

Chapter 10

Public Involvement



Chapter 10 – Public Involvement

Public Participation and Why it Matters

Gathering public input is a vital component of all RPA 7 (INRCOG) planning efforts, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Public involvement plays an essential role in the transportation planning process, providing valuable insights and perspectives that help inform decision-makers and enhance the overall quality and depth of planning outcomes. Engaging the public allows planners to identify concerns and better understand elements of the transportation system that might be overlooked when relying solely on technical data or political considerations. For transportation planning to be truly effective, it must involve the voices of those who are directly impacted in their daily lives.

IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
229 E. Park Avenue | Waterloo Iowa 50703
(319) 235-0311 | www.bhcmmpo.org/rtc

You've been selected to play a role in future transportation planning in your community!

Take the survey by **September 15th!**

How to take the survey: scan the QR code or visit <https://arcg.is/1vm9Kn0>

Chance to win **\$50 cash!**

Tell us your thoughts on:

- Roads & Bridges
- Safety
- Transit
- Passenger Rail
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure

Public Participation Plan

2017 Public Participation Plan

Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority
Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission

Adopted September 21, 2017
Updated June 18, 2020

INRCOG
Prepared by the
Iowa Northland Regional
Council of Governments

The RTA provides service to Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties, except for the Waterloo-Cedar Falls metropolitan area, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Black Hawk County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

In 2017, the RTA implemented its Public Participation Plan (PPP) to establish how public input would be incorporated into agency initiatives, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The plan was revised on June 18, 2020, to allow for increased flexibility in virtual engagement when in-person meetings are not possible, a response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The PPP reflects the RTA's dedication to a transparent and inclusive planning process. It also ensures compliance with various regulations, including the FAST Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Iowa Open Meetings Law, and the Iowa Public Records Law.

The public involvement process utilized for the development of the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan was guided by the PPP, which sets minimum requirements for public involvement opportunities. Public involvement actions required include the following:

- Draft LRTP

- The draft document will be developed by INRCOG staff with further input from jurisdiction representatives & the Iowa DOT, & oversight by the Policy Board & Technical Committee.
- Input will be sought from individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways & bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, providers of freight transportation services, & other interested parties.
- Focus groups will be utilized to represent all pertinent modes of transportation & issues. Focus groups may include transit, highway & land use, bicycle & pedestrian, safety & security, & environmental resources. Focus groups will be charged with identifying issues & potential solutions & reviewing draft chapters.
- The draft document will be made available at the INRCOG Center, on the INRCOG website, & upon request.

- Notices & Public Meetings

- A minimum of three (3) public input sessions will be held regarding the draft LRTP.
- When a circumstance presents itself where a meeting in person is impossible or impractical, the RTA may conduct a public input meeting by electronic means.
 - The RTA will provide public access to the discussion of the input meeting to the extent reasonably possible.
 - The public announcement of the meeting, at least one week before the public input meeting, shall include the time, virtual/electronic place, subject matter of the meeting, & name & phone number of the person available to respond to requests for information about the meeting.
 - The place of the input meeting is the place from which the communication originates or where public access is provided to the discussion.
 - The RTA shall make promptly available to the public, in a place easily accessible to the public, the transcript, electronic recording, or minutes of the discussion & will include a statement explaining why a public input meeting in person was impossible or impractical.
- Should in-person meetings be held, at least one (1) public input session will be held in an area identified as being a low-income or minority neighborhood.
- All in-person meetings will be held in accessible facilities.
- Notices for public input sessions will be advertised through local media sources. Notices may be posted at governmental offices, public libraries, post offices, on transit buses, at the INRCOG Center, & on the INRCOG website & Facebook page. Notices may also be sent to organizations serving traditionally underserved populations.
- Any person with sight, reading, or language barriers can contact the RTA (minimum 48 hours before a session) & arrangements will be made for accommodation.

- Public Comment Period

TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

INRCOG is gathering input from rural Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties to identify transportation needs for the next 25 years.

Play a role in the future of transportation in your community! Answer questions about:

- Roads & Bridges
- Safety
- Transit
- Passenger Rail
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure

Scan the QR code or visit www.bhcmpto.org/RTA

Survey closes Sept 15th!



