

Transportation Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

Joint meeting with Corridor MPO and ECICOG

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM, Tuesday, February 7, 2023

1. Introductions

In Attendance:

- Kesha Billings, *City of Marion*
- Carter Baldwin, *Linn County LIFTS*
- Isacc Davis, *citizen*
- Brad DeBrower [virtual], *Cedar Rapids Transit*
- Tabitha Downing, *Horizons Neighborhood Transportation Services (NTS)*
- Jamie Ginter [virtual], *Jones County*
- Brock Grenis, *ECICOG*
- Mystic Henningsen [virtual], *United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI)*
- Hilary Hershner *Corridor MPO*
- Amy Hockett, *Linn County Public Health (LCPH)*
- Kristin Krambeer [virtual], *Arc of East Central Iowa*
- Jacquie Montoya, *Linn County Public Health (LCPH)*
- Maxine Prime, *Willis Dady*
- Kelly Schneider [virtual], *Johnson County*
- Haley Sevensing, *City of Cedar Rapids*
- Dean Vrba [virtual], *Benton County*
- Justin Wheatly, *6th District Department of Correctional Services (DCS)*

2. Community Improvement Plan – Amy Hockett, LCPH

Amy Hockett shared community health priorities with the group. She covered leading health issues in Linn County, priorities selected, connection of to transportation, and the Cedar Rapids Wellbeing Advisory Committee.

For the plan, they did a community health survey and then three focus groups. They took a minute to look at who was under-represented and had meetings with those groups of people. They had one, in-person, with Young Parent Network and two with populations of color, online via Zoom. The next assessment was the Community Health Status Assessment that went over 10 categories.

Leading areas of concern in Linn County include food access and physical activity; barriers to healthcare, emotional health and access to mental health services, lack of affordable and structurally safe housing; childcare needs; community safety; and health equity (the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health).

Priorities in the plan crosscut several themes: policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE); housing; health equity; education and awareness; and active transportation. The active transportation theme is tied to each health and basic needs issue discussed. About public transit, there is infrequent service across bus routes, long ride times, limited hours of operation (no nights or weekends), and stigmatized use. There's limited research of public transit in rural areas due to the service not being available due to it having a low demand in the area. Parks and trails support active transportation, and while there are many parks, trails, and green spaces in the county, the access to these assets requires transportation to safely reach. Implications of active transportation is a lack of bus routes and service times contribute to missed job opportunities, ability to afford medical services when needed, and increased homelessness. If a bus is missed on many of the routes, the individual waits an hour, which could be unsafe for children. Brainstorming active transportation needs and solutions include cost sharing of transit and normalizing bus use through partnership with local businesses.

Amy went into the 2022-2024 Community Health Improvement Program (CHIP). The four priority areas of the 2022-2024 CHIP include mental health, food security, equitable opportunities for physical activity, and prevention of gun violence. Improved mental health through increased community awareness and equal access to mental health, substance abuse, and prevention services. For food security, create a centralized communications system to increase understanding and coordination of food resources among food system partners and the community. Equitable opportunities for physical activity would lead to improved mental health through increased community awareness and equal access to mental health, substance abuse, and prevention services. Prevention of gun violence through increasing the effectiveness of community partnerships to target evidenced evidenced-based strategies to reduce gun violence.

The last thing discussed was the Cedar Rapids Wellbeing Advisory Committee. In their 2023 Work plan, they have a goal about active transportation. The objective is to "endorse the city's promotion of active transportation- including education of how public transit works and the development of additional improvements by December 31, 2023. Strategies include night walks (review sidewalks, safety, and lighting) and a working group of transit users and transit organizations.

3. Regional Passenger Transportation Needs – Brock Grenis, ECICOG

Brock Grenis shared that in the ECICOG Passenger Transportation Plan from 2021, their need summary included: 1. Need for expansion of service, 2. Need for collaboration among providers and agencies, and 3. Need for enhancement of current services and embrace new innovations. Brock then went into each of the three needs identified.

Discussion was held regarding each of the three needs. The need for expansion of transportation services need was discussed regarding support multi-modal programs;

additional service option to rural areas, including across county boundaries; additional service for elderly, low income, and disabled populations; seek to attract choice riders for public transit; and additional opportunities for employment related to transportation.

Discussion about the need for collaboration among providers and agencies delved into: Need for a one-stop resource for information on all transit services region wide, one call phone number, one-click website focused on transportation; Collaboration among public transit systems to ensure availability of similar service; Regular interaction among MHDS regions and transportation providers; Collaborative funding solutions; Explore private and non-profit transportation providers for opportunities; Seek transportation solutions across current political, planning, and public transit boundaries; Collaboration with local sustainability groups and initiatives, including zero emission vehicles; Seek partnerships with statewide groups and agencies that focus on transportation and representative of passenger transportation users; and Collaboration with local emergency management agencies to prepare for transportation needs during disasters.

