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Counties to benefit from anticipated linking of electronic systems

THIS SUMMER, Iowa's county transportation agencies will begin benefiting from a planned linking of local and state government project development tracking systems. Linking the two systems will streamline and standardize record keeping of project development processes. It will enable automatic data synchronization among Iowa's partners in project planning and development—counties, cities, regional and metropolitan planning agencies, consultants, permit agencies, and the Iowa DOT—allowing them to work together more effectively.

Counties will save time and improve accuracy, all with less paperwork. Ultimately, of course, all

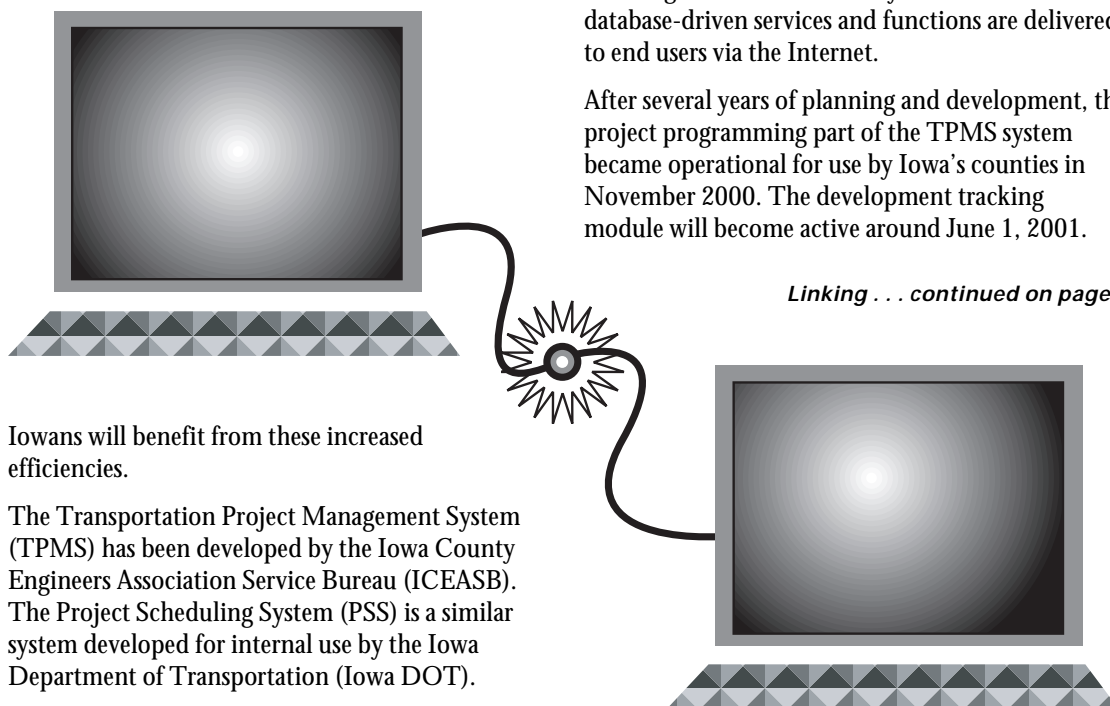
The ICEASB and the Iowa DOT developed their systems separately to suit the specific needs of their organizations, but the two applications have much in common. Both the TPMS and the PSS serve as databases for storing project development status and information. So, the two organizations have communicated regularly with the intention of one day creating a link between the two systems.

The ICEASB system

The TPMS serves as an on-line forum via which everyone involved in programming and development of local government transportation projects can stay abreast of the status of each job and work together more efficiently. The TPMS server's database-driven services and functions are delivered to end users via the Internet.

After several years of planning and development, the project programming part of the TPMS system became operational for use by Iowa's counties in November 2000. The development tracking module will become active around June 1, 2001.

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Iowans will benefit from these increased efficiencies.

The Transportation Project Management System (TPMS) has been developed by the Iowa County Engineers Association Service Bureau (ICEASB). The Project Scheduling System (PSS) is a similar system developed for internal use by the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT).

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Cities, planning agencies, and others will be invited to take advantage of the system for federal-aid project planning starting this summer.

The Iowa DOT system

Over the last three years, the Iowa DOT has created a database-founded management system for project development tracking to replace the old mainframe application created about 25 years ago. The PSS is an interactive tool for monitoring and managing development of the Iowa DOT's own highway improvement projects. This new system is one of the few in the nation to be designed in house.

The linking

It is anticipated that the systems will exchange data in two directions. Initially, TPMS will upload local government project status information to the PSS system, in advance of each scheduled Iowa DOT bid letting. This will enable Iowa DOT staff to more accurately know what local projects are scheduled to be let through their contracting process and help them monitor whether or not such projects are on time. This function could begin as early as late July 2001.

Later coordination will focus on sending information on Iowa DOT project review actions back to TPMS so that local project sponsors can be more rapidly informed about when they may proceed with the next stage of development.

Linking the two systems will reduce communication delays and improve accuracy. Mike Kennerly, Iowa DOT project scheduling engineer, says the integration will benefit both organizations because "we can keep each other informed without a lot of duplication of effort."

The TPMS will track the programming of around 5,500 projects from around the state. Of these, 1,100 typically will be in development for Iowa DOT lettings, with perhaps another 500 being made ready for local lettings. The PSS will typically track about 2,000 active Iowa DOT projects as well as any local projects passed to it by TPMS.

For more information contact Steve DeVries, ICEASB executive director, 515-244-0779, steve@iceasb.org, or Mike Kennerly, Iowa DOT Highway Division-Project Scheduling, 515-239-1446, mike.kennerly@dot.state.ia.us.

Thanks to Steve DeVries for his help with this article. •

Make the most of materials

CLEAR VISION, a publication of the Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Materials, is packed with materials-related information that can benefit Iowa's local transportation agencies.

A few topics covered in a recent issue included

- development and field testing of electronic monitors for portland cement concrete paver vibrators
- evaluation of devices that test asphalt permeability
- improved mix designs for concrete barriers
- differences between high quality and low quality crinoidal limestone aggregates
- foamed asphalt
- new supplemental specifications for hot-mix asphalt

Clear Vision is mailed to Iowa DOT garages and county engineers. City engineers and public works administrators could also benefit from this useful publication. To obtain a free subscription, contact Chris Anderson, Highway Division/Office of Materials, Iowa Department of Transportation, 515-239-1819. •

Web sites

www.ctre.iastate.edu/roadwork2001/

Find current information on Iowa Department of Transportation road construction, including detour information, expected duration of work, and tips for motorists.

www.highwaysafety.org/

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety provides online copies of its newsletter *Status Report*, which covers topics such as teenage drivers, roundabout benefits, and crashworthiness improvements.

wzsafety.tamu.edu/

Check out the National Work Zone Safety Clearinghouse for the latest information on work zone safety standards and practices, equipment, laws and legislation, and crash data information. •