



THE LAND USE BULLETIN

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DRIVING THE DOLLARS: How Citizens Can Influence Transportation Decisions

Stephanie Weisenbach

1000 Friends of Iowa members have advocated a shift in transportation investments to create a more balanced transportation system that provides people with choices about how to get where they need to go. The transportation planning process can often seem complicated. When citizens understand the basic structure and process, they can be more effective advocates for improving our existing roads and public transportation.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization's Basic Functions

Federal regulations require any metropolitan area with a population of 50,000 or more to create transportation plans and decide on transportation investments through a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). (Some metro areas in Iowa use the Council of Governments to fulfill these requirements).

Every five years, the agency creates and approves a Long Range Transportation Plan for the next 25 years. The Plan can be amended with proper public

notification and meetings. Every year, local governments submit project requests for federal funding. These projects must appear in the LRTP and are prioritized using a scoring system.

Public Participation:

Citizens can affect the Long Range Transportation Plan and funding programs by becoming involved in the planning process. Every MPO may use different methods to meet the federal requirement for public notification and participation.

Citizens can study transportation documents like the LRTP and lists of projects that went through the scoring process to gain a perspective on how the local governments are planning for the future. They can then provide input about transportation investments that best serve their community's needs.

Citizens can offer verbal comments at public input meetings and send written comments by mail or email. Comments to the MPO will be circulated amongst all of the local governments, the Iowa DOT, the Federal Highway

Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration. If citizen input isn't resulting in changes at the local level, the public participation process must be expanded to allow this to happen.

Possible allies in this process include neighborhood organizations, transit riders, bicyclists, local business, and any other partners with an interest in regional transportation investments.
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The mission of
1000 Friends of Iowa
is to educate the citizens of our state
about the long-term benefits of
halting urban sprawl,
conserving and protecting our
agricultural and natural resources,
and revitalizing our cities and towns.

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GROWIN' TIMES

Wild Ride

by *Jonna Higgins-Freese*



What a wild ride! My first few months at 1000 Friends of Iowa have been some of the busiest, most exciting, most challenging of my life. I am constantly amazed by Ed, LaVon, and Stephanie's knowledge of every possible aspect of land-use issues and inspired by our broad network of members.

In addition to 1000 Friends' impressive accomplishments, I am energized by our opportunities. We look forward to building more partnerships with planners, commissioners, elected officials, and young people interested in community revitalization. Of course, these positive partnerships won't stop 1000 Friends from opposing irresponsible projects and practices when we see them.

This is a critical time for the organization — we're deepening our current programs and expanding into new areas. Our Board's goal is to reach 1000 Founding and Renewing Friends by the end of the year — if you've always wanted to become a Founding Friend or intended to renew your annual commitment, now is the time! If monthly contributions are easier for you than an annual gift, please see the information about our automatic debit option on page 9.

Assisting citizens with land use issues is still the core of our mission. Please call if you have questions and we'll do our best to suggest strategies to promote well-planned development that's healthy, safe, and fair for everyone.

1000 Friends of Iowa Annual Meeting

DRIVING THE DOLLARS:

How Citizens Can Influence Transportation Decisions

Saturday June 11, 2005
10:00 a.m. –3:00 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ames
1015 N. Hyland Ave., Ames

Reception and Walking Tour 3:00–5:00 p.m.
Somerset Village Clubhouse, 2400 Aspen Road, Ames
*Somerset Village was the winner of the
1000 Friends of Iowa 2004 Best Development Award for New Residential Development*

Featuring:

Dan Burden

The Executive Director of Walkable Communities, Inc. (www.walkable.org),
will give a dramatic and entertaining keynote address outlining his findings from Iowa communities
and giving practical tips on “road diets,” why roads with fewer lanes are more efficient,
and how to calm traffic using paint and trees.

*Sponsors of Dan Burden's visit and the Annual Meeting include the City of Iowa City, the City of Cedar Rapids,
the Cedar Rapids Downtown District, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and the Linn County Trails Association.*

The day's events will also include:
Reports on local issues • Workshops • Business Meeting
Recognition of Founding Friends • Best Development Awards

And An Iowa-grown meal (always delicious!)

