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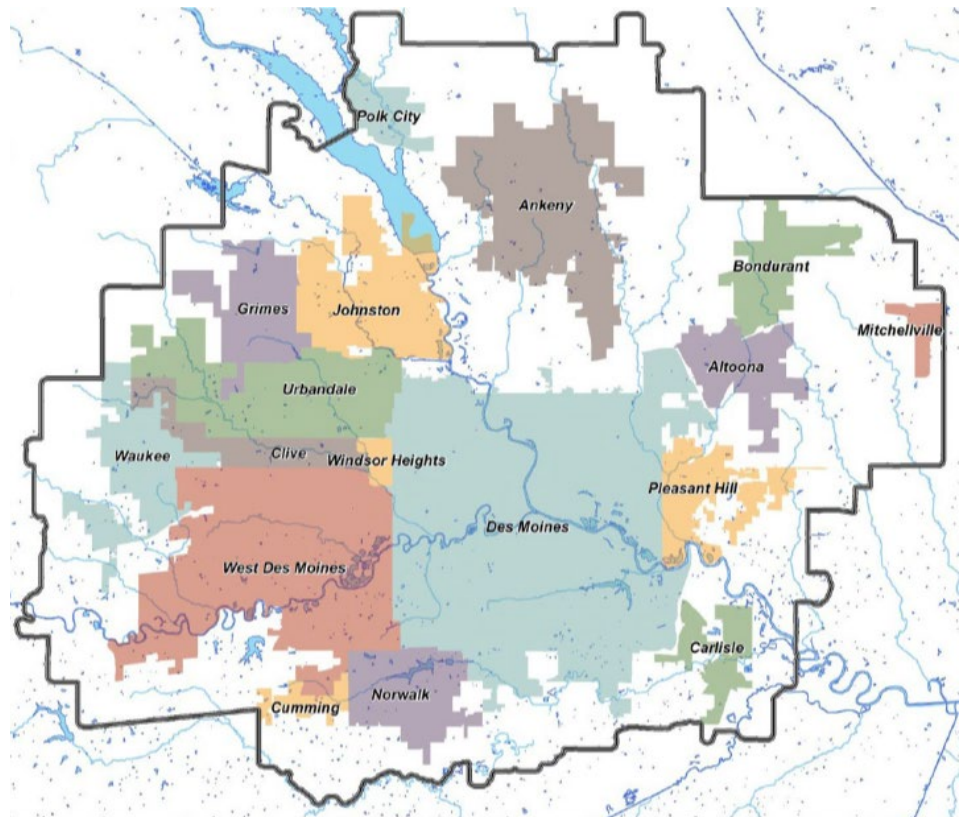
Federal Highway
Administration

Federal Transit
Administration

TMA Certification Review

Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (DMAMPO)

Transportation Management Area



July 9, 2021

Summary Report

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 22 - 28, 2021, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted the certification review of the transportation planning process for the Des Moines MPO (DMAMO) urbanized area. FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each urbanized area over 200,000 in population at least every four years to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements. As a result of this Certification Review, the Des Moines TMA metropolitan planning process performed principally by DMAMPO, DART and Iowa DOT is certified through July 9, 2025.

The Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization (DMAMPO) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Des Moines, Iowa Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) and works with the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), as well as the public transit operators Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) to implement the federally required planning process.

The scope of the federal review of the Des Moines MPA planning process was comprehensive, covering the transportation planning process for the entire area and all the agencies involved. The federal review team's work consisted of reviewing the products of the planning process, reviewing the ongoing oversight activities conducted by the FHWA and the FTA, and a site review conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams.

1.1 Previous Findings and Disposition

The previous Planning Review findings and their disposition are summarized as follows.

Review Area	Action	Corrective Actions/ Recommendations/ Commendations	Disposition
MPO Structure and Agreements 23 U.S.C. 134(d) 23 CFR 450.314(a)	Commendation	1. MPO Staff - The Review Team noticeably highlights the DMAMPO staff as being highly professional, skilled, and demonstrating a high technical ability in developing and preparing transportation planning documents.	N/A

	Recommendation	1. Coordination – The Review Team recommends that Des Moines MPO and Iowa DOT improve their cooperation and coordination and develop an action plan to address the following specific coordination and cooperation deficiencies: a. Coordination on Project Design and Standards; b. Coordination and Transparency for Iowa DOT Sponsored Projects.	
	Recommendation	2. MOU – The Review Team recommends that the Des Moines MPO and DART update their Planning Memorandum of Understanding to address Federal performance-based planning as described by Iowa DOT guidance.	
	Recommendation	3. Financial Planning - The MPO, DART and the Iowa DOT, in keeping with a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing transportation planning process, should work together to develop the financial projections for the MTP and TIP in order to demonstrate fiscal constraint for all projects.	
Unified Planning Work Program 23 CFR 450.308	Commendation	1. Funds Carryover - The Review Team commends the Des Moines MPO for having very low FHWA-FTA Planning Balance Carryover. The MPO uses allocated planning funds in a timely manner that prevents funds from lapsing.	N/A
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 23 U.S.C. 134(c),(h)&(i) 23 CFR 450.324	Commendation	1. Performance Measures - The Federal Review team commends the MPO for proactively developing performance measures in Mobilizing Tomorrow and subsequent performance reports to better evaluate and communicate the performance of the transportation network in the region.	N/A
Transit Planning 49 U.S.C. 5303 23 U.S.C. 134 23 CFR 450.314	Commendation	1. MPO Support of Transit - The MPO is assisting DART in the process of updating the DART Forward 2035 Plan.	N/A
Transportation Improvement Program 23 U.S.C. 134(c)(h)& (j) 23 CFR 450.326	Recommendation	1. Project Delivery - The Review Team recommends that the MPO staff continue to work closely with Iowa DOT, project sponsors, and other partners in the process to continue to ensure the timely delivery of projects from the planning stage through to construction.	

