# IOWA PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING

## PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

# *MAPA Utilizes Iowa Public Health Tracking Information to Forecast Metro Area Population*

The Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) is a group of local government officials and citizens from eastern Nebraska and the western Iowa counties of Douglas, Sarpy, Washington Pottawattamie, and Mills. The aim of MAPA is to address the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro area as a whole for regional planning issues.

## What was the Problem/Situation?

Some of the regional planning MAPA facilitates includes improving and expanding public transportation, fostering economic and community development, monitoring and improving ozone and air quality, waste and emergency management and sustainability. In order to achieve these aims, MAPA compiles and analyzes an array of data on the infrastructure and population of the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. Therefore, MAPA chose to pull information from the Iowa Public Health Tracking system in order to improve regional planning efforts.

## How was Iowa Public Health Tracking Involved?

MAPA accessed vital records data for Pottawattamie, Mills, Harrison and Shelby Counties in Iowa. This data contained birth and death records that encompassed the past 30 years and was used in combination with census data to create age specific fertility rates, death rates, and inferred migration patterns at the county level. By compiling this information, MAPA was able to understand the historical Omaha-Council Bluffs metro region's population dynamics and forecast future population composition. These population forecasts were especially important to MAPA since it aided them in meeting federal and grant requirements:

*These population forecasts are being used to develop a spatial land use allocation model for our federally mandated regional socio-economic forecasts and transportation modeling as well as assisting MAPA in the three year HUD Sustainable Communities Grant (Heartland 2050). –GIS Coordinator Paul Hunt, MAPA*

## What Action was Taken to Solve the Problem/Situation?

Public health problems in the U.S., such as motor vehicle-related injuries, obesity, physical inactivity, and breathing and heart problems related to air pollution are all influenced by the design of a community. Designing communities that encourage healthy choices is critical to improving the health and quality of life of community members. Community design elements include schools, workplaces, and homes, roads, parks and recreation areas, transportation systems, and places to buy food. By being conscientious of future population dynamics, healthier and safer communities can be created. MAPA's use of vital records data to forecast population dynamics in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area is a crucial way to continue to improve community health through contentious community design.