



Iowa State Rail Plan Final

Chapter 6

Coordination and Review



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6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) involved stakeholders in the coordination necessary to develop the Iowa State Rail Plan.

The Iowa State Rail Plan was developed in conjunction with the Iowa State Freight Plan. Developing these plans together offered an opportunity for Iowa DOT to comprehensively define what the rail and freight systems in the state look like today and what it should look like in the future. Due to the subject matter, there is natural overlap of information, data and analysis of rail and freight in both plans; because of this, stakeholder and public input efforts were combined. This made efficient use of time and effort for both Iowa DOT staff and stakeholders, and helped ensure feedback was integrated appropriately into both plans.

Stakeholders are identified as individuals, organizations, and groups affected or have an interest in particular projects or actions. For the rail and freight plans, stakeholders include shippers, modal operators, transportation academics, logistics organizations and service providers, current and potential rail passenger users, various industrial and manufacturing sectors, state, regional, county and city government agencies, elected and appointed public officials, economic development and business interests, special interest and advocacy groups, and the general public. Stakeholder involvement included participation in freight and rail planning activities, validating the freight vision and goals for Iowa and providing input for the draft rail vision and goals for Iowa, identifying issues, needs and potential investments for freight and rail, and helping to define policies and performance metrics for freight and rail to ensure improved freight and rail service into the future.

Specific, targeted outreach efforts were undertaken to ensure participation from key rail and freight stakeholder groups. Stakeholders received email invitations and phone calls that corresponded with each outreach activity. Issue-Based Workshop and High Leverage Stakeholder attendees received an email invitation from the Iowa DOT. In addition, notifications included outreach through the Iowa DOT's blog and LinkedIn. Those who participated in the shipper interviews received notification through phone calls and emails.

6.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement activities were important in order for the team to understand current rail and freight movements throughout the state and to gain an understanding of critical issues.

Outreach efforts included an Issues-Based Workshop, the creation of a High Leverage Stakeholder Committee, hosting a website for both plans, developing a Speakers Bureau presentation and presenting to identified stakeholder groups, holding committee and public meetings, conducting focused interviews of specific stakeholders, managing an online survey and coordinating with neighboring states. Each of these elements and issues identified are described below.

6.2.1 Issues-Based Workshop

An Issues-Based Workshop marked the beginning of stakeholder engagement activities and was held to introduce the details of both the State Rail Plan and State Freight Plan to attendees, explain their role in the development process, answer any questions, and receive comments. The one-day workshop was held on Thursday, September 24, 2015, in Des Moines, Iowa. The Iowa DOT developed a database of stakeholders from around the state that included private sector rail and freight infrastructure owners, freight, public planning agencies, transit operators, rail authorities, railroad and freight organizations and passenger rail stakeholders. Thirty-eight stakeholders attended the workshop, including representatives from the DOT, industries related to freight and rail transportation, special interest groups, and an elected official representative.

The workshop consisted of an introduction from Iowa DOT Director of Office of Rail Transportation Tammy Nicholson, two presentations and three interactive exercises focused on visioning, issues identification, and issues categorization. Feedback from these sessions helped inform the vision and goals for both plans.

The Issues-Based Workshop meeting summary with meeting invitation list are located in Appendix F.

6.2.2 High Leverage Stakeholder Committee

The High Leverage Stakeholder Committee was formed after the Issues-Based Workshop, through invitation by the Iowa DOT. The committee was organized to help in the development of the draft vision and goals of both the State Rail and Freight Plans, strategies for improvements, and location-specific improvement projects relative to each goal once defined.

Committee members included representatives from cities, counties, regional agencies, MPOs/RPAs and committees, as well as rail- and freight-related industries; care was taken to solicit representatives from all interested groups. Appendix F lists the High Leverage Stakeholder Committee meeting summary and invitee list.

Committee meetings were held on November 18, 2015 and February 24, 2016. The third meeting was combined with the public meeting on June 8, 2016. The November meeting focused on reviewing the State Freight Plan vision and goals, reviewing and providing comments on the State Rail Plan draft vision and goals and providing an update to what was discussed at the Issues-Based Workshop. The February meeting focused on reviewing the performance metrics of both plans. At the June meeting, the committee was invited to have early access to the public meeting and view both draft plans.

