
Meeting Minutes

RPA-1 Enhancement Committee

Wednesday, October 20th, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. – Electronic Meeting

This meeting took place via electronic means pursuant to the provisions of the Iowa Open Meetings Law, Section 21.8, Code of Iowa.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was impractical for the Transportation Enhancement Committee to meet in person. This meeting was open to the public and those in attendance were able to hear the proceedings and provide comments and questions as appropriate. Public notice of the meeting was issued in accordance with Iowa Code Section 21.4.

Members in attendance: Jenna Pollock, Clayton County Conservation; Sheryl Struthers, Fayette County resident; Rod Marlatt (Chair), Fayette County Conservation; Barbara Schroeder, Winneshiek County Conservation; Brian Fuhrmann, Decorah Parks & Recreation Board; Roger Thomas, Clayton County resident; Darla Kelchen, Clayton County Development; Joshua Johnson, City of Oelwein Parks Superintendent; Elaine Govern, Howard County resident.

Others in attendance: Aaron Detter, UERPC Transportation Planning Administrator; Mallory Hanson, Fayette County Economic Development and Tourism / NEI RC&D; Lee Bjerke, Winneshiek County Engineer; Lori Egan, NEICAC EARL Transit Director;

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Marlatt at 9:03 a.m.

2. Approval of the agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Struthers, seconded by Kelchen, and passed unanimously.

3. Approval of the July 21st, 2021 meeting minutes

A motion to approve the July 21st, 2021 meeting minutes was made by Pollock, seconded by Struthers, and passed unanimously.

4. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments

Detter noted the two proposed amendments to the FFY 2022 TIP that the Policy Board would be considering at their meeting directly following the Technical Committee.

A motion to endorse approval of the TIP amendments was made by Govern, seconded by Pollock, and passed unanimously.

5. FTA Title VI Program

Detter discussed the role of the FTA Title VI Program and explained the updates that were made. He noted that the Policy Board members and committee members had had the chance to review and provide comments. He noted that an update to the document is required at least every three years by the Iowa Department of Transportation, and that he would be submitting the updated document prior to the November 1st deadline.

6. Regional Trail Economic Impact Analysis & RPA-1 Staff Updates

Detter provided an overview of the regional trail economic impact analysis that he recently completed. He noted that the project had been in the works for a long time and that much credit was due to UERPC regional planner Michelle Barnes for her early coordination and groundwork on the project. Detter displayed the analysis document and walked through each part, including a graphic flowchart showing the flow of the analysis, from data collection to the input-output model.

Pollock thanked Detter and said she appreciated the explanation of the “target group” or “TG” and that identifying the target group really strengthens the report.

Govern commented that it would be nice if future regional trail maps could show connections outside of our region, including adjacent counties such as Mitchell, as well as connections to neighboring states.

Thomas mentioned the national bike routes promoted by the Adventure Cycling Association, and that we could reflect the route that travels through our region in future regional trail maps.

Govern asked about how do we know trail users weren’t attracted to the area by other factors, such as in the case of Decorah which has lots of attractions. Detter reiterated how one of the factors in identifying the target group was that they had to have indicated on their survey that the trail was the primary purpose for their trip. He noted that it is not perfect, but it is a pretty effective way of narrowing down trail users who specifically came to visit trails.

Fuhrmann asked Detter if the Decorah survey related to all trails in Decorah, or if it was specific to Trout Run Trail. Detter explained that each survey was specific to the individual trail, and in the case of Decorah, trail users would have known they were filling out a survey based on their use of the Trout Run Trail.

Marlatt commented that it was worth the wait, that it’s an excellent product, and that he was very happy with the way it looks. He noted that he would like to see if it would be possible to add one additional page that includes an estimated economic impact for the entire Backbone Trail network once it is built out. Detter noted that he would work on that and would coordinate with Enhancement Committee members as needed.

7. Iowa DOT Updates

Detter read Iowa DOT updates that had been provided to him by Iowa DOT District 2 Planner Krista Billhorn.

8. Floor Items

Thomas commented that the economic impact analysis is very good and that trail advocates and stakeholders need this kind of information to be able to put out there. He asked if it would be good to include information about the health benefits of trails. Detter noted that a health impact analysis could be a whole other project and that this effort was specifically focused on economic impacts.

Marlatt asked if there could be a couple of nicer bound copies of the economic impact analysis document for each of the counties. Detter said he could do that. Marlatt again noted that he is very happy with the work and thinks it's excellent.

9. Set next meeting date

Committee members decided to wait and see what the Policy Board does. Marlatt noted that the next meeting would probably be in line with when we do the next round of TAP applications.

10. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Struthers, seconded by Kelchen, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:01 a.m.