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# NIACOG

## NEWS

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### Region 2 Transit Acquires New Vehicles

The Region 2 Transit System held a "presentation of the keys" ceremony at the Worth County Public Health office in Northwood, Iowa on Thursday, July 3, 2008.

Joe Myhre, Executive Director and Kevin Kramer Transit Administrator for the North Iowa Area Council of Governments presented the keys to two new Dodge Sprinter Paratransit buses to the Worth County Public Health Department for the operation of Worth County Transit.



One of vehicles was purchased with funds granted to NIACOG from the Worth County Development Authority. The second was purchased with matching funds granted to NIACOG from the Worth County Board of Supervisors. The combined cost of the two vehicles was \$128,790.00.

The Dodge Sprinter shuttle bus was selected by Region 2 Transit because of its fuel economy and greater mileage between maintenance intervals. The Worth County Transit Service will use the Sprinter shuttle buses to provide approximately 7,000 rides annually and travel nearly 100,000 miles per year.

These vehicles will attain two and a half times the fuel mileage of the traditional Region 2 Transit System bus. With this savings and the increased mileage between preventative maintenance, the transit system is confident that the Sprinter was the right choice. The Dodge Sprinter shuttle buses can operate 10,000 miles between service oil changes and 60,000 miles before an engine and transmission service, making it a highly efficient vehicle to operate. The Dodge Sprinter emits 56% less CO2 per vehicle mile than the traditional cutaway diesel bus that the transit system uses.

Worth County Transit is available to any resident of Worth County to travel to and from any destination within the Region 2 Transit System eight-county area. The service is available Monday – Friday from 8:00a.m. to 5:00 p.m. One-way fares for service are: In-county: senior/disabled = \$2.00, general public = \$4.00. Out of County: senior/disabled = \$3.00, general public = \$5.00. The bus can be used for any trip purpose. Rides can be arranged by contacting Worth County Transit at 641-324-1741.

### FLOODS 2008

The State of Iowa will be receiving FEMA funding under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) as part of the recent floods. The State's priority for funding is for projects pertaining to the acquisition of flood prone properties. Structural Acquisition projects (buyouts) are the only type of projects that the state is considering at this time. Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management and FEMA do not make the decision to buyout property that is made by the local governments and property owners, property owners are never forced to sell their property, this is all voluntary. Counties and cities that have been affected by the recent floods have until September 12, 2008 to file a Notice of Interest Form (NOI). This NOI is specific to Structural Acquisition projects. NOI's must be completed in the provided format and emailed to [hsemd.mitigation@iowa.gov](mailto:hsemd.mitigation@iowa.gov) by September 12, 2008. The state will then review the applications and will formally send out invitations for the full HMGP application around mid October 2008. Entities that are selected will be provided with a minimum of two months to complete the application. Cities and counties interested in this process can contact NIACOG for more information and help with the application process.

In addition, a FEMA approved local hazard mitigation plan is an eligibility requirement for all HMGP projects. All applicants for a project grant must have a FEMA approved local hazard mitigation plan prior to FEMA awarding HMGP project funds. The planning issue is going to be pervasive through-out Iowa. If a community has destroyed homes and is engaged in the planning process now, there could still be an opportunity for them to be awarded HMGP funds. There is, however, a planning waiver that the State and FEMA Region VII could approve that would give a community one year after HMGP project grant award to have their plan approved. If you are unsure whether you have a FEMA approved local hazard mitigation plan or are interested in completing a plan, please contact the NIACOG Office.

### CDBG Workshop Information and Materials

The 2009 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application workshop for the Water/Sewer Fund and the Community Facilities and Services Fund will be held Thursday, September 4, 2008, from 9:30 a.m to 2:30 p.m. at several ICN sites around the state. The designated site for the NIACOG region is AEA 267 located at the Mason City Airport business park. The 2009 CDBG application materials will be available on-line at [www.iowalifechanging.com](http://www.iowalifechanging.com) prior to the September 4th date. Please continue to check this website for updated materials.

## **Charles City Postpones Housing Fund Assistance to Aid Flooded Cities**

The City of Charles City was awarded \$322,500 from the Iowa Housing Fund in April 2008, but has agreed to temporarily turn back the funds to accommodate the State's desire to more quickly assist flooded communities.

A few weeks ago the IDED (Iowa Department of Economic Development) asked cities to consider turning back their Housing Fund awards to expedite the creation of a pool of funds for flood assistance. Although federal funds will be coming to the State at some undetermined future date, waiting until they make it through the proper channels was not found to be a sufficient solution for the urgent need.

