

POLK DES MOINES  
**TAXPAYERS**  
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## METRO TRANSPORTATION

Performance measurement helps policymakers and agency staff determine if the millions of dollars our local governments annually invest in transportation are spent wisely. Local municipal governments report on the size, use, and condition of their transportation system, but the public does not see a regional, consistent evaluation of the entire transportation system including public transportation. Each entity operates independently.

Transportation policy makers need to better understand and track – across boundaries – how transportation investments and policies affect broader goals. The Des Moines City Council heard recently how the MLK extension across the river will spur development in the East Village area. The WDM City Council is working hard for additional Interstate exchanges. Polk County, Ankeny, and the State teamed up to fund the Corporate Woods interchange. But these are done in an isolated and sporadic manner. The MPO helps to set and monitor progress and goals and look to the future, but metro transportation is not easily understandable.

There are some emerging trends that all of us need to pay greater attention to.

Rising energy costs and the urgent to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, both of which heighten the need for greater efficiency.

Continuing demographic shifts that create different needs for transportation (and housing and other services).

A more regional - and global – economy that sometimes creates tension between local governments, but also enhances the entire metro area.

When the local governments look at transportation performance in the area, most of it focuses as a function of throughput: how quickly vehicles can get from place to place. Some experts say that this limits *what could be*. Better integration of regional transportation and regional land use planning could greatly change the quantity and quality of our travel. Planning at the local level makes some reference to land-use patterns that support affordable and energy-efficient transportation systems, and I'm encouraged by some of the items I hear at meetings, but success so far has been limited, and metro-wide measurement is not what it should be.

A metro-wide, integrated transportation and land-use system would use public revenues more judiciously.

## RESIDENTIAL MARKET UPDATE

While the number of residential sales declined considerably in 2008, Polk County bucked a national trend in that the median sale price here continued to creep upward throughout most of last year.

Data for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2009, however, paints a different picture. The median sale price in Polk county has dropped to \$147,000, down from \$149,000 in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2008 (but up from \$142,750 in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter – 2007).

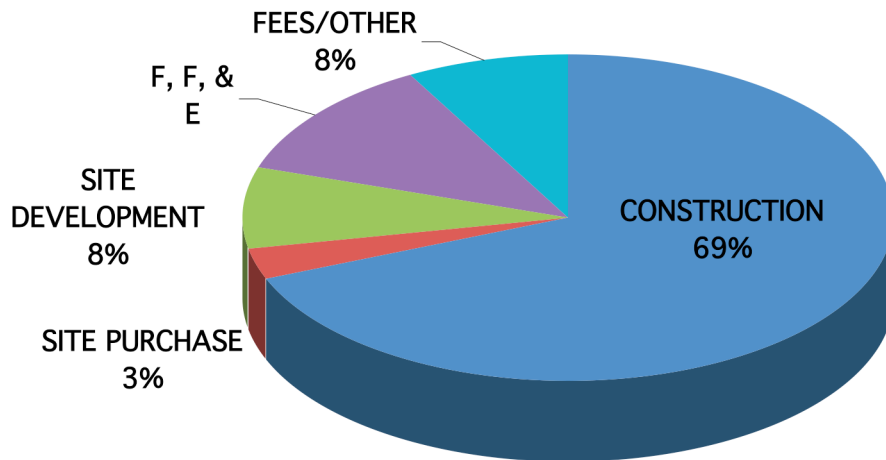
We don't feel this signals trouble in the market, but rather is reflective of more activity in the lower end of the housing spectrum. In other words, a disproportionate number of people buying less expensive homes has probably skewed the medium sale price downward. It is likely that lower-priced homes will remain in demand due to first-time homebuyer incentives and other things contained in the new economic stimulus package.

### PROTESTS

2007	2009
7,323	7,571
Residential – 82%	Residential – 74%
Commercial – 16%	Commercial – 26%
AG/Other – 2%	AG/Other – 1%

SOURCE – Polk County Assessor

## National School Construction Costs



## **Thinking Through the Transition for Existing School Systems - Thomas Frey**

We see the existing school systems going through a complicated transition, which may not always be smooth. Below is a description of some of the anticipated changes that will happen to students, teachers, buildings, and school districts or systems.

**Students** – Perhaps the people who will be quickest to adapt to the new system will be the students. Instead of being forced to learn specific courses that are often of little interest to them, students will be free to select the topics that they are most interested in.

Most students will have the opportunity to travel to various learning camps around the country. As more and more students begin using the system, the demand for new courses will cause more and more people to develop courseware.

**School Buildings** – Some school buildings will transition into learning centers that are open 24 hours a day, accommodating both child and adult learners, providing support staff to assist people who struggle with the system or on a specific topic.

Other school buildings, or portions of buildings, will transition into production centers filled with the tools and equipment for people to produce new courseware. Staff people will also be on hand to assist in courseware design and creation.

**Teachers** – Teachers will have many good options to consider as the changes begin to happen. Some teachers will remain with the school buildings and work more as guides, coaches, and tutors for students needing help. Others will move into event planners and experience designers as each facility experiments with re-engineering the social side of learning.

Other teachers will choose to develop their own learning camp or series of camps. Learning camps will specialize in a specific experiential topic that is tied to specific courseware. These teachers will effectively operate their own enterprise with revenues driven by the number of students opting to go to their camp.

Some of the more entrepreneurial-minded teachers may choose to become full-time courseware producers. The techniques for creating good and effective new courseware will be an iterative process going through multiple evolutionary stages as new and better tools become available

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!  
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!  
Humanity with all its fears,  
With all the hopes of future years,  
Is hanging breathless on the fate!  
We know what Master laid the keel,  
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,  
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,  
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what forge and what a heat  
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!  
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;  
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,  
And not a rent made by the gale!  
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,  
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
Are all with thee, - are all with thee!

H. W. Longfellow