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MEETING Minutes: RPA-1 Transportation Policy Board

Thursday, March 29, 2018, 11:00 a.m. – Upper Explorerland RPC, Postville

Board members in attendance: Dean Thompson, Winneshiek County; Larry Schellhammer, Allamakee County; Janell Bradley, Fayette County; Ron McCartney, Clayton County; Dylan Mulfinger, Oelwein; Lorraine Borowski, Decorah.

Others in attendance: Michelle Barness, UERPC; Aaron Detter, UERPC; Lee Bjerke, Winneshiek County; Nick Rissman, Howard County; Vic Kane, Oelwein; Rafe Koopman, Clayton County; Joel Fantz, Fayette County; Rod Marlatt, Fayette County Conservation Board.

1. Meeting was called to order at 11:15 a.m. by Thompson.
2. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Bradley, seconded by Schellhammer, and approved unanimously.
3. A motion to approve the January 26, 2018 meeting minutes was made by Mulfinger, seconded by McCartney, and approved unanimously.
4. Barness initiated a discussion of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)/Swap funding targets and balances. She explained that the target for STBG/Swap for FY 2022 was \$2,245,000, along with 80% of the STBG-TAP-Flex (\$72,800) for FY 2021 and FY 2022, for a total of \$2,390,600, not including any balances. There were no comments from the board and Barness moved on to a discussion of projects.
5. Barness explained that applications for STBG/Swap for the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) were received from Fayette County, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC), Allamakee County, Winneshiek County, and Howard County. She added that the amount requested by UERPC is the amount that's been approved in previous years—\$30,000. She explained that the other applications received were two projects in Fayette County: W14 Reconstruction and B66 Reconstruction; Maud Road paving in Allamakee County; W14 Repaving in Winneshiek County; and V10 Paving in Howard County. She explained that Fayette County is anticipating a balance of about \$300,000 from a FY 2019 project, but that after discussion by the Technical Committee it was decided to not consider that balance in the available funding at this time. She concluded that the Technical Committee made a recommendation of awarding the W14 Reconstruction project in Fayette County for \$2,100,000 in STBG/Swap as well as the \$30,000 to UERPC for transportation planning, for a total funded amount of \$2,130,000.

A motion to approve the two projects recommended by the Technical Committee for inclusion in the TIP was made by Bradley, seconded by Schellhammer. The following discussion took place prior to the vote.

Barness further explained that per Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) feedback on RPA-1's application process for STBG/Swap, the Technical Committee recommended that the application be adjusted

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to better allow cities to request funding by the Policy Board even if the County Board and/or Engineer do not support the project, and that any changes to the application would be brought to the Policy Board for further discussion and approval in the future.

Thompson asked for clarification on what IDOT meant by “regional priorities” in its feedback with regards to selecting projects, stating that when projects come from the County, they are a priority and that is the Policy Board’s best judgement. Barness clarified that one of IDOT’s points was about making sure that there isn’t a decision at the County level that would prevent a City project from being considered by the Policy Board, which has the final decision in awarding funds for projects, and that this could be addressed by making some small adjustments to the application itself. Barness explained that the second point that IDOT was making was that as a region, RPA-1 needs to consider the region’s Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which defines policies and priorities for transportation in the region, in making project decisions. She explained that this is something that can be considered for future application processes.

Fantz commented that the IDOT feedback amounts to a recommendation, and that there is no requirement that the system be changed.

McCartney added that the Technical Committee had a good discussion about the slight modifications to the application process, using words like “review” and “support” on the application as opposed to “approval” by the Counties.

The motion by Bradley and seconded by Schellhammer to approve the two projects recommended by the Technical Committee was approved unanimously.

6. Barness initiated a discussion of Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) targets and balances. She explained that the funding target for TAP includes amounts for both FY 2021 and FY 2022 because there was no TAP award process last year; that the target was \$119,000 for each year; and that this combined with the remaining 20% of the STBG-TAP-Flex (\$18,200) for both years totaled \$274,400, not including any balances.
7. Barness explained that applications for TAP projects for the 2019-2022 TIP were received from Fayette County, Winneshiek County, and Clayton County and that the Enhancements Committee discussed these projects in detail. She described the process by which each County Conservation Board scores all the applications, and then composite scores are decided by the full Enhancements Committee. Winneshiek County’s application for construction of a bridge on the Dry Run Trail was the top score by three of the five counties, and it had the highest average score. She explained that based on this the Enhancements Committee made a recommendation to award Winneshiek County the full amount requested, which will approximately utilize the full amount of TAP funding available.

