

8:30 a.m., Friday, June 27, 2025  
State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes

*On Friday, June 27, 2025, the Nebraska State Highway Commission convened at the O'Neill City Office located at 401 E Fremont St in O'Neill, 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 on Thursday, June 5, 2025.
- 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.

#### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

- |                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Commissioner Richard Meginnis | District 1 (Virtual) |
| • Commissioner Heath Mello      | District 2 (Virtual) |
| • Commissioner James H. Kindig  | District 4           |
| • Commissioner Doug Leafgreen   | District 5           |
| • Commissioner Jim Hawks        | District 6           |
| • Commissioner Greg Wolford     | District 7           |
| • Commissioner Vacant           | District 8           |
| • Director, Vicki Kramer        | Ex Officio           |

Molly Mellinger, NDOT Executive Coordinator, 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 **Wolford** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
- The chair requested an attendance roll call. A quorum was present as of 9:06 when Commissioner Meginnis joined remotely. Commissioner Mello joined at 9:10. The D8 presentation began prior to quorum but no votes were taken prior to quorum. Commissioners attending and voting remotely had access to all materials digitally.
- The May 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes were called for approval.
  - Motion made by Commissioner **Leafgreen**; **Hawks** seconded.
  - Motion carried by unanimous rollcall vote

## INTRODUCTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Chair **Wolford** called for Commissioner and NDOT introductions.

## MEETING BUSINESS

### District 8 Program Presentation

Mark Kovar, District 8 Engineer and Jason Lehn, District 8 Construction Engineer

- In remembrance of Jerome Fagerland, Highway Commissioner 1999-2024
- The State of District 8
  - Average NSI is 83, goal of 84.7 (D8 needs \$271 million between 2026 and 2031 to reach this goal)
  - 99% of 2,100+ lane miles in good condition (NSI > 70)
  - 3-year average cost per lane mile is \$18,707
  - Preserving the existing State Highway System is NDOT's primary priority
- Highway Improvement projects
  - Overview of programming
  - Specific project examples
    - Minnechaduza Creek Bridge detour
    - In Butte & North
    - West 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Valentine
    - Brewster East
- Questions/Public Input
  - No Commission Questions
  - Scott Menish – O'Neill: Concerns near state yard—asphalt and tar going into holes and not addressing problems. Also putting in an island difficult to get around. Nealy has bumps—we tell our patients in the ambulance they'll feel each one.
    - Mark: Regarding the intersection, the Junction of Hwy 20 and 281 programmed to be reconstructed in 2027—it is in bad shape and needs continual patching. The two raised islands—we'll make them with a sloped curb so long heavy vehicles can negotiate that junction. In regard to Nealy, I'll defer to Kevin and District 3 as that is a D3 city.
  - Gary Connot – Holdt Co. and Boyd Co. Superintendent: What's the status of the Elkhorn River bridge east of O'Neill? Oversize are going around on county roads. South of Butte on Hwy 11 on north of Niobrara there is a slide migrating toward the highway ROW. Wondering about the status of the repair there.
    - Mark: Two bridges close to each other, scheduled to be removed and replaced on new alignment in 2029.
    - Jason: There are several slides in the district we're monitoring. Our geotechnical engineers did come out and do some investigation. We're going to stabilize by planting brush and continue monitoring.

Minatare - US-385

Dawn Knott, Project Studies Engineer

- Purpose and Need
  - o Improved highway, congressionally designated
  - o Fulfill legislative intent
  - o Address roadway and operational challenges
  - o Needed due to designated completion, legislative actions for ongoing funding, efficiency & safety
- Overview and scope of work
  - o 18.5 miles in length
  - o Expands existing two-lane to 4 lane using 2+2
  - o Final EA approved
  - o FONSI
  - o Scope: reconstruct US-26 on alignment, Widen US-26 and L-62A, use existing bridge of Ninemile Creek, construct new bridge to the north, additional improvements
- History
  - o 1991 Heartland Expressway as High Priority Corridor
  - o 1993 Economic and Engineering Study
  - o 2000 Final EI and FONSI
  - o 2011 Build Nebraska Act passed ¼ % sales tax
  - o 2014 Heartland Expressway Corridor Development and Management Plan re-evaluated
  - o 2016 NDOT StEEP process
  - o 2021 FHWA/NDOT determined need for new EA
  - o 2022 Public involvement meeting
  - o 2024 Public hearing
- Design features
  - o 2+2 approach
  - o Traffic accommodations—constructed under traffic, temporary resurfacing, junction closures may be needed, possibly limited access to adjacent properties
  - o Access control criteria
- Public involvement
  - o Public meeting September 8, 2022 ~103 attended, 53 written comments
  - o November 21, 2024 public hearing ~98 attended, 15 written comments
- Schedule and cost
  - o Construction as early as 2026
  - o Estimated cost \$94.7 million
- Public Input/Questions: None
- Approval of Resolution 2025-2
  - o Motion for approval made by Commissioner **Leafgreen**; Commissioner **Kindig** seconded.
  - o Motion carried by rollcall vote, 6 – 0

Central City Viaduct

Brandie Neemann State Roadway Design Engineer

- Project purpose and need
  - o Eliminate conflicts between trains and vehicles
  - o Reduce traffic congestion and delays
  - o Improve operations and reduce crash costs
- Project overview and scope of work
  - o N-14 and US-30 in Central City
  - o 2 and 3 lane cross sections
  - o Final EI approved