6.2.3 Iowa DOT State Rail and Freight Plan Website

A project website was established to serve as an online information center for all potential stakeholders providing ongoing information about both plans, updates on different milestones reached throughout the process, and opportunities to participate and provide input and feedback on goals and objectives. The main landing page gave general information regarding both plans and directed visitors to sub pages related specifically to either the Rail Plan or the Freight Plan. The website, located at both <http://engagefreightrailplans.com> and <http://engagefreightrailplans.iowadot.gov> included project descriptions, copies of meeting materials and upcoming meeting notification. Visitors were able to take an online survey until November 11, 2015.

6.2.4 Online Survey

The Iowa DOT launched its public State Rail Plan website and online survey on September 11, 2015. Stakeholders were notified about the website through email at various points, including an invitation distributed to 2,181 people on October 23, 2015. The survey invitation was distributed to those stakeholders with email addresses in the plan database. Additional outreach was sent through LinkedIn, Iowa DOT's internal Yammer account, and Iowa DOT's blog. Respondents had the opportunity to respond to the survey until November 11, 2015.

This survey was intended as an additional platform for stakeholders to offer their feedback on what the state's rail network and freight system should look like in the future, and was organized into the following topics:

- Economic and Workforce Development
- Multimodal Networks
- Multimodal Links
- Passenger Rail
- Safety and Security

The final number of survey respondents totaled 272. A summary of the survey results appear in Appendix F of this chapter.

6.2.5 Speakers Bureau Presentation

A Speakers Bureau presentation was developed for use at various stakeholder meetings, including the Freight Advisory Council (FAC). The Speakers Bureau presentation was developed to be easily modified depending on the audience and speaking time.

6.2.6 Stakeholder Interviews

Surveys and interviews are effective and direct ways of determine issues or areas of concerns regarding the rail network in Iowa and soliciting the infrastructure, operational, policy, or other needs of these stakeholders. Interview were conducted to solicit information from stakeholders and railroad users to gather their opinion their rail experience, their operations, project or other needs, and their opinion as to what the public sector could do to assist or improve the efficiency and expansion of rail in Iowa. As industries may not want to share detailed information about their business operations publicly, private interviews were effective in obtaining information that may not have been shared at large group meetings or in other formats.

6.2.7 Passenger Rail Advisory Committee Meeting Presentation

The Iowa DOT formed a Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (PRAC) in 2008, which meets regularly to discuss passenger rail planning in the state. A presentation was made at the November 19, 2015, PRAC meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, to describe the work that would be undertaken during development of the Iowa State Rail Plan and to solicit feedback from stakeholders regarding the State Rail Plan and passenger rail service needs in the state. Participants included Iowa DOT, cities, MPOs/RPAs, Amtrak, freight railroads, and passenger rail advocacy organizations.

6.2.8 Rail Shipper Interviews

Rail shippers are typically described as cargo owners that originate or receive freight shipped by rail. Private sector freight rail shippers in Iowa served by Class I, II, and III railroads were contacted during development of the State Rail Plan via a telephone interview process in October and November 2015. Twelve interviews were completed by a consultant. Those interviewed represented retail, agriculture, manufacturing, and domestic and international supply chains. Respondents included representatives from large manufacturers, rural agriculture producers, retailers, and Third Party Logistics (3PL) providers. Shippers interviewed used Class I and Class III (short line) railroads.

Potential respondents were identified using a multipronged approach. An effort was made to ensure broad geographic and freight diversity. From a freight diversity perspective, shippers were contacted who utilize full truckload, less than truckload, private truck fleets, rail, intermodal and international containers, barges, and air cargo.

The structured interview document sent to respondents included three pages of background material to describe the goals of the Iowa planning process and the specific objectives of the State Freight Plan and the State Rail Plan as well as a map of Iowa's rail and highway networks.

Questions were developed to learn current usage, attitudes and opinions about current rail service, rail access, and the freight system and what could be done to improve it. General interview themes included:

- Safety
- Economic and Workforce Development
- Infrastructure Support
- Policy and Communications
- Multimodal/Intermodal Development
- System Conditions
- Performance Measures
- Industry Trends
- Transportation Solutions and Implementation Strategies
- Project Prioritization
- Passenger Rail

The information provided in the interviews is located in Appendix F.

