



**MPO POLICY COMMITTEE
SWOT ANALYSIS
FEBRUARY 2025**

The MPO Policy Committee conducted a SWOT analysis as part of the 2025 Strategic Planning process. Each member received a worksheet to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for consideration in planning for the upcoming year. This document compiles the submissions verbatim, organized by common themes.

The tag in the left-hand column indicates the theme, the line separates each theme, and the themes are in priority order based on the number of comments received.

Color Coding:

Black Font – MPO Policy Committee Member Responses

Orange Font – TTC Member Responses

Blue Font – Staff Responses

WHAT OUTCOMES DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Trust in the organization will only be achieved through open (transparent) and honest conversations. We still suffer from behind the scenes (closed door) politics that contributes to the thought process that the MPO is only to help us meet the federal and state bare minimums required to receive and allocate funding to local projects. We are better than this!
- A more equitable organization where all members find value from participation
- An organization that brings the metro area together with a common purpose. That would require all the cities to not be so parochial.
- We will be thinking of how people travel as a region, not community-by-community.
- We will be supporting and lifting up other communities' projects, even at the expense of our own, if it means the betterment of the region.
- We'll have an evolving but outcomes focused long-term regional transportation plan that our elected officials and taxpayers support and follow.
- A place where communities work together to improve the entire region.
- Members will see value beyond the grant funds we allocate.
- It would be great to be seen as a partner in the development of transportation projects regionally where we provide expertise, analysis, and guidance to our member governments on what is their next great transportation project. This would mean we are helping guide development of projects instead of being brought in for funding.
- More group projects
- Equitably collaborating with and empowering residents in the region to shape their transportation futures.
- Consensus-based direction for the MPO, both short and long term.

Regional
Approach to
Planning

Project Specific

- Development of studies to bring about programs allowing for more frequent, smaller dollar awards to address transportation infrastructure. Something like a \$20,000 sidewalk improvement grant with a 25% match.
- The redesignation of HWY 5 / 65 to 435, and Interstate beltway safety improvements.
- We should all desire a safe and efficient multimodal transportation system that benefits the entire region, our citizens, businesses and visitors. This includes the redesign of roadways with the most recent safety devices and design practices and connectivity between metro communities.
- A unified transportation plan that all local cities design their communities around and strategically place regional assets
- Less car-centric
- Obtain more federal funding through region-wide grant application(s) (e.g. SS4A).
- We will have a solid, strategic set of projects/initiatives that the MPO will focus on that everyone (staff, technical reps, and policy reps) understand and will find value from
- Sustainable transportation investments in public and active transportation that get people where they need to go safely and efficiently, year-round.

MPO Operations

- The MPO staff are a sounding board for member communities as they undertake local, long-term transportation planning, studies, and capital planning.
- Become more educated on how local government works so they can better serve their customers.
- Stability with MPO staff. Existing staff continues to gain knowledge and experience.
- Continue to make sure staff are satisfied and fulfilled with position/employment
- Our planning team collaborates internally and externally to increase the power of our network.
- Meeting deadlines and goals

Process Improvements

- Additional policies and structures to help decrease any political aspects of the decision-making process.
- Objectively approve and fund projects for communities through a systematic process that is as "politic free" as possible.
- Continuing to evaluate the distribution of federal funds to members, ensuring regional benefit is considered when projects are awarded funds
- None Use the flow chart for each topic brought to us
- Reduce political issues affecting projects/work

Scope of Work

- Stay focused and do the best we can with transportation issues in our region
- Be the best that we can be for transportation issues don't be the catch all for everything
- I feel like we could settle in being "there" now, but there is room for more. What "there" looks like to me is a lot of what we have not, but with more data ready to share with members, their supporting consultants, and the public. That data would also have some information on what is means and how it can be incorporated in a member's transportation Capital Improvement Plan.
- Handle nontraditional transportation projects

MPO Best Practice

- Be an MPO that MPOs in other states want to emulate.
- The MPO will be seen as a leader and a trusted resource for data, planning assistance, and collaboration with other regional stakeholders.

Not Sure

- I have not been here long, but I feel like we are doing our job well.
- Not sure...

WHAT ARE OUR ASPIRATIONS

Transportation & Economic Impact

- Tying in the many facets of transportation to a dynamic region.
- Growing an economically viable and development friendly metropolitan area.
- Roads, bridges, bike trails and any other form of transportation
- Ensure coordinated, long-term, future-focused transportation planning that supports economic prosperity.
- I'm excited for the work on transportation economic impacts to help our region and elected officials make decisions
- More focus on the residents who can't afford to operate two or more cars per household
- Our region. Our economy. Our natural resources. The region's people.
- Improving the safety, efficiency, and economics of the transportation system in central Iowa.
- Promote economic growth and vitality.
- Improve the quality of life for our citizens.
- Think outside the box regarding transportation projects
- A multimodal transportation system that works with other systems (e.g. housing, food, economy) to allow residents to flourish and love where they live.