- FONSI
- Scope: reconfigure downtown of US-30/N-14 to one-way pairs, reconstruct US-30 from C ave to 13<sup>th</sup> ave, Construct N-14 on new alignment with viaduct over UPRR, two at-grade crossings closed to local traffic, pedestrian access, roundabout at intersection of relocated N-14 and 10<sup>th</sup> st, repair existing N-14 between US-30 and 10<sup>th</sup> st prior to relinquishing to the city
- Design features - Typical cross sections for segments (diagrams available in digital packet)
- Public involvement
  - 1996 Central City requested NDOT perform study
  - 2007 initial environmental reviews began
  - 2011 project reprogrammed as viaduct, eliminating bypass
  - 2016 public information meeting to present various alternatives
  - 2021 another public information meeting for alternatives considered but eliminated
  - December 2024: Public Hearing ~155 in attendance with 48 comments
- Pedestrian Accommodations
  - No dedicated pedestrian overpass constructed
  - Existing tracks will remain in place
  - At-grade crossings at F and C avenues would remain open
  - At-grade crossings at existing N-14 and 13<sup>th</sup> ave/14<sup>th</sup> st closed to local traffic
- Access control/relinquishments
  - Purchasing of access control adjacent to new viaduct and key intersections
  - Commitment to accepting relinquishment of N-14 upon construction completion as a condition of NDOT building the project (Program agreement with Central City executed November 11, 2024)
- Cost and schedule
  - Final design and ROW 2025 – 2026
  - Construction 2027 – 2029
  - Estimated cost: \$36 million
- Public Input/Questions
  - Commissioner: State of relinquishments with Central City—will we need further approval?
    - This is likely to be the only request for formal approval from the Commission.
  - Commissioner **Kindig's** comments regarding need for project.
  - No public input or questions.
- Approval of Resolution 2025-3
  - Motion for approval made by Commissioner **Kindig**; Commissioner **Hawks** seconded.
  - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 6 – 0

#### BNSF, Bridgeport Viaduct

Brandie Neemann, State Roadway Design Engineer

- Project purpose & need
  - Eliminate conflicts between trains and vehicles at N-14 at-grade BNSF crossing
  - Reduce vehicular delays at US-26/N-92 crossing
  - Reduce crash costs
  - Need for railroad grade separation due to exposure factor, traffic delays, crash costs
- Project overview and scope of work
  - Varying two-lane roadway cross sections
  - Final EA will be submitted to FHWA later this year
  - Scope: construct US-26/N-92 on new alignment with viaduct over BNSF, improvements on Railroad Ave from W 7<sup>th</sup> to Rec road, existing at-grade crossing closed to local traffic, pedestrian accommodations, WAPA electrical transmission lines will need to be raised in advance, repair existing US-26/N-92 prior to relinquishing to the City
- Design features – typical cross sections available in digital packet
- Public involvement
  - 2005 project development began

- 2007 project on hold due to lack of funding
- 2014 project resumed planning phase
- 2015 public information open house to share feedback on original alternatives
- 2024 project continued through preliminary engineering and environmental review
- May 13 2025 public hearing ~69 in attendance with 15 comments
- Pedestrian accommodations
  - Will not be a dedicated pedestrian overpass constructed
  - Existing crossing will be closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic
- Access control/relinquishment
  - Access control adjacent to new viaduct and key intersections
  - Program agreement with Bridgeport June 14, 2025 with commitment to accept relinquishment, formal agreement executed later
- Cost and schedule
  - Final design and ROW late 2025 – Mid 2027, Construction as early as 2028
  - Estimated cost \$16 million
- Public Input/Questions
  - None
- Approval of Resolution 2025-4
  - Motion for approval made by Commissioner **Leafgreen**; Commissioner **Hawks** seconded.
  - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 6 – 0

#### DIRECTOR'S REMARKS

- Alarming trends, working with partners to make sure drivers understand their responsibility
- We will continue to address distracted driving and safety issues.
- Next year's program will look a bit different—static to last year's.
- Rural vs Urban funding discussions.
- We will continue to prioritize preservation.
- AIAI group gave presentation to leadership about funding.
- Question from Commissioner **Leafgreen** regarding funding source locations, concern for rural areas. It would be very difficult to accomplish, logistically. The way it was proposed is likely a non-starter but the concept will continue to be discussed.

#### REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

- The last meeting we discussed funding, we heard from the D2 Engineer they don't have the funding they need. We hear the same thing—and have heard the same thing.
- Comments on decisions made in 2007 regarding funding, evidence is in road conditions now.
- Director: It's difficult to explain to people the timeline of improvements—we see the benefits now of labor prior. We'll start seeing the effects of inflation in our buying power.

#### PUBLIC MEETINGS CALENDAR

- As of the time of this meeting, there are no Public Information Meetings scheduled between now and the next Highway Commission meeting.
- The next scheduled Highway Commission meeting is June 27, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. in the Council Room at the O'Neill City Office, 401 East Fremont in O'Neill, Nebraska.

#### ADJOURNMENT

- The chair adjourned the meeting at 10:13 AM.