



# Bi-State Regional Commission

**Commission in Review**

**Jan/Feb/Mar 2022**

## Connect 2050 – QC Long Range Planning

Gena McCullough, Planning Director/Assistant Executive Director, reported that chapters of the *2050 Quad Cities Long Range Transportation Plan* are currently available for review on the Bi-State website, including those related to the metropolitan planning area (MPA) profile, passenger transportation, non-motorized transportation, and freight. Pending chapters include system planning considerations, a summary of the transportation system, and roads as well as the supporting appendices. Three addendums will follow the plan adoption, including model documentation, congestion management plan, and the Federal Highway Administration directed performance requirements in a technical addendum.

Ms. McCullough went on to highlight the following areas.

**Goals.** Transportation provides for the movement of goods and people to contribute to a resilient Quad Cities metro area. Six overarching goals provide the basis for transportation to be enhanced in the Quad Cities. They relate to residential and commercial/industrial development, transportation resilience, centers for learning, culture and recreation, government and public facilities/installations, and urban design. It was suggested that equity be added to the core goals, which will be

brought to the Transportation Policy Committee for consideration.

**Roads.** There are 2,000 miles of roads in the metro Quad Cities with 125 miles of interstate, and about 40% eligible for federal funds. The river crossings of the Mississippi River carry 171,500 vehicles per day. Related to traffic safety and intersection crashes, speed and younger drivers contribute to the highest number of severe injuries and fatalities. Those with the highest percentage of severe injuries include motorcycle, pedestrian, and unprotected persons' crashes. The impact of crashes may be addressed using engineering, enforcement, emergency response, and or education.

**Passenger Transportation.** There are 3 public transit systems providing 25 fixed routes within the Quad Cities. They use a total of 104 vehicles and 3 passenger ferries. There are 3.9 million annual unlinked rides per year provided in the metro area during 12-13 hours of daily weekday service in the Iowa Quad Cities and 17 hours of daily weekday service in the Illinois Quad Cities. There are two paratransit providers and two regional transit providers (River Bend Transit and RIM Transit) serving rural to urban passenger needs. Passenger rail service

### NEXT COMMISSION MEETING:

**Wed., Apr. 27, 2022**

**3:30 p.m.**

Bettendorf City Hall  
Second Floor Board Room  
1609 State Street  
Bettendorf, IA

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## 2050 (continued)

continues to be in the development stage. The completed passenger rail station in Moline is awaiting rail construction to allow implementation of service from Quad Cities to Chicago. The Quad City International Airport provides commercial air service to 11 destinations.

**Non-motorized Transportation.** Quad Citizens and visitors have 214 miles of existing bicycle facilities to use for commuting and exercise with more miles planned for the future. Two national trails cross the metro area at the Government Bridge, the north-south Mississippi River Trail and east-west American Discovery Trail. Nineteen road corridors have been identified as Complete Streets corridors to encourage use by all users both motorized and non-motorized. As noted, bicycle injuries result in a higher percentage of severe injuries with 37 occurring in the last five years. The plan calls attention to these incidents to facilitate discussions on how our transportation system can be improved to reduce pedestrian crashes. There are also hundreds of miles of sidewalks in the Quad Cities. In the last 5 years, Bi-State staff have inventoried sidewalk repair and snow removal

programs, shared best practices, and highlighted potential improvements through the development of 9 safe-routes-to-school plans. In the last 5 years, there have been 83 of these types of pedestrian-vehicle crashes. Work to reduce severe pedestrian and bicycle injury crashes will continue.

**Freight Transportation.** Advances in planning for freight include the 2015 freight plan, Mississippi River rail bridges study (2020), and the designation of the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois as a statistical area for data collection by the Corps of Engineers. Since the last plan update, the Davenport transload facility west of the Davenport Municipal airport and part of the Eastern Iowa Industrial Center was completed and became operational.

**Next Steps.** Pending chapters are expected to be drafted in February. Public involvement on the draft plan will begin in March. The Policy Committee will review the plan and consider a recommendation to the Commission. The Commission will consider adoption of the plan at their March 24 meeting.

## Spring Flood Outlook – All Eyes on the Mississippi River

Jessica Brooks, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service, presented on the spring flood outlook at the February 26 Bi-State Regional Commission meeting. Spring rains and the rate of snowmelt will influence the severity of flooding, she explained, which are difficult to forecast months in advance with high degrees of certainty. However, four other factors that can be measured at present suggest long-duration flooding is possible on the Mississippi this spring.

These factors include the total rainfall amounts from the previous autumn. Fall 2019 was unusually wet, with 175% of normal accumulated precipitation recorded in the Quad Cities region and between 200% to 300% recorded in areas along the river to the north. This has resulted in extremely wet soils (above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile for soil moisture), which is a primary contributor to above normal flood risk. Also contributing is the depth of frozen ground, which has

locked in the soil moisture. Until the soils dry out, the flood risk will remain high.

There was some good news, though. A warmer winter has resulted in a somewhat shallower depth of frozen ground than normal, and above normal streamflows have persisted since last fall. The snowpack has had a higher water content than normal, but the free flowing streams have helped keep runoff from the melting snow moving downstream. Free flowing streams also mean there is little danger from ice jams on waterways like the Rock River.