Public Participation 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6) 23 CFR 450.316 & 450.326(b)	Commendation	1. Visualization Techniques - The Federal Team commends the MPO for its use of visualization techniques and reader-friendly graphics and maps in its planning products such as its MTP, performance reports and MPO website.	N/A
	Commendation	2. Public Participation - The Federal Review Team was impressed with the level of enthusiasm and innovative techniques the MPO is employing in its day-to-day implementation of its planning responsibilities.	N/A
Civil Rights Title VI Civil Rights Act, 23 U.S.C. 324, Age Discrimination Act, Sec. 504 Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act	Recommendation	1. Training - The Review Team recommends that the Des Moines MPO document its overall Civil Rights Training including Title VI, Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency.	
	Recommendation	2. Outreach - The Review Team recommends that the MPO sustain its current practices, but extend its outreach efforts based on a more inclusive data profile and contact list, to include groups and organizations serving all persons considered under the Title VI/Nondiscrimination Program.	
Freight 23 U.S.C. 134(h) 23 CFR 450.306	Commendation	1. Freight Planning - The Federal Review Team commends the DMAMPO on its continued emphasis and integration of freight into the planning process.	N/A
Nonmotorized Planning/Livability 23 U.S.C. 134(h) 23 U.S.C. 217(g) 23 CFR 450.306 23 CFR 450.3224f)(2)	Commendation	1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning - The DMAMPO is commended for their enthusiastic approach to the Complete Street's Model Policy and the Mini-Grant Program with the Wellmark Foundation.	N/A
	Commendation	2. Livability and Public Health Initiatives – The Review Team commends DMAMPO for livability and public health initiatives such as The Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Master Plan, watershed management planning, and incorporating health into the transportation planning process.	N/A
Integration of Land Use and Transportation 23 U.S.C. 134(g)(3) 23 U.S.C. 134 (h)(1)(E) 23 CFR 450.306(a)(5)	Commendation	1. Scenario Planning - The Review Team commends the MPO on the land-use scenarios created as part of the Tomorrow Plan as well as the speaker series that was established as a result of the plan.	N/A

Travel Demand Forecasting 23 CFR 450.324(f)(1)	Recommendation	1. TDM Documentation - DMAMPO should update current documentation files with additional information that demonstrates sufficient validation of model up-stream model components and to develop a process to support the review of contracted deliverables.	
	Recommendation	2. TDM Agreement - The Review Team recommends that the MPO and Iowa DOT should develop a cooperative agreement to specify roles, responsibilities, and reasonable timelines for the development of updates to the Transportation Demand Model (TDM).	

1.2 Summary of Current Findings

The current review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Des Moines Urbanized Area meets Federal planning requirements. Below are the primary findings, including recommendations in this report that warrant close attention and follow-up, as well as areas that Des Moines MPO is performing very well that are to be commended.

Review Area	Action	Corrective Actions/ Recommendations/ Commendations	Due Date
Transit Planning 49 U.S.C. 5303 23 U.S.C. 134 23 CFR 450.314	Commendation	Partnership with Transit - DART and DMAMPO have a long-standing good relationship. DART is more integrated into the MPO processes than many transit agencies. DART reviews proposed roadway and trail projects that are located on transit routes as a part of project review. This is a best practice.	N/A
Unified Planning Work Program 23 CFR 450.308 & 420	Commendation	UPWP Project Prioritization – The MPO is commended for a comprehensive UPWP development process that ensures projects moving forward are in alignment with current priorities, and that projects in past UPWP are followed up to ensure they are completed.	
Public Participation 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6) 23 CFR 450.316	Commendation	Visualization Techniques – The Des Moines MPO is commended for using innovative visualization techniques such as using charts and graphs to illustrate ideas rather than long blocks of text and using ArcGIS to create an interactive map of projects.	N/A
	Commendation	Regional Partnerships – The Des Moines MPO is commended for a sustained focus on reaching out and partnering with important regional organizations (i.e. United Way) to work on a variety of projects (i.e. Central Iowa Transportation Assessment, wikiblock, bus shelters, complete streets) that focus on regionally identified goals.	
	Recommendation	Website Updates – The review team noted that some of the required federal documents were difficult to find on the website and recommends that it be updated.	N/A
Civil Rights Title VI Civil Rights Act, 23 U.S.C. 324, Age Discrimination Act, Sec. 504 Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act	Recommendation	Self-Certifications: The federal review teams recommends that the MPO submit the self-certifications and supporting documentation as a separate agenda item for the technical and policy committees.	N/A

<p>Security and Environmental Mitigation 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(2)(D) 23 CFR 450.324(f)(10) 23 U.S.C. 168 Appx. A 23 CFR Part 450 23 U.S.C. 134(h)(1)(C) 23 CFR 450.306(b)(3) 23 CFR 450.324(h)</p>	<p>Commendation</p>	<p>Regional Environmental Initiatives – The federal review team commends the MPO for leading or participating in a number of projects (Polk County Hazard Mitigation Plan, Watershed Management Authorities, Rain Campaign) that aid to protect the security of the transportation system from environmental hazards.</p>	
<p>Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(3) 23 CFR 450.322 23 CFR 450.324(f)(5)</p>	<p>Commendation</p>	<p>Smart Cities Roundtable – The federal team commends the MPO, with a partnership with Capital Crossroads, for this progressive and innovation initiative to evaluate and advise local governments and stakeholders on matters of regional importance pertaining to technological advancements and policy opportunities that will foster the creation of a smart region.</p>	
	<p>Commendation</p>	<p>Des Moines Integrated Corridor Management Process – The review team commends the regional partnership lead by the Iowa DOT to develop strategies that will assist the state and area communities to proactively manage multi-modal transportation systems using proven technologies and operational strategies. This process could serve as an example to other regions and states that are trying to optimize the transportation system with efficient, lower cost improvements</p>	
	<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>ITS Architecture – Des Moines MPO needs to update the Regional ITS Architecture.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Details of the planning review findings for each of the above items are contained in this report.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background and Purpose

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years. A TMA is an urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, with a population of over 200,000. After the 2010 Census, the Secretary of Transportation designated 183 TMAs – 179 urbanized areas over 200,000 in population plus four urbanized areas that received special designation. In general, the reviews consist of three primary activities: a site visit, a review of planning products (in advance of and during the site visit), and preparation of a Certification Review Report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The reviews focus on compliance with Federal law and regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the MPO(s), the State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s) in the conduct of the metropolitan transportation planning process. Joint FTA/FHWA Certification Review guidelines provide agency field reviewers with latitude and flexibility to tailor the review to reflect regional issues and needs. As a consequence, the scope and depth of the Certification Review reports will vary significantly.