- Written & oral comments will be solicited during the public input sessions. The public will also have at least a 15-day comment period following the final public input session to submit comments via letter, email, phone, or in person.
- A public hearing will be held at a regularly scheduled RTA meeting following the public input sessions to summarize public comments & responses. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) days & no less than four (4) days before the date of the hearing.
- Final LRTP
 - Following the public hearing, the RTA will adopt a final LRTP, including a summary of comments & responses.
 - The final LRTP will be submitted to the Iowa DOT, FHWA, & FTA.
 - The final LRTP will be available on the INRCOG website, at the INRCOG Center, & upon request.
 - The public participation process associated with the LRTP will be evaluated & updated as needed.
- Revisions
 - The LRTP may be revised between full document updates to reflect current project information.
 - Other amendments to the LRTP will be made as needed.
 - Amendments will require a public hearing to be held at a regularly scheduled RTA meeting. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) days & no less than four (4) days before the date of the hearing.

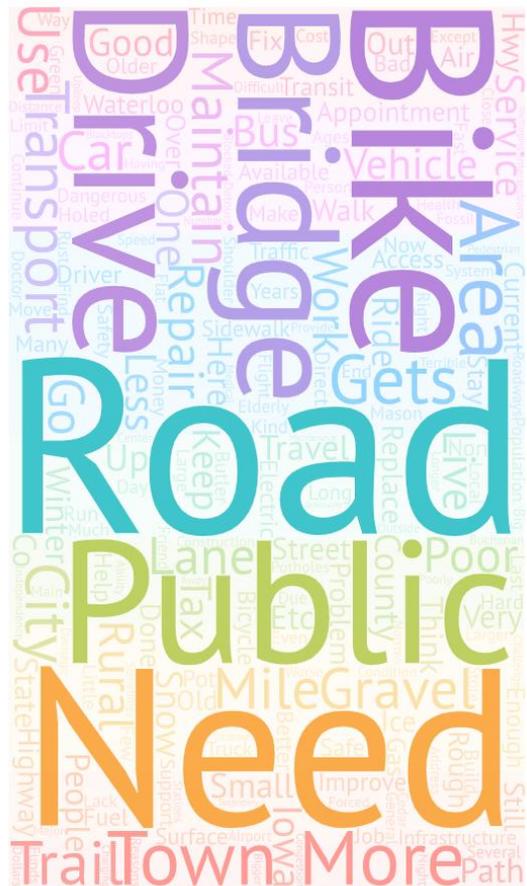
Public Involvement Efforts

2024 Public Input Survey

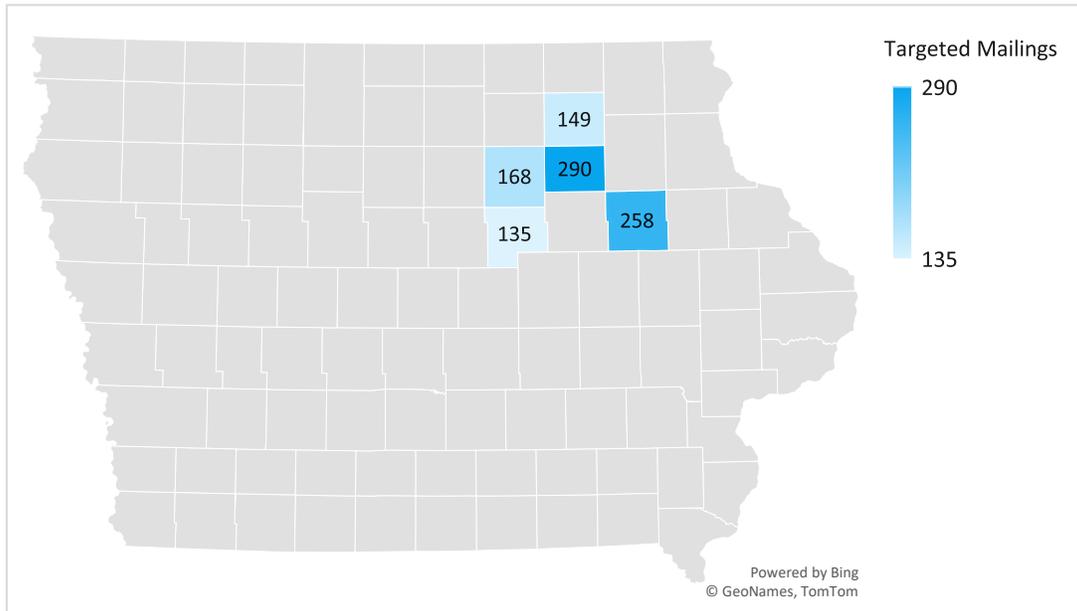
The goal of the survey was to identify transportation challenges, needs, and priorities within the six-county region. A mailing list of 1,000 households located outside the Black Hawk County MPO area was obtained through the mailing consultant Leads Please. The target area was manually selected based on county boundaries for Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties, as well as ZIP codes 50651 and 50626 to include La Porte City, Dunkerton, and rural portions of Black Hawk County not covered by the MPO.

