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Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Five-Year Strategic Plan
September 30, 2017

Introduction and Context for the Strategic Plan

The time is right for the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to develop its first five-year strategic plan. Central Iowa continues its dynamic growth and change. Cities and counties are seeking stronger partnerships to address the known and unknown opportunities and challenges facing the region. This strategic plan sets out the important role of the MPO and direction for the organization as it leverages its unique membership and position in the region.

The MPO recently received high praise from U.S. Department of Transportation officials for outstanding performance in meeting and exceeding federal requirements for the organization. These accolades were in recognition of the MPO's development of long-range transportation plans, administration of $13 million of federal funds, and a review of the additional convening and facilitation with transportation-related partners to encourage coordination and strategic solutions across the region.

Several significant elements of the MPO's recent activity in the region highlighted the importance of developing a strategic plan at this time. Receiving requested funding for and coordinating development of the *Tomorrow Plan*, adopted in 2013, is notable for its depth and breadth of its subject matter, as well as its comprehensive understanding of the interrelatedness of the many systems operated as stand-alone entities. New opportunities and expectations began to emerge for the MPO to engage more broadly with initiatives in the region.

Second, the MPO conducted a survey in early 2016 in an effort to begin tracking and improving its performance as measured by perceptions of member governments. That survey found overall favorable perceptions of the MPO's performance and value to the region. It also identified the need for clarity around the MPO's role and its support for services in the region. Finally, that survey also noted the need for the MPO to develop its first organizational strategic plan.

With this context and the recognition of uncertainty in public policy, political, and funding directions, the time was right for undertaking a comprehensive process of strategic planning. This document is a result of that process and reflects reviews of current and past activities and inputs; analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats; political, economic, social, and technology factors; and stakeholder inputs from member and nonmember individuals and organizations through issue-focused small group sessions, individual discussions, and an electronic survey.

The Steering Committee carefully considered the inputs and determined, through this strategic plan, goals and strategies to ensure a strong Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization that remains nimble and resilient to anticipate and effectively engage in promoting a dynamic regional economy and quality of life.

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Steering Committee and Advisory Members

The eight-month strategic planning process required significant commitment of time and expertise of the 14-member Steering Committee comprising elected officials of MPO member communities.

Steering Committee Members

Bob Andeweg, Mayor, Urbandale – Steering Committee Co-Chair
Tom Armstrong, Mayor, Grimes – Steering Committee Co-Chair
Chris Coleman, Council Member, Des Moines
Angela Connolly, Supervisor, Polk County
Steve Gaer, Mayor, West Des Moines
Joe Gatto, Council Member, Des Moines
Tom Hockensmith, Supervisor, Polk County
Sara Kurovski, Mayor, Pleasant Hill
Brian Lohse, Council Member, Bondurant
Gary Lorenz, Mayor, Ankeny
Kyle Mertz, Council Member, Altoona
Stephanie Riva, Council Member, Norwalk
Linda Westergaard, Council Member, Des Moines
Dean Yordi, Supervisor, Warren County

The MPO traditionally has engaged and relied upon expertise from technical and issue experts and included Advisory Members who provided value and specific information to add value to the overall strategic planning discussions.

Advisory Members

Eric Burmeister, Executive Director, Polk County Housing Trust Fund
Ben Champ, Assistant City Manager, Pleasant Hill
Steve Eggleston, Field Office Director, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development
Jeff Geerts, Special Projects Coordinator, Iowa Economic Development Authority
Tom Hadden, City Manager, West Des Moines
Gary Mahannah, City Administrator, Polk City
Matt McQuillen, Assistant City Manager, Clive
Tim Moerman, City Administrator, Waukee
Jim Sanders, City Administrator, Johnston
Meg Schneider, Senior Vice President, Greater Des Moines Partnership
Gretchen Tegeler, Executive Director Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa
Mark Wandro, Administrator, Polk County
Stephanie Weisenbach, Coordinator, Iowa Clean Cities Coalition

Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

The strategic plan was developed by the Steering Committee based on activities, findings, and deliberations during the period of February 1 through September 30, 2017. Additional information about the process and activities in included in the Appendix to the Strategic Plan.

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Vision and Mission

MPO Vision

Our region has a well-coordinated multi-modal transportation system that leverages our unique attributes in order to ensure a high-quality of life and economic success.

MPO Mission

The MPO advances a safe, effective, fully integrated multi-modal transportation system that supports economic development, protects natural assets, and enhances overall quality of life.

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Goals

Goals are intended as five-year goals that endure for the term of the five-year Strategic Plan. Goals are based on the mission of the organization. Goals are broad statements of direction for certain functions of an organization. Taken together they outline the overall organizational direction.

Areas of Organizational Focus of Goals

- Program
- External Relationships
- Governance
- Sustainability
- Communication
- Organizational Infrastructure

1. **Goal 1. Implement programs and services consistent with vision and mission to meet requirements, fulfill needs, and lead to a more unified vision and plan for the region.**
2. **Goal 2. Develop and maintain mutually-beneficial working relationships outside the MPO.**
3. **Goal 3. Ensure all MPO members feel adequately represented in broad-based deliberations and decisions.**
4. **Goal 4. Maintain a financially sound, strategic, and adaptive organization.**
5. **Goal 5. Provide relevant and educational information commensurate with the expertise of the MPO.**
6. **Goal 6. Ensure organizational infrastructure to support the MPO mission.**

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Goals and Strategies

1 Goal 1. Implement programs and services consistent with vision and mission to meet requirements, fulfill needs, and lead to a more unified vision and plan for the region.

