

8:30 a.m., Friday, September 22, 2023
State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes

On Friday, September 22, 2023, the Nebraska State Highway Commission convened at NDOT Headquarters Highway Commission Room 103 located at 1500 Nebraska Parkway in Lincoln, Nebraska. The agenda, a recording of meeting, attendance sheets, and handouts relevant to the business of this meeting are a part of the permanent minutes of record and are on file at NDOT Central Headquarters. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act (Statutes 84-1407 to 84-1414) was posted in the meeting room.

MEETING NOTICE

- Notice of the regularly scheduled meeting, including the time, location, and agenda, was advertised on the Department of Transportation and the State of Nebraska's websites no less than ten days prior to the meeting.
- The agenda was emailed or mailed to commission members, NDOT staff, and interested persons no less than ten days prior to the meeting.
- A media release was emailed to all statewide outlets on September 15, 2023.
- The meeting agenda was kept current and available to the public in the Communication Division of the Nebraska Department of Transportation, 1500 Nebraska Parkway, Lincoln, Nebraska. No changes were made to the agenda within 48 hours prior to commencement.
- Copies of the meeting agenda were posted and available to the public at the entrance to the meeting room.
- There were 17 in attendance via Webex.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

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| • Commissioner Richard Meginnis | District 1 |
| • Commissioner Vacant | District 2 |
| • Commissioner David Copple | District 3 |
| • Commissioner James H. Kindig | District 4 |
| • Commissioner Doug Leafgreen | District 5 |
| • Commissioner Jim Hawks | District 6 |
| • Commissioner Greg Wolford | District 7 |
| • Commissioner Jerome Fagerland | District 8 |
| • Director Vicki Kramer | Ex Officio |

Sarah Soula, NDOT External Affairs Manager, was recording. A transcript of the meeting is available upon request. Nebraska State Highway Commission meetings are conducted in compliance with the statutes of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

CALL TO ORDER

- Commissioner Copple called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
- The Chair requested an attendance roll call. A quorum was present.

MINUTES

- Approval of August 25, 2023, meeting minutes
 - Motion for approval made by Commissioner Leafgreen; Commissioner Hawks seconded.
 - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 6-0, Commissioner Meginnis abstained vote as he was not in attendance for the August meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The new District 1 Highway Commissioner, Richard Meginnis of Lincoln was introduced. Commissioner Copple thanked outgoing District 1 Commissioner, Mary Gerdes, for her years of service as District 1 Commissioner.

MEETING BUSINESS

- **Director's Remarks**
Vicki Kramer, NDOT Director
 - Thanked Mary Gerdes for her service as a Highway Commissioner.
 - NDOT hosts an annual Maintenance Conference as an opportunity for field staff to convene and share their experiences while learning about new things going on through the Department
 - 250 employees attended
 - It's very clear at this conference that there is a lot of innovation coming out of the districts and it's great to see.
 - Held a joint meeting with the Nebraska State Patrol regarding winter operations to better prepare ourselves for impending weather.
 - Innovative Funding Workshop in October hosted by MAPA and NDOT.
 - Looking at options to maximize funding.
 - Will report back at the October Meeting
 - August Federal Redistribution
 - Nationally \$700M will be redistributed, \$55M for Nebraska. Note, this isn't new money.
 - Federal Government Shutdown
 - Anticipating a 100 Day Shutdown, NDOT doesn't anticipate any delays.
- **2023 Transportation Summit**
Vicki Kramer, NDOT Director
 - Focus of the event was on supporting local agencies
 - 225 local agencies attended
 - Received 70 follow-up emails within 48 hours asking what's next
 - Highlight what the opportunities are with the IIJA Bill
 - Support the local agencies to confidently apply for these funds
 - Local agencies need technical assistance
 - Online support- grant matching portals
 - Training- State and Federal
 - Assistance with Grant writing
 - Grant matching funds
 - Innovative Financing
 - Bonding Bill passed earlier this year
 - \$4.5M in bonding capability through 2029
 - Need to get smarter about what other programs are out there