6.2.9 Railroad Interviews

Iowa's Class I, II, and III railroads were contacted during development of the State Rail Plan to solicit input. Topics addressed included:

- Descriptions of physical and operating characteristics and operations of each railroad's network within Iowa.
- Past and potential future capital projects aimed at improving operational efficiency, capacity, and safety, and providing enhanced service to rail shippers.
- A list of improvement and infrastructure needs for Class II and Class III railroads; Class II and Class III railroads often do not possess the financial and technical resources of the Class I's.

Specific needs identified by the Class II and Class III railroads are presented in Chapter 2, Appendix A and potential projects for addressing these needs are included in the Rail Service and Investment Plan presented in Chapter 5 of the Iowa State Rail Plan.

6.2.10 Coordination with Neighboring States

Iowa DOT routinely interacts with the neighboring states through involvement in national and regional transportation organizations, and to address specific transportation service and facility issues and planning initiatives. Iowa DOT invited rail coordinators in all neighboring states to participate in a Multi-State Rail Plan Presentation on February 24, 2016. Representatives from Iowa DOT, Illinois DOT, Kansas DOT, Minnesota DOT, Nebraska DOT, South Dakota DOT, Wisconsin DOT, Missouri DOT, and the Mid-America Freight Coalition participated in the coordination webinar. During the discussion, Iowa DOT learned more about the trends, best practices, and lessons learned from other states regarding approaches to multi-state planning coordination, passenger and freight rail planning and policy, and associated economic development efforts. Topics discussed included the following:

- Passenger Rail Needs and Improvements in Your State
- FRA Midwest Regional Rail Study – How will the states work together?
- Freight Rail Needs and Improvements in Your State
- Funding Programs in Your State
- Rail Planning and Coordination in Your State

The outcomes of the outreach and coordination with other state DOTs in the region were used to support development of the Iowa State Rail Plan.

6.2.11 Public Meetings

The Iowa DOT held one public meeting to educate stakeholders and the general public regarding the State Rail Plan process, obtain input for development of Iowa's rail vision, provide a forum for discussion of specific rail issues regarding Iowa's rail network, and provide a forum to review and solicit comments on proposed policies, programs, and projects recommended for inclusion in the draft State Rail Plan.

The public meeting took place at the following location:

- Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert Ray Drive, Des Moines, Iowa – June 8, 2016

This meeting was an open-house format and held in the evening and was open to the public. The Iowa DOT invited the public and stakeholders to the meetings using its standard public notification procedures, including emails and press releases.

The public meeting invitation list and summary are located in Appendix F.

6.2.12 Online Public Meeting

For those unable to attend the public meeting in-person, stakeholders and the public were able to attend an online public meeting between June 8 and July 8, 2016, at <http://www.engagefreightrailplans.iowadot.gov/>. The online meeting included the same materials presented at the in-person public meeting.

6.2.13 Public and Stakeholder Written Comments

Iowa DOT received comments by e-mail and web comment forms during the course of the State Rail Plan's development.

Comments were received from members of the public, railroads, the Federal Railroad Administration, and public transportation planners, among others. The comments received appear in Appendix F.

6.3 Input Received from the Stakeholder Engagement Process

Information gathered from stakeholder engagements was used to develop a number of the State Rail Plan components including the plan's vision, goals, and objectives.

The following sections include summaries of the themes raised during the outreach process regarding existing rail issues at the local, regional, and/or state levels. Suggestions and/or actions possible in the future are also included. Input received is organized into the following themes:

- General Benefits, Opportunities, and Threats
- Commuter Rail Passenger Service
- Freight
- Safety and Security
- Economic Development
- Energy Consumption and Environmental Protection
- Financing

6.3.1 General Benefits, Opportunities, and Threats

Comments received during the outreach process acknowledged the importance of rail transportation in Iowa.

At the Issues Based Workshop, participants were asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the state's rail system.

