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Acronyms in this issue

AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials	ISU	Iowa State University
CTRE	Center for Transportation Research and Education	LTAP	Local Technical Assistance Program
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	MUTCD	Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
Iowa DOT	Iowa Department of Transportation		

Joint maintenance facility is Iowa's first

THE CEDAR Valley Transportation Center (CVTC) is the first three-entity joint maintenance facility in Iowa. The facility is shared by Floyd County, Charles City, and the Iowa DOT.

How it began

Floyd County and Iowa DOT officials began discussing a joint maintenance facility in 1995. The initial idea was to build a shared salt storage facility. Through discussion of the benefits of facility sharing, the idea was expanded to a joint facility for vehicle and highway maintenance and storage.

Charles City's existing facilities, located in a flood plain, suffered flooding in 1993 and 1999, so Charles City was invited to join the venture.

Land was purchased for the location of the facility in 1998, and construction plans began.

A cooperative effort

To manage this joint project, a "joint powers board" was created. The board was established under section 28E of the Iowa Code to conduct all business of the CVTC. Board members are

- former Floyd County Engineer Lyle Laartz
- current Floyd County Engineer Dusten Rolando
- Charles City Director of Public Works/City Engineer Dan Barrett
- Iowa DOT Area Maintenance Manager Mark Black

Dan Barrett discusses the Joint Powers Board: "What is exciting about this process is we are an independent board. We are a legal entity that has been formed to act as a governing body for this facility."

Because this project is the first of its kind in Iowa, the board is still developing many procedures for managing costs related to the joint facility. Each entity still issues its own employees' paychecks, but a budget is being developed that will address the cost of shared expenses. The board is developing a billing, trade, or barter process to manage the costs of working on each other's systems.

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This new maintenance facility is a joint project of Floyd County, Charles City, and the Iowa DOT.



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The main building of the new facility is approximately 50,000 square feet and houses about 40 employees representing all three entities. The facility includes 42 vehicle bays: 15 for the Iowa DOT, 15 for Floyd county, 11 for Charles City, and one unassigned.

Construction plans have begun for additional buildings, including

- a fueling station with canopy, six pumps, and tracking system
- a salt, brine, and sand storage building that will store a winter's supply of materials
- a cold storage building

Cost and convenience

This project resulted in approximately \$753,000 in savings compared to construction costs for building three separate facilities. The division of the main building construction costs is based on each entity's space needs; the storage building construction costs are based on each entity's consumption needs.

Many of the inventories will be handled by the Iowa DOT, and each entity will be charged costs based on consumption. Currently, Charles City is paying up front for all common costs such as utilities, contracted services, and building operations. The other two entities are reimbursing Charles City for their portion of the costs, based on percentage of space used.

Each entity is equipping its own offices. Some other items will be shared, including

- road maintenance engineering professionals
- repair, bulk fuel, and chemical inventories
- large quantity volume discounts
- road maintenance equipment, trucks, and vehicles
- information, research, training, and expertise
- computers, weather systems, communications, and technology

Keys to success

Dan Barrett says that, for the board, "The biggest challenge was to have the courage to be independent of all three bureaucracies and try to take the best

"One of the best things we did was to set up committees of front line employees."

**Dan Barrett
Charles City Engineer**

options available during construction and setting up the operational policies.

"One of the best things we did was to set up committees of front line employees. We have a construction committee and a policy committee to advise us on issues. The facility has an operational policy mostly developed by employees. Their buy-in makes the facility operate more as a single facility and not three separate operations out of the same building."

Will Zitterich, Iowa DOT assistant maintenance office director, says, "The most important element in forging a partnership is to think of your partner's position and find a way to make your partner a success in this relationship. If each partner finds it an advantage to be part of the partnership it will succeed."

Floyd County's Lyle Laartz, who was a part of the joint project from its inception, recently retired. Dusten Rolando, Floyd County's new engineer, says that though he wasn't able to be a part of all the planning and construction for the joint maintenance facility, he is looking forward to the exchange of ideas and information between the partners.

No formal guidelines for assessing the project's success have been established, but board members say they see no limits to cost savings and manpower and equipment sharing. In addition, the shared facility allows them to provide better service to the public.

For more information

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To obtain a copy of a case study for this project contact Mark Edelman, Iowa State University professor of economics, 515-294-6144, medelman@iastate.edu. •

