

## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview**

The purpose of transportation planning is to develop and maintain a transportation system that will provide a safe, efficient, and economic means of moving people and goods. The system should promote movement using multiple modes. It should provide an easy transition from the local system within a community to the wider regional system. It should also enhance alternative modes for non-drivers including public transportation and bicycle and pedestrian systems.

An important part of developing and maintaining a transportation system is reviewing its current condition and identifying future needs based on existing conditions, usage, and demographic and economic trends. Roads and bridges that experience heavy usage will deteriorate faster and need more maintenance or be replaced sooner. Areas experiencing growth may require additional capacity roads or public transportation. Roads and streets with high traffic or truck traffic may require safety improvements. Bicycle and Pedestrian accommodations are becoming important in communities to enhance livability.

The 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan for Regional Planning Affiliation 15 will document the current conditions of the region's transportation system, identify the transportation needs and priorities. The plan has a horizon year of 2045 and attempts to look at the needs of the system in both the short term and the longer term. Shorter-term needs are based on the current condition of the system and local capital improvement plans. Longer-term needs include projects based on current condition that are deferred due to other projects taking priority or financial constraints. It will also include needs based on past trends and projected development. This includes striking a balance between the LRTP goals of operating, maintaining, and improving transportation assets guided by engineering and economic information. This helps guide a sequence of actions (maintenance, preservation, repair, rehabilitation, and replacement) to sustain the region's transportation system efficiently over its life cycle. Since these needs are based on a snapshot in time, it is necessary to review and update this document to consider changing developments and needs. To adjust for this, the document will be revised every five years.

Funding is necessary to achieve the goals of this plan and to implement the projects identified in this plan. There are funding sources available at the local, state, and federal levels for implementing a project. These funding sources will be discussed in later chapters, and short term projects will be fiscally constrained.

## **Purpose of the Long-Range Transportation Plan**

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) serves as a means for the Regional Planning Affiliation to examine the region's existing transportation system and determine their adequacy for the region's population and economy. The plan considers all modes of transportation and discusses existing conditions, usage, and needs. It also provides local officials with the opportunity to explore the region's transportation needs based on existing conditions and projected revenues. This process is conducted in coordination with area stakeholders; including the RPA Policy Board, Technical Committee, the regional economic development group, and the solicitation of public comment to discuss the region's transportation needs. The LRTP may serve as a guide for local jurisdictions to base their project selection for the transportation project programming process. Due to limited financial resources, local agencies need to be able to prioritize projects that best address the needs of their jurisdiction.

This plan will be divided into nine chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1 - Introduction and Overview: gives an overview of the purpose of the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the development process and public participation process.
- Chapter 2 – Summary of Public Comment: provides a summary of the public comments received.
- Chapter 3 – Characteristics of the Region: provides an overview of the region's demographic, economic and commuting patterns.
- Chapter 4 – Roads and Bridges: focuses on roads and bridges, discusses existing conditions, and identifies planned improvements, funding sources and discusses anticipated funding.
- Chapter 5 – Passenger Transportation: discusses public transportation services in the region including existing services and passenger transportation needs.
- Chapter 6 – Trails: reviews area bicycle and pedestrian facilities, describes recent developments, discusses regional connections, existing and proposed facilities, funding sources and priorities.
- Chapter 7 – Rail, Air and Pipelines: discusses rail, air and pipelines. Provides an overview of the different rail lines and traffic density and rail crossing types. Reviews the level of service of airports and proposed improvements. Summarizes pipeline transportation in the region.
- Chapter 8 – Safety and Security: focuses on safety and security of the transportation system, including both state, regional and local levels. Provides an overview of planning efforts, reviews crash data and areas of safety concern.

- Chapter 9 – Environmental Mitigation: discusses the potential impacts of transportation projects on environment, strategies to avoid, minimize or mitigate the impacts.
- Chapter 10 – Financial Capacity: provides an overview of available funding sources, the history of STBG and TAP funds, future funding projections, identifies short-term fiscally constrained projects, discusses long-term projects, and explains the RPA’s project selection process.

### **Description of RPA 15 and stakeholders**

Regional Planning Affiliation 15 (RPA 15) was formed in 1994 after the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act when the Iowa Transportation Commission decided to make funding available to local governments through regional planning organizations. The RPA was established under the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, which was the Council of Governments serving already serving the region.

The Area 15 RPC provides the staff for the RPA’s planning activities, technical expertise is provided by the Technical Advisory Committee and decision-making authority rests with the Policy Board. The Technical Committee consists of people with expertise in engineering, public works, conservation, public transit, or trails. The Policy Board is made up of local elected officials and is the governing body of the RPA. The board is responsible for making funding decisions and adopting planning documents including the LRTP.

