

US 20 Corridor Association Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2012 – 10:00 am

The Center – Early, Iowa

The meeting was called to order by Association President Shirley Phillips and self-introductions were made. A motion to approve the previous meeting minutes was made by Pam Anderson and seconded by Mary Gross. Approved. A motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented was made by Sharon Mayo and seconded by Marlo Schoer. Approved. The 2011 treasurer's report was also presented. A motion for approval was made by Mary Gross and seconded by Vince Triggs. Approved.

Dakin Schultz with the Iowa DOT gave an update on construction activity on new four-lane US 20. Due to winter, the only two projects being worked on are the US 71 bypass north of Early (Graves Construction) and the Raccoon River Bridges north of Sac City (Godbersen Smith). There are two crews working on the Raccoon River bridges and they anticipate beams swinging in this February.

Last fall the paving contractor was able to get nine miles completed west of Iowa 4. They report anticipating no issues getting to N-14 by the end of 2012 as scheduled. There is only about one month of grading work left to be completed on this segment in the spring.

There will be two paving lettings this spring for the segment from N-14 to US 71 as well as for the reconstruction of N-14 into Iowa 196 connecting to the new four-lane. Dakin said bids have been very good this year coming in lower than projected. Iowa DOT also received additional federal funds so another \$120 million in construction projects has been programmed in Iowa consisting primarily of resurfacing projects. These do not directly impact construction of four-lane US 20. Dakin explained the DOT Director's philosophy of programming all available funds.

In 2012, the DOT Commission will again hold four meetings outside headquarters. The proposed locations are: April – Burlington, June – Des Moines, August – Clinton, and October – Okoboji. While not finalized yet, Dakin said it was the Commission's intention to tour new four-lane US 20 before the October meeting in Okoboji.

In March this year, the Commission will have the first look at the next Five Year Program. A theoretical 30 percent reduction in federal funds coming back to Iowa did not materialize which is good news for projects in the program.

The DOT delivered the legislatively mandated Road Use Tax Fund report to the Legislature at the end of 2011. The entire report is available at www.iowadot.gov/pdf_files/RUTFStudy2011.pdf. It included the following six recommendations:

1. Through a combination of efficiency savings and increased revenue, a minimum of \$215 million of revenue per year should be generated to meet Iowa's critical roadway needs.

2. The Code of Iowa should be changed to require the study of the sufficiency of the state's road funds to meet the road system's needs every two years instead of every five years to coincide with the biennial legislative budget appropriation schedule.
3. Modify the current registration fee for electric vehicles to be based on weight and value using the same formula that applies to most passenger vehicles.
4. Consistent with existing Code of Iowa requirements, new funding should go to the TIME-21 Fund up to the cap (\$225 million) and remaining new funding should be distributed consistent with the Road Use Tax Fund distribution formula.
5. The CAC recommended the Iowa DOT at least annually convene meetings with cities and counties to review the operation, maintenance and improvement of Iowa's public roadway system to identify ways to jointly increase efficiency. In direct response to this recommendation, Governor Branstad directed the Iowa DOT to begin this effort immediately with a target of identifying \$50 million of efficiency savings that can be captured from the over \$1 billion of state revenue already provided to the Iowa DOT and Iowa's cities and counties to administer, maintain and improve Iowa's public roadway system. This would build upon past joint and individual actions that have reduced administrative costs and resulted in increased funding for improvement of Iowa's public roadway system. Efficiency actions should be quantified, measured and reported to the public on a regular basis.
6. By June 30, 2012, Iowa DOT should complete a study of vehicles and equipment that use Iowa's public roadway system but pay no user fees or substantially lower user fees than other vehicles and equipment.

Dakin said there would be a public meeting this summer addressing four-lane US 20 from Merville to Correctionville.

Discussion followed on the ability of DOT to find and implement \$50 million in savings as requested by the Governor. Both Governor Branstad and Director Trombino have been on the record saying it is doable. Dakin also said Director Trombino's goal is to be ahead of schedule and under budget on all projects.

Ann Trimble-Ray reported the Citizens Advisory Commission has not met since their report was delivered to the DOT and Governor Branstad. They are still working together to advocate for their recommendations.

Senator Tom Rielly and Representative Dave Tjepkes will introduce legislation this session which incorporates parts of the Citizens Advisory Commission recommendations, DOT RUTF Study recommendations, as well as other language to grow transportation infrastructure investment. They held a joint news conference on January 4 to introduce their plan which includes:

1. Increase the gas tax four cents in 2013 and an additional four cents in 2014.

2. Will increase the “fee for new registration” of vehicles from five percent to six percent which will tie the registration fees to the state’s sales as it was prior to the passage of local option sales taxes.
3. Apply a fee to an annual registration fees for hybrid or alternatively fueled vehicles that are using our roads and bridges but are paying nothing or very little to use those roads.
4. Specify that new funding gained through these revenue sources will be dedicated to the TIME 21 account to the statutory cap of \$225 million and the remaining new funds realized by these sources will be distributed consistent with the Road Use Tax Fund distribution formula.
5. Change the code to require the periodic review of road fund revenues and the sufficiency of those revenues for the projected construction and maintenance needs of city, county and state governments to every two years rather than the current five years.
6. Mandate the Iowa DOT to annually convene a meeting with cities, counties and the state to review the operation, maintenance and improvement of Iowa’s public roadway system to identify ways to jointly increase efficiencies.

In addition to the above recommendations from the Governor’s Citizen Advisory Committee, the bill also calls for:

- Reimbursement costs paid out of the road fund receipts to other state agencies for services to be reimbursed from the general fund
- Renaming driver license fees so these funds will have the same constitutional protection as the gas tax and registration fees do today, thus assuring that these fees will be used exclusively as they were intended – on our streets and roads.

Transportation Day 2012 will be January 24. A morning briefing will begin at 9:30 in the Wallace Auditorium then participants will go to the Capitol to talk with legislators. There will be displays in the Rotunda and a 1:30 pm press conference where groups supporting the Citizens Advisory Commission recommendations, DOT recommendations, and the Rielly/Tjepkes bill will go on record.

Cassie Loomis with Congressman King’s staff said she believes it’s unlikely a new Federal Highway Bill will be drafted before the current extension expires on March 30, 2012. If that is the case, predictions for a long-term extension of the expired bill will be approved effectively tabling the issue until after the General Election for the new Congress in 2013.

The next meeting of the Association will be Friday, March 9, 2012, at 10:00 am at Iowa State Bank, 500 Audubon Street, in Sac City.

Meeting adjourned.