

Chapter 10

Public Involvement



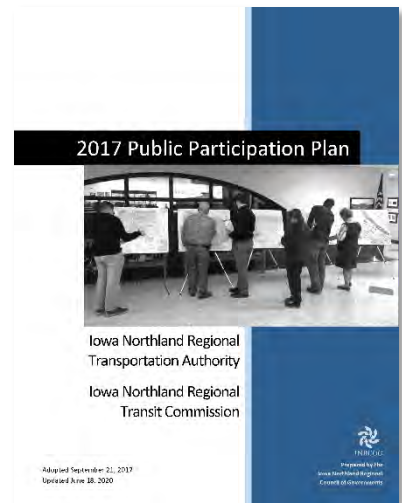
Chapter 10 – Public Involvement

Public Participation Plan

In 2017, the RTA adopted the Public Participation Plan to outline the ways public involvement is incorporated into RTA activities, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan. This document was updated on June 18, 2020 to allow for additional flexibility when circumstances are presented where a meeting in person is impossible or impractical. This was in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As detailed in the PPP, there are a number of federal and state requirements the RTA adheres to in order to ensure an open and transparent planning process. These include FAST Act requirements, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Iowa Open Meetings Law, and the Iowa Public Records Law. In addition, the RTA has several ongoing activities that form the basis of interaction with the public. These include:

- Monthly joint Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings which are open to the public.
- Electronic access to meetings through GoToMeeting.
- Work sessions, focus groups, open houses, public input meetings, and public hearings as applicable during the development of major transportation planning documents.
- Publication of transportation articles in the monthly INRCOG electronic newsletter, which is mailed to over 400 local officials and citizens.
- Notices of opportunities for public input shared via MailChimp marketing program.
- Provision of information and interviews with area media as requested.
- Presentations to city councils, planning commissions, and county supervisors as needed.
- Presentations to local service clubs and other groups and organizations as requested.
- Information, transportation plans, and notices of opportunities for public input shared on INRCOG's website www.inrcog.org and Facebook page.



Passenger Transportation Plan Adopted

In April, the MPO and RTA adopted the FY 2021-2025 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). The document aims to provide coordination between passenger transportation providers and human service agencies, and to recommend projects and initiatives to improve passenger transportation.



Example electronic newsletter article

The public involvement process utilized for the development of the 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan was guided by the PPP which sets minimum requirements for public involvement opportunities. Public involvement actions required include the following:

- Draft LRTP
 - The draft document will be developed by INRCOG staff with further input from jurisdiction representatives & the Iowa DOT, & oversight by the Policy Board & Technical Committee.
 - Input will be sought from individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways & bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, providers of freight transportation services, & other interested parties.
 - Focus groups will be utilized to represent all pertinent modes of transportation & issues. Focus groups may include transit, highway & land use, bicycle & pedestrian, safety & security, & environmental resources. Focus groups will be charged with identifying issues & potential solutions & reviewing draft chapters.
 - The draft document will be made available at the INRCOG Center, on the INRCOG website, & upon request.
- Notices & Public Meetings
 - A minimum of three (3) public input sessions will be held regarding the draft LRTP.
 - When a circumstance presents itself where a meeting in person is impossible or impractical, the RTA may conduct a public input meeting by electronic means.
 - The RTA will provide public access to the discussion of the input meeting to the extent reasonably possible.
 - The public announcement of the meeting, at least one week before the public input meeting, shall include the time, virtual/electronic place, subject matter of the meeting, & name & phone number of the person available to respond to request for information about the meeting.
 - The place of the input meeting is the place from which the communication originates or where public access is provided to the discussion.
 - The RTA shall make promptly available to the public, in a place easily accessible to the public, the transcript, electronic recording, or minutes of the discussion & will include a statement explaining why a public input meeting in person was impossible or impractical.
 - Should in person meetings be held, at least one (1) public input session will be held in an area identified as being a low-income or minority neighborhood.
 - All in person meetings will be held in accessible facilities.
 - Notices for public input sessions will be advertised through local media sources. Notices may be posted at governmental offices, public libraries, post offices, on transit buses, at the INRCOG Center, & on the INRCOG website & Facebook page. Notices may also be sent to organizations serving traditionally underserved populations.
 - Any person with sight, reading, or language barriers can contact the RTA (minimum 48 hours prior to a session) & arrangements will be made for accommodation.
- Public Comment Period
 - Written & oral comments will be solicited during the public input sessions. The public will also have at least a 15-day comment period following the final public input session to submit comments via letter, email, phone, or in person.
 - A public hearing will be held at a regularly scheduled RTA meeting following the public input sessions to summarize public comments & responses. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) days & no less than four (4) days before the date of the hearing.
- Final LRTP
 - Following the public hearing, the RTA will adopt a final LRTP, including a summary of comments & responses.
 - The final LRTP will be submitted to the Iowa DOT, FHWA, & FTA.
 - The final LRTP will be available on the INRCOG website, at the INRCOG Center, & upon request.
 - The public participation process associated with the LRTP will be evaluated & updated as needed.
- Revisions
 - The LRTP may be revised between full document updates to reflect current project information.
 - Other amendments to the LRTP will be made as needed.
 - Amendments will require a public hearing to be held at a regularly scheduled RTA meeting. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) days & no less than four (4) days before the date of the hearing.