IDED promised a 're-award' of the same funds next Spring for the cities willing to postpone their projects. Having seen the impact of flooding itself, Charles City decided to voluntarily delay their project. The State's request was directed especially to communities that had not incurred costs to date, and the costs incurred for Charles City's project solely included administrative costs (primarily NIACOG's staff costs). NIACOG mirrored the community's willingness to accommodate the needs of flooded communities by foregoing the administrative costs incurred to date.

As originally proposed, Charles City plans will use the 're-awarded' fund to rehabilitate 10 homes in the 'old college grounds' neighborhood located in the southeastern part of their community.

## **Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT)**

In the last issue of the NIACOG newsletter, we announced that the City of Garner and Heritage Park of North Iowa had submitted Community Attraction and Tourism applications for their respective projects.

Since that time, the CAT Committee and the Vision Iowa Board have met and awarded funds to both of the projects. A brief description of each project and the award is as follows:

The City of Garner's project is the Garner Veterans Memorial Recreation Center. The project is expected to cost over \$3.8 million. Residents of the City of Garner passed a \$2.75 million dollar bond issue for the project. The Hancock County Board of Supervisors also generously contributed \$10,000 towards the project. The Garner Veterans Memorial Recreation Center project was awarded \$670,000.

Heritage Park of North Iowa's project is to construct a 120 foot by 200 foot building to house steam engines and threshers. The proposed project is estimated at \$313,479. Heritage Park has received funding support from the Winnebago County Supervisors, Hancock County Supervisors, Worth County Supervisors, City of Forest City, Forest City Chamber, Hanson Foundation as well as countless donations of money and labor from many volunteers. The Heritage Park of North Iowa Project was awarded \$60,000.

Both of these projects illustrate that cooperation between government entities, schools, hospitals and the general public can go a long way to the success of the fundraising and the sustainability of the project over the long term.

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTES**



The flood of 2008 will go down in the record books as the worst flooding in the state's history. The unprecedented flooding resulted in millions of dollars in damage and impacted thousand of lives, including yours truly. Yes, the mighty Winnebago River which traverses my rear yard smashed the previous flood

record by 3.5 feet. Besides personally being affected by the flooding, the agency sustained the loss of two newer buses when the Cedar River flooded a city maintenance garage in Charles City. Unfortunately, the flooding was widespread and spared few from its ravages.

The flood assessment is still ongoing and the recovery won't happen overnight, but with state and federal dollars allocated to the recovery effort, north Iowans will step up to the challenge and rebuild our communities and State even better than pre-flood conditions.

NIACOG staff has been active in disseminating information regarding FEMA funding and recently hosted an informational meeting for our member governments impacted by flood waters with the Iowa Homeland Security Emergency Management Division regarding the flood buyout program under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. If your community or county is interested in the buyout program, please know the deadline for submission of acquisition projects is September 12, 2008. If we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

In closing, I would like to publicly thank our staff and in particular our transit division for their dedication, commitment and hard work during the flood catastrophe. The transit system was called into service at the onset of the flooding early Sunday morning and assisted selflessly late into the evening helping in the evacuation process across the region. When water was shut-off Sunday afternoon in Mason City, staff had already begun coordinating transit schedules with social service agencies and with Mercy Medical Center who was dependent upon the transit system in getting dialysis patients to outlying facilities to insure medical treatment could continue uninterrupted. This is a testament to the staff dedication and commitment our employees have to our agency and member governments we serve. I hope your opinion is equally as positive as mine.

## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

### Community Attraction and Tourism Program

The Community Attraction & Tourism (CAT) Program is an opportunity for cities, counties and non profit organizations to ask for financial assistance for vertical infrastructure projects including museums, recreation centers, aquatic centers, sports arenas and other attractions. Applications are submitted to the Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Vision Iowa Board on a quarterly basis. Applicants are reminded that the Vision Iowa Board will require city, county and private funding for each project. Contact NIACOG staff for information. The CAT application deadline is quarterly with the next round of applications due October 15, 2008.

### Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP)

Competitive applications for REAP's City Park and Open Spaces program and the County Conservation program will be due to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources no later than August 15, 2008. 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 and 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.

If you have a project that you would like to discuss, please contact NIACOG staff, 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).