The Certification Review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a regional metropolitan transportation planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process. Other stewardship and oversight activities provide opportunities for this type of review and comment, including Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) approval, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), metropolitan and statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) findings, air-quality (AQ) conformity determinations (in nonattainment and maintenance areas), as well as a range of other formal and less formal interactions provide both FHWA/FTA an opportunity to comment on the planning process. The results of these other processes are considered in the Certification Review process.

While the Certification Review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the “findings” of Certification Review are, in fact, based upon the cumulative findings of the entire review effort.

The review process is individually tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. Federal reviewers prepare Certification Reports to document the results of the review process. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices, and their content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed, whether or not they relate explicitly to formal “findings” of the review.

3.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review Process

This report details the 2021 review, which consisted of a virtual site visit on April 22-28, 2021 and desk review. Participants in the review included representatives of FHWA, FTA, Iowa DOT, Illinois DOT and Des Moines MPO staff. A full list of participants is included in [Appendix A](#).

A desk audit of current documents and correspondence was completed prior to the site visit. In addition to the formal review, routine oversight mechanisms provide a major source of information upon which to base the review findings. The planning review covers the transportation planning process conducted cooperatively by the MPO, State, and public transportation operators. Background information, current status, key findings, and recommendations are summarized in the body of the report for the following subject areas selected by FHWA and FTA staff for on-site review:

- MPO Structure and Agreements
- Unified Planning Work Program
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transit Planning
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and List of Obligated Projects
- Public Participation
- Self-Certifications
- Civil Rights (Title VI, EJ, LEP)
- Nonmotorized Planning/Livability
- Operations and Management/Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Resiliency and Vulnerability of the System
- Performance Based Planning and Programming (PBPP) and Emerging Technology

3.2 Documents Reviewed

The following MPO documents were evaluated as part of this planning process review:

- Des Moines MPO Website
- 2018 MPO Handbook
- 2019 MPO Bylaws

- 2018 28E MPO Agreement
- FY 2021 and Draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program for Des Moines MPA
- 2050 Des Moines Long Range Transportation Plan, Mobilizing Tomorrow - Adopted November 21, 2019
- Des Moines MPO Region Transit Development Plan, 2018
- Des Moines MPO Region Freight Plan, 2015
- FY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program for the Des Moines Metropolitan Area
- 2020 Environmental Justice Report
- Title VI Program and Assurances
- FHWA Title VI Plan, FTA Title VI Program
- MPO Complaint Form
- 2021 Language Assistance Plan
- 2021 Public Participation Plan
- MPO Provided Presentation Slides ([Appendix D](#))

3.3 Key Definitions for Planning Review Findings

Corrective Actions – Corrective Actions are compliance issues and indicate a serious situation that fails to meet one or more requirements of the transportation planning statute and regulations, thus seriously impacting the outcome of the overall process. The expected outcome is a change that brings the metropolitan planning process into compliance with a planning statute or regulation; failure to respond will likely result in a more restrictive review.

Recommendations – Recommendations address technical improvements to processes and procedures, that while somewhat less substantial and not regulatory, are still significant enough that FHWA and FTA are hopeful that State and local officials will take action. The expected outcome is change that would improve the process, though there is no Federal mandate.

Commendations – Commendations are processes or practices that demonstrate innovative, highly effective, well-thought-out procedures for implementing the planning requirements. Elements addressing items that have frequently posed problems nationwide could be cited as commendations. Also, significant improvements and/or resolution of past findings may warrant a commendation.

4.0 PROGRAM REVIEW

4.1 MPO Structure and Agreements

4.1.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(d) and 23 CFR 450.314(a) state the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator shall cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. These responsibilities shall be clearly identified in written agreements among the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator serving the MPA. Further, 23 CFR 450.314(h) states that the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator shall jointly develop specific written provisions for cooperatively developing and sharing information related to transportation performance data, the selection of performance targets, the reporting of performance targets, the reporting of performance to be used in tracking progress toward attainment of critical outcomes for the region of the MPO, and the collection of data for the State asset management plans for the National Highway System.

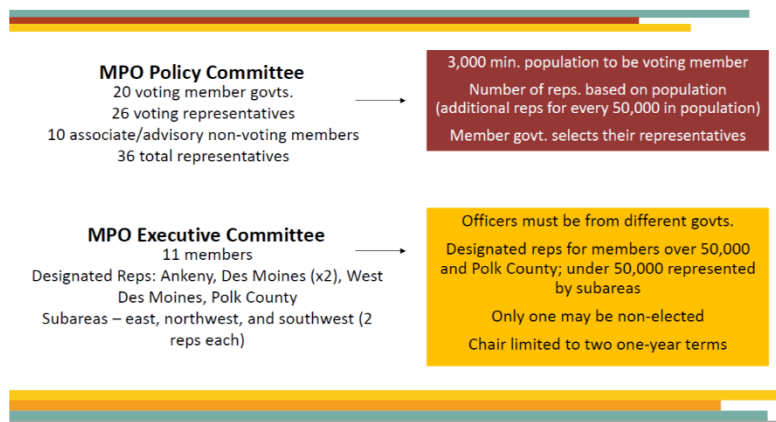
4.1.2 Current Status

The Des Moines MPO was designated as the MPO for the Des Moines metropolitan area in 1983. The current population estimate for the region is approximately 565,000. Since the last review the MPO has updated their 208E agreement with the Iowa DOT (2018) and the committee bylaws (2018). Updating the bylaws was a significant change and improvement to the policy committee structure, changing from 43 representatives to 26. The technical committee changed from 35 to 24 voting representatives. In 2018 the MPO also finalized a strategic plan for the agency with six strategic goals.

