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State 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 during the 2017 legislative session.

Transportation and Infrastructure

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** – Continuous investment in Iowa's transportation system is essential to support economic growth and help attract new businesses to the state. The MPO supports the funding formula for surface transportation funding established by the Transportation Investment Moves the Economy in the Twenty-First Century Fund (TIME-21).
- **Road Use Tax Fund** – The MPO supports continued improvements to the existing Road Use Tax Fund (RUTF) to reallocate funding to more highly traveled primary roads. The MPO also supports the concept of providing local governments the option to swap federal transportation dollars for state transportation dollars to allow for more flexibility with transportation decisions.
- **Transit Funding** – The MPO supports providing more funds and/or funding tools to Regional Transit Authorities. As we look to recruit and retain employees and businesses; connect people to jobs, education and economic development; and ensure age-friendly communities, it is essential to provide funding for a variety of mobility options to ensure the region's competitiveness.
- **Bike Infrastructure and Safety** – The MPO supports the development of on-street bike facilities that connect to and integrate with multi-use trails to have a complete network for bicycling as a form of transportation as well as recreation. The MPO also supports strengthening laws to protect bicyclists using Iowa's roadways.
- **Rail Funding** – The MPO supports continued investment in the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) Rail Revolving Loan and Grant Fund to help develop rail improvements and support Central Iowa's freight rail facilities in recognizing that the freight rail system provides critical infrastructure for transporting certain commodities and other commercial goods. The MPO also supports continued funding for the IDOT Passenger Rail Fund Program to provide matching funding for passenger rail infrastructure development, with the goal of establishing intercity passenger rail service from Chicago to Des Moines to Omaha along the Iowa Interstate Railroad.

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- **Aviation Funding** – Airports provide a tremendous economic impact to the area and regions they serve. The infrastructure of these national resources is deteriorating and in desperate need of rebuilding and expansion. Therefore, the MPO supports continued Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Funding for the Commercial Service Vertical Infrastructure program. Funding for the General Aviation Vertical Infrastructure program, which is currently funded through the State Aviation Fund, should also be funded through the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund as it was prior to 2016. This move would increase funding from the State Aviation Fund for pavement(s) necessary for the safe operations of aircraft by approximately \$800,000. The MPO also supports new programs that will support the reconstruction and development of airports in Iowa through the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund to be administered by the IDOT Office of Aviation.
- **Alternative Fuel/Power Vehicle Readiness** – The MPO supports state policies and programs that ease the introduction and widespread adoption of electric vehicles in Iowa, including policies that simplify the establishment of more charging stations statewide.
- **Technology** – The MPO supports state policies and programs that ease the introduction and widespread adoption of emerging technologies in Iowa. 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.
- **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:
 - Amending the Iowa Code to remove the prohibition against the condemnation of agricultural land for multi-use trails as is currently allowed for non-agricultural land, while recognizing that certain existing uses of some agricultural land may necessitate unique considerations, in that current law has significantly restricted efforts to connect public regional multi-use trails networks.
 - Continued investment in the IDOT State Recreational Trails Program.
 - Continued investment for recreational trails by fully funding the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program.
 - A funding mechanism for regionally coordinated maintenance of the trails network that has become an important cultural amenity.
 - Funding for the strategic completion of critical gaps in the existing trails network and making connections between major trails.
 - Funding to support the development of water trails.
- **Electric Bikes** – Electric bicycles have become more popular in recent years and have proven to be a successful tool in encouraging increased commuting by bicycle. Federal law considers electric bicycles to be in the same class as regular bicycles provided that they do not operate at more than 20 miles per hour in “electric only” mode and that the electric motor is no greater than 750 watts. However, electric bikes are often barred by local ordinances that prohibit motorized vehicles from using multi-use trails. The MPO supports a state policy that declares electric bikes as a permitted use on multi-use trails.

Other Regional Planning 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, the Housing Tomorrow plan, local comprehensive plans, and the Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan.

- **Housing** – The availability of housing for all people, regardless of their age, race or socioeconomic status, is foundational to everything we value in a community. Safe, stable and affordable housing has a positive impact on the health of residents, improves educational outcomes for children and stabilizes the region’s diverse and growing workforce. Therefore, the MPO supports ongoing and increased investment in affordable housing programs, specifically the State Housing Trust Fund and Workforce Housing Tax Credits, as well as funding for programs that support modifications of homes to help people age in place and people with disabilities. The MPO supports policies and programs, particularly those of the Iowa Finance Authority, that incentivize affordable housing that is truly affordable when the full cost of housing and transportation are considered together.
- **Comprehensive Planning & Iowa Smart Planning Principles** – In effort to advance Greater Des Moines’ competitiveness nationally and internationally, the MPO supports comprehensive planning and the Iowa Smart Planning Principles. These include collaboration; efficiency, transparency and consistency; clean, renewable and efficient energy; occupational diversity; revitalization; housing diversity; community character; natural resources and agricultural protection; sustainable design; and transportation diversity.
- **Local Option Sales Tax** – The MPO supports provisions to provide Central Iowa communities more local control of sales tax revenues.
- **Enhance Iowa** – The newly created Enhance Iowa program includes the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT), River Enhancement Community Attraction and Tourism (RECAT) and Sport Tourism funds. The MPO supports continued CAT funding and new funding for the RECAT and Sports Tourism funds.
- **Establish Financial Resources at Scale** – Allocating sufficient, permanent and dedicated funding sources to meet infrastructure needs for non-point and point sources that are targeted and prioritized by watershed with annual accountability for the state’s investment. This investment should be utilized to leverage other public and private dollars through public private partnerships.
- **Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation** – The MPO believes in the importance of clean water, outdoor recreation, productive agricultural soils, and thriving wildlife habitats. As such, the MPO supports sustainable, dedicated, and sufficient funding for these efforts. The MPO supports the funding of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund under its current formula.
- **Water Trails** – The MPO supports the development and funding of the state water trails program, 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.
- **Watershed Approach and Planning** – To provide safe and affordable drinking water, wastewater treatment and storm water mitigation, the MPO supports regional watershed planning and ongoing funding of targeted conservation practices, identifying proactive approaches to optimize nutrient and other chemical applications and sustainable urban development.