

WAYFINDER

2022, Issue 4



WAYFINDER

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NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Journey.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ABOUT THE COVER:

Highway Maintenance Workers perform armor coating on a stretch of highway. Armor coating is an application of an asphalt binder to a roadway surface followed by an aggregate.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Working Together to Ensure Safe Summer Journeys

Ah, summer! It's the time of year that many of us have waited for, with summer getaways and vacations finally upon us. Time to relax and rejuvenate, spending some well-deserved time with family and friends.

Summer is also by far the busiest time for getting work accomplished on highway construction projects across the state. Whether it is the Lincoln South Beltway, the Fremont Southeast Bypass, the Heartland Expressway, or a multitude of other projects big and small, there are a lot of highway improvement projects underway.

Multimodal projects are also in the mix, with construction of a transit facility in Norfolk that will house 30 new passenger buses acquired by North Fork Area Transit for the provision of flex route service. NDOT's Aeronautics Division also has a number of ongoing airport improvement projects, including Omaha Eppley and Lincoln airports.

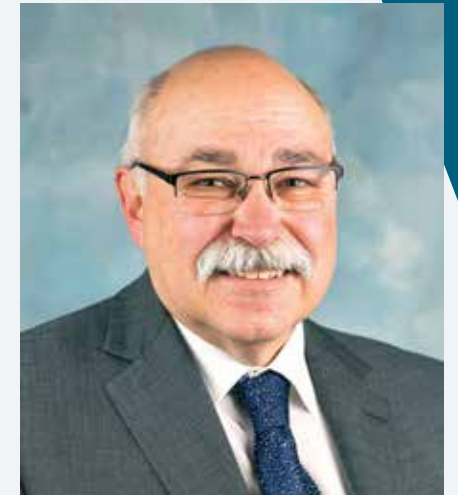
Here at NDOT, we know that folks do not want to be inconvenienced during their travels. While we work to minimize the inconvenience by completing work at night when possible and keeping one or more lanes open for travel, we ask motorists for their patience, realizing that the result will be smoother, safer roads in the months and years ahead.

Safety is our top concern, whether it is for motorists traveling across the state or for our construction workers who put their lives on the line bringing these projects to fruition. We want our families to continue to enjoy their summer vacations, unmarred by crashes, injuries, or deaths. Likewise, we want our workers to make it safely home to their families at the end of the day. Remember to drive cautiously while traveling in and around construction work zones.

While the number of highway fatalities in 2021 was slightly lower than 2020, that has changed in 2022. For the time period between January and June 2022, 126 people died on Nebraska highways, compared with 106 traffic fatalities in the same period a year ago, a 19% increase. We are told time and time again by first responders on the scene of crashes, that seat belts save lives. In fact, buckling up is the single most effective thing you can do to protect yourself and your passengers in a crash. And don't forget to put that mobile device down while you're driving, too.

Thank you to our teammates for your continued hard work, and to our transportation partners for your support of our mission to enhance quality of life through a convenient, safe, and innovative transportation system.

Throughout the summer travel and construction season, remember to Buckle Up Phone Down, make sure your passengers are buckled up, follow the speed limit, always drive sober, and be alert. Safe travels! ▲



NDOT, Partners Encourage Summer Driving Safety

The Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) joined the Nebraska State Patrol and other law enforcement agencies in promoting safety initiatives this spring and summer. The key message conveyed to drivers is to slow down and buckle up every time they get in a vehicle, make sure passengers are buckled up, and keep cell phones down while driving.

The "Click It or Ticket" mobilization occurs annually during the end of May and the beginning of June. This year's mobilization was May 23 – June 5. The initiative covers the weeks surrounding Memorial Day, which marks the start of the summer driving season. Troopers worked overtime as part of the effort, thanks in part to a grant from the Nebraska Department of Transportation – Highway Safety Office.

Col. John Bolduc, the superintendent of the Nebraska State Patrol, said the summer driving season is sometimes called the "100 deadliest days" due to the number of fatal crashes and law enforcement officers are trying to reverse that with the "Click It or Ticket" campaign.

