

# NIACOG

## NEWS

Vol. 18 No. 4

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

September, 2006

### United Way funds Transportation Grant to Improve Health Care Access

The United Way of North Central Iowa Board of Directors recently approved its first ever *Venture Grant* in the amount of \$5,600 to help north central Iowans access healthcare. The *Route Identification and Passenger Amenities Project*, a collaboration with the Mason City Public Transit, North Iowa Area Council of Governments, Iowa Department of Transportation, Regional Planning Coalition and the Aging Services Coalition, will provide the required "community match" to access an additional \$22,400 from the Federal Transit Administration Non-Urban Capital Assistance Fund through the Iowa Department of Transportation to erect 5 bus shelters and 100 bus stop signs.

"Many residents throughout north central Iowa use their county transit system to access their health care needs in Mason City," said Jennifer Kammeyer, United Way Executive Director. "These shelters and signage will help tremendously in assisting individuals to identify locations to access services as well as provide protection from inclement weather for transit passengers."

The project is in response to the coordination efforts of the Iowa Mobility Action Planning Workshop held on April 4<sup>th</sup>, sponsored by the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council.

The bus shelters and signs will be located near primary locations throughout the city including physician offices, pharmacies, and dental offices. Since lack of information is often a barrier to using transportation services, the project is expected to increase the number of people using the transit system to access health care services.

"The newly proposed bus shelters will not only benefit residents of Mason City utilizing the public transit system," said Joe Myhre, Executive Director of North Iowa Area Council of Governments, "but will also help the regional riders from outside Mason City readily identify bus stops when utilizing the transit service while in Mason City."

### New Law Helps Community Foundations

HF 2791 Increases Gambling revenues and Creates Tax Credit- The Iowa General Assembly approved and the Governor signed HF 2791 this year, which provides more gambling revenues to the community foundations already in place throughout the state. Additionally, this legislation provides a tax credit of 20% for all qualified private gifts up to \$500,000 given to local qualified community foundations. The purpose of this legislation is to grow local foundations and encourage more private giving. As many are aware, the state is a net exporter of millions of dollars per year in wealth to heirs outside the state. The legislation is designed in part to keep more of that wealth in the state. Local leaders can promote this legislation to potential donors and benefactors.



Jennifer Kammeyer, United Way Executive Director, speaking at a press conference at the North Iowa Joint Use Transit Facility. Also pictured: Senator Amanda Regan, Representative Bill Schickel, NIACOG Executive Director Joe Myhre and Mason City Transit Director Pat Otto

### CDBG Dates to Remember

The Iowa Department of Economic Development sponsors the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. CDBG's assist communities with water & sewer, housing, and community facility projects. The application deadline to be considered for grant funding is approaching. If your community is interested in applying for assistance for water/sewer facility improvement, housing rehabilitation or community service projects please contact the NIACOG offices at 641-423-0491 for more information.

#### Water & Sewer Fund

Application Workshop - Previously held, Applications Due - December 12; Awards - March 1

#### Housing Fund & HOME

Application Workshop - August 31; Applications Due - November 29; Awards - March 7

#### Community Facilities & Services Fund

Application Workshop - September 6; Applications Due - December 12; Awards - March 1



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Enclosed in this newsletter is a brochure inviting your attendance to the 2006 NE Iowa Community Development Conference. This is an excellent venue for small town elected officials, volunteer leaders and rural developers to network with one another and to hear about others' experiences in community and rural development. This year's conference is highlighting several exceptional local efforts and entrepreneurial development. The keynote speaker for the conference is Adam Bock, a successful entrepreneur and lecturer at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Business. He will have a message for all small towns about how to attract and support entrepreneurs. If your schedule permits, I would recommend attendance.

Throughout the newsletter you will see many grant opportunities. One of the most popular programs, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) deadline is fast approaching. If your community has a water, storm water or wastewater project in need of financial assistance, please contact our office. Those projects that meet the federal eligibility criteria and can prove a readiness to proceed upon receipt of funding will be extremely competitive. If you have a project in mind, please give us a call.

## Region 2 Transit System Receives Recognition

The Iowa Department of Transportation's (DOT) Office of Public Transit presented awards June 22 to acknowledge the operations and staff of Iowa's public transit systems.

Michelle McEnany, director of the Office of Public Transit, presented awards in four categories, plus a special lifetime achievement award, at an awards ceremony as part of the joint DOT and Iowa Public Transit Association's annual training conference in Mason City, which was co-hosted by Mason City and Region2 Transit System's. Awards were presented to three transit systems for excellence in transit Web site design and development. The Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority, city of Muscatine's MuscaBus and North Iowa Area Council of Governments, were acknowledged as the recipients of the large urban, small urban and regional transit system categories respectively.