To achieve this, RTA staff developed and administered the survey in two phases. Round One targeted a random sample of 1,000 households from Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties, using a mailing list provided by the consultant Direct Mail. Black Hawk County was excluded from this round due to difficulties in isolating non-metropolitan addresses. Round Two was open to the public and promoted through INRCOG's media platforms, including email lists, the RTA website, and the INRCOG E-newsletter. Both survey rounds were launched simultaneously and remained open from August 15 to September 15, 2024, to maximize public engagement.

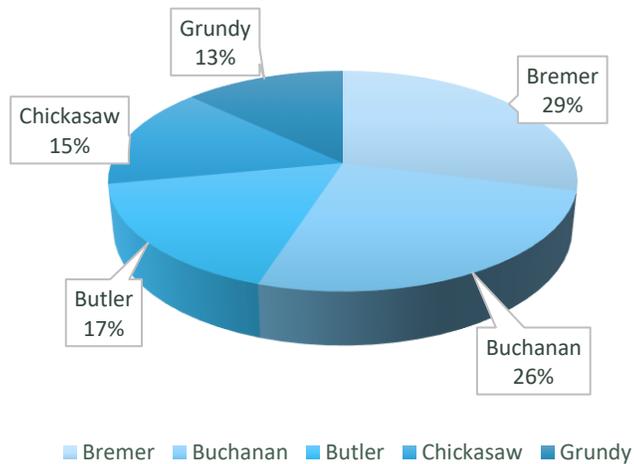
ArcGIS Survey123 was used to design, distribute, and analyze the survey. In Round One, postcards were created and mailed through Vistaprint, each featuring a QR code and a URL directing recipients to the online survey. To increase participation, recipients were also given the option to request a paper copy from INRCOG. As an incentive, participants in the mail-out survey were entered into a drawing for a \$50 cash prize.



A total of 1,000 postcards were distributed across the region, but only 9 responses were received. Staff noted that the survey period overlapped with the 2024 elections, which may have led to lower engagement due to an increase in political advertisements. Round Two yielded a stronger response, with 232 surveys submitted. Because of the limited responses from Round One, the results from both rounds were combined. Despite the low initial turnout, the combined data provides meaningful insight into the region’s transportation needs and priorities.

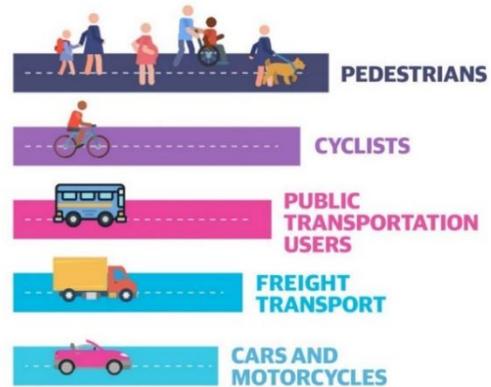


Households will be selected from the five-county RTA region: Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties. From the available pool of 29,208 leads, survey invitations were proportionally distributed based on each county's share of the total leads. This ensures geographic representation while maintaining a minimum base of 200 mailers per county. Fig. 10.1 shows the percentages representing each county's share of the total 29,208 available leads, used to proportionally allocate the 1,000 survey mailings. Bremer County, which makes up 29% of the total leads, receives 290 mailings, while counties with fewer leads, like Grundy at 13% receive fewer mailings to ensure fair regional representation.