"Seat belts save lives, it's a two second action that greatly increases the safety factor when you get behind the wheel," Col. Bolduc said.

Last year bucked a national trend by having fewer deaths in highway crashes, 220, than in 2020, according to NDOT Director John Selmer. But during the first part of 2022, the number of fatalities and fatal crashes were higher than during the same time period in any year since 2018. For the time period between January and April 2022, 84 people died on Nebraska highways, compared with 61 traffic fatalities in the same period a year ago, a 30% increase.

According to Bill Kovarik, NDOT Highway Safety Administrator, Nebraska ranks 4th worst in the United States in seat belt usage, at 81%. The national average is over 90%.



Partnering with NDOT representatives, NSP Col. John Bolduc promotes summer driving safety at a press conference held in June.



Kovarik noted that as fatalities through the month of June 2022 have also outpaced 2021 numbers, there is continued urgency for motorists to buckle up and pay attention to the roadway during the busy travel months of July and August.

"Buckling up is the single most effective thing you can do to protect yourself and all of your passengers in a crash," said Kovarik. "I believe there's someone counting on each and every one of us to buckle up every time we get in a vehicle so that we come back alive and safe."

Motorists are also reminded to be cautious while traveling in and around construction work zones. During the busy summer construction season, work zone crews are working to improve roadways and motorists are asked to give them the space they need. Pay close attention to signs, be patient and dedicate your full attention to the roadway.

Throughout the summer travel and construction season, motorists are reminded to Buckle Up Phone Down (BUPD), follow the speed limit, always drive sober, be alert, and travel safely. ▲

"Seat belts save lives, it's a two-second action that greatly increases the safety factor when you get behind the wheel."
- NSP Col. John Bolduc

NDOT WORK ZONE SAFE-DRIVING TIPS

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION

Signs and work zone flaggers save lives.

TURN ON YOUR HEADLIGHTS

Workers and other motorists must see you.

DON'T TAILGATE

DON'T SPEED

Note the posted speed limits in and around the work zone.

KEEP UP WITH TRAFFIC FLOW

DON'T CHANGE LANES

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Avoid changing radio stations or using your phone.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Keep an eye out for workers and their equipment.

BE PATIENT

Remember that work zone crews are working to improve your future ride.

STAY ALERT

Dedicate your full attention to the roadway.



Photos by Clint Mangen

Find additional safe driving information at <https://dot.nebraska.gov/safety/driving/>

Governor Ricketts, NDOT Officials Celebrate Opening of State Operations Center in Omaha

A new Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) Operations Center in Omaha will provide drivers with more immediate information on hazards along Nebraska's highways and interstates.

By Linda Wilson
Communications & Public Policy Division

This spring, NDOT's State Operations Center (SOC) in Lincoln and the District 2 Operations Center in Omaha merged to create one centralized command center to monitor and operate the state highway network. The merging of the two centers brings additional efficiency and consistency across the state and provides better management of the entire system.

NDOT officials joined Governor Ricketts on June 14 to celebrate the opening of the center, located at a Nebraska State Patrol office along South 108th Street.

"The new State Operations Center advances our mission to provide more effective and efficient service to Nebraskans," said Gov. Ricketts. "The center will improve the State's ability to update motorists on travel conditions. Providing timely information helps drivers make smart decisions behind the wheel so they can stay safe and avoid traffic. Congratulations to Director Selmer and teammates at NDOT on this achievement."

According to NDOT Director John Selmer, the need for a more consistent management system stems from the increase in traffic as the state's transportation networks grow.

Effective Management

"As we look towards the future of transportation, we know effective management of the system is key," said NDOT Director John Selmer. "Today, we celebrate our teammates whose work is vital to ensuring people reach their destination each and every day with minimal disruption. I'm proud to be part of a team that takes such pride in their work, regardless of the day or night."

