

# NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 21 No. 4

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2009

## TRANSPORTATION HAPPENINGS

The Franklin County Conservation Board recently submitted a State Recreational Trails Funding application to the Iowa Department of Transportation for completion of an additional segment of the Rolling Prairie Trail.

The Rolling Prairie Trail stretches from the City of Coulter in Franklin County east approximately 31 miles to the City of Allison in Butler County. This segment was recently acquired from the Union Pacific Railroad. Franklin County and Butler County Conservation Boards have been working cooperatively to develop the trail. The Butler County segments will be hard-surfaced while the Franklin County segments will be aggregate surfaced to accommodate snowmobiles and encourage year-round use.



The two conservation boards were awarded funds last year for development of three segments, but due to the 2008 flooding disasters, Butler County priorities have changed and all of the funding will go to Franklin County to develop the segment from Coulter to the east city limits of the City of Hampton. Within the City of Hampton, the

trail will be hard surfaced while the segment from Hampton to Coulter will be aggregate surfaced.

The recent application submittal will continue development from the east city limits of the City of Hampton to the east Franklin County line. The project is estimated to cost approximately \$553,000.

## SUPPLEMENTAL CDBG DISASTER RECOVERY INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

NIACOG staff, over the last few months, have been busy completing Supplemental CDBG Disaster Recovery Infrastructure Funding applications for member cities that suffered damages during the floods of 2008. The following is a list of cities and their respective projects:

City of Wesley, Storm Sewer Improvements – The City of Wesley is applying for \$788,320 to construct a detention basin and storm sewer relief tile to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

City of Manly, Storm Sewer Improvements – The City of Manly is applying for \$1,058,300 to be matched with \$150,000 from the Worth County Board of Supervisors and \$150,000 in local funds to install a 48" storm sewer to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

City of St. Ansgar, Storm Sewer Improvements – The City of St. Ansgar is applying for \$375,000 for drainage improvements including ditch construction and cleaning, culver and storm sewer pipe installation to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

City of Sheffield, Sanitary Sewer Improvements – The City of Sheffield is applying for \$693,000 to replace approximately 850 feet of sewer main, line approximately 9,500 feet of sanitary sewer main and rehabilitate 30 manholes to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

City of Britt, Sanitary Sewer Improvements – The City of Britt is applying for \$442,750 to install 1,700 feet of sanitary sewer main tile to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

City of Rockford, Storm Sewer Improvements – The City of Rockford is applying for \$385,000 to replace 1,80 feet of deteriorated storm sewer and install 1,150 feet of new storm sewer to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

City of Bancroft, Sanitary Sewer Improvements – The City of Bancroft is applying for \$566,000 to replace an undersized lift station, install 3,020 of undersized force main and replace the undersized lagoon inlet to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

City of Lake Mills, Storm Sewer Improvements – The City of Lake Mills is applying for \$956,000, to be matched with \$150,000 in local funds to install 7,600 feet of 48" HDPE storm sewer pipe to eliminate flooding and sewage backup as experienced during the 2008 flooding event.

## NORTH EAST IOWA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

The Road Ahead is the theme for this year's conference. Opening session at this year's conference is Dr. Verna Cornelia Price, President and Principal Consultant for J. Cameron & Associates and JCAMA Publishers known for creating programs and processes which increase organizational effectiveness and individual performance. Dr. Price will also do a continuation of her keynote address during the first series of breakouts. Breakout sessions include information on Historic Tax Credits, IDED Small Town Development Tools, a Resources Panel, and many others. The conference is on Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>; registration starts at 8:30 with the opening session starting at 9:00am and goes through 3:45 with lunch provided. The location of the event is on the Wartburg College Campus in Waverly, Iowa. Cost for the conference is \$40 before October 16, after October 16 and walk-in is \$55. Please see the included brochure for more information and registration form. If you have any additional questions please call the NIACOG offices.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNER JOINS NIACOG



My name is Dana Heimbuch and I joined NIACOG in June as a Community Development Planner. Previously, I worked for North Iowa Area Community College most recently as the college's Internship Coordinator. My focus at NIACOG will be working with the Iowa Housing Fund and also the Business Assistance Revolving Loan Fund. As a lifetime North Iowan, I am looking forward to working with all of the communities and businesses in NIACOG's region and assisting them to grow and prosper.

