

Chapter One **Planning and Preparation**

Planning and preparation are essential to the success of any project. The purpose of this Chapter is to provide guidance for early planning and preparation of relocation assistance activities. These efforts should begin during the early project development process.

The Relocation Assistance Plan

49 CFR, Part 24 §24.205(a) and 761 IAC Chapter 111.205 requires the creation of Relocation Assistance plans during the early stages of the development phase of the project. The goal of the federal and state requirements is to ensure Relocation Assistance is provided *“in such a manner that the problems associated with the displacement of individuals, families, businesses, farms, and nonprofit organizations are recognized and solutions are developed to minimize the adverse impacts of displacement.”*

By becoming familiar with the project and neighboring area, the Relocation Advisor will be more apt to recognize potential issues early in the project development process. Potential issues may include the need for increased time to accomplish successful moves, unusual replacement housing needs/payments or limited availability of replacement residential and/or business properties in the local market.

A well-developed Relocation Assistance Plan is beneficial for different groups within the Iowa DOT. The examples provided are not intended to be a complete list of uses for the Plan, but to demonstrate the many uses available for a well-developed Plan.

- The Acquisition/Relocation Section may use the Plan to estimate staffing needs and plan for workload assignments.
- The Office of Right of Way may use the Plan to furnish costs estimates for the project to the applicable Offices throughout the Iowa DOT.
- The Office of Location and Environment (OLE) may use the Plan to recognize potential Environmental Justice issues created by individual project concepts.
- The Project Management Team (PMT) may consider the Plan when developing the Preferred Alignment for the project.

The “P2” Event

The Iowa DOT maintains a system for monitoring the progress of projects called “Project Scheduling”. Events essential to the development of projects have been identified. Applicable data is entered into the Project Scheduling System upon completion of an essential event. The Relocation Assistance Plan has been identified as an essential event for some projects. This event has been entitled the “P2” event.

The Relocation Assistance Plan is the document necessary for the completion of the “P2” event in the Iowa DOT’s Project Development Schedule. “P2” events are only required when a project is classified as an “Environmental Assessment” (EA) or an “Environmental Impact Study” (EIS) project.

When the Office of Location and Environment (OLE) classifies a project as an EA or EIS project, the classification will be sent by OLE to the Relocation Supervisor with an indication that a “P2” event is required. The Relocation Supervisor (or designee) will add the P2 event to the Iowa DOT’s project development schedule. The scheduled completion date for the P2 event shall be at least three months prior to the CP3 event.

OLE will provide their CP2 packet to the Relocation Supervisor. The packet will contain the alternatives to be analyzed along with descriptions and visual aids of the project corridor.

Components of the Relocation Assistance Plan

As soon as practical, the Production Coordinator (or designee) will start a survey of potential displaced properties and replacement properties. If the project will acquire business properties, replacement business properties will also be considered. Research should begin through casual observation of the project and properties to be acquired noticing issues such as types of properties involved, evidence of special needs, ramps, evidence of large families, such as playground equipment or numerous toys present, and other noticeable items. Note that we do not need to interview displacee’s at this time.

The assessor’s office may provide information to owner occupied properties versus tenant owned properties. Other available resources to be used for research may include multiple listing service, realty companies, Internet web sites and newspaper advertisements. A survey of local builders, well-drillers, septic contractors and house movers may be necessary. Local financial resources might also be contacted to determine prevailing interest rates and special services available to the relocatee. Area services such as public transportation, schools, shopping facilities, etc. should be reviewed as well as local agencies who provide information on low-income, senior citizen or assisted living housing.

The following outline has been provided as a guide in developing a Relocation Plan or “P2” document.

- A description of the project which includes:
 - ❖ The highway being improved.
 - ❖ Identify the County/City/description of location.
 - ❖ Describe the type of improvement being proposed (4-lane, Super 2-lane, Bridge project, etc.)