The top five strengths were:

- Private ownership and funding
- Efficiency driven
- Need to move large quantities of bulk freight
- Class II and III railroad connections to community
- Connection of transportation modes

The top five weaknesses were:

- Bottlenecks associated with yard capacity
- No major intermodal hub
- Too many grade crossings
- High volume of rail traffic passing through the state
- Availability of railcars – for lease or purchase

Top five opportunities were:

- Expanding transload and intermodal load facilities
- Additional state funding for railroads
- Economic development
- Railroad capacity expansion
- Congestion reduction on highway system

The top five threats were:

- Aging infrastructure
- Truck size and weight (33-foot trailers, specifically)
- Uncertainty of renewal of 45G rail tax credit
- Regulatory issues (including Positive Train Control implementation)
- Passenger rail — lower performance of freight rail

Participants were also asked to discuss the issues that most critically impacted rail operations in Iowa, which included passenger rail, safety and security of freight operations, economic workforce development, multimodal freight networks, and multimodal freight link connectors.

HLSC participants helped in the development of the draft vision and goals of both the State Rail and Freight Plans, strategies for improvements, and location-specific improvement projects relative to each goal. The HLSC convened three times throughout the planning process.

Throughout the HLSC meetings, participants provided their needs for rail in the communities and/or their companies.

From the HLSC meetings, participants offered feedback on the following four main project categories for capital investments:

1. Capacity and mitigation of operational chokepoints
2. Safety
3. Economic development
4. Modal connectivity

Participants identified priority capital investments and projects throughout the HLSC outreach. See Appendix F for the HLSC meeting summaries and full list of capital investments and projects, priority voting results, and feedback on how the Iowa DOT could best help organizations accomplish their priorities.

HLSC participants also identified studies that could inform the State Rail Plan. Study priorities include intermodal, industrial park, and market studies; infrastructure needs; multi-modal and regional network connections; and macroeconomic studies. Meeting summaries from each of the HLSC meetings are included in Appendix F.

6.3.2 Intercity Passenger Rail Service

Issues identified for passenger rail in the state include the potential for improvements to existing Amtrak passenger rail services and facilities and the potential future expansion of passenger rail services on existing and new corridors. Further details about needs identified during the outreach conducted for the SRP can be found in the Rail Service and Investment Plan included in Chapter 5.

6.3.3 Commuter Passenger Rail Service

Iowa does not presently have commuter rail service. The potential for future implementation of commuter rail lines in the Des Moines Metropolitan Area and between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids on the CRANDIC Corridor were mentioned during outreach. Further details about needs identified during the outreach conducted for the SRP can be found in the Rail Service and Investment Plan included in Chapter 5.

6.3.4 Freight

Issues identified for freight in the state include enhanced rail system access, enhanced or new transload and intermodal facilities, and enhanced rail network capacity and efficiency. Further details about needs identified during the outreach conducted for the SRP can be found in the Rail Service and Investment Plan included in Chapter 5.

6.3.5 Safety and Security

During engagement, stakeholders felt Iowa was very good in terms of railroad safety and security. It was also noted during outreach that cities lack enough information or resources on hazmat derailments, additional education and training is necessary, and additional funding is needed.

Priorities identified during outreach included grade crossing closures, separations and improvements and public education programs.

Further details about needs identified during the outreach conducted for the SRP can be found in the Rail Service and Investment Plan included in Chapter 5.

6.3.6 Economic Development

At the Issues Based Workshop, participants were asked to identify and categorize issues. Issues identified for Economic and Workforce Development include how necessary transportation is, Iowa's aging infrastructure, the need for connections to rural communities, efficient transportation, additional funding, and worker availability. During the High Leverage Stakeholder Committee meetings, participants indicated the development of transload/intermodal facilities as one of the top capital investment projects that would support economic development.

Further details about needs identified during the outreach conducted for the SRP can be found in the Rail Service and Investment Plan included in Chapter 5.

6.3.7 Environmental Protection

Participants from both the Issues Based Workshop and High Leverage Stakeholder Committee meetings discussed environmental protection. While discussing modes of transportation and their respective connections to environmental protection participants indicated that rail transportation could be a way to protect the environment, when it is promoted as an efficient mode of transportation with low emissions. Some initiatives to promote sustainability of the rail mode could include the operations of additional low-emissions locomotives on the state's railroads. Participants discussed that through education and potentially through incentives, the state's current and future rail shippers and receivers could re-evaluate their transportation choices, and potentially select a mode that may have less impact on the environment.

