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CTRE's mission is to develop and implement innovative methods, materials, and technologies for improving transportation efficiency, safety, and reliability, while improving the learning environment of students, faculty, and staff in transportation-related fields.

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CTRE director's message: Statewide specifications

Common standards and specifications encourage more bids on each project. In Iowa, the estimated annual statewide savings of such standards on projects using Road Use Tax Fund dollars is nearly \$9 million.

Background

In 1995 the Iowa Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force was charged with finding better methods to maximize the benefits derived from the Road Use Tax Fund. The task force recommended that Iowa adopt common standards for construction specifications and construction equipment. A statewide steering committee was formed in 1998 and completed a feasibility report in 1999 that recommended CTRE develop and staff a program. A grant in 2000 from the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) allowed CTRE to begin work.

How the program works

CTRE staff members Dale Harrington and Harold Smith built the program now called SUDAS—Statewide Urban Design Standards and Specifications. In 2000 and 2001 they visited the 23 metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) and regional planning associations (RPA) in the state at least twice explaining the program and obtaining funding resolutions. The SUDAS program is funded 60 percent by MPOs and RPAs and 40 percent by the Iowa DOT.

District committees were formed for each of the six Iowa DOT districts to review existing manuals and recommend changes to bring them to the "state of the practice." During 2002, 49 meetings were held with these groups to consider recommended amendments. A statewide steering committee composed of representatives of local jurisdictions and the Iowa DOT reviews recommendations from the districts and approves all standards and specifications by majority vote; Greg Reeder, city engineer for Council Bluffs, is the first chair.

In February 2003 the first edition of the finalized amendments to the Statewide Urban Design Specifications and the Statewide Design Manuals were issued and annual updates will be issued starting in 2004. Fifty meetings are already scheduled for this year to prepare the 2004 amendments.

Iowa accomplishment

To my knowledge, Iowa is the only state that has such an inclusive system for statewide urban design and specifications manuals. All states, Iowa included, have a specification for rural highways, but urban specifications are generally handled by individual cities and towns. The Oregon DOT and

the Oregon Chapter of the American Public Works Association published a statewide urban specification in 2001 for roadway and culvert structures, but their decision structure is more centralized than Iowa's.

The Iowa accomplishment would not have been possible without the model created by Central Iowa. Starting in 1988, the City of Des Moines and neighboring jurisdictions developed a Central Iowa Urban Design Specification administered through 28E intergovernmental agreements. The Central Iowa program was very successful, growing to 35 units of government by 1999. The Central Iowa Committee still holds the copyright to the document; ISU/CTRE has a license to use and update it for the entire state. The next major administrative activity is to establish a corporate entity that can hold the copyright on the new statewide documents.

SUDAS is a success story that owes a debt of thanks to all involved. The City of Des Moines contributed much of the legal work necessary to create the organizational structure and licensing agreement. Over 200 city, county, and DOT engineers, plus other state, federal, and industry representatives contribute their time and talent in an environment of collaboration and compromise to make SUDAS possible. The Iowa DOT is supportive and supplied legal assistance and ongoing technical help from the Office of Design. Iowa has created a successful model to capture the benefits from common design standards across many political jurisdictions. For more information refer to www.iowasudas.org/.

Plan for Mississippi River trail

David Plazak, associate director of policy, is leading the development of a plan for Iowa's Mississippi River trail. To review the draft plan, commissioned by the Iowa Department of Transportation, see www.ctre.iastate.edu/mrt/.