

Welcome to the New Wayfinder

Our Communications Team is excited to share we've upgraded **Wayfinder** into a new, monthly employee newsletter. Our goal is to make **Wayfinder** a more frequent and easily accessible source of information. With the transition to a monthly format, you can expect timely updates, a curated blend of success stories, industry content, and engagement pieces to keep you informed and connected. We want this employee newsletter to foster unity, collaboration, and a sense of pride in the incredible work being done across NDOT.

Also, we want to hear from you! Your contributions make NDOT great, and we want to celebrate and share them more frequently. If you have an update to share, please send it to ndot.wayfinder@nebraska.gov for consideration.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and find it both informative and enjoyable.

A Message from the Director:

Navigating Nebraska's Construction Season



Spring thaw means warmer temperatures, which in turn means NDOT is moving away from winter operations and into another busy construction season. Before we leave winter behind, I'd like to thank all of those involved in our winter operations. With several large weather events this winter, including a week in February where there were 96 hours of sustained around-the-clock action, our crews gave top level commitment and selfless service to our state.

We all know that preparation for construction season starts long before spring. Several NDOT teams including Environmental, Design, PS&E, PI and Construction work throughout the year to strategically plan what each project needs, aiming to minimize disruptions while maximizing efficiency. By coordinating our efforts and embracing innovative construction techniques, we're committed to getting the job done right and on schedule, minimizing inconveniences for motorists and local communities alike.

The projects in our 2024 construction program ensure that our system remains safe and our preservation efforts prolong the life of our highways. In addition to continued maintenance on the roads, bridges, and airport runways, we have several projects breaking ground this year that will be either adding capacity or modifying the system to accommodate existing designs. These include the interchange modification at 192nd and Dodge in District 2 and the Lake Maloney South Super 2 in District 6.

Above all, safety is our top priority. NDOT has work zone safety measures in place, such as signage, ensuring drivers are aware and cautious when navigating construction zones. These efforts are designed to alert drivers to upcoming construction zones and encourage cautious driving behaviors, like reducing speed and putting their phone down. Additionally, we need to keep ourselves and each other safe – whether we're in the yard, the work zone or anywhere in between, safety should be the first thing on everyone's minds.

NDOT crews work tirelessly to enhance our roads and their safety is paramount. By working together to prioritize safety, we can ensure a smooth and safe construction season for everyone. Stay safe out there. ▲



APRIL CALENDAR

- 1 Distracted Driving Awareness Month
- 15 Scholarship Submission Deadline
- 15-19 Leadership Trainings
- 17 Go Orange Day
- 19 Moment of Silence for Work Zone Fatalities
- 21 Public Transit Week
- 22-26 Speeding Awareness Week
- 30 Friday Safety Message Deadline

SAFETY CORNER

April is just around the bend and will bring with it rolling weather fronts, kicking off the beginning of tornado season. One of the most important tools we have to protect ourselves and our families are the emergency warning systems. A Watch, Warning and Siren, all help us know what we need to do.

Watch:

There is potential for severe weather.

- Stay tuned to local radio, TV, or the NOAA for further updates and/or warnings.
- Charge your electrical devices and backup battery chargers.
- Watch the weather and look for signs of a tornado, such as dark clouds, hail, or a loud roar.

Warning:

A sighting has been made in your area.

- Take shelter immediately in a basement, safe room, or interior room away from windows.
- Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio to stay updated about the tornado situation.
- Avoid driving or going outside until the warning is over.

Tornado Siren:

This is an audible warning.

Take all the same actions you would take with a Warning announced on TV or radio.

Additionally, Tailgate Talks are a great opportunity for all our teammates, be they office, shop, or road crew, to remind everyone what the procedures are should a tornado warning be issued.

APRIL TRAINING

All training is 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Operations Bldg. (The Hill) Room 152

Unlock your leadership potential with leadership training week! Join Franklin Covey facilitator David Washington for a variety of leadership topics designed to elevate your skills and empower you to lead with confidence and impact. Sign up for individual offerings or attend them all. Claim your spot today!

