

# Area 15 Regional Planning Commission

## Title VI Plan

### Agency information

Name and title of administrative officer

Name Chris Bowers Title Executive Director

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Name and title of designated Title VI coordinator

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\*If the Title VI coordinator changes, please contact the Iowa DOT Title VI specialist.

## Title VI Program

### I. Policy statement, authorities and citations

#### A. Policy of nondiscrimination

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, hereinafter referred to as the AGENCY, hereby assures that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Pub. L. No. 100-259, 102 Stat. 28, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. The AGENCY further assures every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities, regardless of whether those programs and activities are federally funded.

It is the policy of the AGENCY to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e; Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 U.S.C. §§ 6101-6107; Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4601-4655; 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act, 23 U.S.C. § 324; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Pub. L. No. 92-318, 86 Stat. 235; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §§ 701 *et seq*; Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Pub. L. No. 100-259, 102 Stat. 28; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 *et seq*.; Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act 1968, 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-3631; Exec. Order No. 12898, 59 Fed. Reg. 7629 (1994) (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations); and Exec. Order No. 13166, 65 Fed. Reg. 50121 (2000) (Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency).

The Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Pub. L. No. 100-259, 102 Stat. 28, broadened the scope of Title VI coverage by expanding the definition of terms "programs or activities" to include all programs or activities of

federal-aid recipients, subrecipients and contractors/consultants, regardless of whether such programs and activities are federally assisted.

Pursuant to the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Pub. L. No. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355, the AGENCY hereby gives assurance that no qualified disabled person shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination, including discrimination in employment, under any program or activity that receives or benefits from this federal financial assistance.

The AGENCY also assures that every effort will be made to prevent discrimination through the impacts of its programs, policies and activities on minority and low-income populations. In addition, the AGENCY will take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to services for persons with limited-English proficiency. The AGENCY will, where necessary and appropriate, revise, update and incorporate nondiscrimination requirements into appropriate manuals, directives and regulations.

In the event the AGENCY distributes federal-aid funds to a second-tier subrecipient, the AGENCY will include Title VI language in all written agreements.

The AGENCY's Executive Director, is responsible for initiating and monitoring Title VI activities, preparing reports and performing other responsibilities, as required by 23 C.F.R. § 200 and 49 C.F.R. § 21.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Chris Bowers, Executive Director  
Printed name and title

September 8th, 2014  
Date

## **B. Authorities**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000d, provides that no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, or gender be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

The Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Pub. L. No. 100-259 102 Stat. 28, broadened the scope of Title VI coverage by expanding the definition of terms "programs or activities" to include all programs or activities of federal-aid recipients, subrecipients and contractors, whether such programs and activities are federally assisted or not.

**Environmental justice (EJ):** Executive Order 12898 addresses disproportionate adverse environmental, social and economic impacts that may exist in communities, specifically minority and low-income populations.

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** Executive Order 13166 addresses access to services for persons whose primary language is not English and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English.

**Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA):** The Act prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities and transportation.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Pub. L. No. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355, prohibits discrimination based on disability.

## **C. Additional citations**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d to 2000d-4; 42 U.S.C. §§ 4601 to 4655; 23 U.S.C. §109(h); 23 U.S.C. §324; DOT Order 1050.2; Executive Order 12250; Executive Order 12898; 28 C.F.R. § 50.3.

## **II. Standard assurances**

### **49 C.F.R. § 21.7**

Pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 21.7, every application for federal financial assistance or continuing federal financial assistance must provide a statement of assurance and give reasonable guarantee that the program is (or, in the case of a new program, will be) conducted in compliance with all requirements imposed by or pursuant to Part 21 (Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs of the Department of Transportation – Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). Fully executed standard DOT assurances (including Appendices A, B and C) are attached to this plan.

## **III. Organization, staffing and structure**

### **A. Organizational chart – reporting relationships**

*(See page 10.)*

### **B. Staffing**

#### **Metropolitan planning organization or regional planning affiliation administrator**

The AGENCY administrator is authorized to ensure compliance with provisions of the department's policy of nondiscrimination and with the law, including the requirements of 23 C.F.R. § 200 and 49 C.F.R. § 21. The AGENCY grants compliance function and Title VI coordination shall be performed under the authority of the AGENCY.