Public Involvement Efforts

2020 Public Input Survey

In September 2020, RTA staff conducted a public input survey to gain input from across the Iowa Northland Region. A mailing list of 1,000 households in the region (outside of the Black Hawk County MPO area) was purchased through the mailing list consultant LeadsPlease. The geography was selected manually using Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy County boundaries, and ZIP codes 50651 and 50626 to capture residents in La Porte City, Dunkerton, and rural Black Hawk County outside of the MPO area. According to U.S. Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey Five-year Estimates, there are 36,258 households in the region. The LeadsPlease database had 37,581 total available leads. The list of names and addresses was randomly generated.

The survey was administered through a mailing. The survey packet included a cover letter, survey form, and prepaid postage return envelope. On the back of the survey form was a map of the six-county Iowa Northland Region. In an effort to increase response rates, an online version of the survey was made available through www.surveymonkey.com. A link to the survey was provided in the cover letter. The survey consisted of five transportation questions with several opportunities for written comments, and three demographic questions.



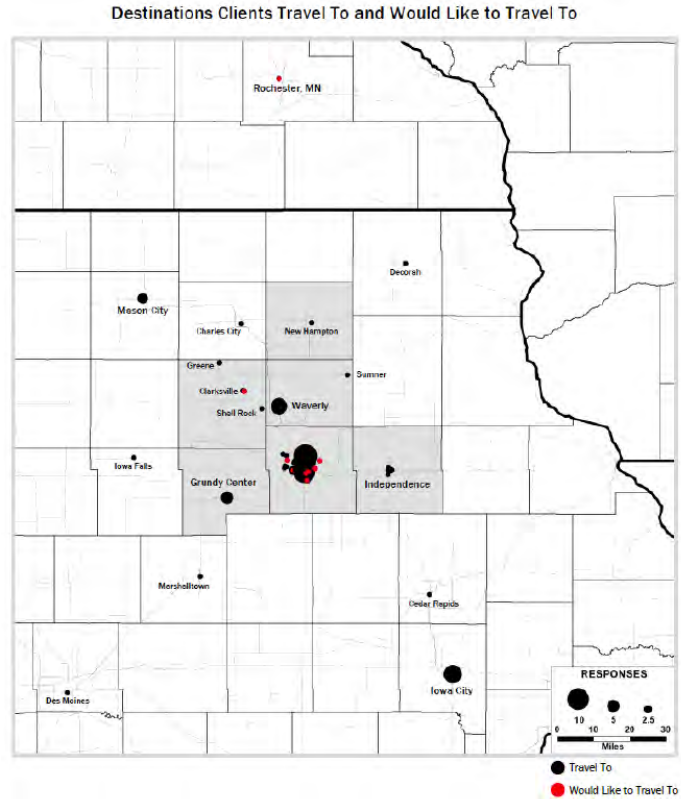
A total of 1,000 surveys were mailed to residents in the region, and 118 were returned. A copy of the survey packet as well as survey results can be found in the Appendix. Notable findings include the following:

- 55.9 percent of survey respondents rated roads and bridges as Excellent or Good.
- 43.2 percent of survey respondents rated pedestrian infrastructure as Excellent or Good.
- 33.9 percent of survey respondents rated bicycle infrastructure as Excellent or Good.
- 56.4 percent of responses rated public transit (bus) as Poor or Very Poor.
- 56.0 percent of responses rated air as Excellent or Good.
- When asked what the number one transportation problem is in their life:
 - 28.8 responded road and bridge maintenance.
 - 9.3 percent reported a safety issue (road, railroad crossing, bike & ped).
 - 7.6 percent indicated there is no public transportation in their area.
 - 5.9 percent commented on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Congestion and capacity were not a primary issue (2.5 percent) for survey respondents.
- When asked what the biggest transportation challenge will be in the next 25 years:
 - 43.2 responded road & bridge maintenance.
 - 11.9 percent said access to public transit (bus & rail).
 - 9.3 percent mentioned the ability to drive and/or access to medical appointments.
- When asked if they would support bike lanes on roads, short trails/trail loops in local parks, and/or long-distance recreational trails:
 - 79.7 percent would support at least one improvement.
 - 21.2 percent would support all three improvements.