Notable Achievements:

- 2018 update to policy and technical committee bylaws
- Annual update to MPO Handbook

MPO Membership and Representation



- 2018 28E Agreement update
- 2018 Strategic Plan

4.1.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the work program requirements listed under 23 U.S.C. 134(d) and 23 CFR 450.314(a).

4.2 Unified Planning Work Program

4.2.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.308 and 420 set the requirement that planning activities performed under Titles 23 and 49 U.S.C. be documented in a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The MPO, in cooperation with the State and public transportation operator, shall develop a UPWP that includes a discussion of the planning priorities facing the MPA and the work proposed for the next one- or two-year period by major activity and task in sufficient detail to indicate the agency that will perform the work, the schedule for completing the work, the resulting products, the proposed funding, and sources of funds.

4.2.2 Current Status

Des Moines MPO annually develops a work program according to the federal requirements and state guidelines. A draft is submitted by April 1st of the year, and a final work program is submitted by June 1st. The MPO provides adequate opportunities for public input as well as agency reviews. The MPO does a great job on prioritizing work and following up on past projects. This is done through a variety of practices included one called a Stoplight Analysis where the staff look back at the work activities from the last UPWP and identify if they have been completed/moving as intended (green), have been delayed or changed (yellow), or have been delayed or not started (red).

Notable projects identified for FY 2022 include: Regional ITS Architecture, Traffic Safety Study, Goods Movement Study, Strategic Trail Plan, Bike/Ped Master Plan, Growth Scenario Analysis, and Climate Change Best Practice Integration.

Notable Achievement:

- UPWP table linking the major task elements to USDOT planning factors and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- MPO Stoplight Analysis

		Task 1 Long-Range Planning	Task 2 Multimodal Planning	Task 3 Public Involvement	Task 4 Integrated Planning	Task 5 Funding	Task 6 Program Administration
Mobilizing Tomorrow Goals	Manage and optimize transportation infrastructure and services	X				X	X
	Enhance multimodal transportation options		X			X	X
	Improve the region's environmental health				X	X	X
	Further the health, safety, and well-being of all residents in the region	X	X	X	X	X	X
Planning Factors	Support economic vitality	X	X		X	X	X
	Increase safety of the transportation system	X				X	X
	Increase the security of the transportation system	X			X	X	X
	Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight		X			X	X
	Protect and enhance the environment and promote conservation				X	X	X
	Enhance the integration and connectivity of the system across and between modes		X			X	X
	Promote efficient system management and operations	X				X	X
	Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system	X				X	X
	Improve resiliency and reliability and reduce/mitigate stormwater impacts				X	X	
	Enhance travel and tourism	X	X		X	X	
MPO Requirements	Long-Range Transportation plan	X					X
	Transportation Improvement Program					X	X
	Unified Planning Work Program						X
	Public Participation Plan			X			X
	Passenger Transportation Plan		X				X
	Congestion Management Process	X					X
	Award Federal Funding					X	X
	Decision Making Structure						X

4.2.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the work program requirements listed under 23 CFR 450.308 and 420.

Commendation:

- UPWP Project Prioritization – The MPO is commended for a comprehensive UPWP development process that ensures projects moving forward are in alignment with current priorities, and that projects in past UPWP are followed up to ensure they are completed.

4.3 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

4.3.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(c), (h) & (i) and 23 CFR 450.324 set forth requirements for the development and content of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Among the requirements are that the MTP address at least a 20-year planning horizon and that it includes both long and short-range strategies that lead to the development of an integrated and multi-modal system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.

The MTP is required to provide a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process. The plan needs to consider all applicable issues related to the transportation systems development, land use, employment, economic development, natural environment, and housing and community development.

23 CFR 450.324(c) requires the MPO to review and update the MTP at least every four years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas and at least every 5 years in attainment areas to reflect current and forecasted transportation, population, land use, employment, congestion, and economic conditions and trends.

Under 23 CFR 450.324(f), the MTP is required, at a minimum, to consider the following:

- Projected transportation demand
- Existing and proposed transportation facilities
- Operational and management strategies
- Congestion management process
- Capital investment and strategies to preserve transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity
- Design concept and design scope descriptions of proposed transportation facilities
- Potential environmental mitigation activities
- Pedestrian walkway and bicycle transportation facilities
- Transportation and transit enhancements
- A financial plan

4.3.2 Current Status

The current 2050 Des Moines Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Mobilizing Tomorrow, was adopted on November 21, 2019 with four goals: Manage and Optimize Transportation Infrastructure and Services, Enhance Multimodal Transportation Options, Improve the Region's

Environmental Health, and Further the Health, Safety and Well-Being of all Residents in the Region. As the second iteration of a performance based MTP, the goals, strategies and performance measures have been greatly refined based on prior experience.

Notable Initiatives:

- Affordable Housing - Opportunity, DART Forward 2035, Housing Tomorrow
- Aging in Place - Age-Friendly Greater Des Moines
- Stormwater Management - Capital Crossroads Initiative, Rainscaping Iowa & Rain Campaign, Watershed Management Plans, Green Streets Initiative
- Hunger - Partnership for a Hunger-Free Polk County

4.3.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the requirements listed under 23 CFR 450.324.

4.4 Transit Planning

4.4.1 Regulatory Basis

49 U.S.C. 5303 and 23 U.S.C. 134 require the transportation planning process in metropolitan areas to consider all modes of travel in the development of their plans and programs. Federal regulations cited in 23 CFR 450.314 state that the MPO in cooperation with the State and operators of publicly owned transit services shall be responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process.

