

ITEM#: AAMPO 4
DATE: 09-12-23
DEPT: MPO

TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: AMES URBAN AREA BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT

BACKGROUND:

On January 18, 2023, the United States Census Bureau published maps of the 2020 urban areas based on the result of the 2020 Decennial Census. The Census Bureau published a [notice](#) on March 24, 2022, which lists several criteria used for establishing and defining urban areas. Some of the key criteria are listed below:

1. Area with a population of at least 5,000 (or at least 2,000 housing units)
2. Initial urban are cores are identified using an aggregation of census blocks with a housing unit density of 425. Land use cover data used to identify territory with high degree of imperviousness.
3. Maximum hop distance of 0.5 miles and a maximum jump distance of 1.5 miles for the inclusion of noncontiguous territory.

Using these Census Bureau defined urban areas, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) undergoes an urban area boundary adjustment process to meet Federal-Aid highway program requirements. This boundary adjustment process starts with a collaboration between local agencies and state departments of transportation (DOTs) to develop a preliminary urban area boundary and is ultimately concluded with final approval of the urban area boundary by the FHWA district office.

Approved FHWA urban area boundaries are utilized for the distribution of some federal formula-based funding programs, such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), as well as for the establishment of highway functional classification. Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundaries (the MPO's boundary) also need to include the entirety of the FHWA urban area.

The FHWA and Iowa DOT provided guidance criteria for adjusting the urban area boundary. Some of the criteria most relevant to the Ames urban area adjustment are:

1. Urban areas must include the entirety of the Census-defined urban area.
2. Urban area boundaries should be as simple and direct as possible. They should follow census boundaries, corporate limits, parcel lines, or geographical features such as roads, railroads, or streams/rivers.
3. Whenever the urban area boundary follows a highway, road, or street, that road shall be entirely within the boundary.
4. Boundaries should smooth out irregularities, maintain administrative continuity of peripheral routes, and encompass fringe areas having residual, commercial,

industrial, and/or national defense significance. It should also include areas which currently have or are developing “urban” characteristics such as sidewalks/curbs, street lighting, sanitary and storm drainage facilities, transit service, police and fire protection, parks, stadiums, schools, or other major facilities.

The Iowa DOT also informed MPOs that, for the 2020 FHWA urban area adjustment process, the 2010 FHWA urban area can be leveraged as a starting point, in addition to the 2020 Census urban area.

On August 21, 2023, MPO staff met with staff and officials from the City of Ames, City of Gilbert, and Iowa DOT to discuss the Ames urban area boundary adjustment. Using feedback from this coordination meeting as well as the FHWA and Iowa DOT’s guidance criteria, MPO staff developed a preliminary adjusted urban area boundary for Ames (see Attachment A). The following are key comments on this preliminary boundary:

1. Inclusion of the City of Gilbert within the Ames Urban Area:
 - a. **The City of Gilbert was not included within the 2020 census Ames urban area due to the reduction of the maximum jump distance to 1.5 miles (instead of the 2.5 miles used in the 2010 census).**
 - b. **In the coordination meeting with local agencies and Iowa DOT, Mayor Jon Popp from the City of Gilbert expressed his desire to remain within the AAMPO and Ames urban area citing the Gilbert school district boundary extending into northern Ames and the desire for continued regional coordination on transportation projects.**
 - c. The City of Gilbert was included within the 2010 FHWA Ames Urban Area, which the Iowa DOT stated could be used as a starting point for establishing the 2020 urban area boundary.
2. Changes with the 2020 preliminary boundary compared to the 2010 boundary:
 - a. Urban area boundary around the City of Gilbert adjusted to match their current corporate limits (including encompassing Gilbert High School on the eastern side of the city).
 - b. Inclusion of the Ames Golf & Country Club and developments along and near Cameron School Road and GW Carver Avenue.
 - c. Inclusion of more area south of Ames to account for adjustments to the census urban area, encompass new developments near research park, and follow established geographical features (roadways).
 - d. Inclusion of residences along W Riverside Road (east of Ada Hayden Heritage Park).

Once the AAMPO preliminary Ames urban area boundary has been approved, it will be submitted to the Iowa DOT for their review. **The Iowa DOT is requesting that preliminary urban area boundaries be submitted to them by mid-September. Once the Iowa DOT has approved the boundary, it will be submitted to the FHWA division office for their final approval. Final approval by the FHWA division office is expected to occur sometime in calendar year 2024.**

It is also anticipated that the AAMPO will review and adjust its MPO *planning boundary* in 2024, before the start of development of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Note that the proposed preliminary urban area boundary shown is currently anticipated to cause only minor adjustments to the MPO planning boundary (see Attachment B for viewing the preliminary urban area boundary in relation to the current MPA boundary).