My husband, Rob, and I live in rural Mason City with our two children Mara (7) and Max (5). They both attend school at West Fork Elementary in Rockwell where Rob also serves on the school board.

## BUFFALO CENTER CAT

The City of Buffalo Center recently submitted a CAT application for the construction of a Community Center and Museum to be known as the Heritage Town Center. The project was undertaken by the City of Buffalo Center and many volunteers that saw a need for a facility that can host large gathering, meetings and community events as well as a way to preserve the area's history and cultural heritage.

Currently there is no facility that can accommodate large groups of people, forcing residents of Buffalo Center and the surrounding area to hold these events in neighboring communities. Community leaders saw this as dollars leaving the community. In addition to the community center portion of the project will be the construction of a museum. Currently, there is no facility to organize, store or display the many papers and artifacts of the area's history. The proposed facility will accommodate both of these needs.

The site of the proposed facility was acquired by the City of Buffalo Center and formerly was the site of a repair shop. The Winnebago County Supervisors played a role in the City being able to acquire the property through the forgiveness of the majority of the back taxes. The City also spent several thousand dollars to demolish the building, clear and mitigate the property of environmental contamination. The Heritage Town Center Committee has spent many hours designing the facility, gathering cost estimates and completing fundraising. The project is estimated to cost \$589,000 with the City requesting \$289,560 in CAT funds.

The proposed project is a fine example of the County, City and private individuals and businesses working cooperatively to remove an eyesore and build a facility that all can be proud of.

## NEW HOUSING RECOVERY ASSISTANCE FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Jumpstart Housing Assistance Program is continuing to make significant strides in helping flood victims to repair/rehabilitate homes and assist people who need to relocate into a replacement home with down payment assistance and/or rehabilitation funds. To date, NIACOG has received about 250 applications from homeowners and about 35 from landlords.

Of particular note, the State of Iowa authorized additional funding that is not restricted to lower income families. Please note, however, that to get Jumpstart assistance, applicants must still have received FEMA assistance.

Although we've past the first anniversary for the flood, many households are still recovering. In fact, new applications continue to come in every week. The Long Term Recovery Committees and their case advocates, serving Cerro Gordo, Franklin, and Floyd counties, have been particularly helpful by working with many flood victims to help them prepare their Jumpstart applications.

Although State and Federal Jumpstart programs use the same application form, to take advantage of state funds, an application must be received by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

## IOWA HOUSING FUND ACTIVITY

In April, the Iowa Department of Economic Development announced conditional awards through the Iowa Housing Fund for Program Year 2009. The Iowa Housing Fund provides funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in order to expand or retain the supply of decent and affordable housing for low-income Iowans. Eligible Activities under the Iowa Housing Fund include owner-occupied housing rehabilitation, rental housing rehabilitation and rental new construction (including transitional housing), homeownership assistance and tenant-based rental assistance.

NIACOG staff assisted five applicants in the preparation and submission of their applications to the 2009 Iowa Housing Fund. All five applicants received Housing Fund awards as follows:

- City of Britt - \$367,400 (Rehabilitation of ten single family homes)
- Common Ground Duplexes, LLC - \$600,000 (Construction of ten new rental units in the community of Osage)
- City of Fertile - \$222,540 (Rehabilitation of six single family homes)
- City of Kensett - \$222,540 (Rehabilitation of six single family homes)
- City of St Ansgar - \$284,320 (Homeownership assistance for eight first time homebuyers to purchase and rehabilitate homes)

NIACOG staff has begun the environmental review process for all five of the above recipients as their respective grant awards become official last month. Environmental Release of funds is expected next month for all five programs at which time all assistance activity can move forward. These programs join nine other existing Housing Fund Programs that are currently receiving administrative assistance by NIACOG.

## OWNER/OCCUPIED HOUSING REHABILITATION GRANT APPLICATIONS

Even though the Housing Rehabilitation grant deadline is several months away, it's not too early to start thinking about how you can revitalize your community's housing. Each year the Iowa Department of Economic Development offers opportunities for cities to apply for federal funds to repair the homes of their low to moderate income citizens. The objective of this program is to maintain and upgrade the housing stock in the state. Common household repairs include new roofing, siding, windows, doors and updating electrical, plumbing and heating systems. Generally, the



program requires that the home be located within the city limits, not in a floodplain, be hooked up to a sewer system and that the homeowner meets certain established income guidelines. This Owner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program is a very competitive grant process with application due around the first of

December. Due to the lengthy grant process, NIACOG would urge communities who are interested in competing for these grant dollars to contact Steve Wendt or Dana Heimbuch to discuss the process.