SEE YOU IN AMES!

Yes! I will attend the annual meeting on June 11th

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____ Email _____

REGISTRATION

Basic \$30
(includes Iowa-Grown Meal)

Sponsor \$50+
(Basic + Special Recognition)

Sadly, I can't attend, but
I have enclosed a contribution of \$ _____

Questions? Call us at 515-288-5364 or email us at kfoi.org

Please make your check payable to 1000 Friends of Iowa and mail it (and this form) to: 3524 6th Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50313 by June 1.

1000 Friends Thanks Stephanie Weisenbach



Stephanie Weisenbach explains the impact of a proposed road on the land, residents, wildlife and Polk County taxpayers to a bus-load of interested citizens.

For the past year, Stephanie Weisenbach has served as Program Coordinator for 1000 Friends. In that time, she has become arguably the state's top citizen expert on Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Long-Range Transportation Plans, annexation, and transportation financing.

She has also worked to hold the office together and see that mailings go out, and she is often the first to respond to member requests for information and assistance.

Stephanie is leaving to pursue her passion for organic agricul-

ture, and we wish her well – but she will be sorely missed. Stephanie's many talents are perhaps best summed up by Jane Clark, Founding Friend and Sierra Club Iowa Chapter Chair. She recently wrote: "I have been impressed with your attention to detail, your grasp of the issue, your persistence, your ability to speak politely and respectfully (but firmly) to transportation officials and elected officials, your knowledge of the issue, your attendance at dozens of meetings, your organization and your passion." Best of luck in your future endeavors, Stephanie!

ISU EXTENSION SCHEDULES *INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING AND ZONING* WORKSHOPS:

These workshops are for local officials and citizens interested in learning more about land use planning and zoning and will provide an overview of Iowa law; the roles and responsibilities of the planning commission, the board of adjustment and the elected council and board of supervisors; and technical information on how to make the land use decision-making process more effective. Registration will begin at 5:30pm, with the program from 6:00 to 8:45. A light supper will be provided.

Workshop Schedule

May 19	Calmar
May 24	Cedar Rapids
May 31	Oskaloosa
June 2	Waterloo
June 7	Spencer
June 8	Sioux City
June 14	Bettendorf
June 15	Mt. Pleasant
June 22	Mason City
July 18	Ames

TBA:

Dubuque, Creston & Council Bluffs

For more information contact your local county extension office, council of governments, or Gary Taylor at the ISU Department of Community & Regional Planning by phone or e-mail at:

gtaylor@iastate.edu or 515/294-2973

Polk County Residents ask for Shift in Transportation Investments



Members of the Sierra Club and others concerned about the proposed Northeast Polk County beltway listen to Scott Rolfes of the US Army Corps of Engineers (right) describe the natural areas that would be impacted.

On March 22, nearly 150 people attended a meeting of the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization while the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration solicited feedback on the MPO's transportation planning process.

Brad Coulson summarized many of the comments when he said, "I don't really think the comments of those of us who live near the proposed Northeast Polk County Beltway route have been heard." Jeff Geertz pointed out that less than 2% of the budget for the transportation plan is set aside for non-automotive transportation.

Ruth Anne Petrak, who owns part of a century farm in the proposed corridor, spoke of the need for more development in established neighborhoods in Des Moines. Paul Carlson echoed those thoughts, expressing his concern that development on the fringe creates a "donut effect" that harms existing businesses and burdens taxpayers in the urban core. Many residents spoke of the need to "fix it first" – to be sure sufficient funds are available for road repair and maintenance before additional roads are constructed.

The federal officials' findings regarding the MPO's process should be available in about six weeks.