Taken together, current conditions indicate a high likelihood of moderate to major flooding along the Mississippi River this spring. The rate of snowmelt and spring rains will be the key determinates in the severity of the flooding. Temperatures that toggle from high to low and heavy rains could yield quick runoff and rapidly rising waters, while a more gradual warming and a drier spring could help limit the flood severity.

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Denise Bulat, Executive Director, reported the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is fully updated every five years, with the last one completed in 2016. The 2021 CEDS will be a full update.

The Bi-State Regional Commission helps to create an overarching plan that is consistent with the broad goals of the five-county Bi-State Region. The CEDS goals are purposely broad so that the CEDS does not usurp the goals of member governments and various economic development partners throughout the Bi-State Region. Many of the goals have remained the same over the years. With this CEDS Update goals related to pandemic recovery and diversity, equity and inclusion added. Strategies are more specific than goals, measurable and realistic considering what can be accomplished over the five-year period of the CEDS by partners in the Bi-State Region.

In March, Ms. Bulat presented a draft of the *Bi-State Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Progress Report 2022*, highlighting economic trends in the Quad Cities. Besides the Bi-State Regions Goals and Strategies that were presented previously, components of the CEDS include a detailed demographic overview of the people, economy, and place of the Bi-State Region; a description of the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats; and a list of performance measures to assess the progress toward the region’s goals.

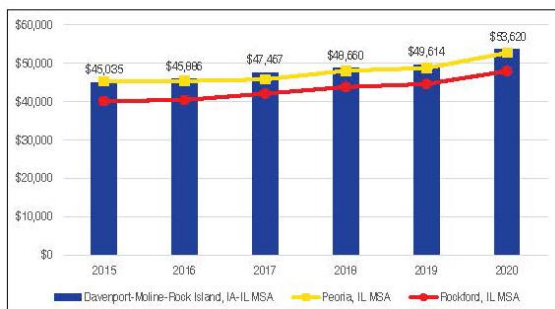
In the summary of regional data and demographics, Ms. Bulat noted most data lags and is based on the five-year American Community Survey averages that were just released. There is a projected steady slow population growth aligning to the recently completed long range transportation plan population projections. Median Age for the region increased from 39.2 to 40.9. The cost of living is lower than the national

average and compares favorably to regional counterparts and is down from 91.7 to 89.4 based on 100.0 being the average in the U.S. The draft annual 2021 unemployment rate is 5.1% and less than the national rate of 5.3%. There has been a slight decrease in Gross Regional Product from the previous year of \$19.59 to \$19.27 billion. Major industries in the region include defense, food processing, machinery, metals, food services, and specialty contractors. Industries hit hardest by the pandemic were travel, entertainment, personal services, and transportation and are being monitored.

Strengths and opportunities in the Bi-State Region include access to multiple modes of transportation; the Rock Island Arsenal and its global reach; numerous economic tools such as tax credits, enterprise zones, RLFs; the I-74 Corridor Project, the largest infrastructure project in regional history; a trained educated labor force; multiple economic development partners; multiple mental health services; multi-season outdoor recreation opportunities; and major redevelopment activities.

The themes related to threats include protecting the Rock Island Arsenal from job losses; the need for improvements and completion of numerous infrastructure projects; changes in state and federal taxing structures; the need for diverse/workforce housing throughout the region; workforce attraction and retention; the need for large scale, site ready industrial parks; flooding impacts and extreme weather; funding for commercial district/downtown revitalization; the CP Rail merger; business succession planning; and increasing commodity costs. The economic development projects listed in the plan were collected from partners and member governments and are used to report progress toward goals.

Per Capita Personal Income (Current Dollars)\*



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

\*Data is presented in terms of current dollars, not adjusted for inflation.

Gross Regional Product by Metro Area (Billions of 2012 Dollars\*)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Data is adjusted for inflation.

\*Data is presented in terms of chained 2012 dollars, a method of adjusting real dollar amounts for inflation over time, so as to allow comparison of figures from different years.



## U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District Busy with Projects

Colonel Jesse Curry, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, provided an overview and update on projects being undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Serving 5 river basins in 5 states, the Rock Island District delivers vital engineering and water resources solutions in collaboration with their partners to secure the nation, reduce disaster risk, and enhance the quality of the nation's inland waterway system. The Rock Island District maintains the second longest nine-foot navigation channel (582 miles) and 18 locks and dams. This system supports the movement of 313 million tons of cargo annually (2021).

Col. Curry highlighted a number of programs and projects including the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program, Brandon Road Interbasin

Project in Joilet, Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project, and maintenance projects at five locks and dams in 2020 with four additional planned for 2023. The Lock 15 dewatering project completed March 3, 2022 was finalized in one quarter and included repair of miter gate and seals, concrete repair, and bubbler system repair and replacements.

FY2022 funding of the Rock Island District is \$416.3 million. With the passage of the Instructure Investment and Jobs Act, there will be an influx of funds amounting to \$1.2 billion to complete critical projects in the Upper Mississippi River Valley. The Mississippi River Project is planned for \$50 million to repair scour, lock damage, guide wall work, gate repairs, and dredging among items.