- ❖ List the different types of properties involved (rural residential, improved farmsteads, urban residential, commercial, etc.)
 - ❖ Provide the anticipated construction time frame as of the date of the Relocation Plan.
- Include discussion of the components considered in developing the Relocation Plan
- ❖ Identify the number of alternatives being considered at the time the Relocation Plan is developed.
 - Acknowledge in the report if only one alternative is being studied.
 - Acknowledge and describe if multiple alternatives are still being considered.
 - Develop comparisons of the similarities and differences of all alternatives considered.
 - ❖ Provide a reference date for cost estimates
 - State if the date of the report is also the effective date of the cost estimates.
 - Provide the basis used for estimating future dollars, if a future date is used.
 - ❖ Identify the source(s) used in gathering the information used in arriving at cost estimates. For example, county records, local realtors, developers, etc.
- Develop a discussion of displacement properties.
- ❖ Describe the individual displacements for each alternative considered.
 - ❖ Identify and report any known unique social or economic issues, for example:
 - Disruption of any particular ethnic or racial neighborhood.
 - Economic disruption or isolation of the impacted neighborhood.
- Specify types of properties to be replaced
- Residential (Rural, urban, both)
 - Farmsteads
 - Commercial

- Industrial
 - Estimate number of owner occupied dwellings vs. number of tenant occupied dwellings. This information may be found by comparing the owners mailing address on the county assessor cards with the address of the subject properties.
- Provide a brief description of improvements estimated to be acquired on each parcel for each alternative considered. For example:
- ❖ House
 - ❖ Commercial buildings
 - ❖ Outbuildings
 - ❖ Signs
 - ❖ Large inventories (car or implement dealers for example)
 - ❖ Livestock
 - ❖ Other types of improvements.
- Develop a discussion of factors influencing the local market within the project corridor.
- ❖ Compare current listings for each type of property to be displaced as a result of the project.
 - ❖ Determine and conclude if the number of available properties within the local market will allow for the displacements to be absorbed without straining the local real estate market.
 - ❖ Consider if the option of new construction will be required and identify which parcels may require a build new option.
 - ❖ Identify the availability of building lots and building contractors in the area.
- Develop an estimate of Relocation Assistance costs for each alternative being considered for the project
- ❖ Provide the basis used in developing the estimate.
 - ❖ Demonstrate how the calculations made.

- ❖ Provide a final estimate for each alternative, so the estimates may be used in considering the ultimate preferred alignment.
- The report should conclude with the writer's recommendations including:
 - ❖ Suggestions for project time schedules, for example:
 - Suggested R-5 dates, which represent the scheduled completion date for Relocation Activities found in Project Scheduling.
 - Recommended time scheduled for implementing and completing the Relocation Assistance Process. (R4 date).
 - ❖ The writer may also wish to include implementation strategies which consider:
 - Exploration and/or use of early or advanced purchases.
 - Whether to stage or phase acquisitions or to proceed with all acquisitions at the same time.
 - Identify the need or lack of need for a freeway office.
 - Calculate the number of staff (Relocation Advisors) needed to handle the project workload.
 - Identify and describe any other applicable recommendation.
- Develop a summary of the report.
- Include an Appendix for additional data that should be included within the report. For example:
 - ❖ Copies of documents used (Assessor cards, etc.).
 - ❖ Copies of pertinent documentation and correspondence.
 - ❖ Copies of other applicable records.

For planning purposes the Office of Right of Way has calculated anticipated minimal time requirements for providing Relocation Assistance services. These calculations are based on historic average displacement times. These time frames include the time from initiation of negotiations until the displacee actually moved from the acquired property.

- Residential: Owner-Occupied:
 - ❖ These moves took an average of 7 months.

- ❖ In urban areas, the average was 5 months.
- ❖ In rural areas the average was 9 months.)
- ❖ On build new (all rural) the average was 10 months.