Collaboration

- We aspire to create a vibrant and cohesive metropolitan area where all communities recognize the interconnectedness that binds us together.
- Our goal is to build a resilient and inclusive region that thrives on mutual support and leverages our collective strengths to better serve all people in the Des Moines metro.
- By fostering a collaborative spirit and a shared sense of purpose, we believe that what benefits one community will ultimately benefit us all.
- Developing the Des Moines metro into the best version it can be
- The MPO is a forum for important regional conversations and collaboration.
- Safety and knowledge of needs

Regional Convener

- Bridge the gap for metro communities in long-range transportation planning; especially for those that do not have such staff in-house.
- Be a source for identifying critical regional projects that might not otherwise be possible without shared resources
- Cooperation among all MPO Members to achieve the goals of individual member communities with an understanding that one size does not fit all, some communities are more advanced than others, and we should welcome any and all projects that individual communities present that meet the parameters of written guidance.
- DMAMPO staff care about the central Iowa region as a whole community; how do regional discussions about transportation modes start and continue through the MPO staff;
- The board (and therefore the region) works collaboratively to advance projects vs. competing with each other for resources.

MPO Best Practice

- MPO seen as an effective, important regional organization, and one that communities would want to be involved with even if the MPO was not federally required.
- I would like the MPO and our region to be seen as the best MPO in the country. Core products that are best practice examples. A model and GIS tools that punch above our small staff. And leading the next big idea, just like we did/are with the data bike.

- Continue to provide excellent work to communities/member governments
- Striving for the highest quality will get us started. That will open minds to other possibilities.
- Make the region better and set an example for other regional entities.

Fiscal Responsibility

- Making the best transportation investments possible for the region; the right transportation solutions for the intended goal.
- Making a lasting difference to our member communities. Fiscally responsible. With the new legislation may not have many projects.
- Ensuring the big picture is considered for the end goals
- Environmental sustainability done justly and equitably.

Reduced Fatalities

- Movement towards Zero transportation related fatalities and serious injury crashes.
- I care deeply about reducing pedestrian deaths that are not caused by disabled vehicles on the side of the road, for example, my car stops, I get out and walk and get seriously injured. In other words, pedestrians crossing streets. I feel like this is a simple area to make improvements with more sidewalks paralleling the street, pedestrian crossing area (tunnels or bridges) on busy roads, etc.

MPO Value

- I believe you care deeply about the residents of the Metro and I would hope you would continue to lift them up in what has become a tricky political climate.
- We care deeply about ensuring members find value in the organization.

Scope of Work

- Expand our services/ potential staff to handle more projects
- Persuade board to allow expansion of projects that aren't strictly "just transportation"

Not Sure

- Not sure what's out there.

SWOT DATA COMPARISONS

19 SWOT worksheets submitted

- 13 Policy Committee Members
- 1 TTC Member
- 5 Staff Members

279 total comments received

- 109 comments (39%) were S & W (Internal)
- 91 comments (33%) were O & T (External)
- 79 comments (28%) were A & R (Visionary)

THEMES FROM THE SWOT

12 UNIQUE Themes Recognized

1. Scope of Work
2. Process Improvements
3. Access to Funding & Managing Policy
4. Regional Collaboration
5. MPO Operations
6. Project Specific Ideas
7. Convening, Resource & Engaging Experts

8. Engaged Governance
 9. Balancing Needs & MPO Value
 10. MPO Best Practice
 11. Exploring Emerging Trends
 12. Marketing and Communications
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What Outcomes Do We Want To Achieve:

- Regional Approach to Planning (11)
- Project Specific (8)
- MPO Operations (5)
- Process Improvements (4)
- Scope of Work (3)
- MPO Best Practice (2)
- Not Sure(2)

What are our Aspirations:

- Transportation & Economic Impact (11)
- Collaboration (6)
- Regional Convener (5)
- MPO Best Practice (4)
- Fiscal Responsibility (4)
- Reduced Fatalities (2)
- MPO Value (2)
- Scope of Work (2)
- Not sure (1)



2025 – 2026 Strategic Framework

Vision Statement (Existing)

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.

Mission Statement (Existing)

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.

Leadership Team

- Dylan Mullenix, Executive Director
- Gunnar Olson, Planning & Public Affairs Manager

Strategy Planning Committee

- Bobbi Bentz, Ankeny
- Connie Boesen, Des Moines
- John Dostart, Altoona
- Mark Holm, Polk County
- Mike Jones, Windsor Heights
- Bob Andeweg, Urbandale
- Tom Hadden, West Des Moines

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	Strengthen MPO Governance & Operations	Regional Planning & Federal Excellence	Enhance Partnerships & Services	Purpose-Driven Innovation
STRATEGIC VISION	Unify the MPO culture to align all stakeholders toward a common mission, stability, and positioning the organization as a dynamic, thriving regional leader.	Focus on regional planning that improves transportation systems and sparks meaningful public engagement, while ensuring compliance with federal MPO requirements.	Establish trusted and reliable partnerships with stakeholders by offering valuable support through data analysis, technical expertise, and collaborative efforts.	Encourage different ideas, celebrate achievements, and elevate new initiatives that advance member priorities, align with organizational capabilities, and drive region-wide impact.