Driving the Dollars:

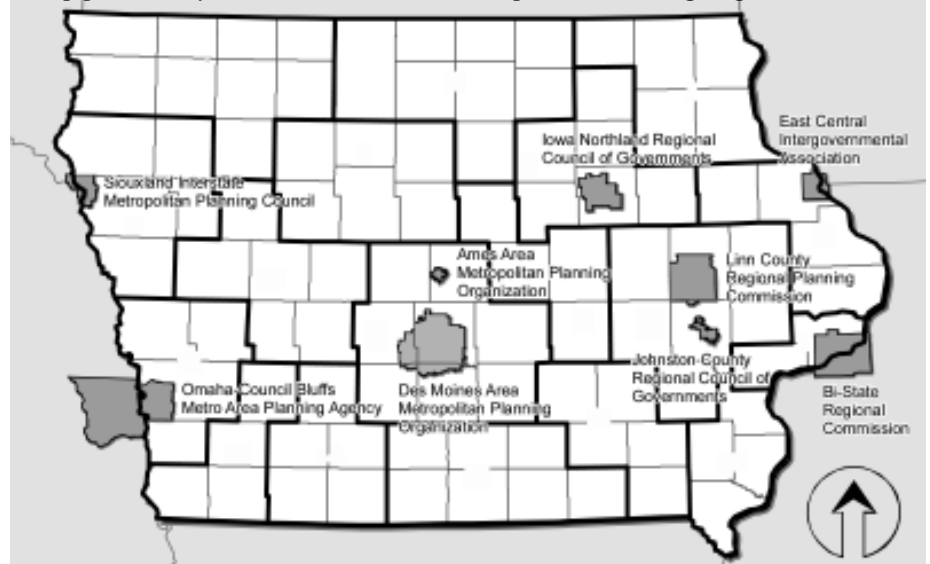
continued from page 1

For a description of an MPO meeting at which 1000 Friends members expressed their concerns about the transportation process, see the above article from Polk County.

Nine urban areas in Iowa are required to use the MPO process. The agencies completing these functions are:

- Ames Area MPO
- Linn County Regional Planning Commission
- Council Bluffs / Omaha Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
- Davenport / Quad Cities Bi-State Regional Planning Commission
- Des Moines Area MPO / Dubuque Metropolitan Transportation Study
- Johnson County COG
- Siouxland Interstate MPO
- Iowa Northland Regional COG in the Waterloo area.

Map provided by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization



If you live in an urban area and wish to learn about your local MPO, visit www.sysplan.dot.state.ia.us/rpampocontact.htm or contact 1000 Friends of Iowa.

Meet the Friends of Iowa...Comm

The 1000 Friends name embodies our funding model.

If 1000 people contributed \$100 per year to support the organization, we would have a stable funding source that allows us to provide resources to communities, organize campaigns, track legislation, and provide services to people across the state working on various land use issues. Currently, we have 682 Founding Friends —donors who have contributed \$100 or more in at least one year. We could not exist without their support. We intend to begin acknowledging them every year in the newsletter, and they will also be honored at our annual meeting on June 11th.

We have made every effort to ensure that our donor lists are accurate and complete. If we have made an error, please let us know right away and we'll correct it in the next edition.

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MATCHING GRANT

Your contribution automatically increases!

Thanks to a generous matching grant from the Iowa Foundation for Education, Environment & the Arts, all contributions to 1000 Friends of Iowa will be matched on a 2:1 basis.

For example, for any contribution of \$100, the Foundation will contribute an additional \$50!

Says Laura Belin, President of the Foundation, "We feel that 1000 Friends' hard work on development issues will pay off in the long run . . . thanks for fighting the good fight!"

.....
Clip and mail with your tax deductible check, payable to: 1000 Friends of Iowa / 3524 6th Avenue / Des Moines, IA 50313

MEMBERSHIP

We are now over 1,000 members in 75 counties.

Our board has set a goal to reach 1000 Founding Friends in 2005.

Of course we gratefully accept annual members at \$20 and up as well.

FRIEND LEVELS

- Revitalizing Friend (\$5000 +)
- Sustaining Friend (\$1000-\$4999)
- Nurturing Friend (\$500-\$999)
- Supporting Friend (\$250-\$499)
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MEMBER LEVELS

- Friend (\$50-\$99)
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- Other \$ _____
- I would like to be listed anonymously.
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(See form below)
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Total annual gift (\$100.00 minimum)* \$ _____

* Because we are charged a fee for each automatic payment, this option is only available for **Founding / Renewing Friends** level and above.