Further details about needs identified during the outreach conducted for the SRP can be found in the Rail Service and Investment Plan included in Chapter 5.

6.3.8 Financing

Priorities identified during outreach included additional funding sources for Iowa rail projects in the state. Participants voted on the top capital investments and projects within the following categories:

- Capacity and mitigation of operational chokepoints
- Safety
- Economic Development
- Modal Connectivity

The full response from the HLSC is included in Appendix F.

Further details about existing funding options for rail projects in the state can be found in Chapters 2 and 4 of the Iowa State Rail Plan.

6.3.9 The Role of Public Agencies

The role of public agencies in Iowa surfaced in focus group discussions and survey results when discussing economic development, as many state agencies support economic development through various policies, programs, and initiatives.

Further details about the existing role of public agencies in Iowa can be found in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Iowa State Rail Plan.

6.4 Consideration of Recommendations Identified During the Freight and Rail Plan Process

The comments and recommendations received through all aspects of the public outreach process conducted during development of the State Rail Plan have been consolidated into recommended actions for Iowa DOT. Input from the other Iowa DOT divisions, and comment obtained through the outreach process, identified several actions that Iowa DOT could take to address rail-related issues in the state. These recommended actions are as follows:

- Continue to promote and enhance rail safety through continued safety and public education programs and enhancements to the public grade crossing improvement programs in the state.
- Continue efforts to support the development or enhancement of rail industrial spurs, transload and intermodal facilities, rail storage capacity, and other infrastructure projects needed to maintain a state of good repair and enhance economic development.
- Preserve, protect, improve, and expand, as necessary, existing intercity / long-distance passenger rail service in Iowa through station facility and access improvements, and continue to study the potential for implementation of new intercity passenger rail services in the state where demand and transportation and other public benefits merit.
- Increase the movement of freight by rail and emphasize rail-related intermodal and other rail improvements to ensure a diverse and robust rail network, while maintaining community and environmental stewardship and economic competitiveness.
- Further collaborate with neighboring states on regional issues and solutions to passenger and freight rail needs through regional multi-state coordination and organizations.

6.5 State Rail Planning Coordination

While the Office of Rail Transportation has the primary responsibility for rail planning and policy within Iowa DOT, and administers various federal and state rail-related programs, some aspect of rail planning occurs within a number of offices within the Iowa DOT.

- The Office of Systems Planning prepares comprehensive intermodal and modal transportation system plans for the state and also maintains rail data and mapping.
- The Office of Public Transit administers federal and state transit grants; provides technical assistance to Iowa's 19 urban public transit systems and 16 regional public transit systems; and assures that future passenger rail services in the state, sponsored by Iowa DOT, are coordinated with local transit.
- The Office of Right-of-Way is responsible for the acquisition of properties necessary for transportation projects.

Effective and continued coordination between these offices is necessary to maximize efficiency and eliminate redundancies.

At the state, regional, and local level, Iowa DOT works with the Iowa Transportation Commission (ITC), Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), six Iowa DOT District Transportation Planners, 18 regional planning

affiliations, and nine metropolitan planning organizations to coordinate planning and development efforts regarding rail transportation. Some of the agencies have participated in the Iowa State Rail Plan development process and had the opportunity to provide further input through review and comment on the Draft State Rail Plan.

Iowa coordinates its state transportation planning and associated processes with other transportation planning programs and activities of the state and metropolitan areas in accordance with the federal law concerning coordinated planning¹. These codes generally require coordination of transportation planning and processes between state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and public transit operators; encourage economic development and environmental sustainability for transportation; promote integration of the management and operation of transportation systems and facilities to ensure an intermodal transportation system for the U.S. and the states; and establish requirements for long-range transportation planning (i.e. Statewide Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan identifying transportation projects for the state, which Iowa updates at regular intervals).

The Iowa State Rail Plan and Iowa State Freight Plan were developed simultaneously by Iowa DOT. Additional coordination within Iowa DOT and with other state agencies and project stakeholders was required to combine the Plans and integrate them effectively into the state's long-range transportation planning.

¹ Title 23 of U.S. Code Sections 134 and 135; Title 49 of U.S. Code Sections 5303 and 5304



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