

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Council Communication</b> Office of the City Manager</p>	<b>Date</b>	October 12, 2009
	<b>Agenda Item No.</b>	7
<b>Roll Call No.</b>	<u>09-</u>	
<b>Communication No.</b>	<u>09-717</u>	
<b>Submitted by:</b>	<b>Richard A. Clark</b> City Manager	

**AGENDA HEADING:**

Approving Memorandum of Understanding among Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Polk County, City of Des Moines, and Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) designating Roles and Responsibilities as Joint Lead Agencies in the Environmental Review Process in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the North-South Metro Connector (IA 415 to I-235) Polk County, IA Project.

**SYNOPSIS:**

Polk County has sent a formal invitation to the City of Des Moines to become a joint lead agency for the North-South Metro Connector project’s environmental review process. The joint lead agency concept for transportation projects is intended to facilitate decision-making and expedite the environmental review process. Under FHWA guidelines, as a joint lead agency, Des Moines will be empowered to participate equally in project decision-making. The decision-making process among joint lead agencies is collaborative and requires the agencies to reach mutual agreement on issues.

This request is in conjunction with a determination that in order to fully address public concerns, the southern project terminus at Euclid Avenue should be moved south to I-235. Polk County is responsible for the bulk of project work and activities pertaining to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation and project milestones. Polk County has obtained federal funding and hired the engineering firm of Snyder & Associates of Ankeny to perform much of this work.

Staff from Polk County and the City presented additional information about the environmental review process at the September 14 Council workshop. Representatives from the Polk County Board of Supervisors and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) attended the workshop, and stressed the importance of conducting this study to identify the needs in this corridor, alternative solutions to those needs, and the impacts associated with each alternative.

Completing the environmental study process does not commit the City or Polk County to construct any new roadways or reconstruct any existing roadways. The project is currently in the alternatives screening phase. Alternatives under consideration include: 1) Taking no action, 2) Transit, 3) Modifying existing roadways, and 4) One or more alternatives to construct a new roadway on new alignment. The expanded study will assess enhanced transit service, “complete streets,” and sustainable development for each of the alternatives considered.

**FISCAL IMPACT: NONE**

Amount: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

The environmental review process for the North-South Metro Connector (formerly known as the NW 26<sup>th</sup> Street) project in Polk County, from IA 415/Oralabor Road south to Euclid Avenue, has been underway for several years, with the City of Des Moines as a participating agency. Public information meetings have been and will continue to be conducted as the project moves forward. The project has progressed positively, and has been shaped by Federal, state, and local agency input, in addition to many citizen comments.

The project is currently in the alternatives screening phase. Alternatives under consideration include: 1) Taking no action, 2) Transit, 3) Modifying existing roadways, and 4) One or more alternatives to construct a new roadway on new alignment. During the environmental review process, there have been public concerns regarding potential impacts to the M. L. King Jr. Parkway corridor between Euclid Avenue and I-235.

The project management team (PMT) of Polk County, IDOT, and FHWA have determined that in order to fully address public concerns, the southern project terminus at Euclid Avenue should be moved south to Interstate-235, so that the project termini are IA 415/Oralabor Road and Interstate-235. The new project terminus leaves half of the study area within the City of Des Moines. To that end, Polk County, IDOT, and FHWA stated their intent to invite the City of Des Moines to increase their level of participation in this study from participating agency and join them as a joint lead agency for the North-South Metro Connector project at a Project Management Team meeting held on May 14, 2009.

Polk County has sent a formal invitation to the City of Des Moines to become a joint lead agency for the North-South Metro Connector project's environmental review process. The expanded study will assess enhanced transit service, "complete streets," and sustainable development for each of the alternatives considered. The City of Des Moines' "Complete Streets" policy will be included in project development within the City of Des Moines.

The joint lead agency concept for transportation projects is intended to facilitate decision-making and expedite the environmental review process. Under FHWA guidelines, each of the joint lead agencies is empowered to participate equally in project decision-making. The decision-making process among joint lead agencies is collaborative and requires the agencies to reach mutual agreement on issues. Polk County is responsible for the bulk of project work and activities pertaining to the NEPA documentation and project milestones.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):**

Date: August 7, 2006

Roll Call No: 06-1588

Action: Joint Public Service 28E Intergovernmental Agreement with Polk County, Ankeny, Johnston, and Polk City regarding Proposed NW 26<sup>th</sup> Street Interchange at I-80/35. Moved by Vlassis to adopt. Motion Carried 6-1.

**BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE**

**ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:**

Approval of environmental documents, obtaining future funding for any construction.

For more information on this and other agenda items, please call the City Clerk's Office at 515-283-4209 or visit the Clerk's Office on the second floor of City Hall, 400 Robert D. Ray Drive. Council agendas are available to the public at the City Clerk's Office on Thursday afternoon preceding Monday's Council meeting. Citizens can also request to receive meeting notices and agendas by email by calling the Clerk's Office or sending their request via email to [cityclerk@dmgov.org](mailto:cityclerk@dmgov.org).