4.4.2 Current Status

Transit services in Des Moines are provided, primarily, by the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority known locally as DART. DART is the largest public transit agency in the state of Iowa, and offers fixed route, rideshare, paratransit and on-call services to customers. DART operates 19 local routes, some of which operate up to seven days a week throughout the Des Moines area. In addition to the regular fixed routes services, seven express routes operate during weekday rush hour to connect residents in the suburbs with jobs in downtown Des Moines. In addition to traditional transit services, DART is testing a new service called Flex Connect. This service is an on-demand service in Urbandale and Windsor Heights. Users can book an Uber, a Yellow Cab or a DART accessible vehicle to take them to and from one of three transfer points where the customer can connect to a DART fixed route service. DART also provides on-call,

paratransit and rideshare services. These services are useful for individuals with disabilities and commuters.

According to the National Transit Database (NTD), DART provided over 4 million passenger trips annually in 2019. This number is down slightly from the 2018 and 2017 NTD reports. However, ridership appeared stable over the four years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

DART is funded by a variety of sources: Two-thirds of the funding comes from property tax levies across the region; approximately 20% of the funding comes from fares and local contracts, approximately 12% comes from federal funding sources, and the remaining 4.7% comes from the state of Iowa and other miscellaneous sources. DART's costs are generally rising about 3% per year, which is greater than the rate of increase in property taxes and state and federal funding. This difference creates short-term and long-term implications for DART services.

COVID-19 Impacts:

COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on transit services across the country. Since March of 2020, many states and communities have enacted various shutdowns and stay-at-home orders. At the peak of the COVID-19 lockdowns in the spring of 2020, DART ridership had fallen by 50%. DART began reducing services across the system, but DART was able to do so without having to furlough any staff.

Ridership has rebounded and is up to about 90% of the pre-COVID numbers. During the rebound, rider patterns have shifted. The rush hour peaks are smaller and there are more midday riders, so DART is adjusting to respond to the demand for more midday service. Express routes are not rebounding as quickly as the regular fixed route services. Many office workers are still working from home, so as more businesses reopen, DART expects ridership on express routes to increase. However, no one is sure if working patterns will return to pre-COVID norms, so as the workplace evolves, DART will work to respond to customer needs.

Regional Coordination:

Transit planning in the Des Moines region is predominantly conducted by DART, particularly in the areas of route design, amenity placement, and service frequency. DART provides DMAMPO with financial information and a program of capital projects for the development of the area's TIP. Since the 2017 certification review, DART staff has continued participation in regional planning efforts. During each funding round, DART reviews and comments on any projects proposed on transit routes. Incorporating transit comments on impacts of proposed projects is a best practice that other regions could incorporate.

DART is a voting member on the DMAMPO Policy Committee and the Transportation Technical Committee. DART also participates on several Subcommittees and Roundtables including the Smart Cities and Transportation Advisory Group. These groups discuss a variety of coordination issues, future services, future land use and development and services for the disabled community.

Through the Transportation Advisory Group, members looked for gaps and barriers that keep disabled individuals from accessing employment and services. The group found that the biggest challenge to customers is getting from their house to the transit network and back home on the street network. Working together, the group started looking for ways to address these barriers, including the initiation of a ½ fare pilot program to align with the gap analysis.

DMAMPO regularly funds transit with STBG funding. A minimum of 10% of the region’s STBG funding allocation is used for transit projects. This ensures that DART can regularly replace rolling stock. This funding also allows DART to upgrade their passenger amenities and add shelters.

4.4.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the requirements listed under 23 CFR 450.314.

Commendation:

- Partnership with Transit - DART and DMAMPO have a long-standing good relationship. DART is more integrated into the MPO processes than many transit agencies. DART reviews proposed roadway and trail projects that are located on transit routes as a part of project review. This is a best practice.

4.5 Public Participation

4.5.1 Regulatory Basis

Sections 134(i)(6), 134(j)(1)(B) of Title 23 and Section 5303(i)(5) and 5303(j)(1)(B) of Title 49, United States Code, require a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide adequate opportunity for the public to participate in and comment on the products and planning processes of the MPO. The requirements for public involvement are detailed in 23 CFR 450.316, which requires the MPO to develop and use a documented participation plan that includes

explicit procedures and strategies to include the public and other interested parties in the transportation planning process.

Specific requirements include giving adequate and timely notice of opportunities to participate in or comment on transportation issues and processes, employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPS, making public information readily available in electronically accessible formats and means such as the world wide web, holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input, and periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the participation plan.

4.5.2 Current Status

The current MPO Public Participation Plan (PPP) and the Language Assistance Plan (LAP) were both adopted in March 2021. The PPP defines the regional process to provide citizens, stakeholder groups, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the transportation planning process. Important updates to the PPP include adding a section on adaptations for the pandemic period, updating the PPP to reflect new outreach options (Adobe Spark, Zoom, and YouTube), and reviewing the media list to reach outlets with diverse audiences. Notable updates to the LAP include: 1. Updated Environmental Justice maps, 2. Data of languages spoken at home, and 3. Additional languages added to the MPO website highlighting translation services (e.g., Polish, Russian, Arabic).

The MPO has a variety of workgroups and participates with non-MPO groups that engage in public involvement and inform the public on regional initiatives:

- Transportation Advisory Group
- Smart City Roundtable
- Environmental Roundtable Passenger
- Greater Des Moines Partnership's Mobility Coalition
- Transit Future Work Group

Notable Initiatives:

- The Tomorrow Plan Speaker Series
- Wikiblock
- United Way Projects: Highland Park Neighborhood Association, Re-imagine 6thAve., Studio 192, Complete Streets funding from IDPH and Temporary Bus Shelter for YMCA summer camp students

- Partnership with United Way OpportUNITY’s Transportation Work Group for direct communication with regional partners

4.5.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the requirements listed under 23 CFR 450.316.

Commendation:

- Regional Partnerships – The Des Moines MPO is commended for a sustained focus on reaching out and partnering with important regional organizations (i.e. United Way) to work on a variety of projects (i.e. Central Iowa Transportation Assessment, wikiblock, bus shelters, complete streets) that focus on regionally identified goals.
- Visualization Techniques – The Des Moines MPO is commended for using innovative visualization techniques such as using charts and graphs to illustrate ideas rather than long blocks of text and using ArcGIS to create an interactive map of projects.

