

NIACOG NEWS



VOLUME 34 ISSUE 1

January-February 2022

Infrastructure bill to increase NIACOG funding

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) signed into law in November is expected to bring significant increases in the amount of federal funding NIACOG received to program for regional transportation projects.

The IIJA includes significant public investment in transportation networks (including public transit), broadband and public works projects, allocating an estimated \$1.2 trillion across 10 years, with \$500 billion in new spending during the next five years.

NIACOG estimates the IIJA will bring a 30% increase overall in Surface Transportation Block Grant funding (e.g. highway, bridge, bicycle & pedestrian improvement and transit capital projects), a 70% increase in funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program (e.g. trails, safe routes to school, non-driver access to public transportation and mobility projects) and a 30% to 40% increase in NIACOG's Planning and Federal Transit Administration funding.

CALENDAR

January

- Jan. 1-Holiday– Office Closed
- Jan. 10– Executive Board Meeting 5:15 PM
- Jan. 10– Full Board Meeting 7 PM
- Jan. 12– Hazmat Meeting 1 PM
- Jan. 12– Transportation Policy Board Meeting 2:30 PM
- Jan. 21-City Clerk Meeting 9:30 AM

February

- Feb. 10– Executive Board Meeting 12 PM

Good News!! Pending Legislation to Expand Eligible ARPA Categories

The American Rescue Plan Act funding that cities and counties received based upon the population has some recent good news. The good news is that Congress is working on a bill that may open up the use of the ARPA funding for projects under \$10 million. The Senate passed the bill unanimously, and it is headed to the house where support is widespread. The new legislation is adding:

Additional eligible project categories in the areas of infrastructure, government services, and transportation.

Emergency relief from natural disasters and associated negative economic impacts of natural disasters.

An extension of the deadline to expend COVID-19 relief funds on these types of infrastructure projects until September 30, 2026. (Under current law, recipients must expend the funds by December 31, 2024.)

More specifically, Any project currently eligible for funding under the following programs would now be eligible for financing with COVID relief dollars:

- ☐ Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects
- ☐ National Highway Performance Program
- ☐ Bridge Investment Program
- ☐ Surface Transportation Block Grant Program
- ☐ Metropolitan Transportation Planning
- ☐ Carbon Reduction Program
- ☐ PROTECT Program
- ☐ Tribal Transportation Program
- ☐ Alternative Fueling Infrastructure
- ☐ Federal Lands Transportation Program
- ☐ Federal Lands Access Program
- ☐ RAISE Grant Program
- ☐ TIFIA Program
- ☐ ADHS Program
- ☐ Urbanized Area Formula Grants
- ☐ Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants
- ☐ Highway Safety Improvement Program
- ☐ Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program
- ☐ Territorial and Puerto Rico Highway Program
- ☐ National Highway Freight Program
- ☐ Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program
- ☐ Formula Grants for Rural Areas
- ☐ State of Good Repair Grants
- ☐ Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities

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- O National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Program
- O Community Development Block Grant
- Bridge Replacement, Rehabilitation, Preservation, Protection, and Construction Program

For reference, a list of the previously approved project categories is available by [clicking here](#). These categories can be interpreted broadly. For example, a trail or park project would be allowed under #2.11 tourism/travel/hospitality. Grant writing costs for a similar project would be eligible under this same category. Another approach to identifying projects for the funding could involve allowing agencies (or government departments) to submit requests for funding that are evaluated and selected by the government body who received the ARPA allocation. Any request for funding should, however, also include a tieback to pandemic response or resiliency. For example, one county is funding additional seating for their fairgrounds to allow for social distancing. Another is updating their E911 system to allow for quicker/more reliable response for calls regarding COVID.



Allowed Methods For Purchasing or Hiring for ARPA-Funded Projects

Projects funded by city/county ARPA funds must follow one of the following 5 procurement methods based upon the level of cost and other factors. Procurement is the method by which service providers and goods are selected for purchase. The following methods are allowed for selecting vendors for purchasing supplies, services, equipment, construction, etc.:

1. Noncompetitive procurement – This method requires no bidding and is allowed only under the following conditions.
 - The acquisition of property or services, the aggregate dollar amount of which does not exceed \$10,000
 - The item is available only from a single source
 - The public exigency or emergency for the requirement will not permit a delay resulting from publicizing a competitive solicitation;
 - The Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity expressly authorizes a noncompetitive procurement in response to a written request from the non-Federal entity; or
 - After solicitation of a number of sources, competition is determined inadequate
2. Micro-purchases (\$10,000 or less) – Bidding is not required.
3. Small Purchases (\$10,000.01 to \$250,000) – At least three bids are requested, but advertising is not required. If fewer than 3 bids are received back that is okay because the regulation allow just using the bid(s) received if “After solicitation of a number of sources, competition is determined inadequate.”
4. Request For Proposals for Services - This is solely for services hired based upon qualifications, not price. – This process involves distributing requests to vendors to prepare and submit proposals to provide the architectural or engineering work on projects. A price is negotiated after a firm is selected; in the even that a price cannot be negotiated, the city/county moves on to the next highest ranking firm and begins negotiations.
5. Sealed Bids – Construction (more than \$250,000) – This process involves public advertisement and sealed bids opened at a scheduled bid opening.