2025-2026 OUTCOMES & OBJECTIVES	Financial & Operations Evaluation Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Financial outlook (dues, funding). ➤ Consider office space/shared services. ➤ Determine MPO ROI (quantitative and qualitative). 	Streamline Processes Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assessment of technology. ➤ Establish funding priorities. ➤ Refine the application process and scoring criteria for funding. 	Simplify Access to Services Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assessment of technology. ➤ Design an application process for supplemental services. ➤ Create awareness of available MPO services. 	Wildly Important Projects Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Future 435 ➤ Safety ➤ STPG & TAP – intentional funding efforts ➤ Multimodal Impact Study ➤ Data Visualization
	Organizational Development Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assessment of technology. ➤ Develop the MPO team, build new skills and expand the bench. ➤ Implement recommendations from Human Capital Plan. ➤ Build the MPO brand 	Regional Priorities Alignment Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make the UPWP more strategic – using it to drive regional priorities and provide value to our members ➤ Better connection between STPG & TAP and the long-range plan. 	Advocacy & Policy Monitoring Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Offer collective advocacy for policy impact that benefits the region. ➤ Serve as the watchdog and communicate changes in federal and state funding/programs. 	Define the Potential of the MPO Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Determine gaps in community service needs. ➤ Find balance between varying city needs to create solutions that are inclusive and effective for all members.
	Enhance Governance Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue working on governance (committees, building the structure out). ➤ Complete a membership evaluation. ➤ Identify 28E/By-law amendments. ➤ Expand Committee Member knowledge base, strengthen orientation 	Maintain a Future Focus Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Explore new technologies that support sustainable transportation systems. ➤ Identify emerging trends in mobility that enhance efficiency and accessibility. ➤ Identify opportunities for regional collaboration/projects to maximize available funding. 	Collaboration, Education & Resource Sharing Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Convene regional partners and stakeholders for discussion, planning and ideation. ➤ Provide learning opportunities from experts in the field in areas of interest. 	Become the Model for MPO Best Practices Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lead the region by adopting innovative policies and serving as a consultant to others. ➤ Learn from other MPOs and organizations, integrating best practices that align with our goals. ➤ Evaluate and implement strategies to improve regional collaboration and efficiency.

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SUCCESS MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Return on Investment – Dues VS Funding Received over 5-year period ➤ More engaged board, more tie into staff ➤ Updated Mission/Vision/Values ➤ Meet with all Member Communities and stakeholders ➤ Updated, clean audit report ➤ Increase staff effectiveness, redundancy of duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Satisfactory recertification review ➤ Completion of work activities by required due dates ➤ Ensuring the projects funded are implemented (completing amendments, getting money out the door) ➤ Review funding policies against goals of long-range plan and federal funding status to ensure alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many communities did we help with something other than providing funding/dollars? ➤ Increase in members accessing new services ➤ Implement new application process for services ➤ Well informed members, active in policy conversations ➤ Hosted at least educational/regional convening per quarter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Moving forward on Wildly Important Projects ➤ The MPO is seen as the place where BIG IDEAS go to get done and done well. ➤ Having our work recognized by the DOT as commendations (certified best practices).
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What the day-to-day includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Meeting preparation ➤ Paying bills ➤ Grant reimbursements ➤ Personnel Management ➤ Facilities & equipment Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Federally required work ➤ TIP ➤ Long Range Plan ➤ Public Participation Plan ➤ Performance Measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not federally required but regionally impactful ➤ Data and mapping ➤ Data bike and trail counters ➤ Grant writing/letters of support ➤ Grant administration ➤ Annual DC list ➤ Modeling ➤ Technical analysis ➤ Serving on committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Convening project-based committees ➤ Research ➤ Outreach
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**MPO POLICY COMMITTEE
VISION, MISSION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES REVIEW
FEBRUARY 2025**

Vision Statement (Existing)

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.

- What do you like about the current Vision Statement?

- What is missing from the current Vision Statement?

- What 3 words should be included to help inspire, describe and shape the vision?

Mission Statement (Existing)

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.

- What do you like about the current Mission Statement?

- What is missing from the current Mission Statement?

- What 3 words should be included to help capture action, support decision-making, help achieve the vision?

Guiding Principles (New Idea)

Share 3 – 5 words with simple summaries of how you define them of principles you think should be considered.

EXAMPLES:

Integrity: Always act with honesty and transparency.

Collaboration: Teamwork and open communication across all levels of the organization.

Holistic Approach to Transportation Planning: Consider other planning elements (e.g., housing, environment, and economic development).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.