

NIACOG

NEWS

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NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

June, 2007

TOP OF IOWA TOURISM CELEBRATES TOURISM MONTH

The Top of Iowa Tourism committee celebrated National Tourism Week during May 12-20, 2007, in recognition of travel and tourism's tremendous economic, social, and cultural impact. The Top of Iowa Tourism group consists of representatives from a ten county area in North Central Iowa including Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Wright, Franklin, Butler, Kossuth, Winnebago, Worth, Mitchell and Hancock counties. NIACOG staff provides administrative support to the tourism group.

Jeff Kolb, Top of Iowa Tourism President, noted, "Tourism is on the upward climb in North Central Iowa. Tourism's economic impact generated \$211.17 million and supported over 2,000 tourism related jobs in the ten counties represented by the Top of Iowa Tourism." According to a report supported by the Iowa Tourism Office, a division of the Iowa Department of Economic Development, tourism contributed \$5.4 billion to the state and employed more than 62,000 people statewide.

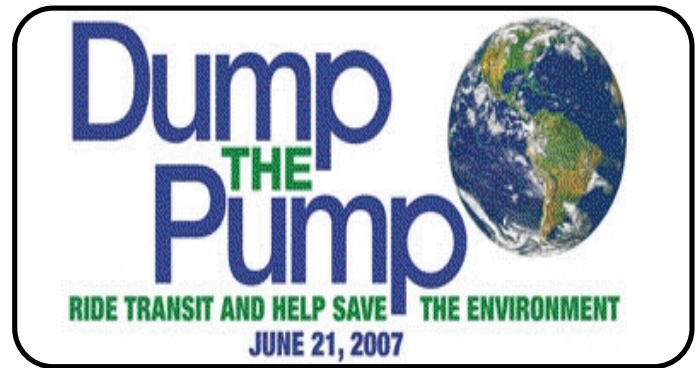
Visitors traveling the State of Iowa, who spend their dollars in our restaurants, hotels, museums, and retail locations, completed surveys while visiting the Iowa Welcome Centers. According to these surveys, the daily expenditure per travel party was \$208.55 and trips averaged 4 days in length. Vacationers made up over 47% of the travelers and another 32% were traveling to visit family and friends. The average number of travelers per party in 2005 was 2.6 and the average age of a typical Iowa traveler is 54.8 years of age. In addition, 91% of Iowa travelers are from within the State of Iowa or surrounding states with Illinois, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Missouri leading the way.

County	Tourism Impact (\$ millions)	Tourism Employment (thousands)
Butler	6.71	0.03
Cerro Gordo	134.95	1.49
Floyd	14.07	0.13
Franklin	8.04	0.06
Hancock	4.63	0.04
Kossuth	10.55	0.1
Mitchell	7.16	0.05
Winnebago	8.35	0.06
Worth	4.48	0.02
Wright	12.23	0.09
Total	211.17	2.07

The Top of Iowa Tourism committee invites residents to discover North Iowa's tourism treasures by becoming a tourist in the North Central Iowa area! To learn more, including information on dining, lodging, events, recreation, golf, parks and camping, visit the Top of Iowa Tourism's website located at www.topofiowatourism.com. This information is also available in brochure format available at the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau and Economic Development offices in Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Wright, Franklin, Butler, Kossuth, Winnebago, Worth, Mitchell and Hancock counties.

ANNUAL DUMP THE PUMP TO BE HELD ON JUNE 21

Transit Plays Key Role in Helping the Environment and Conserving Gasoline



With environmental concerns on everyone's mind, public transportation systems nationwide will participate in the Annual National Dump the Pump Day on June 21. Sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the 2007 National Dump the Pump Day is a day that encourages people to ride public transportation to help improve the environment and to conserve gasoline.

Public transportation plays a vital role in improving our environment. On June 21, people can make a difference by riding public transportation and encouraging their friends and family to do so, too.

U.S. public transportation systems help to create a healthier environment by reducing smog-producing pollutants and greenhouse gases. Public transportation produces nearly 50 percent less carbon dioxide (CO₂) and nitrogen oxide (NO_x), per passenger mile, as private vehicles.

Earlier this year a report by ICF International, "Public Transportation and Petroleum Savings in the U.S.: Reducing Dependence on Oil," stated that the U.S. public transportation systems save 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline every year, the equivalent of 108 million cars filling up in a year.

"The 2007 National Dump the Pump Day is a public awareness day that emphasizes the environmental benefits of using public transportation," said APTA President William W. Millar. "It is also a day for people across the country to make a difference as they conserve gasoline and help our environment."