### Revitalize Iowa's Strong Economy (RISE)

This Iowa DOT program was established to promote economic development in Iowa through construction or improvement of roads and streets. Funding may be in the form of a grant, loan or combination thereof and projects must involve construction or improvement of a public roadway. Local development projects support local economic development, but do not require an immediate commitment of funds (i.e. industrial parks, tourist attractions). Projects are evaluated using the following factors: development potential, economic impact, local commitment and initiative, transportation need, and area economic need. Local match is normally 50 percent. For more information, contact NIACOG staff. Application deadline is September 1, 2008.

### 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 2008, will receive those funds beginning in October of 2009. Contact Chris Diggins for more information. Application deadline is October 1, 2008.

### 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 sponsors, 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, 2008 cycle become available October 1, 2009. Contact Chris Diggins if your community is interested in this program. Application deadline is October 1, 2008.

## Chamber Reaches Agreement to Keep Trolley Rolling

Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce leaders have reached what they are calling a "win-win" solution to its Main Street Trolley woes. The Chamber's Board of Directors has signed a two-year agreement with North Iowa Area Council of Governments to house and maintain the rubber-wheel trolley. In October, the Chamber Board sent a letter to its members asking for

i n p u t concerning the trolley which it has operated for 10 years. The trolley had been operating at an annual net loss of \$5,300 per year. A committee



studying ways to make the trolley more visible and profitable eventually concluded sale of the vehicle must be considered.

Thankfully, the letter to members generated a telephone call suggesting the Chamber contact NIACOG. With ample building to store the trolley and two full time mechanics on staff, the agency was a good fit. "We had the ability to help out," said NIACOG Executive Director Joe Myhre. "And we will be able to make the trolley more visible in Clear Lake, as well as North Iowa." Under the terms of the agreement, the Clear Lake Chamber will continue to use the trolley as it has in the past. When not in use by the Chamber, NIACOG will use the trolley to serve its eight-county area and make more frequent trips in and around Clear Lake.

Chamber President Mike Finnegan, said "We have always wanted the trolley to remain a part of the community, but had a fiscal responsibility to make smart business decisions on the organization's behalf. The agreement is definitely a win-win for all of us." Finnegan encouraged the public to watch for a schedule in the newspaper in the coming weeks announcing dates and times the trolley will be making stops in Clear Lake. Possible routes between parks and other attractions are being studied.

## FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs

FEMA's Mitigation Grant programs provide funding for eligible mitigation activities that reduce losses and protect life and property from future disaster damages. Currently, FEMA administers the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, the Repetitive Flood Claims Program and the Severe Repetitive Loss Program.

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)** - HMGP funds are available after a Presidential disaster declaration. Eligible applicants include States, local governments, Indian Tribal governments and some Private Non-Profit organizations. Communities may apply for HMGP assistance on behalf of affected individuals and businesses.

**Flood Mitigation Assistance Program (FMA)** - The FMA program provides funding to states and communities for measures that reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of flood damage to buildings, manufactured homes and other structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The program provides grants for mitigation planning and projects with a goal of reducing claims under the NFIP. Planning grants are used to assess flood risks and develop Flood Mitigation Plans to reduce the risks. Project grants are used to implement mitigation activities that reduce flood losses to NFIP-insured properties by elevating, acquiring and demolishing or relocating NFIP-insured buildings. Project grants are available to NFIP-participating communities that have a Flood Mitigation Plan in place.

**Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM)** - The PDM program is a nationally competitive program that provides funds to States and communities, including Tribal governments, for hazard mitigation planning and implementation of mitigation projects prior to a disaster event. The PDM program provides Applicants with an opportunity to raise risk awareness and reduce disaster losses through cost effective hazard mitigation activities. Communities and States must have FEMA-approved mitigation plans in order to receive project grant funds. **Application period is now open until November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008.**

**Repetitive Flood Claims Grant Program (RFC)** - The RFC grant program is designed to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of flood damage to structures that are insured under the NFIP and have had one or more claim payment(s) for flood damages. RFC funds may only be used to mitigate structures located within a State or community that is participating in the NFIP and cannot meet the requirements of the FMA program due to lack of cost share or lack of capacity to manage the activities.

**Severe Repetitive Loss Program (SRL)** - The SRL program provides funds to assist States, local governments and Indian Tribal governments participating in the NFIP in reducing or eliminating the long-term flood risks to severe repetitive loss properties. Severe repetitive loss is defined as property that is insured under the NFIP and has had four or more flood insurance claims payments totaling or exceeding \$5,000 with at least two of the payments occurring in a ten-year period or two or more payments exceeding the total cumulative value of the property. Projects include, elevation, relocation and demolishing of existing residential properties; flood proofing of historic properties; localized flood control projects and demolition and rebuilding of damaged properties to the Base Flood Elevation or greater if required by local ordinance.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in any of these programs please call NIACOG today.

