

**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2025

MINUTES

Fratzke called the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 10:00 AM. Introductions were offered to all in attendance.

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| Meeting Attendees: | Cathy Showalter | Otto Schoitz Foundation |
| | Lisa Sesterhenn | Black Hawk County Public Health |
| | Thomas Weintraut | City of Cedar Falls (Online) |
| | Aric Schroeder | City of Waterloo (Online) |
| | Todd Rickert | County Social Services |
| | Nicole Ericson | Exceptional Persons, Inc. (Online) |
| | Norman Coley Jr. | Hawkeye Community College (Online) |
| | Philip Golden | MET Transit |
| | Ashley Caldwell | Tri-County Head Start |
| | Trista Hill | Tri-County Head Start |
| | Megan McKenzie | R.J. McElroy Trust |
| | Karen Siler | Iowa Workforce Development (Online) |
| | Erin Tink | Waterloo Community Foundation |
| | Mindy Benson | Black Hawk County Emergency Management (Online) |
| | Emily Hanson | Black Hawk County Gaming Association (Online) |
| | Jan Heidemann | East Central Region of Iowa (Online) |
| | DeAnne Kobliska | City of Evansdale (Online) |
| | Susan Backes | House of Hope (Online) |
| | Nina Grant | Hawkeye Community College (Online) |
| | Nick Fratzke | INRCOG/OnBoard Public Transit |
| | Kyle Durant | INRCOG |

The first item was approval of the agenda. It was moved by Showalter, seconded by Golden to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was to review and consider approval of the minutes for the June 27, 2024 meeting. It was moved by Sesterhenn, seconded by Showalter to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was Discussion Items:

Fratzke provided a general overview. Quarterly meetings are now being held instead of the minimum requirement of twice annually. These more frequent meetings provide an opportunity to take a closer look at challenges, identify them, and develop goals and strategies to address them. The intent is to achieve more tangible results rather than simply "checking a box." INRCOG represents a six-county region, with many hub resources located in Black Hawk County. Transportation has been identified as one of the top three challenges in Black Hawk County, and it will play a significant role in the county's community health plans and future initiatives.

1. PTP Survey

Fratzke explained that the Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) is updated every five years and provided an overview of the MPO and RTA regions. He outlined the TAC's task of identifying challenges, opportunities, and solutions within the region. Tink inquired about the survey, the differences between this and the MET Transit Study, whether there is an existing baseline mailing list, and how the TAC is expected to assist. Showalter suggested that this group could take the

opportunity to distribute the survey to their constituents within the next two weeks. Fratzke agreed to resend the survey and include a deadline for responses. Durant stated that INRCOG maintains a mailing list for the TAC, which can be shared for updates regarding who should be included on the mailing list and to ensure contact information is accurate.

2. TAC Priority/Goal Setting

Fratzke noted that since the PTP Survey has not garnered the desired number of responses to conduct an in-depth prioritization of goals, additional time and effort will be devoted to further distributing the survey. Fratzke will follow up to facilitate this, and a future meeting will be scheduled to address this discussion item.

Showalter inquired about the community's role in educating residents on how to use MET Transit and MET's responsibility in clearly communicating this information. She also pointed out inaccuracies on the MET website, suggesting it be corrected. Golden acknowledged that updating the website is a priority for MET but explained that potential route changes have delayed updates. Due to the time-intensive nature of these updates, staff are currently prioritizing transportation operations.

Tink asked how TAC could support MET in communicating information to the public. Durant encouraged MET staff to utilize INRCOG/MPO staff and the Transit Advisory Committee to assist in creating and distributing marketing and outreach materials.

Fratzke concluded that these tasks will remain ongoing discussion items. Building a foundational network through this platform presents an excellent opportunity to address and improve the issues raised.

3. Update on the restructure of MET Transit fixed routes and ways TAC can assist in marketing and outreach

Golden shared that MET Transit is experiencing general success while continuing to adjust certain details of the restructured routes. The final route information and schedules will remain flexible for the foreseeable future. This restructuring effort, the first in over two decades, has been a highly involved process. Initially, there was some pushback from some users, as change can be challenging for many.