April 15

Leading at the Speed of Trust

Build trust to thrive as a leader. Low trust leads to guardedness and disengagement, while high trust breeds confidence and boosts productivity. Foster trust in your relationships through meaningful conversations. [Register here.](#)

April 16

6 Critical Practices for Leading a Team

New team leader or transitioning from peer to manager? This is your guide. Mastering people skills is key to leadership success. Discover The 6 Critical Practices for Leading a Team™ for essential mindsets, skillsets, and toolsets. [Register here.](#)

April 17

Unconscious Bias

Daily, we confront a barrage of information, navigating decisions amidst unconscious biases. Unconscious Bias: Understanding Bias to Unleash Potential provides practical strategies to recognize and counter these biases. Empower leaders and teams to thrive and increase performance. [Register here.](#)

April 18

Inclusive Leadership

Building an inclusive organizational culture begins with inclusive leadership. These leaders tackle biases, embrace diverse perspectives, and model empathy. Inclusive Leadership provides principle-based content, expert guidance, and innovative tools to cultivate inclusive mindsets. Join us to foster a culture where everyone thrives. [Register here.](#)

April 19

Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Ignite Everyone's Intelligence

Leaders need to harness talent for innovation, problem-solving, and results. Learn to become multipliers, unlocking your team's full potential. Join our popular class to reignite enthusiasm, amplify intelligence, and drive innovation for stronger outcomes. [Register here.](#)

Your Journey Begins Here

GOOD LIFE, GREAT JOURNEY
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



Announcing the Good Life, Great Journey Scholarship Program

The Good Life, Great Journey Scholarship Program, is a new scholarship NDOT is offering to individuals pursuing two-year technical degrees in critical fields.

This program will allow NDOT to invest in future generations of Nebraskans by providing competitive and practical options for long-term career success that also supports the state's transportation system. Recipients will be provided with the necessary financial resources to fund their education while also giving them the opportunity to gain real world experience by interning at an NDOT facility.

Those pursuing information technology, diesel technology, electronic systems/electrical technology, land surveying/GIS/civil engineering technology,

drafting/design technology programs are eligible to apply for the program. Engineering programs with a transfer to a bachelor's degree program will also be eligible.

Eligible expenses for selected individuals include tuition, books, fees, housing and equipment. Additionally, successful candidates will work in a paid NDOT internship and will be eligible to be reimbursed for travel mileage between their residence and their designated NDOT internship location. Upon completion of the program, there will be an opportunity for full-time employment with NDOT.

This scholarship is open to anyone pursuing or interested in pursuing one of the approved programs, including graduating high school seniors, currently enrolled college students, current NDOT employees and the public.

Eligible schools include, but are not limited to:

- Central Community College - Hastings, Neb.
- Iowa Western Community College - Council Bluffs, Neb.
- Metro Community College - Omaha, Neb.
- Mid-Plains Community College - North Platte, Neb.
- Northeast Community College - Norfolk, Neb.
- Southeast Community College - Milford, Neb.
- Western Nebraska Community College - Scottsbluff, Neb.
- WyoTech - Laramie, Wyo.

More information about the scholarship and application can be found at <https://ndot.info/scholarship>. Applications and all supporting materials must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CST on April 15, 2024. ▲

NDOT Hosted Nebraska Tribal Transportation Conference

At the end of March, NDOT team members and Governor Jim Pillen met with tribal leaders from northeastern Nebraska at the Nebraska Tribal Transportation Conference. This event provided an opportunity for dialogue and collaboration between tribal leadership, government officials, and key stakeholders about the upcoming construction season and infrastructure planning. It also emphasized the importance of partnerships in advancing transportation initiatives that benefit tribal communities.

NDOT Director Vicki Kramer emphasized the significance of these partnerships, stating, "The conference allows us to foster meaningful relationships and develop a unified approach to enhancing the transportation networks in tribal areas. It's about more than just building roads; it's about the relationships and communication that lead to helping to enhance the quality of life for tribal communities." ▲



Vicki Kramer, NDOT Director and Gov. Jim Pillen met with tribal leaders at the Nebraska Tribal Transportation Conference held at South Sioux City.



Gov. Pillen and Victoria Kitcheyan, Tribal Chairwoman of Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska.

Upper right - Misty Klann from the FHWA Office of Tribal Transportation speaks at the Tribal Transportation Conference.

Right - Members of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska Galen Aldrich (*back to camera*), Greg Phillips and Calvin Harlan (*far right*) visit with Khalil Jaber, NDOT Deputy Director-Engineering (*second from right*).





NDOT team members accompanied Governor Jim Pillen on a tour of key community elements in Western Nebraska.

NDOT Visits with Kimball County Transit System

In late February, Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) team members accompanied Governor Jim Pillen on a tour of key community elements in Western Nebraska. One highlight of the trip was a roundtable meeting with the leadership of Kimball County Transit Systems (KCTS), a community-grown transit provider that has become an integral resource for Nebraskans in the panhandle.