ALTERNATIVES:

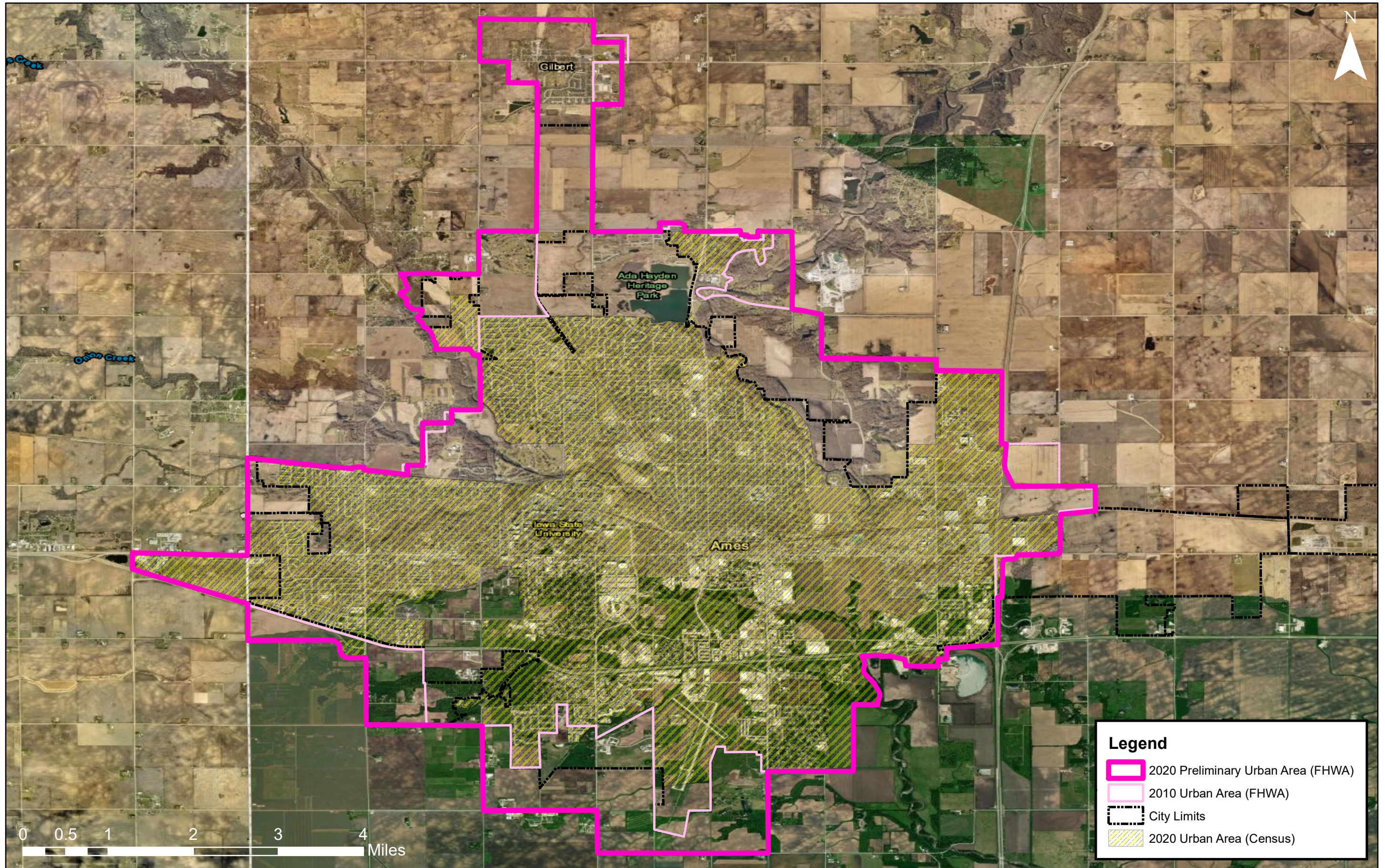
1. Approve the preliminary Ames urban area boundary as proposed for submission to the Iowa DOT and FHWA.
2. Approve the preliminary Ames urban area boundary, with Transportation Policy Committee modifications, for submission to the Iowa DOT and FHWA.

MPO ADMINISTRATOR'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:





MPO staff developed this preliminary Ames urban area boundary by following the guidance criteria provided by the FHWA and Iowa DOT as well as in coordination with MPO member agencies and the Iowa DOT. Additionally, the Transportation Technical Committee unanimously recommended approval of the preliminary Ames urban area boundary. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the MPO Administrator that the Transportation Policy Committee adopt Alternative No. 1.