Recommendation:

- Website Updates – The review team noted that some of the required federal documents were difficult to find on the website and recommends that it be updated.

4.6 Civil Rights (Title VI, EJ, LEP, ADA)

4.6.1 Regulatory Basis

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, and national origin. Specifically, 42 U.S.C. 2000d states that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” In addition to Title VI, there are other Nondiscrimination statutes that afford legal protection. These statutes include the following: Section 162 (a) of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 (23 U.S.C. 324), Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. ADA specifies that programs and activities funded with Federal dollars are prohibited from discrimination based on disability.

Executive Order #12898 (Environmental Justice) directs federal agencies to develop strategies to address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs on minority and low-income populations. In compliance with this Executive Order, USDOT and FHWA issued orders to establish policies and procedures for addressing environmental justice in minority and low-income populations. The planning regulations, at 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vii), require that the needs of those “traditionally underserved” by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and/or minority households, be sought out and considered.

Executive Order # 13166 (Limited-English-Proficiency) requires agencies to ensure that limited English proficiency persons are able to meaningfully access the services provided consistent with and without unduly burdening the fundamental mission of each federal agency.

4.6.2 Current Status

Diverse approaches are used at the MPO to prevent discrimination and assure compliance. No complaints for the area were filed. Title VI documents for FHWA and FTA are updated including a webpage on the MPO website dedicated to Title VI. It was discussed during the review that the Iowa DOT Civil Rights Bureau and Systems Planning Bureau are currently working on a Title VI template that may be used by agencies to submit plans that will meet the requirement of FHWA and FTA.

Self-certification of the planning process is carried out each year under the approval of the Transportation Improvement Program. The self-certification is completed when the TIP update is under consideration, typically this occurs in June of each year.

4.6.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the civil rights requirements.

Recommendation:

- Self-Certifications: The federal review teams recommends that the MPO submit the self-certifications and supporting documentation as a separate agenda item for the technical and policy committees.

4.7 Security and Environmental Mitigation

4.7.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(h)(1)(C) requires MPOs to consider security as one of ten planning factors. As stated in 23 CFR 450.306(b)(3), the Metropolitan Transportation Planning process provides for consideration of security of the transportation system.

The regulations state that the degree and consideration of security should be based on the scale and complexity of many different local issues. Under 23 CFR 450.324(h), the MTP may include emergency relief and disaster preparedness plans and strategies and policies that support homeland security, as appropriate.

23 U.S.C. 134(i)(2)(D) and 23 CFR 450.324(f)(10) requires environmental mitigation be set forth in connection with the MTP. The MTP is required to include a discussion of types of potential environmental mitigation activities for the transportation improvements and potential areas to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the plan.

23 U.S.C. 168 and Appendix A to 23 CFR Part 450 provide for linking the transportation planning and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes. A Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study can incorporate the initial phases of NEPA through the consideration of natural, physical, and social effects, coordination with environmental resource agencies, and public involvement. This will allow the analysis in the PEL study to be referenced in the subsequent NEPA document once the project is initiated, saving time and money with project implementation.

4.7.2 Current Status

The MPO is involved with a number of projects and initiatives that align with FHWA planning factors related to system security and the environment. The MPO hosts an Environmental Roundtable that includes regional staff from cities and partner organizations convene to examine projects through environmental lens. The group shares opportunities for ongoing work, funding sources, and partnerships.

Notable Initiatives:

- Polk County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Watershed Management Authorities
- Rain Campaign

- Central Iowa Water Trails

4.7.3 Findings

Commendation:

- Regional Environmental Initiatives – The federal review team commends the MPO for leading or participating in a number of projects (Polk County Hazard Mitigation Plan, Watershed Management Authorities, Rain Campaign) that aid to protect the security of the transportation system from environmental hazards.

4.8 Nonmotorized Planning / Livability

4.8.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 217(g) states that bicyclists and pedestrians shall be given due consideration in the comprehensive transportation plans developed by each MPO under 23 U.S.C. 134. Bicycle transportation facilities and pedestrian walkways shall be considered, where appropriate, in conjunction with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation facilities.

23 CFR 450.306 sets forth the requirement that the scope of the metropolitan planning process will increase the safety for motorized and non-motorized users; increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users; and protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life. 23 CFR 450.324(f)(2) states the MTP shall include existing and proposed transportation facilities, including nonmotorized facilities, that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system.

4.8.2 Current Status

Since the 2017 TMA Certification Review, the Des Moines MPO has continued to increase involvement in nonmotorized transportation planning. See the list below for the notable projects.

Notable Initiatives:

- Complete Streets Adoptions
- Trail Counting Program
- On-Street Counter Pilot
- Data Bike
- On-Street Bicycle Feasibility Study
- Proof of Concept Programs
- Micromobility (e-Scooter Pilot)
- Mini-Grant Program with Wellmark Foundation



4.8.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the nonmotorized requirements listed under 23 U.S.C. 217(g) and 23 U.S.C. 134.

4.9 Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations

4.9.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(k)(3) and 23 CFR 450.322 set forth requirements for the congestion management process (CMP) in TMAs. The CMP is a systematic approach for managing congestion through a process that provides for a safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system. TMAs designated as non-attainment for ozone must also provide an analysis of the need for additional capacity for a proposed improvement over travel demand reduction, and operational management strategies.

23 CFR 450.324(f)(5) requires the MTP include Management and Operations (M&O) of the transportation network as an integrated, multimodal approach to optimize the performance of the existing transportation infrastructure. Effective M&O strategies include measurable regional operations goals and objectives and specific performance measures to optimize system performance.

The FHWA Final Rule and FTA Policy on Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architecture and Standards was issued on January 8, 2001 and codified under 23 CFR Part 940 ITS Architecture and Standards, implements Section 5206(e) of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). This Final Rule/Policy requires that all ITS projects funded by the Highway Trust Fund and the Mass Transit Account conform to the national ITS architecture,

whether they are stand-alone projects or combined with non-ITS projects, as well as to U.S. DOT-adopted ITS standards.