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

NIACOG staff said farewell to Josh Kohlhaas, regional planner, who recently resigned his position to move to California and get married. We wish Josh and his new wife, Margie the very best. We are currently in the process of finding his replacement. Josh did an excellent job of tying up the loose ends prior to his departure, but until we find his replacement, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. Please read his departing comments in the article below.

Since I'm on the topic of departures, the Myhre family had its second graduation and will be sending another daughter out into the real world, well sort of. Number 2 daughter will be leaving this fall to join her older sister at the University of Iowa to pursue a degree in engineering. With both parents Cyclone alumni and ISU known for its engineering program, I can only scratch my head as to why Iowa, but she knows best!

Things will be different around the house with only one left at home, but it is rewarding to know your kids are doing well as a new chapter of their life begins, much like Josh. I wish the very best to both!

STAFF MEMBER FAREWELL

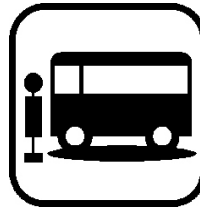
After two and a half years as a NIACOG staff member, I have decided to leave my position as a regional planner at NIACOG. I will be relocating to Santa Barbara, CA and marrying my fiancé, Marguerite Freeman, on May 26, 2007. I intend to continue my career as a city and regional planner and as a freelance grant writer in Southern California.

I have truly enjoyed my tenure as a NIACOG staff member and I appreciate the opportunity I was given to work with the cities, counties, and local organizations within Region 2. Thank you for the support, guidance, and encouragement you have provided to me at NIACOG. I will miss you, my colleagues and friends, who I have met over the past few years.

I am looking forward to the new challenges that I will have in the next phase of my career and married life, and I wish the entire NIACOG organization only the best in the future.

Sincerely,
Joshua Kohlhaas

DEMAND FOR HOUSING NEAR MASS TRANSIT ON THE RISE



Housing development centered on public transit will be growing in popularity in coming decades and represents an opportunity to address the housing needs of low- and moderate-income households, according to a report released last month by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

"The renaissance of mass transit has coincided with a renaissance of communities and neighborhoods that are near transit," the report says. "More and more residents want to not only use transit, they want to live near it as well."

Researchers for the report, "Preserving and Promoting Diverse Transit-Oriented Neighborhoods," project that 16 million households will want to live near transit in 2030, compared to the 6 million that already lived in these locations in 2000.

"To accommodate this demand, a substantial amount of housing will need to be constructed near transit," the report says. "Affordable housing may not need to be created at each and every transit zone, but the amount of affordable housing opportunities near transit should be tracked at the transit zone, corridor and system-wide scales to ensure transit in each region is equally accessible to all income levels, given the affordable connectivity it provides to job opportunities."

The report sites statistics from the American Public Transportation Association showing that riders in the U.S. took more than 9.7 billion trips on public transportation systems in 2005 and that public transportation use has increased 25% since 1995.

Driving the growth in transit use and transit oriented development (TOD) are increasingly expensive transportation costs, convenience and growing auto-related congestion and air pollution.

A significant portion of future demand for housing near transit will come from low- to moderate-income households, the study says. "By 2030, more than one-half of the potential demand for housing near transit is likely to come from households that have incomes below the area median income, or approximately \$50,000. Twenty percent of households with a potential demand for housing near transit will make less than \$20,000 a year."

The report also finds that neighborhoods near transit provide housing to a greater share of the region's lower-income households, with the number of households earning less than \$35,000 10% higher in transit zones than in the regions where those zones are located. "The transit infrastructure generally helps households of lower means get where they need to go, while keeping their transportation costs down."

"In regions where congestion and housing prices are high or on the rise, employers are now emerging as advocates for transit investment because many find that high costs for housing paired with difficult and expensive commutes get in the way of attracting talented workers at affordable wages," the study says.

IOWA HOUSING FUND ACTIVITY



In March, the Iowa Department of Economic Development announced the Iowa Housing Fund Awards for Program Year 2007. 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), and tenant-based rental assistance.

NIACOG staff assisted five applicants who were awarded 2007 Iowa Housing Fund assistance. These successful recipients from the NIACOG region were: Lake Mills - \$199,875 (Assistance for 5 first time homebuyers); Sheffield - \$278,000 (Rehabilitation of eight single family homes); Thompson - \$278,000 (Rehabilitation of eight single family homes); Whittemore - \$278,000 (Rehabilitation of eight single family homes); Common Ground Duplexes LLC - \$500,000 (Construction of 10 new rental units in St Ansgar).

2007 Housing Fund Awards became effective on May 11, 2007. NIACOG staff has now begun the environmental review process for all five of the above recipients. Release of funds is expected later on this summer for all 5 programs at which time all assistance activity can move forward. These programs join 8 other existing Housing Fund Programs that are being administered by NIACOG Staff.