➤ Residential: Tenant-Occupied:

- ❖ These moves took an average of 5.4 months.
- ❖ In urban areas, the average was 4.1months
- ❖ In rural areas, the average was 6.5 months.

➤ Non-Residential: Businesses:

- ❖ Typical business moves took an average of 9 months.
- ❖ Farm Operations took an average of 12 months.

Completion of the Relocation Plan and P2 Event

The Production Coordinator (or designee) develops and completes the Relocation Plan. The completed Relocation Plan is submitted to the Relocation Supervisor (or designee) for concurrence. The approved Relocation Plan is then submitted to OLE and the Relocation Supervisor enters the P2 event completion date into the project production schedule. The completed and approved Relocation Plan is then be scanned and entered into the ERMS system for permanent record retention. (Note: At the time of this writing the ERMS system is not yet able to handle the storage of the Relocation Plan.)

Projects classified as Categorical Exclusion (CE) projects do not require a P2 event. Please note most Iowa DOT projects are classified as CE's. Relocation Assistance Plans are typically not developed for projects classified as CE's. The exceptions would involve projects when three or more homes and/or businesses are displaced, when a concern that replacement housing is not available or a unique situation in the local market would create unusual hardships for the displacee.

The Initial Interview

The initial interview with the displacee is essential for a successful relocation process. During this initial visit the Relocation Advisor can make a positive impression with the displacee, gain trust and establish the rapport that can either make the experience a success or create difficult challenges for the future.

Prior to the meeting the Relocation Advisor should become familiar with the general locale of the property to be acquired, the specifics of the proposed acquisition and the potential impacts on the remaining property, if any.

The Relocation Advisor should make every reasonable effort to schedule an appointment with the displacee at a time that is convenient and at a location that is comfortable for the displacee. The purpose of the initial meeting is the exchange of information. Information should be provided to the displacee to answer their initial questions and to provide a level of comfort about the upcoming move. Information should be obtained to allow the Relocation Advisor to complete the applicable studies and calculate the appropriate benefits. The Relocation Advisor should be aware that they may be the first person from the Iowa DOT to meet individually with the displacee.

The Relocation Advisor should be prepared to devote the time and resources necessary to ensure that the Relocation Assistance Program is explained in a manner that the displacee understands. The Relocation Advisor also needs to receive information from the displacee in order to ascertain their needs and desires and must be skillful in seeking this information. This is accomplished by explaining why the information is needed and by providing assurance to the displacee that the information gathered is confidential.

The Relocation Advisor is expected to gather the information necessary to complete the Residential Relocation Subject Inspection Sheet. This information will become the basis for completing moving estimates, comparable housing studies and finally the Offer of Relocation presented to the displacee.

Chapter One Overview

- 49 CFR, Part 24 §24.205(a) and 761 IAC Chapter 111.205 require the creation of Relocation Assistance plans during the early stages of the development phase of the project.
- The Relocation Plan completes the P2 event.
 - ❖ OLE requests creation of a P2 event early in the Development Process and before public involvement for the project.
 - ❖ P2 must be completed prior to the CP3 date.
- Several Offices within the DOT utilize the Relocation Plan
 - ❖ The document is used for different purposes by different consumers.
 - ❖ Uses are continually evolving.
- The Relocation Plan is completed as part of the Project Development Process.
 - ❖ The Relocation Plan is developed early in process and may considered several possible alignments.
 - ❖ Potential displacee's should not be contacted at the time the document is created.
- Acquisition/Relocation Section is responsible for the Relocation Plan
 - ❖ The Relocation Plan is typically created by the Production Coordinator with final concurrence from the Relocation Supervisor, but these duties may be designated.
 - ❖ The final report is made available to OLE and entered into the ERMS system for permanent record retention.
- The Initial Interview
 - ❖ Critical for successful relocation.
 - ❖ Should be personal meeting
 - ❖ Use the meeting to provide and gather information.