Additionally, the procurement rules state that any firm that is involved in forming the project (prior to bidding) is ineligible to compete for being hired later for the project. Please note that none of the above rules negate State-mandated bidding requirements for cities/counties. More details can be found in 2CFR200.

FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME TRANSIT DRIVER POSITIONS OPEN

Full-time & Part Time transit bus drivers – Driver will be responsible for the operation of various vehicles for the safe and orderly transportation of passengers to and from their destinations. Class C CDL with passenger endorsement is required. We can assist applicant in obtaining the appropriate license and endorsements. Applicant must have a good driving record for the past two years. \$14.00/hr. Our board will be considering an increase in the starting wage rate at their January meeting. Full time is 40 hours per week or choose your own part-time schedule.

HELP WANTED



BUS DRIVERS

The full time position offers an excellent benefits package and includes IPERS retirement. A complete job description and job application can be found at www.R2bus.org. Please submit your completed application to Teresa Collins, Operations Manager, at the Region 2 Transit Office, 525 6th St SW, Mason City. EOE/Drug free workplace.

HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR FUTURE HEALTHIER?

ENCOURAGE KIDS TO LIVE 5-2-1-0!



The long-term goal of the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is to reduce the significant rates of heart disease, stroke, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancers in Iowa. This is done through policy, systems and environmental changes to make healthy choices practical and available to all members of a community. One of the best tools for implementing these changes is the 5-2-1-0 message.



Within NIACOG's service area, the Hampton community, in its 3rd and final year, is receiving \$6,400 from IDPH to implement projects compatible with the 5-2-1-0 message. 5-2-1-0 funding is administered by NIACOG with statewide marketing led by the Healthiest State Initiative.

Hampton's proposed projects this year, which are subject to change pending IDPH approval, are the following:

Greater Iowa YFC, Franklin County Campus – Outdoor activity equipment for middle and high school out-of-school-programming. This includes 9-square building materials, volleyball net, 2 corn hole sets, spike ball, kan jam, sports balls (basketball, volleyball, soccer ball, gaga ball, and football), and outdoor games (Yardzee, giant checkers, connect-four, giant Jenga, etc.)

Franklin County Extension/Franklin County General Hospital Dietician – Gel bracelets for creating fruit and veggie tracking bracelets at Franklin County Fair and other events.

Franklin County Wellness Center – Equipment for on-site fruit smoothie and juice bar

The message is foremost being marketed towards Iowa's children 2-18 years of age; however, the message also applies to adults. Research shows that healthy dietary and physical activity habits established during childhood and adolescence continues into adulthood. Additionally, parents and grandparents can lead by example by following 5-2-1-0 every day.

If an organization desires to be a registered 5-2-1-0 site, <http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/resources/individuals/5210/> to register. If you want tips on marketing the 5-2-1-0 message within your community, contact Matt O'Brien at the NIACOG office. Future communities receiving funding are selected by IDPH on a yearly basis based on certain health statistics and will be notified by NIACOG.

More Funding Opportunities

Microenterprise Assistance:

This program provides assistance to communities to assist local microenterprises impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A City or county must apply for CDBG-CV funds on behalf of the eligible microenterprise. If awarded, funds will be awarded to the city or county who will then distribute funds to the microenterprise(s). A Microenterprise is defined by HUD as a business with 5 or fewer employees, including the business owner. Highlights below:

*To be eligible for funding the microenterprise must:

1. Be owned by a LMI individual, based on income verification OR
2. Create LMI jobs as a result of the project. Those hired for new positions will complete an income certification that will be used to document LMI status (at least 51% to be LMI).
3. Low- to moderate income is defined as persons with household incomes at or below 80% of the area median income as defined by HUD.

*Assistance to a microenterprise for working capital, equipment, building improvements, and related cost necessary to sustain and expand a microenterprise.

*Maximum award is \$50,000.00 per microenterprise assisted.

*Applicants must demonstrate that the project can be completed and funding will be spent by July 20, 2023.

*All projects must demonstrate how the activities prevent, prepare for, or respond to COVID-19.

