

# SAFETEA-LU highlights for local transportation agencies

**Editor's note:** This is the final *Technology News* installment describing, in general, impacts on Iowa's local transportation agencies of the five-year transportation funding bill: *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)*. SAFETEA-LU distributes roughly \$2.2 billion to Iowa (through 2009) and emphasizes local planning and decision-making.

As a result of SAFETEA-LU, Iowa's cities and counties are seeing some changes in several planning, regulation, and funding programs.

## Metropolitan planning

For metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), SAFETEA-LU expands the consultation and coordination efforts required during transportation planning.

According to Stuart Anderson of the Iowa DOT's Office of Systems Planning, SAFETEA-LU's broadened planning process addresses concerns about a project's impacts in the early stages of the project. A survey of potential impacts may include, for example, a cursory review of archaeological sites, cemeteries, or endangered species. MPOs can use GIS maps or other tools and existing data sources to complete this review.

In addition, SAFETEA-LU adds some consultation requirements. Planners may need to confer with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel and local historical officials, as well as representatives of bicycle, pedestrian, and accessibility interests. These expanded planning requirements are currently in the federal-level rule-making process.

Planners should also begin to notice SAFETEA-LU's new emphasis on visual elements in reporting and publicizing the planning process. Maps and figures will now supplement tables of numbers, making planning documents more user-friendly and accessible.

## Equity Bonus Program

SAFETEA-LU's Equity Bonus Program replaces the Minimum Guarantee Program and affects Iowa's core highway funding (e.g., Surface Transportation Program, STP). In terms of taxes or tolls collected, Iowa is

beginning to receive less federal highway funding than it contributes to the national share.

To partially offset this gap and to guarantee at least a minimum level of return, Iowa will receive annual grants over the next five years. But the grants have been reduced significantly, from approximately \$15 million in 2004 to \$6.4 million in 2005 to \$630,000 in 2006.

The overall rate of return hovers around 92 percent, reducing core program funding for local systems.

## Private activity bonds

A new funding feature under SAFETEA-LU allows local governments to issue tax-exempt, private activity bonds to finance highway projects and rail-truck transfer facilities.

These bonds are not currently a significant funding source in Iowa. A study of Iowa's future revenue needs, however, will examine alternative funding sources, including private bonds. Floating bonds may become a funding stream for local agencies.

## Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

Because all of Iowa continues to meet federal air quality standards, no CMAQ funds are tied to particular areas of the state. The funds go into ITS projects and, more important for local agencies, the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP).

ICAAP, with \$4.7 million set aside per year, funds projects that maintain Iowa's clean air status. These may include signal coordination efforts, transit projects, new roads, and some rail projects.

Newly eligible CMAQ projects under SAFETEA-LU include integrated and

interoperable emergency communication systems, diesel retrofits, and truck stop electrification systems.

Although Iowa's cities primarily use CMAQ funds at present, Stuart Anderson of the Iowa DOT's Office of Systems Planning notes that counties can also apply through

ICAAP. Funding priority will be given to cost-effective emission reduction projects that provide air quality benefits.

## Environmental streamlining

SAFETEA-LU establishes a streamlined environmental review process for highway, transit, and multimodal projects. The process applies to new projects with environmental impact statements and, if the U.S. DOT elects, to projects with other environmental documents.

The U.S. DOT will take the lead on eligible projects, defining the projects' purposes and needs and coordinating public and agency participation.

For local agencies, an important new category, participating agencies, provides state, local, and tribal agencies a formal role and rights in the planning process that specifically address environmental issues.

Under this streamlined system, stakeholders may consider a range of alternatives for any project. A 180-day statute of limitations for lawsuits challenging federal agency approvals is provided, but it requires a new step: publishing environmental decisions in the Federal Register.

**Iowa's cities and counties can apply for ICAAP funds for projects that maintain clean air.**

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FHWA characterizes these changes as an upgrade to the environmental decision-making process that accomplishes two goals: increased efficiency and improved dependability of the outcome.