To encourage ridership, MET held a month-long fare-free event, which led to a significant increase in usage—ridership rose by 11,000 rides during the event, reaching a total of 21,000 rides. MET recently completed its General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data and will soon send it to Google for integration into Google Maps.

The group highlighted various media resources available to help MET spread the word about these changes and encouraged MET to communicate its outreach needs to the members for additional support.

4. Update on Commute with Enterprise

Fratzke began by providing a brief overview of the Commute with Enterprise program, highlighting the ongoing challenge of finding an organization interested in implementing a vanpool initiative in the Cedar Valley. A potential grant funding source has been identified to help subsidize such programs, but a public-private partnership could be a more effective solution.

Hill recommended reaching out to Iowa Workforce Development to collaborate with businesses, while Tink emphasized that the key is identifying an employer with both the workforce and the interest to participate. McKenzie inquired about potential funding opportunities through the state, and Durant mentioned the possibility of utilizing Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) funds

through the Iowa DOT to support the program.

Fratzke noted that staff resources are limited, and INRCOG's role does not easily accommodate extensive agency outreach. However, Enterprise has offered to handle engagement with agencies if the group can assist in identifying potential partners. Efforts are also underway to collaborate with Grow Cedar Valley in this regard.

5. Waterloo Community School District Fare Free Summer

Golden shared an update on the Free Summer Ridership program for Waterloo Community School District (WCSD) middle and high school students. The program operated for 21 days per month, averaging 25 rides per day, with a total ridership of 294 rides. WCSD has decided to continue the program throughout the school year, allowing students to access free rides by simply showing their school ID.

Tink noted that the upcoming consolidation of high schools, which will place 8th and 9th-grade students at East and West campuses, presents an excellent opportunity to expand the program, particularly for students who do not yet have a driver's license.

6. National Center for Mobility Management

Fratzke shared that the Black Hawk County metropolitan area was awarded a grant to identify solutions for youth transportation barriers. During the first round of funding, interviews were conducted with individuals experiencing such barriers. INRCOG received a \$20,000 grant to implement a Learning Launch, which is a prerequisite for eligibility to secure funding for a pilot program.

Although GO! Transportation was previously considered to operate the Learning Launch, the timeline does not align with the grant's deadline. Fratzke noted that he is exploring alternative opportunities to fulfill the grant requirements and will provide updates to the group at a future meeting.

7. Update on Scheduling Software for Onboard Public Transit

Fratzke shared that OnBoard Public Transit has implemented new software, CTS Software's TripMaster, to assist with scheduling and dispatch operations. The implementation has been highly successful and has created opportunities to cross-train employees within the organization to address staffing gaps. The system also includes features such as automated reminder phone calls for riders, which could potentially integrate with some of the transportation solutions being discussed by this group.

8. General Discussion

Backes suggested that it would be helpful to understand the missions of INRCOG and MET Transit to better guide the group in setting meaningful goals. This understanding could inform the development of actionable steps, determining whether they should focus on organizational efforts or broader community initiatives. Backes emphasized that this group has the potential to be highly valuable, providing leaders with community insights to help take responsibility and ownership of necessary actions aligned with each organization's mission. In response, Fratzke provided a detailed explanation of INRCOG's history and its role in the region.

Durant showcased the Black Hawk County MPO website www.bhcmpo.org, including the "[What is the MPO?](#)" and the "[Transit Planning](#)" pages. INRCOG/MPO staff created an [interactive map for the MET Transit Fixed Routes](#), which can be found on the Transit Planning page. The map displays the restructured routes along with the locations of benches and shelters. Users can interact with the map by clicking on routes or bench and shelter icons to access pop-up details. These details include the

route color, route name, a link to the route schedule, and information about the type of bench or shelter (e.g., bench only, bench with shelter, or shelter only).

There being no further discussion, Fratzke declared the meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Durant
Secretary