## **I-JOBS**

The Iowa Legislature recently passed an \$830 million piece of legislation commonly referred to as I-Jobs. The legislation consists of six major program areas. Detailed information about the programs may be found at: [www.ijobsiowa.gov](http://www.ijobsiowa.gov). We believe our member cities and counties will be particularly interested in possible grants available under the Disaster Recovery portion of the legislation. Funding may be available for public construction projects relating to disaster relief or mitigation or local infrastructure.

Two important dates need to be remembered with respect to these grants. The application process for the first round requires an application to be filed on or before August 3, 2009. However, before an application can be filed, a notice of intent to apply (NOI) is required; the NOI must be filed 20 days before an application may be submitted. The NOI is an electronic filing and is currently available on the I Jobs website. We would encourage any members who think they may be interested in pursuing this possible funding source to file an NOI as soon as possible.

The project approval process includes an evaluation system with five major categories that will be used to score the projects. That system considers factors such as job creation, financial feasibility, sustainability and energy efficiency, disaster recovery benefits and readiness of the project to proceed. Specific definitions of eligible projects and conditions may be reviewed at the I Jobs website. Other portions of the I Jobs legislation include funding for Transportation, Environment & Water Quality, Housing and Technology & Alternative Energy. Additional details on these areas are also available at [www.ijobsiowa.gov](http://www.ijobsiowa.gov).

## **RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT AND PROTECTION (REAP)**

Competitive application for REAP's City Park & Open Spaces program and the County Conservation program will be due to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources no later than August 15, 2009. Since its inception in 1989, the REAP program has provided millions of dollars towards the preservation of open space and the development of outdoor recreation projects throughout the state. Over the years, this portion of the REAP program has become a popular funding source for open space acquisition/preservation, park expansion and recreational trail development.

The amount of REAP grant money available to a city in the City Park & Open Spaces category in any one year depends on its' population. There is no maximum on the amount of funds a County Conservation Board can apply for; however, to be eligible counties must dedicate at least 22¢ per \$1,000 of the assessed value of taxable property in the county for county conservation purposes.

NIACOG has prepared several successful grant applications for cities and counties throughout the region. If you have a project that you would like to discuss, please contact Chris Diggins or if you would like to learn more about the REAP program in general, go to [www.iowadnr.com/reap/cityopen.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/reap/cityopen.html).

## **HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM (HMGP)**

The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division will accept Notices of Intent until September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009, for the following types of hazard mitigation projects: construction of tornado safe rooms; acquisition, structural relocation or elevation of buildings located in a special flood hazard area; structural and non-structural retrofitting of existing public buildings, facilities, or utilities to protect against wind, ice or flood hazards; minor structural hazard control or protection projects; and localized flood control projects. Potentially eligible applicants include state agencies and local governments; private nonprofit (PNP) organizations or institutions that operate a PNP facility as defined in the 44 Code of Federal Regulations Section 206.221(e). If a community's Notice of Interest is approved, they will be asked to

complete a full application, which is due by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Contact Dan Schroeder for more information.

## **STATEWIDE ENHANCEMENT**

Eligible projects fall into the following transportation enhancement categories: trails and bikeways, historic and archeological, or scenic and environmental. If an application is successful, the Iowa Department of Transportation will provide up to 70 percent of the eligible project costs. Funds do not become available until one year after submittal of the application. For example, an applicant awarded funds in October of 2009, will receive those funds beginning in October of 2010. Contact Chris Diggins for more information.

## **FEDERAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM**

The Federal Recreational Trails Program provides funding for the development and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized recreational trails and trail related projects. Public agencies and private organizations are eligible to sponsor however, private sponsorship will require a public agency co-sponsor. A minimum 20 percent match is required and trails resulting from successful applications must be maintained as a public facility for a minimum of 20 years. Funds for projects awarded a grant during the October 1, 2009 cycle become available October 1, 2010. Contact Chris Diggins for more information.