4.9.2 Current Status

The Des Moines MPO includes the current Congestion Management Process (CMP) as an appendix to Mobilizing Tomorrow, the metropolitan transportation plan. INRIX data is used to identify congestion as Travel Time Index and Planning Time Index. The congestion corridors identified in the CMP have been incorporated into scoring criteria for STBG project selection.

The regional ITS Architecture was last updated in 2009-2010 and is due for an update. MPO staff is currently working on an updated using new software (RAD-IT 9.0, ARC-IT 9.0). The MPO's Travel Demand Model (TDM) was adopted with the updated LRTP (Mobilizing Tomorrow) in 2019 with a base year of 2016 and forecast years of 2030, 2040 and 2050. The regional TDM follows the Iowa DOT's Iowa Standardized Model Structure (ISMS) and is Land use/parcels based. It runs on Caliper TransCAD Version 7.0 software with ISMS-add on tool.

The Des Moines MPO hosts the regional Traffic Management Advisory Committee (TMAC). TMAC is a group for Traffic Incident Management (TIM) and affiliated with the Iowa Statewide Multi-Disciplinary Safety Team (MDST).

Notable Initiatives:

- Integrated Corridor Management (ICM)
- Smart Cities Roundtable
- Right-Sizing Project (NCHRP Report 917)
- New Des Moines Transload Facility

Why ICM for Des Moines Metropolitan Area?

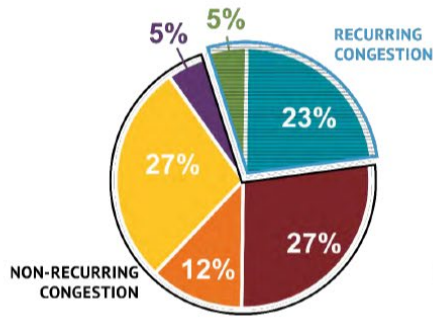


Figure 1. Iowa Sources of Congestion, 2013-2015

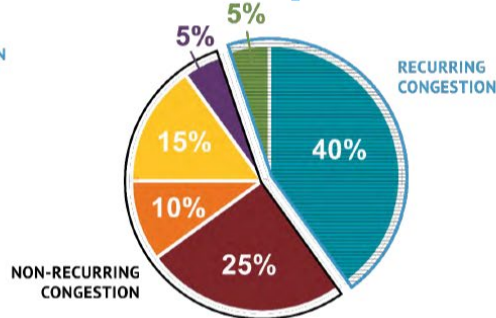


Figure 2. National Sources of Traffic Congestion, 2005 (Cambridge Systematics, 2005)

- Special Events
- Work Zones
- Poor Signal Timing
- Bad Weather
- Bottlenecks
- Traffic Incidents



4.9.3 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the requirements related to congestion management and operations listed above.

Commendation:

- Smart Cities Roundtable – The federal team commends the MPO, with a partnership with Capital Crossroads, for this progressive and innovation initiative to evaluate and advise local governments and stakeholders on matters of regional importance pertaining to technological advancements and policy opportunities that will foster the creation of a smart region.
- Des Moines Integrated Corridor Management Process – The review team commends the regional partnership lead by the Iowa DOT to develop strategies that will assist the state and area communities to proactively manage multi-modal transportation systems using proven technologies and operational strategies. This process could serve as an example to other regions and states that are trying to optimize the transportation system with efficient, lower cost improvements

Recommendations:

- ITS Architecture – Des Moines MPO needs to update the Regional ITS Architecture.

4.10 Performance Based Planning and Programming

4.10 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 150(b) identifies the following national goals for the focus of the Federal-aid highway program: Safety, Infrastructure Condition, Congestion Reduction, System Reliability, Freight Movement and Economic Vitality, Environmental Sustainability, and Reduced Project Delivery Delays. Under 23 U.S.C. 134(h)(2), the metropolitan planning process shall provide for the establishment and use of a performance-based approach to transportation decisionmaking to support the national goals, including the establishment of performance targets.

23 CFR 450.306(d) states that each MPO shall establish performance targets to support the national goals and track progress towards the attainment of critical outcomes. Each MPO shall coordinate with the relevant State to ensure consistency, to the maximum extent practicable, and establish performance targets not later than 180 days after the State or provider of public transportation establishes its performance targets. The selection of performance targets that address performance measures described in 49 U.S.C. 5326(c) and 49 U.S.C. 5329(d) shall be coordinated to the maximum extent practicable, with public transportation providers to ensure consistency with the performance targets that public transportation providers establish under 49 U.S.C. 5326(c) and 49 U.S.C. 5329(d). Additionally, each MPO shall integrate the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets from other performance-based plans and programs integrated into the metropolitan transportation planning process.

23 CFR 450.314(h) states that the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator shall jointly develop specific written provisions PBPP, which can either be documented as part of the metropolitan planning agreements or in some other means. See section 4.2: MPO Structure and Agreements for more information.

23 CFR 450.324(f) states that MTPs shall include descriptions of the performance measures and performance targets used in assessing the performance of the transportation system, a system performance report evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets, and progress achieved in meeting the performance targets in comparison with system performance recorded in previous reports.

23 CFR 450.326(d) states that the TIP shall include, to the maximum extent practicable, a description of the anticipated effect of the programmed investments with respect to the performance targets established in the MTP, the anticipated future performance target achievement of the programmed investments, and a written narrative linking investment priorities to those performance targets and how the other PBPP documents are being implemented to develop the program of projects.

23 CFR 450.340 states that MPOs have two years from the effective dates of the planning and performance measures rule to comply with the requirements.

4.10 Current Status

The Des Moines MPO has implemented performance- based planning throughout the planning process and incorporated it into project selection procedures for the MTP and TIP. Performance measures have been included into the Des Moines transportation planning process since the MTP developed in 2009, making Mobilizing Tomorrow 2050 (2019) the 3rd performance based MTP. Required and voluntary measures were developed for each of the four goals of the plan. The MPO maintains two options for setting regional performance targets: Support the State's targets by agreeing to plan and program projects so that they contribute toward the accomplishment of the State DOT safety target for that performance measure or to set a quantifiable target for that performance measure for the MPO. The Des Moines MPO has generally opted to support state targets and then focus on regional voluntary measures. MPO TIP documents compliance with following performance- based planning categories: DMAMPO Safety & State Safety Performance Targets, DMAMPO Pavement Condition & Iowa DOT Pavement and Bridge Condition Performance Targets, System and Freight Reliability Performance Targets, and DART's Transit Performance Targets.