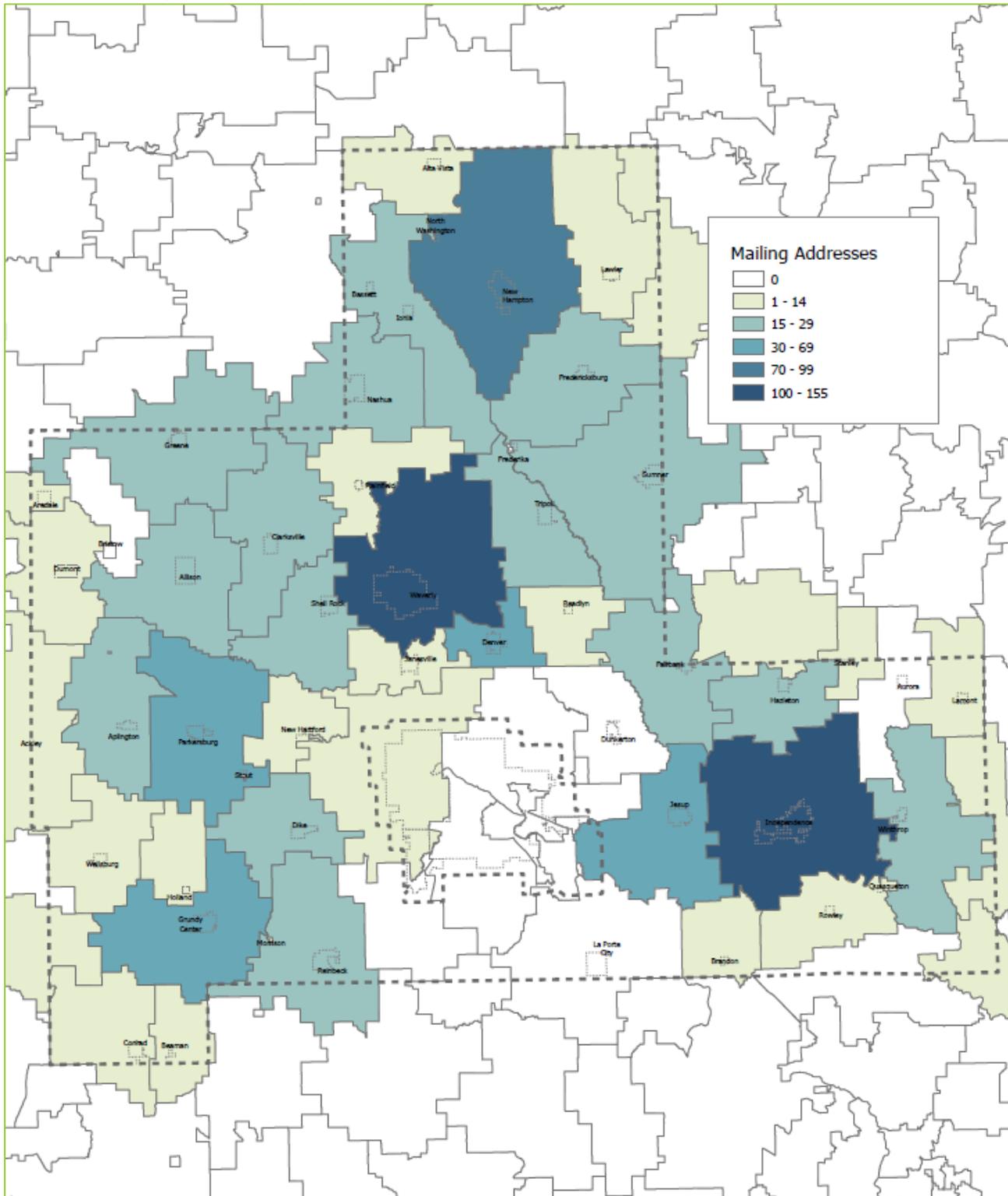


- 29.5 percent of survey respondents rated roads as Good
- 44.4 percent of survey respondents rated bridges as fair.
- 37.8 percent of survey respondents rated pedestrian infrastructure as Fair.
- 39.6 percent of survey respondents rated bicycle infrastructure as Excellent or Good.
- 36.5 percent of responses rated public transit (bus) as Very Poor.
- When asked what the number one transportation problem is in their life:
 - 31.2 percent responded to road & bridge maintenance.
 - 18.8 percent responded with a deficiency in public transportation in smaller towns