The SOC has undergone significant change since being established more than 20 years ago. Back then, one person took calls and updated the 511 system while relying on teammates in each of NDOT's eight districts to do the same. Initially, the centers did not operate on a full-time basis, but would activate for major events or incidents, such as weather events and major crashes in their areas. Now, the SOC operates around the clock.

"The evolution of the SOC is a testament to the people who have worked to build this center into what it is today," said NDOT State Operations Center Manager Jessica Sherwood. "The SOC's No. 1 goal and priority is to provide the most accurate and timely information to our traveling public throughout the state. I'm proud to be a part of this program and this team."

Latest Technology

The newly organized State Operations Center brings together the latest technology and resources to be prepared to manage everyday issues in addition to emergency response.

According to Sherwood, staff members have access to more than 380 live traffic cameras across the state. With access to those feeds and other information now under one roof, staff members will be able to communicate quickly and effectively with each other, first responders, and ultimately the public about obstacles and hazards on Nebraska's roads.



Photos by Clint Mangan

"Today, we celebrate our teammates whose work is vital to ensuring people reach their destination each and every day with minimal disruption."

- NDOT Director John Selmer

That includes distributing real-time information via various methods including the smartphone navigation app Waze, which provides crowdsourced traffic information, and more than 330 message boards across the state.

"There's nothing worse than to come up on an incident unaware where you wish you could have taken that exit just prior to the incident," NDOT Director John Selmer said. "We hope that this center will help meet the desires and expectations of our public." ▲

Left - NDOT's SOC Manager Jessica Sherwood, Governor Pete Ricketts and NDOT Director John Selmer at the official opening of the State Operations Center in Omaha. Below - NDOT Director Selmer and Governor Pete Ricketts with the State Operations Center team in front of the traffic cameras used to update travelers on road conditions.



Lincoln's South Beltway Set to Open in Less Than a Year

From the first shovel of dirt unearthed in May 2020 near US Highway 77 (US-77) and Saltillo Road, until two years later, in June 2022, the heavy lifting for the Lincoln South Beltway has resulted in some mind-boggling results.

By Linda Wilson
Communications & Public Policy Division

Hawkins Construction, contractor for the \$352 million project to connect US-77 and Nebraska Highway 2, and its army of dozers, diggers, scrapers, and haulers had moved 5.25 million cubic yards of dirt along the 11-mile-long construction site by early June – enough to fill nearly 300,000 dump trucks, with just 500,000 more cubic yards to move.

That is just a scratch on the surface of work that has been completed over the past two years, according to Hawkins' project manager, Alan Hayes.

"Everything's gone really well. Everything's working smoothly," said Hayes. "We've got a heavy lift this year, but we're on track to be open on time."

In addition to the dirt that was moved, 18 of the 21 bridges were 100% complete as of June 15. Ranging in

length from 143 feet to nearly a half-mile, these bridges will carry the new four-lane freeway over and under other roads, railroads, creeks, and a bike trail. Six bridges, including crossings at 54th and 68th streets, are already open.

And they've poured 60% of the 839,400 square yards of concrete, or about 174 acres, required to give east-west travelers smooth passage between far southeast Lincoln and Interstate 80.

At this rate, the South Beltway project – the biggest and most complex single project undertaken by the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) – is on track to open by May 1, 2023, the state's deadline for substantial completion.



