projects

The MPO annually develops a list of priority transportation projects of importance to the region. This list is intended to keep MPO’s congressional representatives and the US Department of Transportation apprised of key transportation investments planned for the region should additional federal resources become available. The list of transportation projects identified by and approved by the MPO Policy Committee is included on the following page.

2017 MPO/Greater Des Moines Partnership Priority Projects

Priority Projects			
Sponsor	Project	Description	Total Cost
Polk County and City of Johnston	NW 66 Ave. Reconstruction and Kempton Bridge Replacement	Phase 2 and 3 of the Reconstruction of NW 66 Ave. and the Des Moines River Bridge including widening from a 2-land rural road to a 5-lane urban roadway from NW Beaver Drive to NW 26th St.	\$24,992,000 total project \$11,940,850 remaining for Ph 2 & 3
Polk County and City of Ankeny	NW 26th Street Reconstruction Project	Reconstruction of NW 26th Street including widening from a 2-land rural roadway to a 5-lane urban roadway from NW 66th Ave. to Oralabor Road in Ankeny.	\$6,750,000
Iowa Department of Transportation	I-35 in Ankeny from IA 160/Oralabor Rd. to NE 36th Street (4 Yr. Project)	Construct auxiliary lanes from IA 160 to First Street; Reconfigure First Street Interchange; Widen to six lanes from First Street to NE 36th Street.	\$12,947,000 (FY18) \$50,810,000 (FY17-20)
City of Ankeny	West First Street Widening and Improvements - Phase 1	Reconstruct 4-lane arterial street to a 5-lane PCC section with raised medians, new traffic signals, a transit bus turn-out stop and 8' shared use sidewalk.	\$4,800,000
MPO	Des Moines Transload Facility	The construction of a Transload facility on the Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway in Des Moines just west of Southeast 14th Street.	\$12,000,000
Pleasant Hill City of Des Moines	SE Connector SEDM Levee	Four-lane complete street connecting Downtown Des Moines to US-65.	\$50,000,000
City of West Des Moines	Grand Avenue, 1st St to 6th St	Widen existing street to accommodate turn lanes and various street-scape improvements.	N/A \$6,900,000
City of West Des Moines	Grand Prairie Pkwy, Mills Civic Pkwy to Raccoon River Dr	Construct new roadway to link the existing section of Grand Prairie Pkwy to the north of Mills Civic and a section of Grand Prairie Pkwy to the south of Raccoon River Dr that is currently under design.	\$16,000,000
Bicycle/Pedestrian Projects			
Sponsor	Project	Description	Total Cost
City of Ankeny	High Trestle Trail Regional Trail Connection	Extension of the High Trestle Regional Trail within SE Ankeny to connect with the Gay Lea Wilson Trail and Neal Smith Trail System. Includes 10-foot PCC trail and two overpasses.	\$2,400,000
City of West Des Moines	Raccoon River Pedestrian Trail Bridge	Pedestrian bridge across the Raccoon River between Raccoon River Park and Walnut Woods State Park.	\$3,000,000
City of West Des Moines/City of Windsor Heights	73rd St/8th St Trail Connection	Trail to connect Windsor Heights and West Des Moines at 73rd St/8th St.	\$2,500,000

Other Issues of Importance

While transportation remains its core function and focus, the MPO also is involved with and supportive of other regional planning efforts that benefit its member communities. These legislative priorities are important to support the ongoing implementation of The Tomorrow Plan – the regional sustainable development plan for the Greater Des Moines area – particularly the development of watershed management plans and the Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan.

- **Des Moines Recreation River & Greenbelt** – The Des Moines Recreational River & Greenbelt is a partnership of local and federal governments and private interests dedicated to developing ecosystem improvements and recreational opportunities in the Des Moines River corridor. Federal funds were appropriated to the Greenbelt Program from FY 2003 through FY 2010 and 18 projects were completed. However, federal funds have not been appropriated for the Greenbelt program since FY 2010 and all program activities with the exception of closing completed projects have been suspended. Future funding could support implementation of Saylorville and Red Rock master plans as well as downtown dam mitigation and Fort Dodge Riverfront transformation
- **Raccoon River Priority Watershed** – The Raccoon River watershed has received much attention with the ongoing discussions around improving water quality in Iowa. The MPO supports additional federal funding for this watershed, and supports the inclusion of the watershed as a specific line item in future appropriations bills to allow for dedicated funding.
- **Water Trails** – The MPO supports the development and funding of water trails, including dam mitigation, to enhance recreational opportunities in and along the many miles of waterways and adjoining greenways that are a vital natural asset in Iowa.
- **Utility Relocation Policy** – The MPO supports federal assistance in establishing a reasonable timeframe for utility companies conducting work in the public right-of-way. Local municipalities and the traveling public are often affected by utility project delays, over which the municipalities have little control.
- **Conservation Reserve Program** – The MPO supports expanding conservation programs that address environmental challenges including soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The 2014 Farm Bill established a 24-million-acre nationwide limit for CRP for Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018. As of 2016, that limit was nearly reached. Consequently, additional land will be difficult to put into CRP, and land set to expire in CRP may not be able to re-enroll into the program if desired. The MPO supports federal action to expand or remove the acreage limit to ensure that all farmers and property managers who wish to take advantage of the program may do so.