*Award decisions are made on an ongoing basis, as application are submitted. Approval timelines may vary, depending on staffing, internal approvals, and the completeness of the application. Award decisions are typically made within 30-45 days of application submittal.

For more information please contact:

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More Funding Opportunities

Commercial Façade Improvements:

The program provides assistance to communities to eliminate slum and blight by encouraging commercial building façade repairs/improvements in commercial districts impacted by COVID-19.

Eligible activities include:

Financial assistance to commercial businesses for building façade improvements.

Examples of projects include:

Improvements to multiple downtown building façades in a community.

To be eligible for funding, projects must meet HUD's Slum and Blight national objective. To meet this objective, applicants must demonstrate that the building façades to be repaired are in fair or poor condition. This must be documented by detailed photographs and descriptive narrative.

*All incorporated cities and all counties in the state, except those designated as HUD entitlement areas, are eligible to apply for and receive funds under this program.

*The maximum award per project is \$50,000.00 per building façade.

*All projects must demonstrate how the activities prevent, prepare for, or respond to COVID-19.

*Applicants must demonstrate that the project can be completed and that all CDBG-CV funding will be spent by July 20, 2023.

*CDBG funds may only be used to pay for work/rehabilitation that addresses conditions detrimental to public health and safety. Items proposed in the scope of work must address the identified slum and blight conditions.

*Façades must be highly visible. Side and rear façade are generally ineligible, unless the applicant can demonstrate to IEDA that the façade is highly visible.

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More Funding Opportunities

Daycare Assistance:

This program provides assistance to communities to assist non-profit daycare facilities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A city or county must apply for CDBG-CV funds on behalf of the eligible daycare program/ facility. If awarded to the city or county who will then distribute funds to the daycare program/facility.

Eligible activities included:

Assistance to a daycare program/facility.

Examples of projects included:

- Purchase of equipment/supplies tied to increased demand as parents transition back to work.
- Funding to assist with training new staff hired in response to increased demand.

*All incorporated cities and all counties in the State, except those designated by HUD entitlement areas are eligible to apply for and receive funds under this program.

*The maximum award per project under this program is \$100,000.00. However, if the project involves a for-profit daycare facility, the maximum award amount awarded to the project is \$85,000.00 per full time equivalent job being created.

*All projects must demonstrate how the activities prevent, prepare for, or respond to COVID-19

*Applicants must demonstrate that the project can be completed and that all funding will be spent by July 20,2023.

*Applicants must demonstrate the project is in response to new or increased services. CDBG-CV funds cannot be used to cover costs not associated with a new or increased level of service.

For more information please contact:

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Early Childhood Iowa Family Survey

Early Childhood Iowa is conducting a state-wide survey for families in order to collect feedback from families with young children. The information collected will help us continue improving services so that families have access to what they need, when they need it in our area.

[Please consider completing this survey and helping to distribute the survey.](#)



Introduction to ArcGIS Pro Workshop: January 13-14, 2022

After a longer-than-intended hiatus, ISU Extension Community & Economic Development (CED) is thrilled to ring in 2022 with a completely revamped Esri workshop for ArcGIS Pro! Whether you're an ArcMap user ready to take the leap to Pro, someone who's used ArcGIS Pro in the past and are looking to brush up your skillset, or a GIS novice, this workshop is for you.

Over two days, you will be introduced to the essentials for ArcGIS Pro, including its interface, basic geoprocessing tools (buffer, clip, dissolve, etc.) and map-making essentials. This offering also includes a one-year student subscription to ArcGIS Pro.

This workshop will take place at the CED office buildings at 2321 N Loop Dr. Ames, Iowa, on January 13-14, from 8:30am-4pm on Thursday and Friday. The cost is \$500 with discounts for groups of 2 (10% off) or 3+ (15% off) and for ISU faculty, staff and students (50% off).

More Information about the course can be found at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/gis/>

Please contact Bailey Hanson at bahanson@iastate.edu or Luke Seaberg at seaberg@iastate.edu with any questions about the course.





“Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

(Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking before the Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1968.)



NIACOG Staff would like to wish you a Happy New Year! Here's hoping you make the most of 2022! May the new year bring you peace, joy, and happiness. **Wishing you and yours health and prosperity in the new year.**

No-Bake Chocolate Raspberry Cheesecake

Makes 6 single serving cheesecakes Here's what you will need:

Crust:

1 cup chocolate graham cracker crumbs

1/8 cup sugar

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Cheesecake:

2 blocks (16 ounces total) cream cheese, softened

3/4 cup sugar

1/4 cup whole milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup heavy whipping cream

1/4 cup raspberry jam Fresh raspberries, whipping cream, and heart chocolates to garnish



In a medium bowl, stir together the graham cracker crumbs* with the sugar and melted butter until combined. Divide the mixture into six small dishes (about 4 inches in diameter and 2 inches deep). Press into an even layer with your fingers or a spatula. Place in the refrigerator while preparing the cheesecake.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the cream cheese on high until smooth and creamy. Add the sugar, milk, vanilla, and salt. Beat again until smooth and combined. Transfer the cream cheese mixture into a large bowl and set aside.

