

Not-so-new urban specifications for Iowa DOT

Cities that have wanted to use the Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS) guidance for federally funded transportation projects let by the Iowa DOT will soon be able to do just that.

In 2009, the Iowa DOT will incorporate sections of the SUDAS Specifications Manual related to utility installation, including sanitary sewers, storm sewers, and water mains, into the Iowa DOT Standard Specifications.

This means that the specifications for materials and processes will be the same for city and state projects, which should lead to lower bids and faster completion of projects.

One set of specifications

“Contractors will be able to rely on one set of specifications and suppliers will be able to keep one set of supplies on hand for a particular type of project,” says SUDAS Director Larry Stevens. “This uniformity and standardization, from the contractor’s and supplier’s standpoint, is invaluable.”

The current DOT specifications focus mainly on rural work, with a strong emphasis on areas such as grading and paving. Topics of interest to urban communities, such as underground and utility work, are given only brief coverage in a miscellaneous section.

The lack of sufficient guidance on underground and utility installation poses a problem for many cities, since cities are required to use the DOT specifications, rather than SUDAS, for any projects that are federally funded and let by the Iowa DOT. Without specific guidance, cities must create special provisions for each project on an individual basis. This poses a problem for contractors, who are constantly forced to adapt to special provisions for different projects, and suppliers, who may need to have a myriad of products on hand.

Developing the new specifications

The integration of the Iowa DOT and SUDAS specifications began in 2004, when the Iowa Highway Research Board (IHRB) funded a project to identify differences between the DOT and SUDAS specifications. Two years later, IHRB funded another project to reconcile those differences.

SUDAS will issue its newly revised specifications this fall, and the Iowa DOT will follow suit in 2009. Stevens believes the new specifications will simplify construction processes for everyone involved.

For more information

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SUDAS - Statewide Urban Design and Specification

CTRE maintains Iowa’s unique SUDAS manuals for public improvements. Developing and maintaining the SUDAS manuals is the result of a lengthy and painstaking effort by more than 300 stakeholders across the state.