Passenger Transportation Survey

Public input was received through a Passenger Transportation Survey that was conducted as part of the FY 2021-2025 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). The purpose of the survey was to help identify existing transportation services, transportation needs, and opportunities for coordinated services in the Iowa Northland Region, including the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area. Survey responses were also utilized to help identify passenger transportation investment priorities and strategies for the next five years.

The online survey was distributed to passenger transportation providers and human service agencies in December, 2019. The survey consisted of 12 questions as well as several opportunities for written comments. Agencies were also provided the opportunity to complete the survey manually. Agencies were notified of the survey through mailings and email. A total of 50 responses were received. Survey results are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.



Policy Board and Technical Committee

Monthly joint Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings were used to discuss the LRTP update throughout 2020. Discussion topics during this time included the public input survey methodology, the Bicycle Accommodation Plan, and review of draft chapters. RTA meetings are open to the public and advertised through local media and the INRCOG Facebook page. Starting in April of 2020, all meetings were made available online through GoToMeeting.

Website and Social Media

The INRCOG website www.inrcog.org was used throughout the development of this Plan. Draft chapters were posted on the transportation department website as they were completed, and staff contact information was provided to any person who wished to comment on draft materials. Other information on the transportation planning process and additional transportation documents and memorandums are available on the website. The final LRTP is posted online and available at the INRCOG office. The INRCOG Facebook page was also used to notify the public of the draft LRTP and opportunities for input.

Long-Range Transportation Plan Public Input Meetings

In November 2020, three public input meetings were held on the draft 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual public input sessions were held through GoToMeeting. The public input sessions were advertised via a news release, flyers posted at public places, the INRCOG website and Facebook page, and an email blast through MailChimp to the INRCOG mailing list. During the sessions, a slideshow presentation with a variety of displays was played on loop. Staff were available through the entirety of the sessions to answer questions. Persons were able to submit comments via phone, email, in person, or an online comment form. A summary of comments can be found in the Appendix.

External Stakeholder Consultation

Several Federal, State, Tribal, and local government agencies were notified when the draft LRTP document was available for review. Feedback on topics relevant to their field of expertise was requested. Agencies notified include the following:

- Black Hawk County Conservation
- Bremer County Conservation
- Buchanan County Conservation
- Butler County Conservation
- Chickasaw County Conservation
- Grundy County Conservation
- Black Hawk County Emergency Management
- Bremer County Emergency Management
- Buchanan County Emergency Management
- Butler County Emergency Management
- Chickasaw County Emergency Management
- Grundy County Emergency Management
- Black Hawk County REAP Committee
- Grow Cedar Valley
- Hawkeye Community College
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- Iowa Department on Aging
- Iowa Department for the Blind
- Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
- Iowa Department of Education
- Iowa Department of Human Rights
- Iowa Department of Human Services
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Iowa Department of Public Safety
- Iowa Department of Transportation, Systems Planning Bureau
- Iowa Department of Transportation, District 2
- Iowa Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission
- Iowa Tourism Board
- Iowa Utilities Board
- Iowa Workforce Development
- Office of the State Archaeologist
- Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi
- State Historical Society of Iowa
- Transit Advisory Committee
- University of Northern Iowa
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, Midwest Regional Office
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois-Iowa Field Office



Opportunity for Public Input

The Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) will be holding virtual public input sessions on the draft 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The document examines the current transportation networks - roads and bridges, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, air, and rail - and assesses their adequacy for the future. Draft chapters are available at <http://www.inrcog.org/lrtp.htm>.

The virtual public input sessions will be held on Monday, November 16; Tuesday, November 17; and Wednesday, November 18 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. Visit <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/534650245> OR dial +1 (224) 501-3412, access code 534-660-245 during the listed hours. Staff will be available to answer questions via web conference and phone. The sessions will be open house format with no formal presentation.

Comments will be accepted on the draft LRTP until the RTA holds a public hearing and considers adoption of a final version on Thursday, December 17 at 1:00 p.m. at INRCOG.

Comments can be submitted at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/35GXSSN> OR directly to Kyle Durant, Transportation Planner II: kdurant@inrcog.org or (319) 235-0311 ext. 139.

INRCOG public input meetings are open to all individuals. Any persons with a location need receiving a reasonable accommodation to participate must contact INRCOG at (319) 235-0311 at least 14 (2) business days prior to the meeting.