\$298,340,000
PAID OUT



772 DAYS USED
1,460 ALLOWED

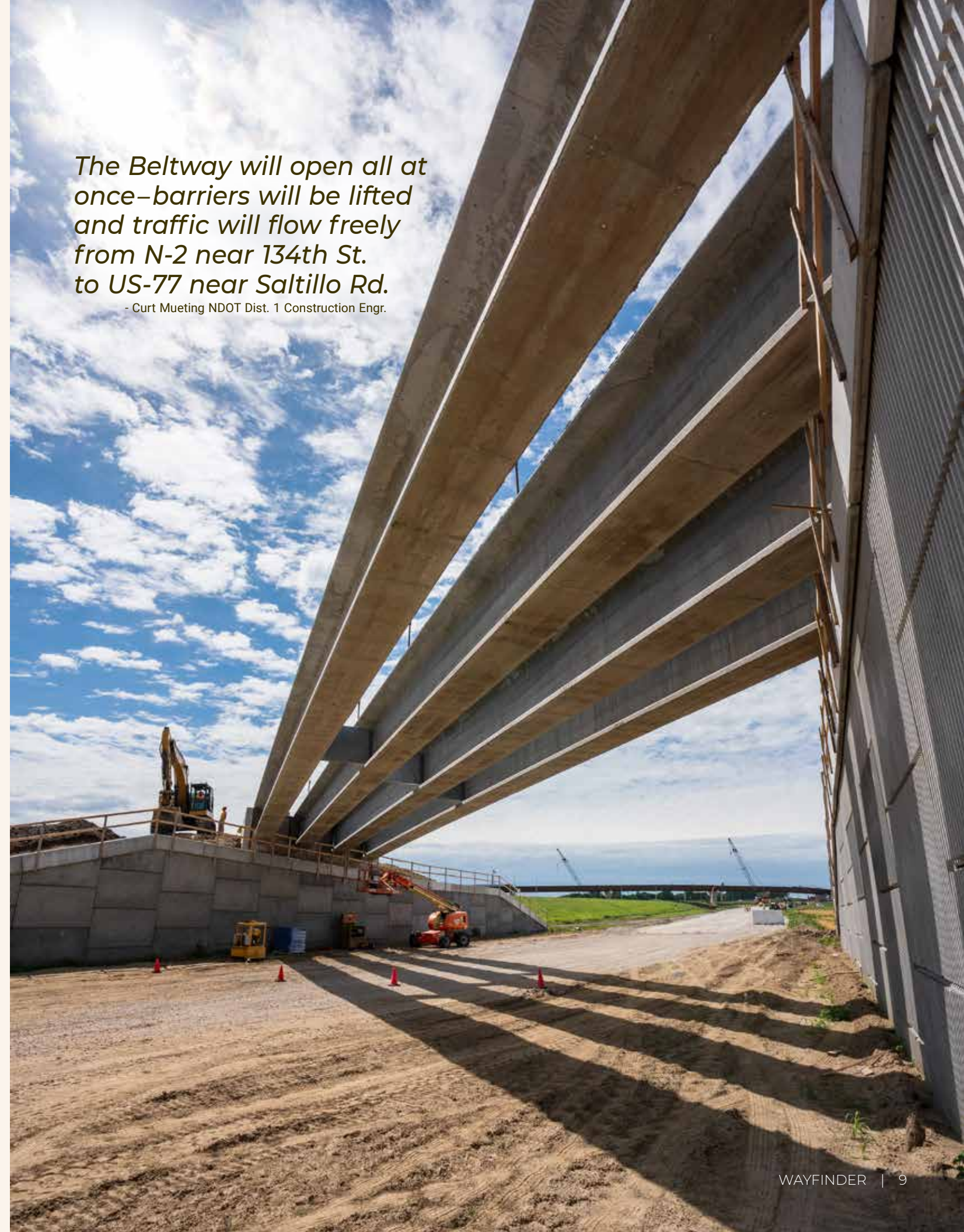


PROJECT PROGRESS

- 18 of 21 bridges complete
- 45% earth shouldering complete
- 3,242,729 SY topsoil placed – 3,605,942 SY total
- 5.25 million CY earthwork complete – 5.3 million CY total
- 175,893 CY concrete pavement complete – 255,000 CY total
- 7,045,221 lbs. of steel placed – 7,555,515 lbs. total
- 90% underground drainage structures complete
- 60% seeding/erosion control complete
- 40% street lighting complete
- permanent lane markings not started

The Beltway will open all at once – barriers will be lifted and traffic will flow freely from N-2 near 134th St. to US-77 near Saltillo Rd.

- Curt Mueting NDOT Dist. 1 Construction Engr.