- 5.8 percent responded with cycling and pedestrian safety issues (road, railroad crossing, bike & ped).
- 26 percent responded to School Transportation.
- 8.2% responded to the cost of Fuel and Vehicle Maintenance.
- 4 percent Traffic flow & Vehicle behavior
- When asked what the biggest transportation challenge will be in the next 25 years:
 - 45.5 responded road & bridge maintenance.
 - 35.8 percent said access to public transit (bus & rail).
 - 15.3 percent mentioned the cost of gas/fuel prices.
 - 5.1 percent mentioned alternatives such as electric vehicles.
- When asked about strategies for road improvements
 - 52 percent responded with sidewalk additions and repairs.
 - 20 percent Crosswalks and Pedestrian Safety.
 - 12 percent responded with trail expansion and connectivity.
 - 16 percent responded to lighting Improvements, traffic calming, and signage



Map 10.1 Survey Distribution by Home Zip Code



Map 10.1
Survey Distribution by Home Zip Code

This map does not constitute a survey, and INRCOG assumes no liability for the accuracy of the data presented herein, whether expressed or implied.

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In addition, the RTA has several ongoing activities that form the basis of interaction with the public. These include:

- Monthly joint Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings, which are open to the public.
- Electronic access to meetings through Microsoft Teams
- Work sessions, focus groups, open houses, public input meetings, and public hearings as applicable during the development of major transportation planning documents.
- Publication of transportation articles in the monthly INRCOG electronic newsletter, which is mailed to over 400 local officials and citizens.
- Notices of opportunities for public input shared via the MailChimp marketing program.
- Provision of information and interviews with area media as requested.
- Presentations to city councils, planning commissions, and county supervisors as needed.
- Presentations to local service clubs and other groups and organizations as requested.
- Information, transportation plans, and notices of opportunities for public input shared on INRCOG's website www.inrcog.org and Facebook page.

TRANSPORTATION INPUT SURVEY



- Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments
- Help identify transportation needs in Eastern Iowa
- Survey for residents in Bremer, Butler, Grundy, Black Hawk, Buchanan, and Chickasaw counties
- Access survey at www.bhcmpo.org/rta
- Open until September 15th

Public feedback was gathered through a Passenger Transportation Survey conducted in support of the FY 2026–2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). The survey aimed to identify current transportation services, unmet needs, and opportunities for better coordination across the Iowa Northland Region, including the Waterloo-Cedar Falls metropolitan area. The responses also played a key role in determining investment priorities and strategies for passenger transportation over the next five years.

As part of the requirement for completing PTP, the recent public input for this document was obtained through a Passenger Transportation Survey. The online survey was developed using Survey Monkey and distributed to passenger transportation providers and human service agencies in December 2024 and again in February 2025. The survey consisted of 8 questions as well as several opportunities for written comments.

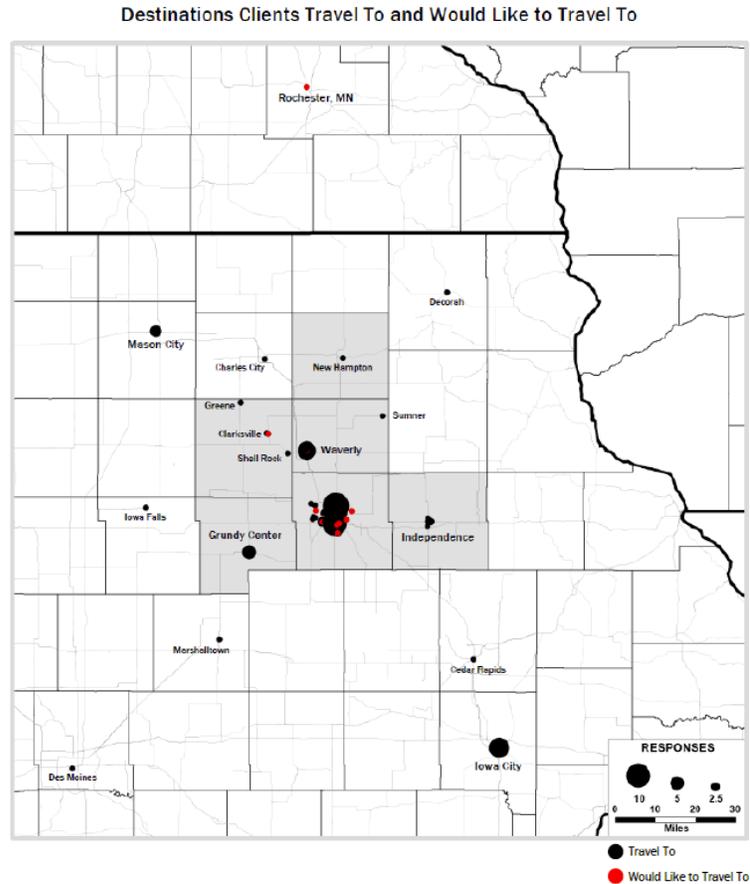
Agencies were also provided with the opportunity to complete the survey manually. Agencies were notified of the survey through email and were encouraged to distribute it to other agencies.

