

Connecting with small communities

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IOWA'S Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) and the Iowa chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) have a common goal: connecting with small communities. LTAP wants to make training opportunities more convenient for transportation staff in small communities, and APWA is interested in including more communities in its activities and events.

People in smaller communities may not have the opportunity to participate in many APWA or LTAP activities. This may be due to a lack of funding, low staffing (a one-person shop can't be closed all day), or lack of approval to attend.

Along with public works directors and APWA members Bret Hodne (West Des Moines), Al Olson (Ankeny), John Klostermann (Dubuque), Stan Ericson (Bettendorf), Bart Weller (Clive), and Greg Parker (Cedar Rapids), I am part of a committee that is working together to find new ways of reaching public works employees in smaller communities.

As part of this effort, during the last two years, we have held area meetings with staffs from small communities. We sent personal invitations to communities within a two-hour driving distance of host cities, which included Bettendorf, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Clive, and Harlan. In general, 35–40 people attended each meeting.

Meetings included a short presentation on a public works topic, a discussion of the topic, an open discussion in smaller groups, and a tour of the host city's public works facilities. We also surveyed the participants to learn how APWA and LTAP could better serve them.

The consensus of the survey was that employees in small communities

- normally cannot travel overnight,
- usually have to report to work and get daily activities started before attending training events,
- need to be back to their home base at the end of the day to close up shop,
- would have funding for a minimal registration fee that would cover the cost of lunch, and
- would like to meet approximately twice a year

APWA and LTAP will keep these issues in mind as we plan additional activities that involve small communities. One thing seems apparent. Larger cities need to become more involved with smaller cities by inviting them to and hosting them at APWA meetings and training events. LTAP is available to coordinate and provide subject matter.

By working together, all cities, large and small, can provide quality training and professional development opportunities for their employees.

For more information

Contact me anytime for more information about this new APWA/LTAP initiative, 515-294-8103, desmith@iastate.edu. •

MUTCD . . . continued from previous page

The standard has a 10-year compliance period, but implementing it sooner where railroad crossing crashes/violations have occurred could improve motorist safety.

In Iowa, it is generally accepted that the crossbuck signs and supports are the responsibility of the railroad company, so road agencies may tend to ignore this requirement. However, Section 8A of the MUTCD implies that highway agencies have a joint responsibility to ensure appropriate and proper traffic control devices at all locations. Therefore, it may be advisable for agencies to initiate contact with rail company authorities to discuss the new standardized requirements of the MUTCD, especially the installation of retroreflective tape on crossbuck signs and supports.

For more information

Please contact me if you have questions about these new MUTCD standards, tmcdonal@iastate.edu, 515-294-6384.

Iowa Traffic Control Devices and Pavement Markings: A Manual for Cities and Counties is available online: www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/icd/index.htm. •