

8th Annual Tri-State Development Summit

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FAIRFIELD, IA (WIUM) - Hundreds of people have spent the last decade working across state lines to improve the region's economy.

The Tri-State Development Summit got its start out of necessity. Steering Committee Member Dan Weidemeyer of Burlington, IA says the Flood of 1993 left everyone in NE Missouri, SE Iowa, and WC Illinois with no way to cross the Mississippi River.

Weidemeyer says that event showed government, business, and community leaders that they had to get on the same page to handle future challenges.

"Working as a region," says Weidemeyer, "we can get more done in economic development than working alone or by city. By bringing together portions of three states, we can get more accomplished, which we have."

The Tri-State Development Summit has grown over the years, spawning more than a half dozen working committees. The most active has been in the area of transportation.

Steering Committee Member Tom Boland of Hannibal, Missouri says improved interstate transportation improves the region's economic development opportunities. He says the work of the summit is evident with projects like Highway 336 between Macomb and Quincy and the Avenue of the Saints becoming realities.

"We all were on the same page," says Boland, "we all were focused on the same projects, it was the same way to go all the time. It is very important for people in Illinois to know people in Missouri and Iowa. When you get to know people, those divisions start to go away."

The Tri-State Development Summit has worked to promote more than just physical projects. It has worked to change people's opinions about their neighboring cities, counties, and states.

Steering Committee Member Pat Poepping of Quincy, IL told the crowd at this year's summit in Fairfield, IA that the region must look at itself as its own state.

"Individually, your impact may be minimal," says Poepping, "but collectively, you can make a difference. It is all a matter of your State of Mind."

Participants in the Tri-State Development Summit have discussed the "State of Mind" for years. The idea is that if the 35 counties have similar challenges and problems, so they should consider themselves their own state.

Poepping says the regional "State of Mind" includes 280 towns, 700,000 residents, 5 U.S. Congressmen, and 6 U.S. Senators. It also includes hundreds of leaders ready to meet the ever-present challenges and create new opportunities for the region.