

TECH NEWS

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SUDAS goes corporate

Iowa is the only state with border-to-border, uniform urban design standards and specifications developed by stakeholders: SUDAS.

SUDAS (pronounced “soo’dahs”) is the shorthand way of saying Statewide Urban Design and Specifications. To establish a mechanism for ensuring continuation of this highly successful program, SUDAS has been incorporated in Iowa. CTRE will continue to administer the program under a new director, Larry Stevens.

A brief history

In the mid-1990s, after several years of cooperative meetings among a growing number of central Iowa urban jurisdictions, 34 jurisdictions adopted a set of urban standards for project design standards and specifications for public improvements. Participating agencies soon began experiencing significant cost savings and other benefits.

Many communities across Iowa were eager to duplicate central Iowa’s success. So, in 2001 Iowa State University negotiated a license agreement with the original central Iowa committee, and CTRE took on the task of overseeing the expansion and updating of the regional standards into statewide standards. CTRE worked with a statewide steering committee representing various stakeholders.

Now uniform urban design standards and specifications are being implemented across Iowa. Updates are distributed annually to manual holders.

Benefits

By conservative estimates, implementing urban standards statewide should result in construction savings of four to seven percent. At only four percent, the potential annual savings to Iowans is \$16 million—a benefit-cost ratio of 44 to one.

Here are a few examples of savings opportunities:

- With up-to-date and uniform design standards and specifications, jurisdictions are improving their project plans and providing clearer information for contractors, which results in improved bidding.
- Because contractors are familiar with the uniform standards, more contractors are now bidding on some individual urban projects, resulting in more competitive bids.
- When contractors don’t have to constantly change equipment and methods to meet varying specifications, they can pass on any resulting reduction in construction and maintenance costs to employing agencies.
- Engineers save time formerly devoted to updating and, in some cases, developing new design standards and

Speaking of specs

Agencies, contractors, construction engineers, and others can now find construction specifications for all 50 states on one website. The site includes a searchable library of highway specifications from across the country, including

- standard specifications and supplements
- innovative and emerging specifications
- ASTM publications

The website also includes a discussion forum.

This project is a result of a collaborative effort of FHWA and AASHTO. Check it out: www.specs.fhwa.dot.gov.

specifications for a vast number of agencies.

Why incorporate?

It is critical that such a valuable resource remain current and viable. To ensure that SUDAS does just that, the central Iowa committee will transfer ownership of the SUDAS manuals to a separate, statewide entity.

The new, nonprofit SUDAS Corporation will be that entity. Its board of directors consists of representatives from various statewide stakeholders, including all Iowa cities and counties, Iowa DOT, engineering consultants, and industry representatives. One of the corporation's first charges will be to develop a policies and procedures manual.

Secret of success

The effort to develop statewide design standards and specifications has only succeeded because of incredibly strong stakeholder involvement and buy-in.

Dale Harrington, the original director of the SUDAS program who was instrumental in facilitating stakeholder involvement, calls SUDAS a "little democracy." More than 200 engineers around the state have donated significant time and effort to the program.

The future

On March 23, Harrington passed the SUDAS torch to Larry Stevens, former Oskaloosa city engineer and public works director. Stevens brings 27 years of city engineering experience to CTRE as the SUDAS director. With a new director and new corporate oversight, the mechanisms are in place to continually build upon this vital constituency, maintain strong support, and continue to improve urban design standards and specifications as needs change.

One important effort currently underway is to make the SUDAS and Iowa DOT specifications compatible. The two organizations have already worked hand in hand to develop a common design section on jointing concrete pavements. And SUDAS specifications are included in the Iowa DOT's electronic reference library.

For more information

You can find both the design and specifications manuals, along with recent updates, supplementals, and developmentals, online, as well as forms for ordering hard copies. See www.iowasudas.org/. The website also lists district meeting schedules and minutes of past meetings. If you have other questions, contact Larry Stevens, 515-294-0419, lstevens@iastate.edu.