According to Jim Rost, director of the Iowa DOT's Office of Location and Environment, it is not yet totally clear what this legislation will mean for the Iowa DOT nor specifically how it will affect Iowa's process.

### For more information

For information about SAFETEA-LU's implications for metropolitan planning, minimum core highway funding, private equity bonds, and funding for air-quality related projects, contact Stuart Anderson, 515-239-1312, stuart.anderson@dot.iowa.gov. Additional information about the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program is available on the Iowa DOT website, [www.sysplan.dot.state.ia.us/icaap.htm](http://www.sysplan.dot.state.ia.us/icaap.htm).

For information about streamlining the environmental review process, contact Jim Rost, 515-239-1798, jim.rost@dot.iowa.gov. Additional information is online, [www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/strmlng/index.asp](http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/strmlng/index.asp). ■

## Stanley L. Ring Memorial Library: New acquisitions

*The library recently began using the U.S. Postal Service for sending orders. This change will result in important savings for LTAP, but ordered materials will not arrive as quickly. If you have an urgent need for library materials, please let us know when you place your order so we can arrange faster delivery.*

### Publications

#### P 1688 Integrated Materials and Construction Practices for Concrete Pavement: A State-of-the-Practice Manual

This manual is intended as both a training tool and a reference to help concrete paving engineers, quality control personnel, specifiers, suppliers, technicians, and tradespeople bridge the gap between recent research and practice regarding optimizing the performance of concrete for pavements. Specifically, the manual will help the reader to understand concrete pavement construction as a complex, integrated system involving several discrete practices that interrelate and affect one another in various ways and to understand and implement technologies, tests, and best practices.

#### P 1689 Distress Identification Guide: Asphalt Concrete Pavements

This pocket guide is derived from the Long-Term Pavement Performance (LTPP) program's Distress Identification Manual. The guide includes photographs and text that clearly label, describe, and illustrate each type of distress.

#### P 1690 Distress Identification Guide: Jointed PCC Pavements

This pocket guide is derived from the Long-Term Pavement Performance (LTPP) program's Distress Identification Manual. The guide includes photographs and text that clearly label, describe, and illustrate each type of distress.

#### P 1691 Distress Identification Guide: Continuously Reinforced Concrete Pavements

This pocket guide is derived from the Long-Term Pavement Performance (LTPP) program's Distress Identification Manual. The guide includes photographs and text that clearly label, describe, and illustrate each type of distress.

### CD-ROM

#### CR 85 Guidelines for the Selection of W-Beam Barrier Terminals

This CD provides information to designers and construction/maintenance personnel responsible for selecting and properly installing the most appropriate terminal design at any site. In addition to showing the actual crash performance of each terminal type, this CD provides guidance on proper site grading and presents real-world examples of both appropriate and inappropriate installations.

#### Order LTAP library materials in three ways:

- Order online, [www.ctre.iastate.edu/library/search.cfm](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/library/search.cfm).
- Contact Jim Hogan, library coordinator, 515-294-9481, [hoganj@iastate.edu](mailto:hoganj@iastate.edu), fax 515-294-0467.
- Mail or fax the order form on the back cover of *Technology News*.

### Selected Iowa DOT library new acquisitions

To receive the following publications, contact Hank Zaletel, Iowa DOT librarian, 515-239-1200, [hank.zaletel@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:hank.zaletel@dot.iowa.gov).

You can search the entire Iowa DOT library online as part of the State Library of Iowa. Go to the LTAP library site, [www.ctre.iastate.edu/library/search.cfm](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/library/search.cfm); click on Iowa DOT Library.

**Images of Rail: Iowa's Last Narrow-Gauge Railroad.** John Tigges and James Scaffer, Arcadia Publishing, 2006.

**A Way of Life: A Story of the Sioux City Stockyards (Volume 1).** Marcia Poole, Sioux City Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, 2006.