## Congratulations!!!

Kudos to Region 2 Transit System drivers Tom Tisor and Linda Stricker who placed 2<sup>nd</sup> as a team at the Iowa Public Transit Association's 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rodeo held in Des Moines, Iowa in the Cutaway Bus Division. Individually Linda placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in competition and was awarded a plaque and a savings bond. The Annual Rodeo is an opportunity for drivers to test their skills and compete against other drivers from other transit systems throughout the state. The drivers are scored on driving maneuvers through an obstacle course and a pre-trip inspection test.



Linda Stricker, Third Place Rodeo winner

A banquet was held the previous night at Principal Park and drivers were honored with "Driver of the Year" awards. Region 2 Transit's recipient was Tom Tisor. At the presentation, this was said: "Tom has only been with us for just over a year, but in my 20 years with transit he has proved to be one of the best drivers I have ever worked with. I never

have to talk Tom "into" adjusting to changes, nor do I ever have to explain things twice to Tom, his comment is always "it's my job". Tom's accident free record proves how safety conscience he is with our passengers, the care he takes with the vehicles he drives shows how respectful he is to his employers. I have never heard a complaint about Tom from fellow employees or passengers, and the wonderful comments we receive about Tom from passengers and fellow employees proves just how much he genuinely cares for people. A few

months after Tom started I asked him how he was getting along and how he was handling the job, he told me no matter what mood he starts the day with he always goes home feeling better, and more fortunate. I wish I had 6 more of him, it would make my job much easier! Thanks Tom, it's such a pleasure to work with you and even more a pleasure to know you as a person" by Teresa Collins, Operations Manager / Region 2 Transit.



Tom Tisor, Driver of the Year

Another accolade was received by the transit system from the ARC of North Central Iowa. The "Friends of the ARC" award was presented to the Region 2 Transit System at their annual meeting. Drivers; Tom Tisor, Ron Krahn, Dave Martin, Roger Johnson, Roylene Hopper, Art Smith, Dean Graven, Les Holt, Linda Stricker, Scott Alman, Steve Jicka and Patti Burke were each presented with a certificate at the banquet.

## GREEN JOURNEY

The Iowa Department of Economic Development's Community Development Division launched a "green journey" last November to apply an environmentally conscious approach to its policies and programs. In May, IDED announced the publishing of a draft of its new Iowa Green Communities Criteria. These Criteria establish minimum performance-based green building design and construction standards for several upcoming IDED financial assistance programs, including the 2009 Housing Fund and the CDBG Community Facilities and Services Fund. Last month IDED presented a one-day workshop which provided information on the new Iowa Green Communities Criteria to users of these programs and to those interested in sustainable community and construction projects. A draft of the Iowa Green Communities Criteria is available on line at: [www.iowalifechanging.com/community/downloads/green-criteria08.pdf](http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/downloads/green-criteria08.pdf).

## 2009 Housing Fund Workshop Information and Materials

The IDED's 2009 Housing Fund Application Workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, August 19, 2008, via the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) from 8:30 to Noon. This ICN broadcast will originate from the Iowa Department of Economic Development with AEA 267 located at the Mason City Airport business park as the NIACOG region's designated site. If you are considering submission of a Housing Fund Application, IDED expects you or your representative to attend this workshop. There is no pre-registration required. Application materials will be available soon at IDED's website: <http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/housing>.

## Northeast Iowa Community Development Conference

Enclosed within this newsletter edition is the brochure for the Northeast Iowa Community Development Conference.

1. Learn about what the future of the bio-industry means for rural Iowa.
2. Discover how the State's green initiatives are creating sustainable communities and supporting sustainable building.
3. Hear Generation Iowa's recommendations to attract and retain young people to Iowa.
4. Network with others in small town development across the state.

**Who Should Attend:** City Clerks, City Council members, Mayors, County officials, economic development, community development professionals, housing developers, community leaders, lenders, anyone working to make their small communities more vibrant and more sustainable.

**Early bird registration \$40 by August 15<sup>th</sup>, after August 15<sup>th</sup> - \$55**

Northeast Iowa Community Development Conference

**Wednesday September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008**

Heartland Acres Agribition Center

2600 Swan Lake Blvd.

Independence, Iowa

## Fire Grants

The ever popular Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program has published some interesting statistics for the program for the years 2004 through 2008. *(The total number reflects the inclusion of Puerto Rico, Guam, District of Columbia, Marshall Islands, American Samoa, Northern Marianas, and the Virgin Islands)*

The State of Iowa ranked 10<sup>th</sup> of 57 in total applications submitted with 2,902.