McEnany said, "Last year Iowa's public transportation systems provided Iowans with over 23 million rides. Iowans rely on public transportation to get to jobs, school, medical appointments, and community resources. We are very pleased with the results Iowa has been able to achieve, due in large part to the support of local governments and dedicated transit system staff."

Iowa is served by 35 public transit systems. There are 19 urban transit systems, each providing transit services in one or more communities of more than 20,000 in population; 12 of these systems serve areas with greater than 50,000 in population. There are also 16 multi-county, regional transit systems that provide transit services in all areas of the state.

## Safe Routes to School

The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) is administering a new federal funding program, Safe Routes to School (SRTS). The primary purpose of the program is to help get more Iowa children bicycling and walking to and from school safely. Below are some important points about the program: Eligible schools are public and private elementary and middle schools (Kindergarten through 8th Grade); Eligible applicants are cities, counties, local governments, schools, or nonprofit organizations; Some of the eligible projects include sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian crossings, traffic calming improvements, public awareness campaigns, safety education and enforcement, and many others; All projects need to address both infrastructure and non-infrastructure components; Infrastructure projects must be within two miles of the school; No local funding match is required; Iowa will receive approximately \$1 million each year through 2009; This is a competitive grant program administered by the Iowa DOT; Award recipients must comply with stringent federal and state funding requirements.

Application forms are available at Iowa DOT's website at [www.dot.state.ia.us/saferoutes](http://www.dot.state.ia.us/saferoutes). The deadline for submitting applications to the Iowa DOT is October 1, 2006.

Additional program information is also available at the Federal Highway Administration Web site: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes> and the National Center for Safe Routes to School Web site: [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org).

You may be wondering what you can do to prepare for the grants. Some suggestions are: Identify community partners and form a local SRTS team; Come up with a plan, whether it's on a school, district, city, or regional level; Inventory and prioritize where improvements are needed, with the help of parent and student surveys; Learn what is possible, both in infrastructure and policy; Determine gaps in pedestrian and bicycle safety education; Start encouragement programs (like International Walk to School Day); or Prioritize simple steps and those that require funding.

This program will be available through at least 2009, so if you are not able to submit an application for your project this year, you will have the same opportunity in future years. Please contact Chris at the NIACOG Office with questions and assistance with your funding application.

## Reducing Council Size

The 2003 Legislature passed Senate File 230, making it easier for Iowa's smaller communities to reduce the size of their councils from five to three council members. If your city is under 500 in population and interested in reducing council size from five to three, Iowa laws allow the city to do so without holding an election unless your citizens petition for an election.

A city desiring to reduce the council size effective for the next regular city election needs to follow a specific timeline set forth in Code of Iowa section 372.4. In order to meet time constraints in the law, a public hearing must be held prior to June 1 of a regular city election year, and at least 10 days notice must be given prior to that. If the city is uncertain whether to proceed with council size reduction, the city clearly can drop the process after the public hearing. The city can also decide to wait for the next election cycle.

## Grant Opportunities

The following are deadlines for popular grants our members and associated organizations may wish to consider. NIACOG has the staff and experience to assist our communities in submitting the best possible applications for these funds. Please contact NIACOG for additional information or assistance.

Source/Program	Funding Use	Eligible Applicants	Due Date
<i>RISE Competitive Program</i>	Roads to business sites.	Local Governments	Sept. 1
<i>Historic Site Preservation Grant</i>	Investment in historic properties.	Local Governments, Non-Profits, Private Developers	Sept. 14
<i>Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program</i>	Traffic Improvements	Local Governments	Sept. 28
<i>Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT)</i>	Tourism and Recreation	Local Governments, Non-Profits	Oct. 1
<i>Statewide Transportation Enhancements</i>	Enhancements	Local Governments	Oct. 1
<i>Federal Recreational Trails</i>	Recreational Trails	Local Governments	Oct. 1
<i>Safe Routes to School Program</i>	Projects to increase pedestrian travel to schools.	Local Governments, Schools	Oct. 1
<i>Rural Community Development Initiative</i>	Technical Assistance	Local Governments, Non-Profits, Private Developers	Oct. 10
<i>Volunteer Fire Assistance Program</i>	Wild Fire Equipment, Personal Safety Gear	Fire Departments	Oct. 15
<i>CDBG Water/Sewer Fund</i>	Water and Sewer Projects	Local Governments	Nov. 15
<i>IDED Housing Fund</i>	Housing Rehabilitation, Rental Projects, Rental Assistance, Etc.	Local Governments, Non-Profits, Private Developers	Nov. 29
<i>CDBG Community Facility Fund</i>	Daycares, Special Needs, Elder Care Projects, Etc.	Local Governments	Dec. 12

### IDED Housing fund

The Workshop for Program Year 2007 Iowa Housing Fund applications will be held on August 29, 2006 over the ICN.