The current membership of the Technical Advisory Committee and the Policy Board is as follows:

#### **Technical Advisory Committee**

##### ***Membership:***

- Jefferson County Engineer
- Keokuk County Engineer
- Mahaska County Engineer
- Van Buren County Engineer
- Wapello County Engineer
- Jefferson County Conservation Director
- Mahaska County Conservation Director
- Wapello County Conservation Director
- City of Fairfield Engineer

- City of Oskaloosa Engineer
- City of Ottumwa Public Works Director
- 10-15 Transit Director
- Pathfinders RC&D Director
- Van Buren County appointed representative for transportation alternatives

### Policy Board

#### *Membership:*

- Jefferson County Supervisor
- Keokuk County Supervisor
- Mahaska County Supervisor
- Van Buren County Supervisor
- Wapello County Supervisor
- City Administrator of the City of Fairfield
- City Administrator of the City of Oskaloosa
- Mayor of the City of Ottumwa
- Mayor of the City of Sigourney

In addition, there are other groups that function as forums for input and comment on transportation activities and needs in RPA 15. These groups are as follows:

Transit Advisory Group: The group provides input into the passenger transportation planning process on mobility problems affecting seniors, students, persons with disabilities or with no vehicle, and lower incomes. This group serves as an advisory capacity to the Policy Board.

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission: This organization serves as the designated Economic Development District Organization. It assists local governments in the areas of community development, economic development, transportation, housing, land use and natural resources. The RPC provides staff for the Regional Planning Affiliation.

Iowa South: This group coordinates economic development in Southeast Iowa and works to market the region to new and expanding businesses.

Additional stakeholders and resources in the development of the LRTP include:

- Neighboring Regional Planning Affiliations: RPAs 6, 10, 11, 16 and 17
- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources

- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- Pathfinders Resource Conservation and Development
- Local trails groups: Jefferson County Trails Council, Mahaska Community Recreation Foundation, Van Buren County Trails Association, Wapello County Trails Council
- Airports in the region: Fairfield, Keosauqua, Oskaloosa, Ottumwa, and the new South-Central Regional Airport
- Railroads running through the region: Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Canadian Pacific and Kansas City, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific and Burlington Junction Railway
- Member cities and counties
- Residents

**Timeline of Plan Development**

October 2022: Reviewed LRTP guidance, previous LRTP, other LRTPs from surrounding RPAs.

December 2022: Developed outline and timeline for 2024 plan.

February 2023: Held LRTP meeting with Iowa DOT. Discussed process and organization of plan.

April 2023: Identified resource agencies to be involved and consulted. Held kickoff meeting with Policy Board. Discussed process, Policy Board role and involvement, board’s view of region’s transportation system.

**Plans Reviewed**

RPA 6 – Region 6 Planning Commission  
2021 Long-Range Transportation Plan

RPA 10 - ECICOG  
CRDS 2050 (2022 Long-Range Transportation Plan)

RPA 11 CIRTPA  
Horizon Year 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan

RPA 16 SEIRPC  
Great River Region Transportation and Development Plan 2050

RPA 17 Chariton Valley Planning  
2022 Long-Range Transportation Plan

Iowa Department of Transportation  
Iowa in Motion 2050  
Iowa State Rail Plan – 2021  
Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan – 2024-2028  
Iowa Bicycle and Pedestrian Long-Range Plan – 2018

2024 County 5-year Plans and City CIP Plans  
Local Road Safety Plans

Fairfield Forever - 2020 Comprehensive Plan  
Plan Osky – 2022 Comprehensive Plan  
Our Ottumwa – 2022 Comprehensive Plan

Lake Red Rock 2015 Master Plan  
Historic Hills Scenic Byway 2017 Interpretive Master Plan

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission  
2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

June 2023: Obtained copies of: city comprehensive plans and capital improvement plans, county five year plans, local road safety plans, other relevant studies. Reviewed the status of projects identified in the previous LRTP.

Collected demographic data: population (age, percent disabled, limited English proficiency, education level, income, housing ownership) and employment (unemployment rate, labor area, travel time, distance to work). Began Chapter 3 Overview of Region.

July 2023: Completed Chapter 3 Overview of Region and Chapter 5 Passenger Transportation.

Collected roadway data on: pavement condition, federal functional classification, traffic volume, bridge location and condition

August 2023: Developed Chapter 6 Trails and began Chapter 4 Roads and Bridges.

Collected data on rail, aviation, and pipelines.

September 2023: Completed Chapter 7 Rail, Air and Pipelines and began Chapter 8 Safety and Security.

Collected crash data, reviewed Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan, Potential for Crash Reduction Intersection locations, and Local Road Safety Plans.

October 2023: Completed Chapter 8 Safety and Security.

November 2023: Reviewed Environmental Strategies and resources.

December 2023: Completed Chapter 4 Roads and Bridges and Chapter 9 Environmental Mitigation.

January 2024: Began Chapter 10 Financial Capacity.

Held LRTP meetings with TAC and Policy Board. Discussed projects and goals.

February 2024: Completed Chapter 10 Financial Capacity and Chapter 1 Introduction.