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk (in a new or cleaned bowl) beat the heavy whipping cream on low for about 45 seconds. Increase the speed to medium and continue beating for another 45 seconds. Increase the speed to high and beat until stiff peaks form.

With a spatula, stir about one-third of the whipped cream into the cream cheese mixture and fold it in until completely combined. Add the remaining whipped cream and fold until fully combined.

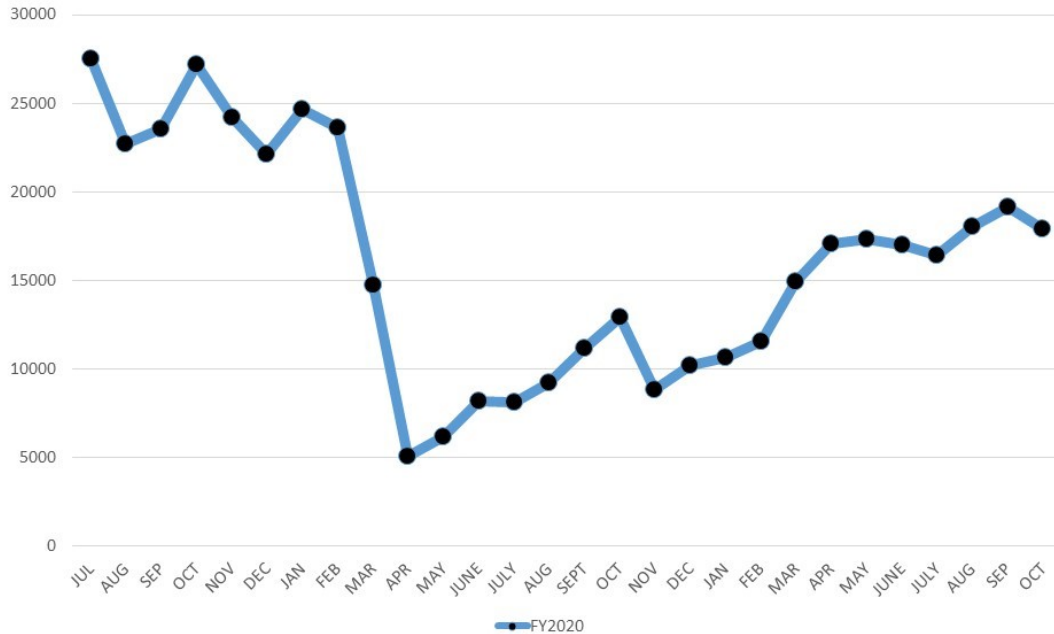
Using a spatula or piping bag, divide the cream cheese mixture evenly over the six prepared crusts. Smooth the top with a spatula.

Finally, in a microwave safe bowl, add the jam and 1 tablespoon of water. Heat for about 30 seconds to make the jam liquid. (Heat for an additional 15 seconds, if needed). Stir to combine. Allow the jam to cool slightly, then drop small amounts of jam on top of each cheesecake. Use a skewer or toothpick to drag the jam through the top of the cheesecake to make swirls.

Refrigerate the cheesecake about 1 hour until firm or up to 1 day. (cover with plastic wrap if refrigerating for longer than 1 hour.)

*use a blender or food processor to crumble whole chocolate graham crackers to create fine crumbs for best results.

REGION 2 TRANSIT SYSTEM MONTHLY RIDERSHIP FY2020-21



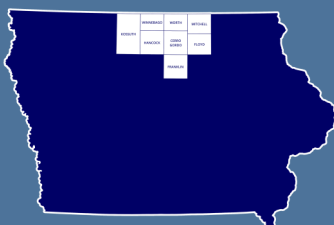
The graph above shows the monthly ridership of the Region 2 Transit System from early pandemic (July 2019) to October 2021. Prior to the pandemic average monthly ridership was around 24,500 one way rides per month. In April of 2020, a 79% decrease in ridership was witnessed. Current average monthly ridership stands near 17,540 per month which is 72% of the early pandemic levels.



**In the end, it's not
the years in your life
that count.**

**It's the LIFE in your
YEARS!**

- Abraham Lincoln



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