

Highway 20 Across Iowa *Go Four It!*

www.4Lane20.com



The Midwest *Connector*

TIME-21 Study Committee Activity

The eight member study committee appointed by the Iowa Legislature to evaluate possible funding streams to meet the transportation needs identified in the TIME 21 report has met several times. The committee hammered out bi-partisan recommendations for increasing revenues to cover projected shortfalls, including a mix of a gas tax increase along with changes in other fees.

These efforts fell apart the week of December 17 after receipt of a letter from Iowa Governor Chet Culver who said he will oppose any increases in the gas tax.

The U.S. 20 Association asked members of the TIME 21 study committee to provide their comments on the situation. Senator Steve Warnstadt (D-Sioux City) and Representative Dave Tjepkes (R-Gowrie) responded.

Senator Warnstadt

Several members of the committee were reluctant to make a firm commitment on how much various fees would be increased. I offered language that would direct members of the committee to keep working on the amounts, and establishing that fees be increased (without setting any amount or date of implementation) on the following, but not limited to: pickup registration, title issuance, trailers, and vehicle registrations (delaying the phase down of registrations), and that we would not include a gas tax increase. That motion was amended to say that we would keep working on a solution, and that a gas tax was the only thing that would not be included. Unfortunately, we are not much further along than when we started.

Representative Tjepkes

The Time 21 study committee passed a motion to continue looking at all possible avenues of revenues that could be applied toward RUTF infrastructure needs with the exception of any gas tax increase. The Governor sent a letter to the committee in which he stated that gas tax is not a reasonable approach in his opinion and that after lengthy discussion with Director Richardson, he is certain that all our highways and bridges are safe and will remain so with our current funding levels. The Governor did not make any funding proposals nor did he even indicate whether he would be supportive of vehicle registration fee adjustments. The lack of leadership on his part really puts the committee in a difficult position not knowing if he supports ANY revenue increases to RUTF.

With the removal of the gas tax component in the funding model drafted by the General Contractors and adopted by our study committee as a discussion starting point for

January 2008

Next Meeting:

- Friday, January 11, 2008
- 10:00 am
- Iowa State Bank Meeting Room
- Sac City, Iowa

Directions:

The Iowa State Bank is located at South 5th and Audubon Streets, just one block south of the downtown stoplights. Please use the south door and proceed downstairs to the meeting room.

In this Issue:

- King Secures Additional Funding for Expansion
- TIME 21-Study Committee Activity
- November 2007 Meeting Minutes
- Culver Names Michael Blouin to Transportation Commission

www.4Lane20.com

continued on page 4

U.S. 20 Corridor Association Meeting Minutes

Lohff Schumann Community Center • Holstein, Iowa

Friday, November 9, 2007 • 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by President Phillips at 10:05 A.M. Motion by Magnusson, second by Mayo to approve the minutes of the September 14th meeting. Ayes all – motion carried. Motion by Jerke, second by Smith to approve the Treasurer's Report indicating a current balance of \$16,601.38 less an approved bill to Daryl Watts in an amount of \$31.40. Ayes all – motion carried. Motion by Mayo, second by Sandholm to accept with regrets the resignation of Joyce Hamman as the organization's secretary. Ayes all – motion carried.

Watts presented the report of the Nominating Committee: to nominate Steve Hoesel as Secretary; and to nominate Bob Singer to the position of 1st Vice President (a position created by a By-Law change at the last meeting). Motion by Watts, second by Magnusson to cease nominations and to cast unanimous ballots for Hoesel as Secretary and Singer as 1st Vice President. Ayes all – motion carried.

Schultz of IDOT presented the following report:

- a.** Construction is underway in Webster and Calhoun Counties (Moorland to Rockwell City segment). A railroad is being temporarily relocated north of Moorland and grading has begun east and west of Knierim.
- b.** IDOT staff is nearing completion of the final design in Western Calhoun and Sac Counties. Right-of-way acquisition will begin once the five-year plan shows construction dollars being programmed.
- c.** Corridor studies in Sac, Ida, and Woodbury Counties are underway (archaeological survey, land survey, environmental assessments, etc.).
- d.** Discussions have been held with community interests of Correctionville. It still has not been decided whether the new alignment will follow the current roadway with some business relocations, or skirt north of the current alignment. Another meeting will be held with Correctionville interests to discuss community preferences.
- e.** No final decision has been made on whether all four lanes will be paved between Moorland and Rockwell City rather than the programmed two. Advantages of letting a larger paving contract are logical and IDOT recognizes this advantage as balanced with funds available.