Thompson asked for clarification on IDOT’s feedback on the TAP applications, which were all lacking the required County resolution to provide the 20% funding match and maintain the project for 20 years if awarded. Marlatt clarified that this was something that all the applicants overlooked, that all projects were deemed eligible by IDOT, and that whichever project is awarded funds will have to address those issues.

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Barness added that the Technical Committee also recommended awarding TAP funding to the Winneshiek County project.

Marlatt added that all three applications that were submitted are basically working on different portions of the regional “Backbone” trail system—that it’s all different portions of the same system.

A motion to approve the recommended TAP project of Winneshiek County for inclusion in the TIP was made by Bradley, seconded by Schellhammer, and approved unanimously.

8. Barness presented background on the draft RPA-1 Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP) for FY 2019 and discussed the work elements and the budget for RPA-1 transportation planning activities during the period from July 2018 to June 2019. She asked the Policy Board for feedback and approval to submit the draft TPWP to IDOT for review. She added that she will incorporate any necessary changes based on IDOT’s review and have the final TPWP ready for approval by the Policy Board at the May meeting.

A motion to approve the draft TPWP for submission to IDOT was made by Borowski, seconded by Mulfinger.

McCartney asked Barness what efforts are made to seek efficiencies in the budget, specifically along the lines of allocation of staff time. Barness said that one of the things staff would be doing is more carefully dividing out duties among RPA/UERPC planners and ensuring that they are avoiding any redundancies. She said that another effort that staff have discussed is working to make the RPA-1 planning documents more succinct and user-friendly while continuing to ensure that IDOT requirements are being met. McCartney then asked how staff time is allocated or tracked for the RPA-1 planning activities—whether it is based on a boilerplate or on actual hours. Barness explained that staff track time for every grant or funding source down to the half-hour, and that time that staff spends on RPA-1 tasks is specifically tracked and is unique to RPA-1; that the budget is not a boilerplate from another region and that the budget is based on past budget years, what has been completed in the past fiscal year and what new activities there will be.

The motion to approve the draft TPWP for submission to IDOT was approved unanimously.

9. Review of the RPA-1 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). Barness explained the PTP process, indicating that a public comment period was provided for the plan; the Policy Board approved the draft for submittal to IDOT at its January meeting; that IDOT provided PTP feedback; and that staff have addressed IDOT’s comments in the current, final PTP which was ready for consideration and approval by the Policy Board for submission to IDOT.

PRA-1 Resolution number 2018-01, to approve the RPA-1 Passenger Transportation Plan 2018-2022, was read aloud by Thompson. A motion to approve the resolution was made by Schellhammer, seconded by McCartney. Barness took a roll-call vote and the resolution was approved unanimously.

10. Barness began a discussion of the RPA-1 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), explaining that it is updated every five years and the next update will need to be completed by March of 2019. She added that

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Detter would be the project manager and that she would be assisting. Detter proceeded to give an overview of the project process and timeline and the plan's 20-year planning horizon.

Mulfinger asked whether the plan will be focused on sustaining what we already have in the region, or if it will be looking into the future and trying to predict some of what could happen. Detter clarified that the plan is intended to look into the future, look at revenue projections, population and commuting projections and determine the transportation priorities for the region.

11. Barness provided the following updates given by IDOT:

- IDOT will be holding a public meeting regarding the Iowa 9 river crossing in Lansing in mid-May to take input from the public about the research they've done on the alternatives for the bridge, and that they will be sending out further information.
- IDOT's Transportation Commission is working on their five-year program this spring, with adoption in June; no specific projects are known at this time, but there will be a draft available in May.
- The Transportation Commission will be doing an input meeting in our region; it will be October 9 in Decorah at the Hotel Winneshiek.

Detter gave information from IDOT regarding balances of TAP funding that the RPAs will be able to carry over, explaining that RPAs and MPOs will not be able to carry a balance of local TAP funds greater than four years of programming.

12. Thompson asked if any of the members had any floor items.

Mulfinger told members of the board that Oelwein is heading up the Highway 150 Transportation Committee and that they are working on a plan that brings together all the communities in the counties and cities along the corridor, as well as businesses. He added that the group will present to the IDOT Transportation Commission at the October meeting in Decorah, and will continue to lobby IDOT for support of the effort and improving Iowa 150.

Mulfinger also requested that UERPC/RPA staff spell out acronyms once on documents for people who are not aware of what they stand for.

13. Barness initiated a discussion of planning the next meeting date, with attention to trying to find a date that works for Krista Rostad with IDOT. Barness said that she would look at possible dates in May in coordination with Krista Rostad and would send out a poll to Policy Board members.

14. A motion to adjourn was made by Schellhammer, seconded by Borowski, and approved unanimously.