#### **Title VI coordinator**

The AGENCY has appointed Chris Bowers, Executive Director to perform the duties of the Title VI coordinator (Coordinator) and ensure implementation of the AGENCY's Title VI Federally Funded Transportation Program pertaining to this agreement.

The AGENCY will notify Iowa DOT in writing of any changes to the Coordinator or Coordinator contact information.

## **III. Implementation procedures**

### **Title VI coordinator's responsibilities and program administration**

As authorized by the AGENCY Administrator, the Coordinator is responsible for initiating, monitoring, and ensuring AGENCY compliance with Title VI requirements as follows.

1. **Program administration.** Administer the Title VI program and coordinate implementation of the plan. Ensure compliance with the assurances, policy, and program objectives. Perform Title VI program reviews to assess administrative procedures, staffing, and resources; provide recommendations as required to the AGENCY administrator (see Section V: Self-Assessment and Remedial Action Procedures).
2. **Complaints.** Review written Title VI complaints that may be received by AGENCY following the adopted procedural guidelines (see Section IV: Complaint Procedures). Ensure every effort is made to resolve complaints informally at the local or regional level.
3. **Data collection.** Statistical data on race, color, national origin, age, disability, income level, language spoken, and gender of participants in, and beneficiaries of, programs is to be gathered and maintained by program area, as described in the Special Emphasis Program Areas Responsibilities Section VI of this

document. The AGENCY will review the statistical data gathering process periodically to ensure sufficiency of data for meeting the requirements of Title VI program administration.

4. **Environmental documents.** To the maximum extent practical, ensure that appropriate data are included as a part of all environmental impact statements (EIS) or environmental assessments (EA) for projects receiving Federal Highway Administration or other federal assistance. Efforts are undertaken to ensure that transportation system improvements that are implemented do not have disproportionately negative effects on minority and low-income populations. In addition, system investments must provide for an equitable distribution of benefits to the areas that are traditionally underrepresented in the planning process.
5. **Training programs.** Conduct or facilitate training programs on Title VI issues and regulations for AGENCY employees; and facilitate Title VI training for appropriate staff, contractors and subrecipients. A summary of training conducted will be documented.
6. **Title VI plan update.** Review and update the AGENCY's Title VI plan as needed or required. Present updated plan to the AGENCY administrator for approval; submit amended plan to the Iowa DOT's Office of Employee Services' civil rights section (OES-CR).
7. **Public dissemination.** Work with AGENCY staff to develop and disseminate Title VI program information to AGENCY employees and subrecipients, including contractors, subcontractors, consultants, and subconsultants and beneficiaries, as well as the general public. Public dissemination may include postings of official statements, inclusion of Title VI language in contracts or other agreements, website postings, and annual publication of the AGENCY's Title VI Policy Statement in newspaper(s) having a general circulation, and informational brochures. Ensure public service announcements or notices are posted of proposed projects, hearings, meetings, or formation of public advisory boards, in newspapers or other media reaching the affected community. Ensure the full utilization of available minority publications or media; and, where appropriate, provide written or verbal information in languages other than English.
8. **LEP.** The AGENCY follows Executive Order 13166 in identifying and engaging LEP populations to ensure their involvement and knowledge of transportation planning and projects in and around their communities. A LEP person is defined as one who does not speak English as his or her primary language and has a limited ability to read, write or understand English. The AGENCY's policy for engaging individuals with LEP is to provide translation services to individuals who request them, if reasonable accommodations can be made. In addition, the AGENCY proactively identifies communities with high concentrations of LEP persons and employs tactics and strategies to effectively engage them in the planning process. The AGENCY trains staff to recognize individuals in community meetings and forums who may show difficulty or inability to read or write English, and to assist them accordingly.
9. **Elimination of discrimination.** Work with other AGENCY offices to establish procedures for promptly resolving deficiencies, as needed. Recommend procedures to identify and eliminate discrimination that may be discovered in any AGENCY processes. Take affirmative action to correct any deficiencies found within a reasonable time period, not to exceed 90 days, in order to implement Title VI compliance in accordance with this agreement.
10. **Maintain legislative and procedural information.** Federal laws, rules and regulations, Iowa DOT guidelines, the current AGENCY Title VI plan, annual accomplishment and goals reports, and other resource information pertaining to the implementation and administration of the AGENCY's Title VI program will be maintained and updated by the Coordinator. Information will be made available to other AGENCY departments/offices or the public as requested or required.

