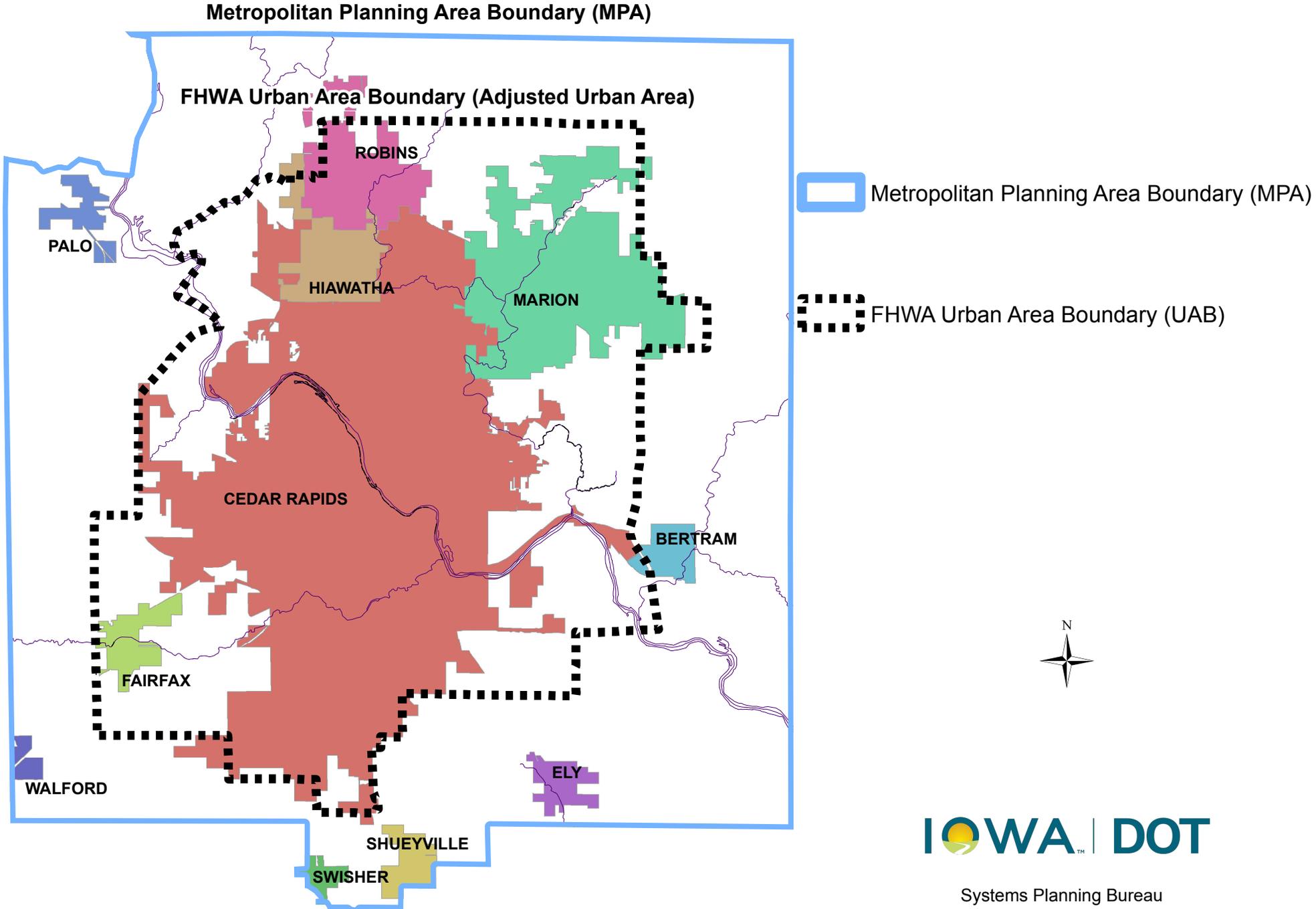


# Planning Boundaries



## Urban Area

Urban Area (Census definition) - A statistical geographic entity consisting of a densely settled core created from census blocks and contiguous qualifying territory that together have at least 2,000 housing units or 5,000 persons.

Urban Area (FHWA definition) - The term "urban area" means an urbanized area or, in the case of an urbanized area encompassing more than one State, that part of the urbanized area in each such State, or urban place as designated by the Census Bureau having a population of 5,000 or more and not within any urbanized area, within boundaries to be fixed by responsible State and local officials in cooperation with each other, subject to approval by the Secretary. Such boundaries shall encompass, at a minimum, the entire urban place designated by the Census Bureau

Urban Area Boundaries were released by the Census Bureau in December 29th 2022. TIGER/Line® Shapefiles were released in the February of 2023.

## FHWA Urban Area Boundary

The Federal Highway Administration uses the Census Bureau Urban Area Boundaries (UAB) definition as a starting point but then allows smoothing and adjusting of the UAB, resulting in a slightly larger area better suited to transportation needs.

The following Federal Transportation Programs are impacted by adjustments to the FHWA Urban Area Boundaries:

- 1.) Highway Functional Classification
- 2.) FHWA's Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS)
- 3.) Distribution of STP Funds
- 4.) STP Apportionment Formula
- 5.) Control of Outdoor Advertising

Boundaries should be fixed so as to smooth out irregularities, maintain administrative continuity of peripheral routes, and encompass fringe areas having residential, commercial, industrial, and/or national defense significance. Transportation terminals serving the area such as airports and seaports should also be included within the redefined area if they lie within a reasonable distance of the urban area boundary that would otherwise be selected. Careful consideration should be given to the selection of boundary locations which will include logical control points for transportation linkages such as interchanges, major cross roads, etc., where the inclusion of such areas will not unduly distort the urban area as would otherwise be selected. Boundaries should not, however, be modified to accommodate a single project.

The boundary location should be delineated on maps of a scale necessary to show all prominent highways and streets, all fixed transit right-of-way facilities, all major bus routes, corporate limits, township lines, etc., as well as the new limits of the urban area. The maps, together with any supporting documentation, should be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) division office for approval. The submission should indicate the formal approval of the responsible State and local officials.

## Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary

Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary (MPA) refers to the geographic area in which the metropolitan transportation planning process must be carried out. The MPA shall, at a minimum, cover the UAB(s) and the contiguous geographic area(s) likely to become urbanized within the 20-year forecast period covered by the Transportation Plan. An MPO must be designated for each urban area with a population of more than 50,000 people. A Transportation Management Area (TMA) is an area designated by the Secretary of Transportation, having an urban area population of over 200,000.

The Census Bureau issued its list of qualifying Urban Areas based on population counts from the 2020 decennial Census in the December 29th, 2022 Federal Register. Each Urbanized Area listed by the Census Bureau must be represented by a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in order to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process specified in Federal transportation legislation (23 USC 134 and 49 USC 5303).

Designation of a new MPO consists of a formal agreement between the Governor and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the population to be included in the metropolitan planning area (MPA). The agreement should, at a minimum, identify the membership structure of the policy board and establish the metropolitan planning area boundaries (23 USC 134 (b) and 49 USC 5303 (c)).

### Sources

[https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census\\_issues/urbanized\\_areas\\_and\\_mpo\\_tma/faq](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/urbanized_areas_and_mpo_tma/faq)

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/24/2022-06180/urban-area-criteria-for-the-2020-census-final-criteria>