Policy Board and Technical Committee

Throughout 2025, monthly joint meetings of the Policy Board and Technical Committee were held to guide the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update. Key discussion topics included the methodology for the public input survey, the Bicycle Accommodation Plan, and a review of draft chapters. All RTA meetings were open to the public and promoted through local media outlets and the INRCOG Facebook page.

Website and Social Media

The INRCOG website www.inrcog.org was used throughout the development of this Plan. Draft chapters were posted on the transportation department website <https://bhcmppo.org/rta-plans-programs/> as they were completed. Other information on the transportation planning process and additional transportation documents and memorandums is available on the website. The final LRTP is posted online and available at the INRCOG office. The INRCOG Facebook page was also used to notify the public of the draft LRTP and opportunities for input.

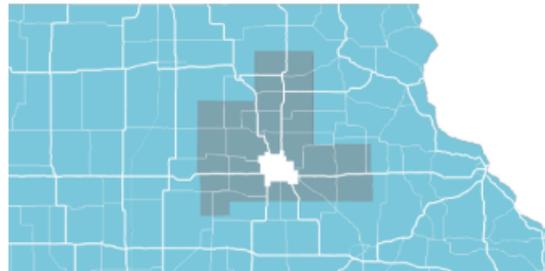


2050 INRTA Long-Range Transportation Plan Update Draft Chapters Available

Draft chapters of the [2050 Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority Long Range Transportation Plan Update](#) are now available for review and comment, with additional chapters to be released as they are completed. We encourage you to explore the draft materials and stay engaged with the process.

Comments can be submitted to [Nick Fratzke](#) until the RTA Policy Board considers the final document for adoption in December 2025.

Iowa Northland
Regional Transportation Authority



[2050 LRTP Update](#)

Public Input Opportunity

Draft 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan

Draft chapters of the 2050 LRTP are available for review and comment, with additional chapters to be released as they are completed. Comments will be accepted until the RTA Policy Board reviews and considers adoption of the full final plan on December 18, 2025.

2 - Region Profile

3 - Roads & Bridges

5 - Bicycle & Pedestrian

6 - Freight

7 - Safety & Security

**8 - Preliminary
Environmental Review**

9 - Financial Analysis

10 - Public Involvement

**Appendix III - 2050 LRTP
Public Input Survey Report**

External Stakeholder Consultation

Several Federal, State, Tribal, and local government agencies were notified when the draft LRTP document was available for review. Feedback on topics relevant to their field of expertise was requested. Agencies notified include the following:

- Black Hawk County Conservation
- Bremer County Conservation
- Buchanan County Conservation
- Butler County Conservation
- Chickasaw County Conservation
- Grundy County Conservation
- Black Hawk County Emergency Management
- Bremer County Emergency Management
- Buchanan County Emergency Management
- Butler County Emergency Management
- Chickasaw County Emergency Management
- Grundy County Emergency Management
- Black Hawk County REAP Committee
- Grow Cedar Valley
- Hawkeye Community College
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- Iowa Department on Aging
- Iowa Department for the Blind
- Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
- Iowa Department of Education
- Iowa Department of Human Rights
- Iowa Department of Human Services
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Iowa Department of Public Safety
- Iowa Department of Transportation, Systems Planning Bureau
- Iowa Department of Transportation, District 2
- Iowa Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission
- Iowa Tourism Board
- Iowa Utilities Board
- Iowa Workforce Development
- Office of the State Archaeologist
- Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi
- State Historical Society of Iowa
- Transit Advisory Committee
- University of Northern Iowa
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, Midwest Regional Office
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois-Iowa Field Office