

MEETING MINUTES: RPA 1 Transportation Enhancement Committee  
Thursday, January 12, 2017, 8:30 a.m. - Upper Explorerland RPC, Postville

Board members in attendance: Elaine Govern, Valerie Reinke, Barb Schroeder, Rod Marlatt, Bruce Palmborg, Harlan Satrom, Joshua Johnson, Rachelle Howe, and Michelle Barness.

1. Meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m. by Chair Marlatt.
2. Motion to approve the agenda was made by Schroeder, seconded by Satrom, all approved.
3. A motion to approve the 10-13-16 minutes was made by Palmborg, seconded by Schroeder, all approved.
4. Annual appointment of Chair: After discussion Schroeder made a motion to re-elect Rod Marlatt as Chair, seconded by Palmborg, all in favor. A motion was made by Satrom to elect Schroeder as Vice Chair, seconded by Govern, all approved.
5. Barness explained that at the request of the DOT the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG), regional transit and RPA-1 transportation planners would initiate an update to the region's Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). Barness reviewed a PTP timeline she had provided for the committee to look at.
6. The committee briefly discussed the importance of the backbone trail initiative being in the Long Range Transportation Plan.
7. Planner Barness introduced the topic of the TAP application process. She briefly reviewed the current regional TAP application, including the funding amount anticipated, but explained that the TAP application process would be facilitated and decided by the DOT starting in the coming federal aid cycle. She explained that the DOT had not provided an application for distribution yet, but that it would likely be similar to what the region has used in the past. Committee members discussed the timeline they use for submission and review of TAP applications, how the enhancement committee has historically prioritized projects.

Committee members questioned Planner Barness regarding what will happen if the DOT does not provide the TAP application in the timeframe the region has used in the past. Barness was unsure, but indicated that one possibility is that the application process could be delayed but still occur in the spring. There was discussion regarding how long it takes to complete the TAP application, and agreement around a month being a reasonable amount of time for completion.

The committee requested Planner Barness follow-up again with the DOT regarding the specifics of the TAP application process and provide information to them as it becomes available.

8. Planner Barness shared with the committee that the DOT was no longer planning on requiring a 50/50 split of TAP Flex funds. She reviewed data from other RPAs in the state regarding how they split TAP flex funds on an annual basis. Several RPAs award all of their TAP Flex aid to TAP projects, several award all the funds to road projects, and a small handful split the TAP Flex between TAP and road projects. Of those that split, a 50/50 split was somewhat common.

Committee members discussed what they believed would be an appropriate TAP Flex split based on the data provided and what the impact of the funds could be for transportation alternative versus road projects. There was discussion surrounding what information the Policy Board is looking at in making their decision on the



distribution of TAP flex funds, and what additional research could be completed to provide additional guidance on the distribution of TAP flex funds. Goals in the regions Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) expressing the need for transportation alternatives improvements is one important consideration in decisions regarding distribution of TAP flex funds.

There was general agreement by committee members that a more even TAP Flex split between transportation alternative projects and road projects would be advantageous for the region. Committee members pointed out that the small amounts of funding available through TAP flex aid has the ability to have a sizable impact on transportation alternative projects and less so on road projects.

Committee members raised the additional advantage that having more TAP flex funds available could be leveraged by transportation alternative projects to become eligible for further grant funding opportunities.

Committee members agreed that working with the Technical Committee on the issue of how best to split the TAP Flex funds was important.

Committee member Govern explained that transportation alternative projects also address key safety issues for transportation in the region, another reason for prioritizing flex funding for these projects. Govern shared information on potential safety concerns for trails near Riceville, and indicated that associated work may be a potential TAP project.

9. Chair Marlatt emphasized the importance of prioritizing shovel ready projects in awarding TAP and TAP Flex funds. He also explained the importance of supporting Scenic By-Ways and Safe Routes to Schools projects with the funds. Additional TAP Flex funds could have a significant impact on projects such as these. Stormwater projects are another important use of TAP funding.
10. The current federal fund balances were reviewed. They were adjusted based on most recent quarterly reports received from the DOT (through Quarter 1 of FFY 2017). Targets for 2021 have not yet been received from the DOT.
11. Items from Committee Members:
  - Allamakee County: Reinke explained that Jim Janett has been spending a lot of time with the Driftless Education Center. The building is nearing completion. They have already had visitors at the center, and are planning on officially opening in towards the end of summer or in the fall of 2017.
  - Clayton County: Marlatt was able to share information on Clayton County activities. The Clayton County Supervisors are interested in a countywide trail plan, which Clayton County Conservation Director Jenna Pollock is working on. Pollock has been visiting each community about the plan and is finalizing it.
  - Fayette County: Marlatt talked about the Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC) trail extension through Gilbertson. The project was about 100k short but they were able to attain an additional 100k in REAP grant funding. Trail funding through REAP is not common, and it was helpful that the goals for the TRRC were communicated consistently in so many different trail plans, including the region's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Work on the concept statement for the project has begun, and they hope to let the project in June.
  - Howard County: Govern shared information on trail and trail-bridge work in the county. She discussed some of the land acquisition challenges experienced in planning for trails, and discussed the need to re-direct trails across Highway 9 due to land acquisition issues. Committee members discussed different situations when land acquisition issues had become an impediment to trail extension and connectivity issues. Govern discussed the county's attempt to connect trails through Howard County with Shooting Star Trail to the north. The trails will be within one mile of each other, but again, land acquisition was an impediment.

- Winneshiek County: Schroeder shared information regarding working with the DOT on land acquisition for recent trail work near Decorah. The DOT approved money to assist with land acquisition for Dry Run Trail, and have been assisting with cost estimates for acquisitions. She also explained that the Nest Valley Recreation Area purchase plan was finalized in December of 2016. It is the first new park in 20 years in the area, and will be open to the public later with a campground, restrooms and other amenities. This parks sits along Dry Run Trail. Barb also explained that she had spoken with representatives from Ossian regarding trail connections from that community to Fayette County trails. She explained the significance of intercity trail and park space planning and regional trail connectivity. She also shared that Spillville and Fort Akinson are forming plans for connecting to the Prairie Farmer Trail.

12. Floor items:

- Reinke touched on the issue of the sale of the Camp Tahigwa property by the Girl Scouts. A non-profit group interested in the future use of the property for girl scout or other public use is searching out options for funding for purchasing the land. Marlatt discussed different funding sources and issues of programming use of the land depending on where the money comes from. Schroeder explained that she had toured the site with her board, along with DNR and Fish and Wildlife representatives. There was discussion by stakeholders regarding the potential use of the land for environmental education purposes and the challenge of identifying which buildings could be kept or removed if the DNR purchases the land. Other challenges include who will maintain the structures on the property. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is also interested on what happens to the land. Marlatt stated that the site has very good wildlife habitat which is a draw for the DNR. Committee members discussed potential partnerships and agreed that county conservation organizations could be interested in contributing smaller amounts of funds if there may be some future use of the site for related programming.
- Satrom shared information on initiative by Decorah residents to see a YMCA come to town.

13. Committee members discussed the date of the next meeting, which was difficult to establish given unknown factors surrounding the TAP application process. Committee members requested Planner Barnes follow-up when more information is available.

14. Marlatt made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Schroeder. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.