It was discussed that The Association needs to lobby the Commission and Staff in Ames to program four-lane paving contracts between Moorland and Rockwell City.

Hoesel provided an overview of two Commission Meetings:

- a.** At Clinton approximately 10 associations presented their requests for highway/transportation improvements, with the common theme that the requests greatly

exceed the amount of funds available. All are excellent projects. None of the lobbying efforts or techniques of presentation "stood-out" as examples that the U.S. 20 Corridor Association should duplicate. However, of note are the recent efforts by Illinois to consider/plan/program the Rock Falls to Clinton section of U.S. 30. This initiative will put pressure upon IDOT to program improvements on U.S. 30 from Clinton (costly bridge) to Ames. These funds could be in direct competition with U.S. 20 activities.

- b.** At Ames it was noted that YTD receipts to the Road Fund are running \$3.9 million ahead of budget (which is good) and bid lettings are running \$9.3 million less than budget (which is good). IDOT will begin to consider re-programming these dollars, but they must be placed in projects which can be accomplished quickly rather than put into long-range projects out more than one year.

- c.** Also in Ames we learned that there is much uncertainty regarding the Federal Allocation for SAFTEA-LU as the trust fund is nearly exhausted and one year is left to program. States have been "put on notice" of this situation in a politically uncertain climate, so budgets for the next five-year plan must be very conservative with a substantial reduction programmed in Federal Funds. This could greatly affect planned U.S. 20 activities. The media/public outcry after the collapse of the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis has totally dissipated and it is unlikely that any new infrastructure program will emerge as a result of that disaster.

- d.** Distribution of M&Ms and "Thank You Cards" to the Commission for recent Highway 20 activities were well received and the M&Ms quickly consumed.

It was announced by Bill Anderson (Congressman King's Staff) that an earmark of \$500,000 has been placed in the budget for next year to directly benefit U.S. 20. This earmark was accomplished in an extremely anti-earmark environment in Washington and compares to past efforts of \$5 million or more.

Phillips distributed a TIME-21 information piece and general discussion ensued. Key points of discussion were:

- a.** Increase gas tax by 3-5 cents per gallon (which would still leave Iowa in the lower half of all states). A chart distributed at the meeting showed Iowa as having one of the lowest gas/diesel tax rates of its neighboring states.
- b.** Equalize pickup license fees to those of cars/vans.
- c.** Increase Use Tax license fees for all vehicles.
- d.** Increase driver license fee.
- e.** Others

Members were urged to contact their Representative/Senator (Iowa General Assembly) and urge their support for the TIME-21 compromise that will be emerging from the Interim Study Committee within the near future (November 19th meeting date). Rumor has it that the Study Committee will meet until a compromise is achieved. It was also noted that Governor Culver supports a four-lane Highway 20, but says it is just a matter of money.

Watts reported that the Membership Committee has analyzed the list of past members who have not renewed their memberships, split those names into county groupings, and have given those lists to key U.S. 20 supporters in the various counties to create one-on-one contacts to urge membership renewals. Another developing strategy is an effort toward large companies/clients of U.S. 20.

After the Clinton Commission Meeting a session was held that included a variety of Eastern Iowa legislators and members of approximately 10 Highway Association throughout Iowa to discuss TIME-21. The primary recommendation of that session was to organize a group "Day on the Hill" at the Capitol to provide a larger impact for lobbyists for highway funding. It was the consensus that the U.S. 20 Association should participate in this effort, but that we should also organize our own program at the Capitol. The following committee was formed to consider this issue: Trimble-Ray, Boekelman, Mayo, Phillips, Hoesel, and Singer. Others will be called to help as needed.

Sioux City's annual trip to DC is April 21st to 24th and Fort Dodge will visit between May 5th and 6th. If other delegations are planning to visit DC to lobby please include support for U.S. 20 and contact President Phillips with your trip dates.

Consensus was that Trimble-Ray provide to President Phillips a contract estimate to upgrade the Association's Web Page, which is severely outdated.

The future meeting dates and locations were announced. Please call Phillips to take an open date.