The State of Iowa ranked 17<sup>th</sup> of 57 in federal share requested with \$306,186,465.

The State of Iowa ranked 54<sup>th</sup> of 57 in average federal share requested with \$105,509.

The following illustrates Iowa's share of AFG awards.

Year	Apps	#of Awards	Amount Requested	Award Amount
2007	560	132	\$ 66,413,201	\$ 9,238,396
2006	531	130	\$ 60,920,859	\$ 10,064,612
2005	547	152	\$ 54,433,197	\$ 13,118,935
2004	618	254	\$ 66,363,403	\$ 16,540,967
2003	<u>646</u>	<u>280</u>	<u>\$ 58,055,805</u>	<u>\$ 16,467,202</u>
	2,902	948	\$306,186,465	\$ 65,430,112

## Innovation in Local Governments

In 2007 the Iowa legislature created the Local Innovation Commission, with one of its goals to stimulate and encourage innovation in local government by providing grants to assist in the implementation of local governance and revenue models. Eligible applicants are community-wide areas, which are a distinct geographical area voluntarily comprised of counties, cities or townships. State agencies, community colleges, school districts, councils of governments, private business and not-for-profit agencies also may be part of the community wide area if joined by a county, city or township.

Government innovation projects must fit one or more of the following categories to be eligible:

- Produce cost savings to citizens, in particular reduction of property taxes.
- Create, or induce to create, high-wage, stable employment opportunities for a local government's citizens and more effective leveraging of resources to improve competitive advantage.
- Eliminate duplication of government administration.
- More efficient and effective delivery of services by government, including eliminating duplication of service delivery by more than one unit of government in the same area and modernizing services and service delivery to meet the changing public service needs of the area.
- Create a state/local partnership in one or more areas of service delivery and governance that would increase quality and efficiency on the local level.

Information and grant applications are available on the department of Management's web site [www.dom.state.ia.us](http://www.dom.state.ia.us).



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**NIACOG Calendar of Events**

**August**

- 11<sup>th</sup>- NIACOG Exec. Cmte. Mtg @ NIACOG 12noon
- 19<sup>th</sup>- CDBG Housing Fund Workshop, 8am - 12, AEA 267 Clear Lake, Iowa

**September**

- 1<sup>st</sup>- Labor Day Holiday, NIACOG Office closed
- 4<sup>th</sup>- CDBG Infrastructure Workshop, 9:30 am - 2:00 pm, AEA 267, Clear Lake, Iowa
- 8<sup>th</sup>- NIACOG Board of Directors Mtg, 6:00 p.m. location to be determined

**Mid-Iowa Community Development Conference**

The Mid Iowa Community Development Conference will again be an evening event held September 4, 2008, at the Best Western Starlite Village, Fort Dodge. This conference brings together community leaders and volunteers from small communities across central and north central Iowa.

The legislative forum was a popular item at last years conference and will be held again this year. In addition, a number of breakout sessions will feature real life experiences from community leaders as they tell about programs that improve life in their communities. Breakout sessions include topics such as MYENTRE.NET, GIS/Technology, Community Betterment and Tourism/Recreation.

The conference is designed to bring together community leaders, volunteers, professional developers, rural leaders and elected officials from the north central Iowa region to share their experiences and learn about new ideas for community and rural development. Everyone from rural communities is invited and welcome to attend.

For registration information, contact: Webster County Extension, 217 S 25<sup>th</sup> St., Suite C-12, Fort Dodge, Iowa 50401. Phone: (515) 955-6447 or e-mail: [midlowgrowth@gmail.com](mailto:midlowgrowth@gmail.com)

**NIACOG STAFF**

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<b>Jodi Wyborny</b>	<b>Administrative Assistant</b>
<b>Chris Diggins</b>	<b>Local Assistance Director</b>
<b>Steve Wendt</b>	<b>Community Development Planner</b>
<b>Dale Moe</b>	<b>Lead Mechanic</b>
<b>Teresa Collins</b>	<b>Operations Manager</b>
<b>Bonnie Lettow</b>	<b>Fiscal Officer</b>
<b>Myrtle Nelson</b>	<b>Senior Planner</b>
<b>Dan Schroeder</b>	<b>Regional Planner</b>