The IDED Housing Fund provides funding from the U.S. Department of HUD (either CDBG or Home Investment Partnership Funds), in order to expand or retain the supply of decent and affordable housing for low-to-moderate income (LMI) households in Iowa. Only local governments (cities, counties) are eligible to receive CDBG funds. However, eligible Home Investment Partnership (HOME) recipients include for-profit entities and nonprofit organizations in addition to local governments.

Eligible activities under the Housing Fund include owner-occupied housing rehabilitation, rental housing rehabilitation, new construction rental, transitional housing rentals, home ownership assistance (existing or new construction), and tenant-based rental assistance.

Those Cities and entities in the NIACOG Region who have committed to writing housing fund applications each met with NIACOG staff some time ago and were given work packets to jumpstart the process. Therefore, they are well on their way in the development of their respective applications.

Housing Fund Applications for Program Year 2007 are due at IDED no later than November 29, 2006. IDED's recipient workshop for 2007 awards is scheduled for March 21 and 22, 2007. Contact Steve in the NIACOG office if your community is interested in applying for funds.

### 07 Brownfield funding Applications Due

The Iowa Brownfield Redevelopment Program is currently accepting applications for funding assistance. The program has \$500,000 available for the acquisition, remediation, and redevelopment of qualified brownfield sites.

Do You Have a Brownfield in Your Community? - Brownfields are abandoned, idled or underused industrial and commercial properties where resale or redevelopment has been hindered by known or suspected environmental contamination at the site.

Who is Eligible to Apply? - A city, county, site owner, or nonowner of a site may apply for funding. A site owner or nonowner of a site must secure local city or county sponsorship before applying.

Eligible Forms of Financial Assistance - Financial assistance is limited to 25% of eligible activity costs. Assistance may be awarded in the form of a grant, forgivable loan, conventional loan, or some combination thereof.

How do I Receive an Application Form? - Contact: Mary Klemesrud, Program Manager, Iowa Department of Economic Development, 200 East Grand Avenue. Phone: 5 1 5 . 2 4 2 . 4 8 0 8 E - m a i l : [mary.klemesrud@iowalifechanging.com](mailto:mary.klemesrud@iowalifechanging.com). Or visit the Iowa Department of Economic Development website at: [www.iowalifechanging.com](http://www.iowalifechanging.com). Applications will be accepted through 4:30pm of Friday, October 13, 2006.



**North Iowa Area Council of Governments**  
**525 6th Street S.W.**  
**Mason City, IA 50401-5058**  
**(641) 423-0491 fax: (641) 423-1637**  
**E-mail: niacog@niacog.org**

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## NIACOG Calendar of Events

### SEPTEMBER

- 4th - Holiday OFFICE is CLOSED
- 5th - Transportation Advisory Committee @ NIACOG  
12:00 noon
- 6th - CDBG Application Workshop - ICN 9:30 am
- 11th - NIACOG Board Meeting
- 14th - N.E. Iowa Community Development Conference -  
Decorah, Iowa
- 15th - City Clerk's Association mtg at NIACOG 9:30 am

### OCTOBER

- 9th - NIACOG Board meeting
- 11th - Haz-Mat Mtg at NIACOG 1:30 pm
- 27th - Top of Iowa Tourism meeting @ NIACOG - 12:00  
noon
- 29th - Daylight Savings Time Ends

## CDBG Water/Sewer Changes - Ready to Proceed Projects

The Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) has changed the procedures to be followed for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program's Water and Sewer Fund for 2007. The focus of the funding will be on projects that are ready to proceed. It appears that even good projects in the early stages of readiness may be denied funding in favor of atypical projects that are ready to go. Before the CDBG deadline, November 15, the following are now required for water and sewer projects:

- 1) Applications already submitted to other third-party funding sources
- 2) Facility Plan/Preliminary Engineering Report submitted to Iowa DNR
- 3) Procurement of engineer

Applicants wishing to be the most competitive should have:

- 1) Local and third-party funding secured
- 2) Approved Facility Plan/Preliminary Engineering Report
- 3) Completion of additional engineering on the project

One thing that can help pay for engineering, even before seeking CDBG funds, is to apply to the Iowa Finance Authority for Planning and Design Loans, which have limited loan fees, deferred payments until other funds are secured, and 0% interest. CDBG will fund water, sewer, limited storm sewer, and community facilities (such as day care, special care units, and fire stations). NIACOG has extensive experience with CDBG funding and we are here to help our member communities.

### NIACOG STAFF

<b>Joe Myhre</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>
<b>Chris Diggins</b>	<b>Local Assistance Director</b>
<b>Kevin Kramer</b>	<b>Transit Administrator</b>
<b>Joshua Kohlhaas</b>	<b>Regional Planner</b>
<b>Steve Wendt</b>	<b>Community Development Planner</b>
<b>Jodi Wyborny</b>	<b>Administrative Assistant</b>
<b>Dale Moe</b>	<b>Lead Mechanic</b>
<b>Tim Merrill</b>	<b>Bus Washer/Custodian</b>