NDOT Director Vicki Kramer facilitated the conversation, which highlighted the underpublicized benefits and diverse uses of a robust public transit system. KCTS has seen significant ridership amongst attendees of nearby community colleges, and parents who have had to seek out-of-town care options for their young children.

Other transportation-related topics addressed on the tour included

the logistics behind county bridge maintenance and support, the process for identifying, funding, and designing key updates in municipal airports, and how infrastructure can best enhance rural community growth. The day was a valuable opportunity for Governor Pillen to connect with constituents and hear their unique perspectives on how NDOT and other partners can best serve our rural communities. ▲

NDOT Highway Safety Office Hosts Statewide Safety Conference



In late February, the NDOT Highway Safety Office hosted a statewide conference in Kearney, bringing together nearly 200 law enforcement officers, traffic safety advocates, and professionals. The focus: tackling Nebraska's alarming traffic fatality and injury rates.

Each year, there's an average of 230 lives lost and 15,000 people injured in crashes statewide, with

94% attributed to driver behavior. To address this, NDOT and partners are targeting impaired and distracted driving, speeding, and other dangerous driving behaviors.

Experts shared insights on grant writing, social media promotion, law enforcement training, and child safety seat education. Encouraging seat belt usage is crucial, as it can increase survival rates by 45%.

The national seat belt use rate in 2023 was 91.9%, but only 77.3% in Nebraska.

The ultimate goal of the conference is zero traffic deaths in Nebraska. While progress has been made, with fatalities slightly below the five-year average in 2023, there's still much to be done. Collaboration and sustained efforts are key to achieving this ambitious target. ▲

Buckle Up Phone Down Campaign Scores Big at Nebraska State Championships

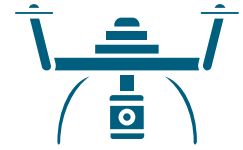
NDOT's Communications Team, along with the Highway Safety Office partnered to promote their Buckle Up Phone Down campaign during various Nebraska School Activities Association State Championships throughout the 2023-2024 school year. They effectively reached diverse audiences across the state, spreading awareness about the campaign and engaging with fans of all ages.

By strategically positioning booths at these events, NDOT engaged with a broad range of communities, promoting awareness about the significance of buckling up and minimizing distractions while driving. Attending high school events is vital for educating the next generation of drivers. By interacting with high school students, NDOT and HSO can foster lifelong habits of safe driving from an early age, ensuring that these future drivers have the knowledge and awareness necessary to make responsible decisions on the road. ▲



Top - Walthill vs. Sumner-Eddyville-Miller in the state basketball tournament
Middle - Skutt Catholic High School students visiting the BUPD booth
Bottom - Buckle Up, Phone Down Booth

From Drones to Design: McCook High School's Hands-On Lesson in Modern Surveying



Back in March, some members of the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) visited McCook High School during their Bison Days celebration. This community event immersed high school students in a variety of activities to learn new skills, hobbies and interests thanks to hundreds of community volunteers. NDOT was there to showcase the transformative impact of technology on highway construction and survey.

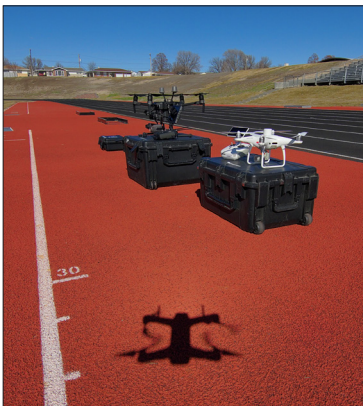
NDOT District 7 Construction Engineer Drew Wilson, along with NDOT UAS Technology Specialists Shawn Jording and Kent Robinson engaged students by organizing a logo design project for the McCook High School football field. For this project, Jording visited the field prior to the event and used an unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) to map out the

area. Next, he used the collected data to create a 3D model. By using a drone, Jording could demonstrate to the students how NDOT uses its multifaceted applications beyond mere photography or videography to create, manipulate, and analyze engineering related data.

During Bison Days, Jording and Wilson presented students with an overview of the logo project, showing them the 3D model of the field. After the presentation, students participated in an interactive session outside on the football field where they were able to get hands-on experience with an inspection RC vehicle. Utilizing the vehicle's RC camera and tablet for navigation control, students surveyed the field. This activity not only exposed students to the tools of highway inspection, but also emphasized the practical applications of cutting-edge technology in engineering.