Photos by Clint Mangen

Dream A Reality

The project has been a dream for decades, because of its potential to reduce congestion on Nebraska Highway 2 (N-2) through Lincoln and improve regional mobility. Funding provided through the Build Nebraska Act, the Transportation Innovation Act, the awarding of a TIGER Grant to NDOT, as well as innovative approaches and extensive partnering, finally made the dream a reality.

During a week in early June, an estimated 150 contractors were performing a host of duties across the 11-mile project. Some were grading topsoil or seeding or working erosion control. Others were building bridges, paving, installing underground fiber, running electrical, planting signs, or conducting traffic control.

Curt Mueting, NDOT District 1 Construction Engineer, noted that with all these moving parts, Hawkins has done a good job of keeping them all coordinated, even during the pandemic with supply chain problems.

“Knowing the pace of this project and how fast it needs to occur, they really stayed on their game and ordered the material early,” Mueting said.

The same holds true for all the District 1 staff, whether directly or indirectly involved with the project. “Our entire District staff has impacted the success of the project,” Mueting said.

According to Mueting, the beltway will open all at once, not in phases. On the chosen day, the barriers will be lifted, and traffic will flow freely from N-2 near 134th Street to US-77 near Saltillo Road – past five interchanges, 26 miles of chain-link fence, 12,000 feet of storm sewer pipe and 33,000 feet of drainage pipe.

By 2025, NDOT expects 13,600 vehicles to travel the central stretch of the beltway daily, including 1,700 semis – reducing truck traffic through Lincoln by two-thirds.

But for now, the heavy lifting continues.

“We’re gaining on it,” Mueting said. “We’ve got a lot of work done but, of course, we’ve got quite a bit of work to go. We’re looking forward to a big celebration when it is all finished.” ▲

“We’ve got a heavy lift this year, but we’re on track to be open on time.”

- Alan Hayes, Hawkins Project Manager



ITS Heartland Conference Explores Transportation Technology Trends



The 2022 ITS Heartland Annual Conference, held April 24-26, brought 245 attendees to Lincoln from five member states (Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma) to learn and network about the latest trends in transportation technology and operations. State DOTs, cities, consultants, vendors, and academia were represented at the conference.

NDOT Director John Selmer was the keynote speaker and NDOT's Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) Engineer Matt Baker, who serves as the Nebraska State Director of the ITS Heartland Chapter, also spoke during the conference.

TIM Gains Traction

Baker, along with Austin Yates, Iowa DOT's District 4 Traffic Operations Engineer, presented Traffic Incident Management (TIM) highlights. Their presentation covered the history and background of TIM from its inception and current efforts in Nebraska. TIM is a planned approach to detect, respond to, and clear traffic incidents.

Baker noted that NDOT has been working to advance TIM in targeted areas for over a decade, starting in west central and southeast Nebraska and the Omaha metro area. In 2020, NDOT expanded the program to cover the full extent of I-80 from Wyoming to Iowa. Subsequently, new TIM groups were established in the Panhandle, Tri-City, and East Central areas.

Additional highlights of the presentation included:

CRASH RESPONDER SAFETY WEEK

In November 2021, Governor Ricketts proclaimed November 8-14 as Nebraska Crash Responder Safety Week, which recognizes the work of first responders, advocates for participation in TIM training and implementation, and asks the public to do their part to protect emergency responders on the roadway.

SOUTHEAST AREA MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Southeast area TIM group celebrated the signing of their Memorandum of Understanding, a major milestone that formalized TIM partnerships to support the group's progress in moving TIM initiatives forward to improve safety, reliability, and efficiency on the roadway.

2022 TIM TRAINING GOALS

All six Nebraska TIM groups identified TIM training as a priority for 2022. As a result, training goals have been established for each group.



TSMO Strategies

Kristen Veldhouse and Shea Saladee, Strategic Communications and Social Media Specialists, HDR, presented TSMO strategic communication highlights during the conference.

According to Veldhouse, TSMO includes strategies that focus on operational improvements to maintain or restore traffic flow without adding additional capacity. There is a need for TSMO concepts and information to be communicated to the traveling public to build trust. Examples of how NDOT communicates TSMO to drivers in the metropolitan area were highlighted.