## **SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

Safe Routes to School is a federal funding program that seeks to increase the number of K-8 children bicycling and walking to and from school. The program is intended to improve safety, encourage healthy and active lifestyles, and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. Funding is available for infrastructure projects such as sidewalks and traffic improvements, and non-infrastructure projects such as studies and encouragement programs. Applications for the program are due October 1. No local match is required for awarded grants. Contact Chris Diggins for more information.

## **REGION 2 TRANSIT SYSTEM TAKES DELIVERY ON FIRST ARRA FUNDED BUSES**

The Region 2 Transit System has taken delivery on three new buses funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). These are the first of 21 buses to be delivered to the system. These are also the first of 214 buses to come to the 35 transit systems throughout the State of Iowa.

These buses were manufactured by EIDorado National in Salina, Kansas and acquired through Iowa Department of Transportation bus procurement.



In March 2009, the Iowa Transportation Commission approved funding for Iowa's transit programs through the ARRA of approximately \$36.5 million to transit programs in Iowa. The Federal Transit Administration's preliminary apportionments indicate Iowa will receive \$10,689,659 for the urbanized program (not including areas with populations of 200,000 or more) and \$15,156,406 for the non-urbanized program.

Transit agencies provided candidate projects for the ARRA funding. Iowa Department of Transportation staff, in cooperation with the Iowa Public Transit Association's Public Transit Equipment and Facilities Management System Advisory Committee, reviewed the project proposals using a process similar to that used for annual federal capital discretionary funding. The approved projects include facility improvement projects and the purchase of much needed replacement and high-priority expansion vehicles.



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**BUSINESS RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

A new program was recently unveiled by the State to assist disaster-impacted businesses. The Disaster Recovery Business Rental Assistance Program will provide financial assistance to companies located in, or planning to locate in rental space that was physically damaged by the 2008 natural disasters.

The program, which is funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars, will provide rental assistance to help offset lease payments for up to six months not to exceed a total award amount of \$50,000. The award will be in the form of a forgivable loan to a business that has entered into a minimum one year market rate lease agreement. If the business stays open for the six month time period, the loan will be forgiven.

The program is different from the Jumpstart Small Business Assistance Program, which provided funds in an amount equal to 25% of the dollar amount of their disaster loan, up to a maximum of \$50,000.

For more information or to apply for the program, visit <http://iowalifechanging.com/flood.html> or contact the NIACOG office directly.

**NIACOG CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- Aug. 10 NIACOG Executive Committee @ NIACOG-Noon
- Sept. 7 – Labor Day Holiday – Office Closed
- Sept. 14 – NIACOG Board of Directors Meeting 6:00pm  
Location yet to be determined
- Sept. 18 – City Clerks Meeting 9:30-12:00 @ NIACOG
- Sept. 30 – Region 2 REAP Assembly – Lime Creek Nature Center  
7:00 pm



In Celebration of Labor Day  
 NIACOG Offices will be closed!

<b>NIACOG STAFF</b> <b>641-423-0491</b>		
<b>Joe Myhre</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Ext. 11</b>
<b>Kevin Kramer</b>	<b>Transit Administrator</b>	<b>Ext. 17</b>
<b>Jodi Wyborny</b>	<b>Administrative Assistant</b>	<b>Ext. 10</b>
<b>Chris Diggins</b>	<b>Local Assistance Director</b>	<b>Ext. 15</b>
<b>Steve Wendt</b>	<b>Community Development Planner</b>	<b>Ext. 13</b>
<b>Dale Moe</b>	<b>Lead Mechanic</b>	<b>Ext. 24</b>
<b>Teresa Collins</b>	<b>Operations Manager</b>	<b>Ext. 22</b>
<b>Bonnie Lettow</b>	<b>Fiscal Officer</b>	<b>Ext. 12</b>
<b>Myrtle Nelson</b>	<b>Senior Planner</b>	<b>Ext. 16</b>
<b>Dan Schroeder</b>	<b>Regional Planner</b>	<b>Ext. 14</b>
<b>laurel Clement</b>	<b>Disaster Recovery Coordinator</b>	<b>Ext. 27</b>
<b>Dana Heimbuch</b>	<b>Community Development Planner</b>	<b>Ext. 28</b>
Email – first letter of first name followed by last name @niacog.org (i.e. jmyhre@niacog.org)		