4.10 Findings

The Des Moines Urbanized Area meets all the requirements related to performance- based planning listed above.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The FHWA and FTA review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Des Moines Urbanized Area meets Federal planning requirements as follows.

5.1 Commendations

The following are noteworthy practices that the Des Moines MPO Regional Commission is doing well in the transportation planning process:

- Partnership with Transit - DART and DMAMPO have a long-standing good relationship. DART is more integrated into the MPO processes than many transit agencies. DART reviews proposed roadway and trail projects that are located on transit routes as a part of project review. This is a best practice.
- UPWP Project Prioritization – The MPO is commended for a comprehensive UPWP development process that ensures projects moving forward are in alignment with current priorities, and that projects in past UPWP are followed up to ensure they are completed.
- Visualization Techniques – The Des Moines MPO is commended for using innovative visualization techniques such as using charts and graphs to illustrate ideas rather than long blocks of text and using ArcGIS to create an interactive map of projects.
- Regional Partnerships – The Des Moines MPO is commended for a sustained focus on reaching out and partnering with important regional organizations (i.e. United Way) to work on a variety of projects (i.e. Central Iowa Transportation Assessment, wikiblock, bus shelters, complete streets) that focus on regionally identified goals.
- Regional Environmental Initiatives – The federal review team commends the MPO for leading or participating in a number of projects (Polk County Hazard Mitigation Plan, Watershed Management Authorities, Rain Campaign) that aid to protect the security of the transportation system from environmental hazards.
- Smart Cities Roundtable – The federal team commends the MPO, with a partnership with Capital Crossroads, for this progressive and innovation initiative to evaluate and advise local governments and stakeholders on matters of regional importance pertaining to technological advancements and policy opportunities that will foster the creation of a smart region.
- Des Moines Integrated Corridor Management Process – The review team commends the regional partnership lead by the Iowa DOT to develop strategies that will assist the state and area communities to proactively manage multi-modal transportation systems using proven technologies and operational strategies. This process could serve as an example to other regions and states that are trying to optimize the transportation system with efficient, lower cost improvements.

5.2 Corrective Actions

The following are corrective actions that the Des Moines MPO Regional Commission must take to comply with Federal Regulations:

None

5.3 Recommendations

The following are recommendations that would improve the transportation planning process:

- Website Updates – The review team noted that some of the required federal documents were difficult to find on the website and recommends that it be updated.
- Self-Certifications: The federal review teams recommends that the MPO submit the self-certifications and supporting documentation as a separate agenda item for the technical and policy committees.
- ITS Architecture – Des Moines MPO needs to update the Regional ITS Architecture.

APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANTS

Federal reviewers prepared this Certification Review report to document the results of the review process. The report and final actions are the responsibility of the FHWA Iowa and the FTA Region 7 Office. The following individuals were involved in the Des Moines Urbanized Area on-site review:

The Federal Review Team included:

Darla Hugaboom, FHWA Iowa Division
Sean Litteral, FHWA Iowa Division
Karla Kudart, FHWA Iowa Division
John Gibson, FHWA Iowa Division
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Allison van Pelt, Senior Planner
Gunnar Olson, Comm and Strategy Manager
Andrew Collings, Principal Planner

Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) Participants

Tony Filippini, DART
Luis Montoya, DART

Elizabeth Presutti, DART








Iowa DOT Participants

Zac Bitting, Systems Planning Bureau
Garrett Pedersen, Systems Planning Bureau
Jeff Von Brown, Systems Planning Bureau
Tracey Bradley, Civil Rights Bureau
Steven Kerber, Civil Rights Bureau
Tonnette Harris, Civil Rights Bureau
Kristin Haar, Public Transit Bureau
Matt Chambers, Program Management Bureau
Andy Loonan, District 1

APPENDIX B – AGENDA

**Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Federal TMA Certification Review
April 22-28, 2021**
Virtual Meeting Online using Microsoft Teams (links below)

Agenda

Day 1 – Thursday, April 22		Meeting Link
	Welcome and Scope of Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • MPO Overview and Presentation • Organizational Structure • Agreements 	
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) • Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 	
Day 2 – Friday, April 23		
NO MEETING		
Day 3 – Monday, April 26		
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Participation Plan (PPP) • Self-Certifications • Title IV • Environmental Justice • Limited English Proficiency (LEP) 	
Day 4 – Tuesday, April 27		
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Based Planning Process (PBPP) • Operations and Management/ITS • Emerging Technologies • Safety and Security • Resiliency and Vulnerability of the System 	
Day 5 – Wednesday, April 28		
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit 	
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Team Discussion 	
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review close out and Preliminary Findings 	

APPENDIX C - LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act
CFR: Code of Federal Regulations
CMP: Congestion Management Process
DOT: Department of Transportation
EJ: Environmental Justice
FAST: Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA: Federal Highway Administration
FTA: Federal Transit Administration
FY: Fiscal Year
HSIP: Highway Safety Improvement Program
ITS: Intelligent Transportation Systems
LEP: Limited-English-Proficiency
M&O: Management and Operations
MAP-21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
MPA: Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP: Metropolitan Transportation Plan
SHSP: Strategic Highway Safety Plan
STIP: State Transportation Improvement Program
TDM: Travel Demand Management
TIP: Transportation Improvement Program
TMA: Transportation Management Area
U.S.C.: United States Code
UPWP: Unified Planning Work Program
USDOT: United States Department of Transportation

APPENDIX D – DES MOINES MPO RESPONSE TO REVIEW TEAM

See attached to end of report

APPENDIX E – Public Comments

The following presentation was given about the process by the federal review team: No public comments were received.





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