Accepting Nominations for 2005 Best Development Awards

The Best Development Awards program is a great opportunity to reward cities, companies, and individuals implementing 1000 Friends' ideals to make Iowa a better state.

2004 Recipients

New Residential: Freidrich / Iowa Realty for Somerset Village in Ames, a neo-traditional subdivision

Renovated Residential: NuStyle Development and InVision Architecture for its renovation of the former high school in Sioux City into the Castle on the Hill Apartments

Renovated Commercial/Civic: Opera House Players and the City of Elkader for the renovation of their historic opera house

New Commercial/Civic: Iowa Municipal Utilities for its "green" building in Ankeny

Leadership: Ken Stone, Professor Emeritus, Iowa State University, for his life long efforts studying rural and small town economics.

To submit a nomination in any of the above categories, please mail or e-mail as much of the following information as you know by May 20 to the Des Moines office or kfoi@kfoi.org: Name of the development, location, owner and/or architect, contact information for you and a representative of the project, and a brief summary of how the project meets KFOI's mission and the Smart Growth criteria (listed on our webpage — www.kfoi.org.) If available, pictures are encouraged as they truly are worth a thousand words.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

These are some of the issues 1000 Friends has been tracking. For further information on legislative activity, sign up to receive our e-mailed Public Policy Updates, or look them up on the KFOI web site (www.kfoi.org).

Cuts proposed to Community Main Street budget: The Main Street program has been directed to prepare a budget reflecting a 15% cut from last year's funding. The cuts would come from the technical assistance program, which Main Street Communities use to hire consultants to create fundraising plans, learn how to organize and market special events, attract and retain businesses, etc.

Local Control of Land Use: House File 642 would prohibit local governments from regulating agricultural seed. This bill has passed both legislative chambers and been signed by the governor.

Seed varieties unapproved for human consumption, such as pharmaceutical crops, bring the threat of contamination to any neighboring farmer and this bill would take away any form of local control.

DOT proposal: The DOT has requested \$9 million to move a Department of Motor Vehicle office from an urban neighborhood to a greenfield on the urban fringe in Polk County. The plan would require more than \$600,000 in annual federal transit funds to provide bus service to the facility. These funds would come from the state's total pool of transit funding, decreasing the amount available to other transit systems in the state. The budget passed despite questions about the process used to select the site, budget numbers, and options to retain the facility in an already-developed area.

Land Use in the News

Thanks to a generous donation from Laura Belin and Kieran Williams, 1000 Friends of Iowa has joined the Iowa News Service. Over the next year, we will be able to place up to 12 radio stories on land-use issues using this service.

A story we pitched regarding the DOT's proposed move of a driver's license station from a core neighborhood of Des Moines to the suburban fringe was played on 42 stations.

Listen for other stories throughout the year — they may be due to this service!

SMART GROWTH RESOURCE AVAILABLE

Smart Growth America now has a CD that collects a variety of resources pertaining to various aspects of smart growth — including transportation, historic preservation and schools.

Simply go to www.smartgrowthamerica.org and click on the "Free CD" link to sign up.



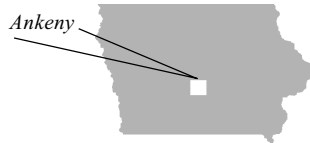
**Iowa City:
ROSES & THISTLES**

Kudos to the City of Iowa City, which has proposed a code that provides incentives for walkable, mixed-use, compact development. Residents may want to watch for and attend public meetings, as the Home Builders Association opposes the recommendations.

And...

The City of Iowa City recently agreed to sell land for a Wal-Mart Supercenter to replace the current Wal-Mart. The land will be located in an area currently designated for airport-related development. Local citizens are organizing to oppose the rezoning because it is inconsistent with the comprehensive plan and would be detrimental to Iowa City's downtown and locally owned businesses.