Relevant chapters were reviewed with stakeholders: Chapter 6 Trails with Trails groups, Chapter 7 Rail, Air and Pipelines with Railroads and Airports.

March – April 2024: Revisions

May 2024: Review and comment period.

June 2024: Adoption by the RPA.

Figure 1.1: RPA15 Long-Range Transportation Plan update. Timeline and Status

Month	Oct 2022			Jan 2023							Jan 2024							June			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Task																					
Review of existing LRTP, guidance and other LRTPs.	█																				
Develop outline and timeline.			█	█	█																
Discuss with TAC/Policy Board							█		█									█	█		█
Review with stakeholders															█		█		█		
Data collection								█	█	█	█	█	█	█							
Development of draft Chapters										█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
IDOT review						█				█		█	█	█			█				
Incorporate IDOT and stakeholder comments																	█	█	█	█	
City review																				█	█
30 day public review and comment																					█
incorporate public comments																					█
Policy Board Approval and submittal to IDOT																					█

**Goals of the Long-Range Plan**

The goals of the Long-Range Transportation Plan were developed through a review of the previous LRTP, the needs of the region and consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board. These goals will focus the prioritization of projects and the investment of public funds in the region. Applications for Surface Transportation Block Grant/SWAP or Transportation Alternative Program funds should address one or more of the goals of this plan and/or should be identified as a project within this document. STBG/SWAP and TAP projects will be scored according to how well they address the goals of the LRTP.

Goal 1: Maintain a transportation system in a state of good repair for users and a system that is safe with good mobility by encouraging projects that:

- Strategy 1: Improve deficient roads based on their condition, traffic volume, and population.
- Strategy 2: Improve bridges based on their condition so they are safe for use.
- Strategy 3: Incorporate safety improvements into projects, in areas with a crash history and/or with a high Potential for Crash Reduction (PCR).

- Strategy 4: Reduce vehicle, freight, transit, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian conflicts. Prioritize higher traffic roads and areas near pedestrian generators.
- Objective 5: Improve travel times or level of service.

Goal 2: Promote an efficient means of meeting the transportation needs of the region by:

- Objective 1: Maximize the useful life of existing transportation infrastructure through maintenance and low cost improvements ( ex: rumble strips, paved shoulders, passing lanes).
- Objective 2: Discourage projects with high costs and low use.
- Objective 3: Identify federal, state, and local sources to assist with the funding of projects.
- Objective 4: Encourage cooperation between governments on projects that benefit more than one agency.

Goal 3: Encourage economic development in the region by:

- Objective 1: Consider and promote transportation projects that create or retain jobs in the region.
- Objective 2: Develop connections between existing developments, new developments and/or redevelopments.
- Objective 3: Improve connectivity between cities or regions.

Goal 4: Promote and maintain public transportation as affordable, available, and accessible, look for ways to improve service by:

- Objective 1: Ensure that fixed routes are rider friendly, less than one hour in length.
- Objective 2: Coordinate with area hospitals to assist people in getting home after a trip to the Emergency Room.
- Objective 3: Look for opportunities to expand service into the evening/night for people who work later so people can use transit for shopping/leisure activities.

Goal 5: Promote and develop nonmotorized transportation, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities both to enhance quality of life and mobility by:

- Objective 1: Expand and improve access to trails with an emphasis on connecting neighborhoods to trails, parks, recreation areas, schools.
- Objective 2: Develop a regional trail system by encouraging connectivity between communities within the region.
- Objective 3: Develop safe trails and improve the safety of existing trails through the incorporation of marked or separated crossings, good lighting/visibility, and signage.

## **Public Participation Process for Plan**

The public involvement process for the Long-Range Plan is based on the RPA's [Public Participation Plan](#), which was updated in 2022. This plan describes the federal and state requirements the Regional Planning Affiliation follows ensure participation by all interested parties. It also describes the methods the RPA uses for ongoing outreach, engaging marginalized and/or disadvantaged populations and for the development of major transportation plans.

The 2022 RPA 15 Public Participation Plan set the requirements for public involvement opportunities for the LRTP and guided the public input process. Public input actions required included the following:

- Public engagement:
  - Presented at RPA 15 TAC and Policy Board meetings.
  - Posted on Area 15 RPC website and available in the planning commission's office during normal business hours.
  - A minimum of one public input session will be held.
  - Presentations were also made to interested organizations.
  
- Public Notice:
  - Legal notice published for public comment and hearing in the newspaper of widest circulation.
  - Notice may also be advertised through local media sources, RPC newsletter, posted on RPC Facebook page, sent to member cities, member counties, private transportation organizations and organizations serving disadvantaged populations.
  
- Comment period and adoption:
  - The public will have at least a 30-day comment period prior to adoption to submit comments by mail, e-mail, phone or in person during normal business hours or at the designated public hearing.
  - Following the 30-day comment period the RPA will adopt a final version of the LRTP including a summary of the comments received by resolution at a Policy Board meeting.