- USDOT is partnering with FHWA to hold a half day workshop on Innovative Financing
 - The workshop would cover TIFIA which is their main project
 - More details to come at the October Meeting
- **Hastings SE Update**
Mick Syslo, Roadway Design Engineer
 - Purpose and Need
 - Replace the existing pavement
 - Modernize the Highway
 - Improve Safety along corridor
 - Reduce delay and congestion
 - Public Meeting was held July 25, 2023
 - Approximately 100 people were in attendance, nearly 300 webpage visits
 - Received 33 public comments
 - Common Comment themes included project support, pedestrian facilities, roundabout locations, and increased truck traffic
 - Project overview
 - Proposing a 3-lane roadway including a designated center turn-lane
 - Other Improvements include:
 - Sidewalks throughout the project
 - Roundabout at South St. and Elm Avenue to improve safety and operational efficiency
 - Intersection improvements at Hwy 6 and J street
 - Construction scheduled for spring 2026
 - The estimated cost of the project is approximately \$36 million. Funding for the proposed project would derive from state and local funding sources and would include Build Nebraska Act funds.
- **Lincoln West Beltway**
Steve McCullough, Assistant Roadway Design Engineer
 - Project Overview
 - The West Beltway Corridor will tie into the Lincoln South Beltway. To make US-77 meet Freeway standards, there are four intersections that must be addressed.
 - There are four intersections that need to be addressed with a range of options being discussed
 - Yankee Hill Interchange, this would be closed with the project.
 - Warlick Blvd
 - Pioneers Blvd
 - Old Cheney
 - There is a commitment to make Warlick Blvd and interchange. Currently evaluating the Pioneers Blvd and Old Cheney intersections.
 - A traffic corridor study was completed in October 2022
 - Alternative layouts with a cost estimate will be completed in October 2023
 - A public information meeting will be held in early 2024
 - Plans will be wrapped up in 2024 with an estimated cost of 34.8 million
- **Ashland Roundabout**
Matt Neemann, Assistant Traffic Engineer

- In 2021 a Modular Roundabout was proposed in Ashland at the intersection of Hwy 6/66
 - In November 2021 at an Ashland City Council meeting NDOT asked for a resolution supporting the pilot project
 - NDOT researched different products to use and decided on the company Vortex
 - The panels arrived on pallets directly to the location
 - The panels were easily installed on the existing roadway and there was no need to do any cutting
 - The project took only 45 working days at a cost of a little over \$1.4 million
 - The roundabout is the largest of the 16 in existence
 - We will monitor how the roundabout holds up in the winter and review additional sites that would benefit from a modular roundabout
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- **Commission Meeting Logistics**
Dave Copple, District 1 Highway Commissioner
 - Commissioner Copple started a discussion on the time and days in which the Commission Meetings are held since the in-person attendance has reduced over the year.
 - The Commissioners were asked their thoughts on changing the meetings to a Thursday with a 5:30 PM start time.
 - Commissioner Fagerland commented that there will always be conflict but is open minded
 - He believes NDOT staff need to be part the decision
 - Commissioner Leafgreen feels that if the public has a strong enough opinion they will show up
 - Commissioner Wolford stated that if things are going well in the district the public doesn't feel the need to come
 - He is willing to try night meetings if we think that will increase public involvement
 - Commissioner Hawks stated that If it is more convenient for staff then change the time but if not keep it how it is
 - Director Kramer suggested to change the schedule to quarterly
 - The meeting agendas would be more condensed
 - Sarah stated that the statute requires 6 meetings a year
 - Sarah will provide 2 different schedules at the December meeting to evaluate.

PUBLIC INPUT

- Mary Gerdes, Former District 1 Highway Commissioner
 - *Full Statement can be viewed upon request.
 - Mary said it was a privilege to serve from December 2015 to August 2023. She has a new appreciation for state highways. She thanked NDOT staff and the District Commissioners. Some of the more memorable events in her time serving was the 2019 floods and repairing hundreds of miles of highways, covid with the difficulties it created, and the construction of the Lincoln South Beltway.
- Lee Vrooman, Director of Engineering, City of Hastings
 - Thanked the Commission for the support for the Hastings Southeast Project.

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

- Commissioner Copple again thanked Mary for her service.

PUBLIC MEETINGS CALENDAR

- The next scheduled highway commission meeting is October 27, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. in the NDOT Holdrege District Office at 1013 West 4th Ave in Holdrege, NE.

ADJOURNMENT

- The chair adjourned the meeting at 10:07 a.m.