- January 11 – Sac City (Mayo Coordinator)
- March 14 – Early (Irwin Coordinator)
- May 9 – Fort Dodge (Singer/Magnusson Coordinators)

An attempt will be made to bring to this meeting the mayors of the larger communities along the corridor from Illinois to Nebraska.

- July 11 - _____
- September 12 - _____
- November 14 - _____

Representative Worthan cautioned the members that an approximate \$400 to \$450 million "budget hole" already exists in next year's state budget. This deficit and the need to find other revenue will make an increase in trans-

portation revenue difficult as no legislator likes to raise taxes in an election year.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Submitted by Stephen F. Hoesel, Secretary

King Secures Additional Funding for Highway 20 Expansion

U.S. Congressman Steve King announced \$500,000 in federal funds secured for the four-lane U.S. Highway 20 expansion as part of H.R. 2764, Consolidated Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2008. "Turning Highway 20 into a continuous four-lane road is my top transportation priority in Congress. I am thankful that \$500,000 will be added to the millions already invested in Highway 20 by the federal government," King said.

Seventy-four percent of the traffic in Iowa runs east and west with no four-lane highway transversing Northwest Iowa. In order to attract residents and businesses, improving access to the national transportation system in rural areas is essential. The current void means Northwestern Iowa especially lacks critical access to major markets and is unable to meet a growing demand to implement just-in-time systems for inventory management, making our highways more efficient enables businesses to compete.

Since his swearing-in as a Member of the United States Congress in 2003, King has worked to secure a total of \$47 million in federal funding authorizations to complete Highway 20.

"This 'Midwest Connector' is vital to the economic development of the entire region. I am fully committed to finishing the four-laning of Highway 20 until the last ribbon is cut," King added.

After House passage, the bill must be signed into law by the President.

**FOUR-LANE
FINISH IT NOW**



From page 1

possible legislation, the goal of \$200M becomes extremely steep as the gas tax is collected from everyone using our roads and highways, including out of state vehicle operators and only registration fees etc. are from ALL Iowans who own vehicles regardless of the amount of their respective usage. In many cases, that means someone on a limited income who may own an older vehicle but drives very little (many senior citizens fall into this category) face a proportionately higher burden of tax on this issue than someone from out of state who would contribute NOTHING to an increase and ALL the burden of the increase would fall on Iowa vehicle owners regardless of the amount of driving that they do rather than the USER concept.

Culver Names Michael Blouin to Transportation Commission

Governor Chet Culver named Michael Blouin, President of the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, to the Iowa Transportation Commission.

A native of Dubuque, Blouin spent several years in public service, representing eastern Iowa in the Iowa House, Iowa Senate and US House of Representatives. He went on to hold several economic development posts across the state including Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and in state government, where he served as Director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development. Earlier this year, Blouin was named President of the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation where he manages new business recruitment, executes regional and national marketing strategies and leads entrepreneurial and venture capital development efforts.

Blouin will fill the position vacated by Thomas Hart in November. His term will be effective immediately and will run through April 30, 2009. He will serve in the interim and his appointment will be subject to two-thirds Senate confirmation in March.

While serving as Director of IDED, Blouin went on record supporting the completion of four-lane U.S. 20 across the state of Iowa.

All roads lead to the State Capitol **Transportation Day • January 23, 2008**

The U.S. 20 Association will join with other highway coalitions from across the state to visit the State Capitol to talk with legislators about the need to address transportation infrastructure needs and the role of the TIME 21 study.

**Details will be discussed at the January 9
U.S. 20 Corridor Association meeting!!**

Meeting Notice

U.S. 20 Corridor Association
(Federal ID# 39-189955)

Friday, January 11, 2008
10:00 am
Iowa State Bank
Sac City, IA

Agenda

1. Call to Order and introductions
Comments from our hosts
2. Approval of November 2007 meeting minutes
3. Treasurer's report
4. DOT Update on the US 20 project in Calhoun and Webster Counties
5. Congressional report
6. DOT Commission meeting reports
7. TIME 21 Report – Rep. David Tjepkes
 - a. Discussion on next steps
8. Transportation Day at the Capitol – Jan. 23rd
9. U.S. 20 Day at the Capitol
10. Other business for the good of the cause
11. Next meeting: March 14, 2008 - Early, Iowa
12. Adjourn