#### **IV. Discrimination complaint procedures – allegations of discrimination in federally assisted programs or activities**

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission adopts the following discrimination complaint procedures for complaints relating to federally assisted transportation-related programs or activities.

1. **Filing a discrimination complaint:** Any person who believes that he or she, or any class of individuals, or in connection with any disadvantaged business enterprise, has been or is being subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and/or the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, as amended, has the right to file a complaint.

Any individual wishing to file a discrimination complaint must be given the option to file the complaint with the AGENCY, or directly with the Iowa DOT, FHWA, USDOT and U.S. Department of Justice. Complaints may be filed with all agencies simultaneously.

No individual or agency shall refuse service, discharge or retaliate in any manner against any persons because that individual has filed a discrimination complaint, instituted any proceeding related to a discrimination complaint, testified, or is about to testify, in any proceeding or investigation related to a discrimination complaint, or has provided information or assisted in an investigation.

2. **Complaint filing timeframe:** A discrimination complaint must be filed within 180 calendar days of either:
  - (a) The alleged act of discrimination.
  - (b) Date when the person(s) became aware of the alleged discrimination.
  - (c) Date on which the conduct was discontinued, if there has been a continuing course of conduct.

The AGENCY or their designee may extend the time for filing or waive the time limit in the interest of justice, specifying in writing the reason for so doing.

3. **Contents of a complaint:** A discrimination complaint must be written. The document must contain the following information.
  - a) The complainant's name and address, or other means by which the complainant may be contacted.
  - b) Identification of individual(s) or organization(s) responsible for the alleged discrimination.
  - c) A description of the complainant's allegations, which must include enough detail to determine if the AGENCY has jurisdiction over the complaint and if the complaint was filed timely.
  - d) Specific prohibited bases of alleged discrimination (i.e., race, color, gender, etc.).
  - e) Apparent merit of the complaint.
  - f) The complainant's signature or signature of his/her authorized representative.

In the event that a person makes a verbal complaint of discrimination to an officer or employee of the AGENCY, the complainant shall be interviewed by the AGENCY's Coordinator. If necessary, the Coordinator will assist the complainant in reducing the complaint to writing and then submit the written version of the complaint to the person for signature.

4. **Complaints against the AGENCY:** Any complaints received against the AGENCY should immediately be forwarded to the Iowa DOT for investigation. The AGENCY shall not investigate any complaint in which it has been named in the complaint. The contact information for the Iowa DOT's Title VI program is:

Iowa Department of Transportation  
Office of Employee Services – Civil Rights  
800 Lincoln Way  
Ames, Iowa 50010  
515-239-1422  
515-817-6502 (fax)  
[dot.civilrights@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:dot.civilrights@dot.iowa.gov)

5. **Notice of Receipt:** All complaints shall be referred to the AGENCY's Coordinator for review and action. Within 10 days of receipt of the discrimination complaint, the Coordinator shall issue an initial written Notice of Receipt that:
- a) Acknowledges receipt of the discrimination complaint.
  - b) Advises the complainant of his/her right to seek representation by an attorney or other individual of his or her choice in the discrimination complaint process.
  - c) Contains a list of each issue raised in the discrimination complaint.
  - d) Advises the complainant of the timeframes for processing the discrimination complaint and providing a determination.
  - e) Advises the complainant of other avenues of redress of their complaint, including the Iowa DOT, FHWA, USDOT and USDOJ.
  - f) Includes an invitation to mediation as described in paragraph 1 under item eight below.
6. **Notification of the Iowa DOT of a complaint:** The AGENCY shall advise the Iowa DOT within 10 business days of receipt of the complaint. Generally, the following information will be included in every notification to the Iowa DOT.
- a) Name, address and phone number of the complainant.
  - b) Name(s) and address(es) of alleged discriminating official(s).
  - c) Basis of complaint (i.e., race, color, national origin or gender).
  - d) Date of alleged discriminatory act(s).
  - e) Date complaint received by the AGENCY.
  - f) A statement of the complaint.
  - g) Other agencies (state, local or federal) where the complaint has been filed.
  - h) An explanation of the actions the AGENCY has taken or proposed to resolve the issue identified in the complaint.
7. **Processing a complaint and timeframe:** The total time allowed for processing the discrimination complaint is 90 calendar days from the date the complaint was filed. There is no extension available at this level. This timeframe includes 60 calendar days at the AGENCY level and 30 days for review at the state level, if needed.

