

Special Events Planning

Prepared For:



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1.0 Overview

The Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) Special Events Planning (SEP) document is a collection of Special Event Management Strategic Plans for individual events throughout the state of Iowa. The development of the SEP document focused on improving travel, safety and efficiency to and from Iowa's largest traffic generating events through the review of event specific traffic management components. Initially, three events were selected from the state of Iowa for inclusion in the SEP document. As Strategic Plans are developed for additional events, those events will be included in the SEP document. The three initial events that are included in this SEP are:

- Iowa State Fair
- Iowa State University Home Football Games
- University of Iowa Home Football Games

The Strategic Plan for each event documents existing transportation conditions for the event based on field observations, highlights positive existing practices and issues for consideration, and provides recommendations, both short and long term, to be considered as potential improvements to event operations. The objective of each Strategic Plan was, at a high-level, to analyze traffic and pedestrian flow at each event and to work with event staff, agencies and others in developing roadway, operations and safety improvements where appropriate.

The SEP document is intended to be a “living” document with updates to the Strategic Plans occurring as warranted and additional Strategic Plans being incorporated for other events. The enacting of recommendations contained within each Strategic Plan is not a mandate for the responsible agency for a particular event. The Strategic Plans are intended to provide a basis for discussion between the Iowa DOT and agencies involved in the planning and implementation of transportation operations for large traffic events regarding opportunities to improve the event patron's experience.

2.0 Special Events Planning

Special events planning builds on the current practices and provides a framework for enhancing the efficiency and applicability of current agency event-specific plans. The following sections provide an overview of special event management planning.

2.1 Impact of Planned Special Events

The impact of a planned special event on the transportation system is dependent on several characteristics of the event. When analyzing the impacts of an event the first thing that should be considered is the type of special event that is occurring, as special events vary in size and duration. Some of the more common special events include: single events at a permanent location (concerts), recurring events at a permanent venue (sporting events), continuous events (fairs), and street use events (marathons). The potential impacts of an event are influenced by

event operation characteristics, including attendance, rate of event patron arrival and departure, venue location, adjacent roadway capacity, and duration of the event. The effort required to minimize the transportation impacts associated with special events requires extensive planning and coordination by stakeholders. Stakeholders that may be involved in the process include:

- Event Organizer
- Transportation Agencies
- Law Enforcement/Public Safety
- Government Agencies
- Elected Officials
- Regional Organizations
- Private Industry
- Media
- Public

Transportation stakeholders place a priority on minimizing the event's impact to the public (regardless of whether they are participants of the event). Event patrons will accept a certain level of delay as part of the overall experience of attending an event, but place high priority on getting to their destination prior to the start of the event. Because planned special events are scheduled, transportation and other agencies are able to proactively plan for and manage the increased demand on the transportation system.

2.2 Goals of Managing Travel for Planned Special Events

An early initiation of planning efforts significantly improves the ability to accommodate the additional traffic demand associated with an event. The goals for managing planned special events as stated in the *Federal Highway Administration's Managing Travel for Planned Special Events Handbook* reference are:

- Achieving Predictability
- Ensuring Safety
- Maximizing Efficiency

By achieving predictability in the travel patterns to and from an event, stakeholders are able to develop mitigation strategies to accommodate the travel demand associated with an event. Through the deployment of the mitigation strategies it becomes possible to better ensure the safety of the transportation system users and maximize the efficiency of available resources.

To achieve these goals requires extensive interagency coordination between stakeholders. Stakeholders must agree upon a command structure for managing the traffic, pedestrian, and transit coordination strategies required for operating the transportation system in a manner that fulfills the goals of special event planning. Planned special event stakeholders may adopt process and operations strategies for disseminating standard operating procedures regarding the management of the transportation system.

2.3 Benefits of Successful Planned Special Events

The proactive and coordinated management of travel for planned special events yields numerous benefits to transportation stakeholders and transportation system operations. Those benefits include, but are not limited to:

- Reduced delay for motorists attending the planned special events through more active information dissemination, traffic management, and alternate mode choice.
- Reduced delay for motorists not attending the special event through active promotion of alternate routes or modes.
- Reduced overall traffic demand, at or near the special event site, through active promotion of alternate route or modes or dissemination of information resulting in the cancellation or delay of unnecessary trips.

The benefits of a successfully planned for special event can be achieved through numerous methods, including the deployment of new technologies for traffic control and monitoring, incorporation of new procedures and tactics into everyday traffic/incident management tasks, the promotion of interagency sharing of personnel and equipment resources, and the dissemination of lessons learned and solutions to technical problems that may be encountered in the future.

2.4 Traffic Management Plan

The primary result of special event management planning is a traffic management plan that indicates how traffic, parking, and pedestrian operations will be managed on the day of the event. The traffic management plan should contain strategies and tactics for mitigating travel impacts identified for the planned special event. It also accommodates planned travel demand management initiatives aimed at improving transportation system operations and contingency planning for weather, security threats, major traffic incidents, and event cancellation. A complete traffic management plan considers event specific traffic management components, which may include:

- Site access and parking
- Pedestrian access
- Traffic flow
- Traffic control
- En-route traveler information
- Traffic surveillance
- Traffic incident management and safety
- Implementation

Proper resources, a good implementation plan and a solid understanding of the transportation system are required for successful event management. The traffic management plan describes the what, when, and where in terms of personnel and equipment resource deployment needed to implement the mitigation strategies. Development of a traffic management plan that details traffic, parking, and pedestrian management techniques to mitigate any and all anticipated problems on the day-of-the-event should strive to meet the following objectives:

- Facilitate safe and quick travel to/from the event
- Maximize safety
- Maximize transportation system capacity
- Maximize efficiency of parking operations
- Accommodate pedestrians
- Automate traffic control tasks
- Disseminate useful traveler information
- Minimize impact to non-event patrons
- Respond to crash, weather, and safety risks

To satisfy these objectives the traffic management plan presents and recommends various processes, operations, and service strategies for planned special event travel management. .

3.0 Special Event Strategic Plans

The following sections of the Iowa DOT SEP document contain the individual Strategic Plans for the Iowa State Fair, Iowa State University Home Football Games, and the University of Iowa Home Football Games. The Strategic Plans for each event are based on field observations, which cover a broad range of traffic management. The Strategic Plans should not be taken for a detailed Traffic Management Plan for each event. Many of the recommendations from each Strategic Plan will need additional analysis and design prior to implementation