**Ankeny:
ANNEXATION
APPROVED**

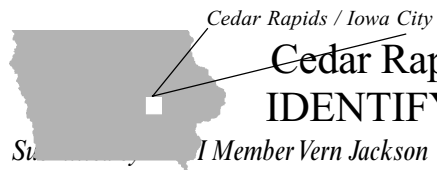


In January, the City Development Board approved the annexation of 291 acres of land. On March 22, the Planning & Zoning Commission approved the first plat for 54 lots, which will be Ankeny's first conservation design subdivision. The plat was approved before the deadline for citizens to contest the City Development Board's decision.



**Dallas County:
AIRPORT
UPDATE**

Concerned Citizens of Dallas County are continuing to educate their community about an unneeded new airport proposal. They are opposed to the airport for a variety of reasons, including the lack of need (five other airports with additional hangar capacity exist within a 25 mile radius), loss of 1000 acres of prime agricultural ground, projected tax increases, depreciation of surrounding property values, and questionable "economic development" resulting from an airport at this location. Further information can be found by going to" www.bantheairport.com.



**Cedar Rapids/Iowa City:
IDENTIFYING ISSUES**

St. Member Vern Jackson

1000 Friends of Iowa sponsored a meeting on March 2 in the North Liberty Community Center to gather input from members in the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City areas.

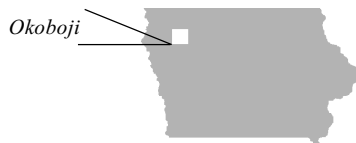
The meeting opened with some historical and over-view comments provided by KFOI President LaVon Griffieon. Board member Jim Throgmorton served as the meeting facilitator to capture the concerns of those participating in the meeting, together with comments as to actions that may be helpful in addressing the issues.

The subjects that were most frequently identified by those in attendance include:

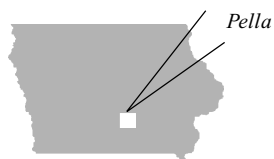
- *Transportation:* the desire for 'complete' transportation systems that recognize the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
- *Farmland preservation:* Preservation of farmland and land-use plans that include local food production
- *Sense of Place:* Preservation and revitalization of viable and attractive small towns; preservation of the unique character of all Iowa communities
- *Cooperative Planning* among town, county, and state governments
- *School* location and zoning that promotes "smart growth"

KFOI plans to sponsor several meetings of this type to allow members to get to know each other better, get a sense of priority concerns, and gather input as to actions that are most effective.

**Okoboji:
LAKEFRONT
RE-ZONING**



Citizens are concerned about a request to rezone 70 acres along the shore of East Lake Okoboji from agricultural to "Resort Enterprise" to make way for 560 condominium units and an indoor water park. The land includes 2600 feet of shoreline and oak savannah. Citizens successfully advocated for developers to be required to complete a study of environmental, social, and traffic impacts of the proposed project.



**Pella:
44 ACRES FOR
SUPER WAL-MART**

The Pella Planning & Zoning Commission recently recommended rezoning 44 acres to allow a Super Wal-Mart to be built. The land is currently designated for residential and green space in the comprehensive plan.



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TO OUR MEMBERS & SUPPORTERS

*Our volunteers fold and stuff envelopes, design brochures, make phone calls, enter data, provide tech support, consult on fundraising, design the newsletter, and make many other **priceless** contributions to the organization!*

The Ankeny 4-H Club, Chris Breitbach,
Kristine Chiafos, Michelle Cole, J.R. Feld,
Susan Koch Bridgford, Eric Higgins-Freese,
Naomi Leiserowitz, Jennifer Neumann,
Ruth Anne Petrak, Jessica Rundlett,
Kim Sheehan, Gail Turner, Jeanne Uhl,
Lorraine Walizer & Bob Willis

Five Iowa Communities to Host “Walkable Audits”

Dan Burden, Executive Director of Walkable Communities, Inc. (www.walkable.org) will visit five Iowa communities and organizations in June to provide advice on how to build “complete streets” that are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as cars.

Please thank these communities and other sponsors for their support, and watch for further information about how you can participate!

- June 8** — Morning: Ankeny
Afternoon: TBA
- June 9** — Morning: Cedar Rapids
Afternoon: Iowa City
- June 10** — Morning: Waterloo
- June 11** — 1000 Friends Annual Meeting
(see details on page 3)