If the complainant elects to file a complaint with both the AGENCY and Iowa DOT, the complainant shall be informed that the AGENCY has 90 calendar days to process the discrimination complaint and the Iowa DOT shall not investigate the complaint until the 90 calendar-day period has expired.

Immediately after issuance of the notice of receipt to the complainant (step four), the AGENCY's Coordinator shall either begin the fact-finding or investigation of the discrimination complaint, or arrange to have an investigation conducted.

Based on the information obtained during that investigation, the Coordinator shall render a recommendation for action in a Report of Findings to the head of the AGENCY.

8. **Alternative dispute resolution/mediation process:** The complainant must be given an invitation to participate in mediation to resolve the complaint by informal means. The AGENCY's Coordinator shall include an invitation to mediation with the Notice of Receipt, offering the opportunity to use the alternative dispute resolution/mediation process.

If the complaint selects mediation, it allows disputes to be resolved in a less adversarial manner. With mediation, a neutral party assists two opposing parties in a dispute come to an agreement to resolve their issue. The mediator does not function as a judge or arbiter, but simply helps the parties resolve the dispute themselves.

Upon receiving a request to mediate, the AGENCY's Coordinator shall identify or designate a mediator who must be a neutral and impartial third party. The mediator must be a person acceptable to all parties and who will assist the parties in resolving their disputes.

If the complainant chooses to participate in mediation, she or he or the designee must respond in writing within 10 calendar days of the date of the invitation. This written acceptance must be dated and signed by the complainant and must also include the relief sought.

After mediation is arranged, a written confirmation identifying the date, time and location of the mediation conference shall be sent to both parties. If possible, the mediation process should be completed within 30 calendar days of receipt of the discrimination complaint. This will assist in keeping within the 90 calendar-day timeframe of the written Notice of Final Action if the mediation is not successful.

If resolution is reached under mediation, the agreement shall be in writing. A copy of the signed agreement shall be sent to the Iowa DOT's Title IV program coordinator. If an agreement is reached, but a party to it believes his/her agreement has been breached, the nonbreaching party may file another complaint. If the parties do not reach resolution under mediation, the AGENCY's Coordinator shall continue with the investigation.

9. **Notice of Final Action:** A written Notice of Final Action shall be provided to the complainant within 60 days of the date the discrimination complaint was filed. It shall contain:
  - a) A statement regarding the disposition of each issue identified in the discrimination complaint and reason for the determination.
  - b) A copy of the mediation agreement, if the discrimination complaint was resolved by mediation.
  - c) A notice that the complainant has the right to file a complaint with the Iowa DOT, FHWA, USDOT or USDOJ within 30 calendar days after the Notice of Final Action, if she or he is dissatisfied with the final action on the discrimination complaint.

The AGENCY's Coordinator shall provide the Iowa DOT's Title VI program coordinator with a copy of this decision, as well as a summary of findings upon completion of the investigation. Should deficiencies be noted in the implementation of these discrimination complaint procedures by the AGENCY, the Iowa DOT's Title VI program coordinator will work in conjunction with the AGENCY's Coordinator to review the information and/or provide technical assistance in the discrimination complaint process, mediation process, and/or investigation.