Strategy 1.1 Maintain exceptional performance in the Federally Required Activities and meet the highest expectations of the 10 Planning Factors established by the U.S. DOT.

Strategy 1.2 Maintain exceptional performance in the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and the Transportation Alternatives Program as measured by federal review processes.

Strategy 1.3 Establish key partnerships, committees, and agreements to jointly coordinate regional multi-modal transportation system.

Strategy 1.4 Convene and facilitate implementation of the multi-modal elements of the Tomorrow Plan and report annually on the overall progress of the Tomorrow Plan.

Strategy 1.5 Provide services to individual member jurisdictions as requested that are within the MPO's vision, mission, and existing organizational capacity to provide.

2 Goal 2. Develop and maintain mutually-beneficial working relationships outside the MPO.

Strategy 2.1 Actively participate in collaborative regional planning or project initiatives where MPO can gain and bring value.

Strategy 2.2 Provide MPO member or staff representation on community-wide or region-wide organizations or committees consistent with the MPO's vision and mission.

Strategy 2.3 Engage with other jurisdictions and organizations in formal collaborations approved by the Policy Committee to achieve ongoing or short-term program goals in alignment with the MPO vision and mission.

Strategy 2.4 Engage with elected and appointed policymakers at all levels as a resource to provide expertise and current data and information.

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3 Goal 3. Ensure all MPO members feel adequately represented in broad-based deliberations and decisions.

Strategy 3.1 Adjust governance structures to address issues of member satisfaction with representation in the work of the MPO.

Strategy 3.2 Create more leadership opportunities for MPO committee members on committees or interim groups established to address needs or issues that may arise.

Strategy 3.3 Identify specific elements of membership expectations and MPO governance to promote consistent communication and enhance effective participation.

Strategy 3.4 Review, update, or develop additional MPO member training, handbook, and other educational information that help members be actively engaged in the work of the MPO.

4 Goal 4. Maintain a financially sound, strategic, and adaptive organization.

Strategy 4.1 Assure ongoing compliance with acceptable accounting principles and practices required by each funder.

Strategy 4.2 Review the balance of revenue sources and cost centers, and establish targets for each on an annual basis.

Strategy 4.3 Seek a diversity of revenue sources to support needs of the region, and disseminate relevant information to MPO member communities consistent with the vision and mission.

Strategy 4.4 Develop financial contingency plans for various scenarios to be applied should the circumstances require.

5 Goal 5. Provide relevant and educational information commensurate with the expertise of the MPO.

Strategy 5.1 Establish the MPO's organizational identity and brand in alignment with its mission.

Strategy 5.2 Develop and implement a communications plan focusing on MPO initiatives and timely issues.

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Strategy 5.3 Review technology resources, including the MPO website, to optimize opportunities for communication with members, partners, and the public.

Strategy 5.4 Develop and maintain relationships with priority media and other organizations that can be called upon to share MPO information and educational messages.

Strategy 5.5 Ensure communications internally and externally about MPO activities reflect the benefits and financial impacts to the region and member communities.

6 Goal 6. Ensure organizational infrastructure to support the MPO mission.

Strategy 6.1 Ensure an integrated staff team with the talent, skills, and capacity to fulfill the MPO's obligations.

Strategy 6.2 Review and utilize professional development opportunities to ensure staff remains current in skills and issues necessary for effectiveness and efficiency of the MPO.

Strategy 6.3 Inventory, determine life cycle, and develop replacement plan for software and hardware necessary for a high-performing MPO office.

Strategy 6.4 Review annually the utilization of the MPO office and meeting space to address emerging needs to accommodate needs of groups and organizations who use the space.

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Implementation Plan

The Strategic Plan serves as a guide at all levels for the organization. It contains a hierarchy of the Vision and the Mission of the organization. Strategies are the broad areas of activity necessary to achieve the Mission. Each strategy needs a specific action plan to carry out the various components necessary to make progress toward the Strategy, Mission, and Vision.

Following is a template the MPO's leaders and staff can use or adapt to manage and track implementation of activities related to each strategy.

Template for Implementation Phase

Once the Strategic Plan is finalized, the MPO will develop an implementation or action plan focusing on each strategy. The implementation activities may be adjusted or updated from time to time and should be revisited at least annually to ensure progress is being made. The action/implementation phase is typically performed by staff with participation by MPO members and leaders as appropriate.

An Implementation Plan should be clearly written and meet the needs of the organization. An example might look something like the following.

2 Goal 2. Develop and maintain mutually-beneficial working relationships outside the MPO.

Strategy 2.1 Actively participate in collaborative regional planning or project initiatives where MPO can gain or bring value.

Activity	By Who	By When	Outcome/Result
What will be done	Names	Date	Measures and other indications of progress

Strategy 2.2 Provide MPO member or staff representation on community-wide or region-wide organizations or committees consistent with the MPO's vision and mission.

Activity	By Who	By When	Outcome/Result

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Strategy 2.3 Engage with other jurisdictions and organizations in formal collaborations approved by the Policy Committee to achieve ongoing or short-term program goals in alignment with the MPO vision and mission.

Activity	By Who	By When	Outcome/Result

Strategy 2.4 Engage with elected and appointed policymakers at all levels as a resource to provide expertise and current data and information.

Activity	By Who	By When	Outcome/Result

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