Once the inspection was complete, students used GPS surveying equipment and NDOT's plans to stake out the logo design onto the football field. When the work was complete, Jording used the drone's high zoom and thermal cameras to capture the results, allowing the students to view the camera feed in real-time. This added another layer of technology to the learning experience and highlighted the seamless integration of advanced tools in real-world applications.

The collaboration between NDOT and McCook High School during Bison Days provided students with valuable insights into the ever-evolving technology of surveying. As students engaged in the logo design project, they not only acquired new skills, but also witnessed firsthand the transformative power of technology in construction and survey. ▲



District 7 employees used drone technology working with students on a logo design project for the McCook High School football field.



2024 Project Managers Conference and Award Winners

In March, the 2024 Project Managers Conference was held at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney. There was record attendance with 395 individuals registered representing NDOT, local public agencies, consultants, FHWA, and contractors. Conference topics included celebrations of successes, sharing lessons learned, informational presentations and training sessions in addition to providing many opportunities to share best practices and learn from one another.

During the conference, awards were presented which included the Teamwork in Work Zone Safety Award, the Bridge Award, Paving Awards, the Lyle Leader Award, and the Signature Award.

The Lyle Leader Award is presented annually by the AGC to an NDOT Project Manager whom the AGC believes best exemplifies the character and work ethic displayed by Lyle Leader. Lyle Leader was a District 3 Project Manager who was highly respected by his peers, contractors, and everyone with whom he worked. The AGC presented the 2024 Lyle Leader Award to Bob Hinrichs of District 1.

The NDOT District Construction Engineers annually select an individual from the transportation contracting industry to receive the Signature Award. The Signature Award recipient is an individual who demonstrates true partnership and excellence in highway construction. This year's recipient of the Signature Award was presented to Mitch Hagan of Western Engineering Company, Inc. ▲

Paving Awards



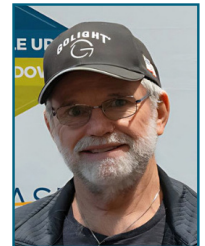
Jason Sindelar, D1



Robert Hinrichs, D1



Micky Jacobs, D2



Bob Nordhues, D4



Maryanne Jacobs, D5



Russ Frickey, D5



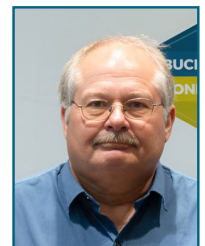
Troy Pedersen, D6



Jason Nichols, D6



Jodie Smith, D7



Darrell Lurz, D7



Katie Wilson, AGC Nebraska Chapter Executive Director presented the 2024 Lyle Leader Memorial Award to Robert Hinrichs of District 1.

The *Lyle Leader Memorial Award*, presented yearly by AGC, honors an NDOT Project Manager for exceptional ethics and integrity in highway construction. Named after Mr. Leader, a respected NDOT project manager for 34 years, the award pays tribute to his legacy of professionalism and respect within the industry.

Signature Award



This year's recipient of the Signature Award was Mitch Hagan of Western Engineering Company, Inc.

The *Signature Award*, given by NDOT District Construction Engineers, celebrates individuals in the contracting industry for exceptional leadership, communication, problem-solving, organization, attitude, safety, and management practices.

Pictured l to r - Cameron Craig, District 6 Construction Engineer, Mick Syslo, Deputy Director-Operations, Mitch Hagan, Western Engineering Co., Inc., and Jason Lehn, District 8 Construction Engineer.

Teamwork in Work Zone Safety Award



The *Teamwork in Work Zone Safety Award* acknowledges excellence in installing, coordinating, and maintaining effective traffic control. Reflecting the goals of both the Department of Transportation and the Nebraska AGC, it ensures work zones are safe for workers and motorists.

Pictured l to r - Duane Hostler, D4 Hwy. Construction Tech IV, Jared Kreher, D1 Asst. Construction Engr., and Rocky Torres, D5 Hwy. Maintenance Supervisor.

Bridge Construction Award



Pictured l to r - Drew Wilson, D7 Construction Engineer, Mick Syslo, Deputy Director-Operations, Wayne Witt, D7 Hwy. Project Manager, Travis Rose, Bridges, Inc., Ervey Ordonez, Bridges, Inc., and Inocente Montes, Bridges, Inc.