The last need, the need for enhancement of current services and embrace innovation, has discussion that covered: Modernize fleet and facilities; Seek alternative fuel and zero emission vehicles; Explore mobility management for entire region; Explore innovative approaches to expand transit (Partnerships with employers, community colleges, institutions); Explore innovative funding for capital replacement and expansion; Offer amenities on vehicles that passengers need and desire; Monitor innovative platforms that could change the provision of passenger transportation and ride ride-sharing, and consider partnerships (Uber, Lyft, Via).

4. MPO Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP)

Hilary Hershner provided an overview of the MPO's PTP. She went over what the PTP is, what does TAG have to do with the PTP, and the timeline for the PTP plan.

The PTP is an Iowa creation for MPOs/RPAs. It is designed to promote joint, coordinated passenger transportation planning programs that further the development of the local and regional public transportation systems. The PTP provides needs-based justification for passenger transportation projects and as well as incorporating federal requirements for coordinated planning. The PTP is also a mobility management tool to help meet the specific passenger transportation needs that the local constituency desires. The PTP goals are: 1. Improve transportation services to lowans; 2. Increase passenger transportation coordination; 3. Create awareness of unmet needs; 4. Develop new working partnerships; 5. Assist decision decision-makers, advocates, and consumers in understanding the range of transportation options available; 6. Develop justification for future passenger transportation investments; and 7. Save dollars and eliminate overlapping of services.

Development of the PTP must include an honest effort to jointly involve passenger transportation stakeholders (human services agencies and all transit providers, generally) and consider all passenger transportation needs and services. The PTP must be updated (at a minimum) every five years and it should be one of several inputs to the Transit Chapter of your area's long long-range transportation plan. The Policy Board must approve the PTP, as well as any amendments. During the PTP's planning process, it includes and invites representatives of public transit systems, human service agencies/organizations/providers, private transportation providers, etc. covering the entire planning area. TAG will be consulted and in development and review of PTP.

Hilary went into the format and what is included in the PTP. The PTP is formatted into five sections: Section 1: Introduction and Process Discussion; Section 2: Inventory and Area Profile; Section 3: Coordination Issues; Section 4: Priorities and Strategies; Section 5: Funding. The most recent PTP, covering the years 2019 to 2024, is [available online](#).

After covering what is in the plan, Hilary noted what TAG will do as part of the PTP planning process. They will assist in the transportation planning process, both with regard to MPO long-range (PTP and the long-range transportation plan, LRTP) and short-range (Transportation Improvement Program, TIP), and can identify needs which could lead to projects. Input received from TAG throughout the PTP process will go to the MPO's decision-makers, the Policy Board. TAG will also provide an evaluation of the planning process.

Hilary shared what the expected timeline is. First, there will be data gathered from the public through transit audits and surveys. There will be open houses. The PTP, both draft and final, will go to MPO Policy Board and Executive Committee for review and adoption. The draft PTP is due to the Iowa DOT on February 1, 2024, with the final, Policy-Board approved final PTP being due May 1, 2024.

5. MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Transit and Road Projects

Hilary Hershner went into the MPO's TIP projects for this year's program. She first provided an overview of what the TIP is and then noted TAG is reviewing the TIP projects as many people included in TAG represent people from communities we are trying to reach. The MPO wants to get more information about how the projects impact people and get TAG member's local insight beyond only transit projects, so road projects are also being shared.

Hilary shared the road projects: 1. 7th Avenue Reconstruction in Marion, 2. 6th Street SW Reconstruction in Cedar Rapids, 3. West Main Street Reconstruction in Robins, and 4. Boyson Road Reconstruction. Hilary then shared the transit projects from Cedar Rapids Transit: 1. Two fixed-route replacement buses and 2. One paratransit replacement bus. The following tables summarize the road* and transit projects being considered in this TIP cycle.

It should be noted at the time this was presented to TAG, projects with funding in 2028 were included; these projects are no longer being considered this TIP funding cycle. *Five road applications were submitted for this year's TIP; however, the Palo Bridge project, described in the table below, was not shared with TAG (this project will be covered with TAG at their June 2023 meeting).

Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization - FFY24-FFY27 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Funding Requests

Transit Projects - Executive Committee Recommendation

Requestor	Project	Project Description	Estimated Total Cost for Project	MPO Funding Previously Allocated to Project	Total Amount Requested	Total Amount Recommended	Funding Amount Recommended FFY24	Funding Amount Recommended FFY25	Funding Amount Recommended FFY26	Funding Amount Recommended FFY27	Project Score	Expected Construction Completion	Percentage of MPO Funding in Project (if Approved)
Cedar Rapids Transit	2 Fixed-Route Replacement Buses	Purchase of two (2) heavy-duty replacement buses for fixed-route service	\$ 1,269,000	\$ -	1,015,000	1,015,000	109,800	204,696	162,540	537,964	82	2027	80%
Cedar Rapids Transit	Paratransit Bus Replacement	Purchase of one (1) medium-duty replacement bus for the ADA paratransit service	\$ 316,000	\$ -	252,000	252,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	252,000	82	2027	80%
		Totals: \$	1,585,000	\$ -	1,267,000	1,267,000	109,800	204,696	162,540	789,964			
Total Carbon Reduction Funding Available		Available Funding				\$ 1,437,430	109,800	204,696	162,540	954,394			
Total STBG Available		Available Funding				\$ 401,186				\$ 401,186			
Remainder		* Difference				\$ 565,616	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 565,616			

Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization - FFY24-FFY27 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Funding Requests

Road Projects Blank Funding Spreadsheet

Requestor	Project	Project Description	Estimated Total Cost for Project	MPO Funding Previously Allocated to Project	Total Amount Requested	Total Amount Recommended	Funding Amount Recommended FFY24	Funding Amount Recommended FFY25	Funding Amount Recommended FFY26	Funding Amount Recommended FFY27	Project Score	Expected Construction Completion	Percentage of MPO Funding in Project (if Approved)
City of Marion	7th Ave from 12th Street to 22nd Street	Modification of lane configurations with intersection improvements at 10th Street and 35th Street. Update: Reconstruction of 7th Avenue between 12th Street and 22nd Street from a 4-lane cross-section to a 3-lane cross-section with a center dual left turn lane, including additional infrastructure improvements, including storm sewer, sanitary sewer, water main, sidewalk, lighting, and other improvements.	\$6,445,000	\$3,294,000	\$1,635,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	242.2	2029	51%
City of Cedar Rapids	6th Street SW from 1st Ave W to 16th Ave SW	Complete reconstruction of 6th Street SW from 16th Avenue to 1st Avenue W. Conversion of a four-lane section to three-lane section with a center left turn lane and bike lanes. The project will also include the replacement of traffic signals at 16th Avenue, 15th Avenue, and 5th Avenue. Storm sewer, fiber interconnect of traffic signals, transit stops, sidewalks, and water main improvements will be included.	\$17,192,000	\$ -	\$13,755,600	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	43	2027	0%
City of Hiawatha	Boyson Road	Reconstruct rural pavement and right-of-way to an urban 3-lane section, including PCC pavement, storm sewers, sidewalk, trail, and railroad crossing improvements.	\$1,590,000	\$ -	\$1,274,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	31	2025	0%
City of Robins	West Main Street Reconstruction	This project will reconstruct approximately 3,500 feet of existing two-lane rural section as a two lane urban section from approximately Slamy Road to east of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail. This project will involve traffic analysis to determine appropriate intersection lane use configurations within the project limits. Intersection improvements are planned to be incorporated into the project at Ouassas Road and at Robins Road including improvement of intersection and stopping sight distances. Intersection controls will also be analyzed by the Engineer, but signalized intersections are not anticipated with this project.	\$4,451,000	\$ -	\$3,560,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	13	2025	0%
City of Palo	Covington Road and 1st Street Bridge Rehabilitation	: The City of Palo has two bridges within their jurisdiction, and both are in need of repairs. Covington Road Bridge is an existing 152' long by 28' wide bridge that spans Dry Creek on Covington Road. It is a continuous steel stringer bridge built in 1955. The existing bridge has significantly deteriorated expansion joints, approach paving, bearings, and steel stringers. To prevent further deterioration a rehabilitation project is needed as soon as possible. The project should include traffic control, new expansion joints, clean, repair and paint bearings, and new approach paving. The 1st Street Bridge is an existing 155' long by 26' wide bridge that spans Dry Creek on 1st Street. It is a steel stringer bridge that was built in 1955. The existing structure has deteriorated bearings and stringer ends due to decking salt exposure. To prevent further damage a rehabilitation project is needed as soon as possible. The project should include traffic control, vegetation removal, clean, repair and coal bearings and stringers.	\$330,000	\$ -	\$264,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	13	2024	0%
Total STBG Available		Totals: \$	30,011,000	\$ 3,294,000	\$ 20,466,600	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -			
Total STBG from Transit Additional STBG Funding		Available Funding			\$ 3,973,570	\$ 3,973,570	74,000	80,000	280,000	3,539,570			
					\$ 401,186	\$ 401,186				\$ 401,186			
					\$ 365,394	\$ 365,394	74,000	80,000	280,000	\$ 365,394			
Remainder		* Difference			\$ 4,760,150	\$ 4,760,150	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,326,150			

6. Member Updates

Hilary Hershner if anyone at the meeting had an update for their organization

- Linn County Public Health noted they received a Walkability grant from the Centers for Disease Control for a Virtual Walkability Academy.
- Marion city staff shared that the Horizons and Brad DeBrower, CR Transit (CRT) Manager, were looking at microtransit. It is not yet funded in 2024, but staff is still looking into it.
- Brad with CRT shared that they hope to have an agreement signed soon for the zero-emission transition plan.
- Neighborhood Transportation Services (NTS) shared that they completed their second year of microtransit (Via app). Ridership went up and the average ride time went from about 60 minutes to about 15 minutes because of the Via app. NTS also shared that the Eastern Iowa Health Center had 60 rides in January. On two Saturdays in February NTS will provide rides to the Covid clinic. On Sunday, have anywhere from 50 to 120 riders. They also had 2,000 rides in private shuttles and 12 routes for Cedar Rapids Community School District (about 1,200 students per month).