The following is a progress report on the activity to date in these existing programs: **Buffalo Center** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2005 Award) The rehabilitation of 7 homes has been completed in the Buffalo Center Program. The final 2 projects recently went under contract; **Charles City** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2005 Award) The rehabilitation of 8 homes has been completed in the Charles City Program. The final three projects are now underway; **Rake** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2005 Award) The rehabilitation of 4 homes has been completed in the Rake Program. The final two projects are nearing completion; **Stacyville** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2005 Award) The rehabilitation of 5 homes has been completed in the Stacyville Program. Another project is nearing completion and the processing of a 7th and final project is underway; **Swea City** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2005 Award) The rehabilitation of 6 homes has been completed in the Swea City Program. The final three projects recently went under contract; **Algona** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2006 Award) The rehabilitation of 5 homes is now underway. The next 5 assisted homeowners have been selected and the bidding process will begin for them soon; **Burt** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2006 Award) The rehabilitation of 4 homes is now underway. The next 4 assisted homeowners have been selected and the bidding process will begin for them soon; **Titonka** Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (2006 Award) The rehabilitation of 4 homes is now underway. The next 4 assisted homeowners have been selected and the bidding process is underway.

SMALL TOWN SIGN REPLACEMENT PROGRAM



The Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Traffic and Safety is now accepting applications, from communities with populations of 5,000 or less, to replace damaged, obsolete or substandard signs and signposts. The program will provide up to \$5,000 of signs and signposts per applying community on a first come first serve basis. All eligible applicants are encouraged to apply even if they have already participated in a similar program in the past.

This year the responsibilities of an assessment of need, ordering and proper location and installation of posts will rest with the communities themselves. Guidance to perform all of these tasks and all other information regarding the program is now available on a website (<http://www.dot.state.ia.us/traffic/smalltownsign.htm>) and will be supplied upon request to interested parties.

The signs and signposts available through the program this year will be limited to those listed below. This year the state will be making square tubing (Telespar is currently stocked) and some associated accessories available for mounting of posts and signs with this system. Questions regarding the program may be directed to Chris Diggins in the NIACOG Office.

Signs Available:	Price	Signposts	Price
STOP Sign 30"X 30"	\$35	4" X 4" X 12ft Wood	\$15
STOP Sign 36"X 36"	\$51	4" X 4" X 14ft Wood	\$15
YIELD Sign 36"	\$29	4" X 6" X 16ft Wood	\$15
DO NOT ENTER 30"X 30"	\$43	4" X 6" X 18ft Wood	\$35
DO NOT ENTER 36"X 36"	\$61	U-Channel 14ft Galvanized	\$35
STOP AHEAD 36"X 30"	\$61	Tubular Steel (Telespar) 2" X 2" X 12ft	\$35
Single Headed Arrow 48"X 24"	\$65	Telespar Anchor Bases	\$35
Double Headed Arrow 48"X 24"	\$65	Telespar Concrete Mounting Base	\$35

Contact Information: Jeff Stratton, jeff.stratton@dot.iowa.gov, Small Town Sign Replacement Program Coordinator, Office of Traffic and Safety, Iowa Department of Transportation, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50010, Phone 515-239-1154, Fax 515-239-1891



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NIACOG Calendar of Events

JUNE

- 11- NIACOG Board Mtg., 6:00 pm, NIACOG office
- 21- Summer Solstice
- 25-29 P.A.T. Train the Trainer, North Iowa Joint Transit Facility

JULY

- 4- Independence Day Holiday, NIACOG office closed
- 11- HazMat Mtg. 1:30 pm, NIACOG office
- 24- RAGBRAI - Hampton
- 27- Top of Iowa Tourism, 12:00 noon, NIACOG office

REVITALIZE IOWA'S SOUND ECONOMY (RISE) FUNDING

It appears there will be County RISE funds available for applications later this summer. As many of you know the County RISE funding pool had been depleted due to the number of requests for funds for road improvement projects to serve the growing number of bio-diesel and ethanol plants in the State.

Governor Culver has been sent a bill that will increase the County RISE funds from \$1 million to \$5 million. (RISE funds accumulate monthly with gas receipts, so the funds will remain low until it builds up.)

It appears funds will only available for immediate opportunity projects at this time. If you have a project in mind please contact the NIACOG office. We will continue to keep you informed of any further developments.

NIACOG STAFF

Joe Myhre	Executive Director
Kevin Kramer	Transit Administrator
Jodi Wyborny	Administrative Assistant
Chris Diggins	Local Assistance Director
Steve Wendt	Community Development Planner
Dale Moe	Lead Mechanic
Teresa Collins	Operations Manager