10. **Corrective action:** If discrimination is found through the process of a complaint investigation, the respondent shall be requested to voluntarily comply with corrective action(s) or a conciliation agreement to correct the discrimination.
11. **Confidentiality:** AGENCY and Iowa DOT Title VI program coordinators are required to keep the following information confidential to the maximum extent possible, consistent with applicable law and fair determination of the discrimination complaint.
  - a) The fact that the discrimination complaint has been filed.
  - b) The identity of the complainant(s).
  - c) The identity of individual respondents to the allegations.
  - d) The identity of any person(s) who furnished information relative to, or assisting in, a complaint investigation.
12. **Recordkeeping:** The AGENCY's Coordinator shall maintain a log of complaints filed that alleged discrimination. The log must include:
  - a) The name and address of the complainant.
  - b) Basis of discrimination complaint.
  - c) Description of complaint.
  - d) Date filed.
  - e) Disposition and date.
  - f) Any other pertinent information.

All records regarding discrimination complaints and actions taken on discrimination complaints must be maintained for a period of not less than three years from the final date of resolution of the complaint.

## V. Self-assessment and remedial action procedures

1. **Title VI self-assessment federal-aid highway funds.** Conduct Title VI self-assessment of the AGENCY's program areas and activities. Where applicable, revise policies, procedures and directives to include Title VI requirements. Ensure that programs, policies and other activities do not have disproportionate adverse effects on minority and low income populations.
2. **Remedial action.** When irregularities occur in the administration of Federal-aid highway programs, corrective action will be taken to resolve identified Title VI issues. Take affirmative action to correct any deficiencies found by the Iowa DOT, FHWA or the USDOT within a reasonable time period, not to exceed 90 days, in order to implement Title VI compliance in accordance with this plan. The head of the AGENCY shall be held responsible for implementing Title VI requirements.

## VI. Title VI implementation activities in special emphasis program areas

### A. Planning and location activities

1. **Planning process.** The AGENCY has responsibility for providing long-range planning (through a service agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation), program development, and capital programming necessary to provide efficient transportation services to AGENCY citizens. The AGENCY's Transportation Director annually updates and coordinates the AGENCY's four-year plan for transportation improvement programs and projects. The update also informs other AGENCY departments of the AGENCY's jurisdiction of the current planning direction for transportation needs. Projects included in the update are the result of evaluation and prioritization of needs in various transportation areas. The evaluation process includes input from the AGENCY, local jurisdictions and organizations, citizen groups and private individuals.
2. **Public involvement in planning activities and Title VI and EJ**
  - a) Invite participation of a cross section of the populace from social, economic and ethnic groups in the planning process by disseminating written program information to minority media and ethnic organizations, and providing public service announcements for all local media, when forming citizen advisory committees or planning board, and requesting involvement.
  - b) To ensure access to public meetings, evening meetings will be conducted in a variety of community buildings throughout the AGENCY, including those along transit routes, ensure translation services are available if anticipated, and ensure public meetings are held in predominantly minority communities when transportation projects will specifically impact those communities.
  - c) The AGENCY regularly conducts an analysis of how the benefits and burdens of the long-range plan are distributed among low-income, minority and disabled populations versus the general population. The AGENCY is responsible for informing all staff members and consultants of all federal Title VI policies, including any changes and updates. In addition, the AGENCY is responsible for informing all staff members and consultants of the AGENCY's Title VI plan, including the LEP plan, public involvement plan, environmental justice policy, and ADA policy, as well as any updates and changes.

### B. Consultant contracts activities

1. **Consultant contracts administration.** The Executive Director is responsible for recommending consultant firms to the AGENCY for final selection, negotiation and award. The Executive Director administers awarded consultant contracts.



**2. Consultant selection process.** Area 15 Regional Planning Commission staff will request qualifications from consulting firms specializing in the applicable area of expertise. Consultant selection adheres to State of Iowa Regulations and is consistent with the AGENCY's vendor policies. Title VI text is included in all request for proposals (RFP) and contracts.

**3. Title VI assurances and provisions**

- a) Include Title VI assurance and provision language in all federally funded consultant contracts. Periodically review documents and language to ensure compliance with current laws and regulations. Provide a copy of the form of the contract to the Coordinator, and any amendments or updates that may occur over time.