Attachment A - Preliminary Ames Urban Area Boundary

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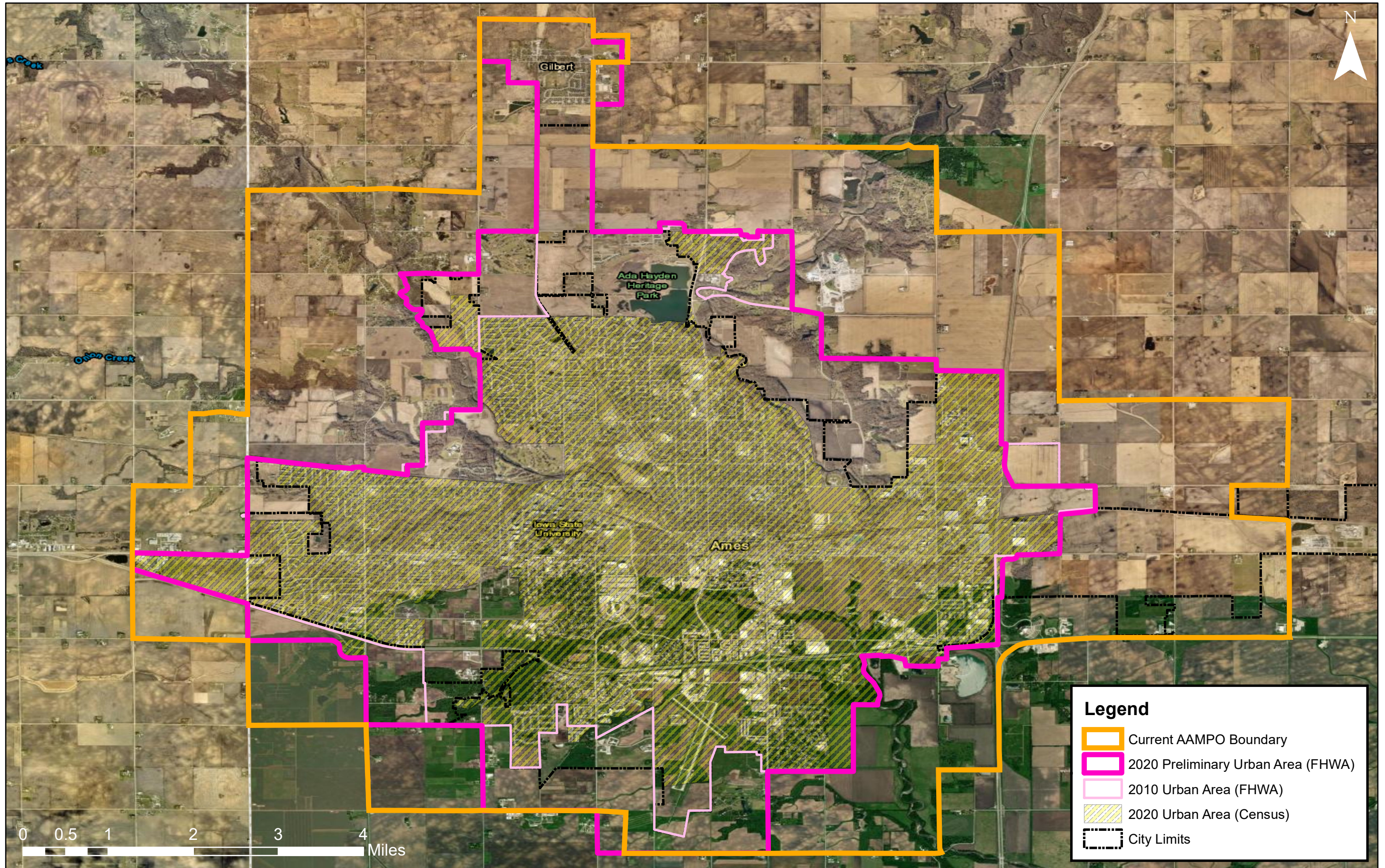
Legend

-  2020 Preliminary Urban Area (FHWA)
-  2010 Urban Area (FHWA)
-  City Limits
-  2020 Urban Area (Census)

Service Layer Credits: Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

Attachment B - Preliminary Ames Urban Area Boundary (w/Current MPO Boundary)

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Legend

- Current AAMPO Boundary
- 2020 Preliminary Urban Area (FHWA)
- 2010 Urban Area (FHWA)
- 2020 Urban Area (Census)
- City Limits

Service Layer Credits: Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community
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