SPEEDING AWARENESS WEEK

January 24-28, 2022, marked the inaugural Speeding Awareness Week where a diverse mix of metro area law enforcement agencies, transportation departments, hospitals, and elected officials shared a unified message about the dangers and consequences of speeding. This effort was a first responder-driven initiative. Hundreds of thousands of Omaha metropolitan area drivers were reached in this multi-faceted TSMO campaign.

CONSTRUCTION COMMUNICATION - MOVING THE METRO & ZIPPER MERGING

Moving the Metro is a construction update provided annually by NDOT for the Omaha metropolitan area. With several significant construction projects planned for and underway during the 2022 construction season, NDOT wants drivers to know what to expect so they can get to their destination safely. Recently, NDOT implemented a zipper merge on US 75 at N-370 and Chandler Road. A coordinated outreach effort, including media outreach, social media, and dynamic message signs were used to prepare drivers for this long-term change while construction is completed. ▲

EVENT MANAGEMENT

NDOT is focused on improving traffic flow for traffic-generating events, such as the recent College World Series (CWS) held in Omaha June 16-27. CWS brings over 300,000 fans to the Omaha metropolitan area, and to ensure their safety during travels to and from the game, NDOT promoted recommended travel routes, using traffic resources (511, Waze, etc.), and encouraged finding a sober ride. Several strategies, including social media, sponsored content with a local TV news station, media outreach, and dynamic message signs over interstates were used.

Niobrara River Bridge Project Wins Bridge Construction Award

Kiewit of Omaha, Nebraska, prime contractor for the Niobrara River Bridge project (Holt/Boyd County Line) was the recipient of the 2021-2022 NDOT/AGC Bridge Construction Award, presented March 8 during the Project Managers' Conference in Kearney.

During the winter of 2019, storms and flooding damaged or destroyed bridges across the Niobrara River. The N-11 Niobrara River bridge at the Boyd and Holt County line, a 7-span steel plate girder bridge, was the last bridge left standing on the eastern part of the Niobrara River but had been moved 18-inches making it unsafe for vehicular travel. Kiewit infrastructure was brought in, and they were able to lift the bridge, using a jacking process, and move it back to the bridge's original location.

Kiewit removed the concrete from the bridge deck and railing to allow damaged I-beams and other structural steel to be repaired or replaced as required and reduce the weight of the bridge. Steel frames were built under the bridge in order to place hydraulic jacks and rollers to lift the bridge and allow it to be moved. Hydraulic rams were used to move the structure to its original location.

Bridge Relocated

Due to limits of the equipment and to prevent undue stress to the structure, the bridge would be moved three inches before it was secured, and the equipment was reset.



Drone view of Kiewit paving the deck of the N-11 bridge.
Photo by Kiewit



Niobrara River Bridge before construction began. The road striping and rail on the right-hand side have been shifted to the left at the expansion joint.
Photo by Greg Henrikson, NDOT District 8



Photo by Melissa Lally, NDOT District 5
Pictured, l to r: Moe Jamshidi, NDOT Deputy Director-Operations; Greg Henrikson, NDOT Project Manager; KEA Representative; and Jim Knott, NDOT Construction Engineer, during presentation of the 2021-2022 NDOT/AGC Bridge Award.

This process was repeated until the bridge had been relocated to its original location. From there the bridge was restrained to prevent any unwanted lateral movement and lowered to the new bearing plates. The bridge remained restrained to allow the structural steel to settle. Kiewit slowly released the restraints until the bridge had settled.

During the paving of the new bridge deck, Kiewit used white burlap from Sika Greenstreak, instead of regular burlap, to assist with the curing of the concrete. Paving of the bridge deck was completed late fall with overnight temperatures reaching below freezing.

According to Norm Henderson, Project Superintendent from Kiewit, the white burlap has better freeze/thaw resistance, eliminated any runoff into the river, and compared to regular burlap, maintained moisture easier and had a much better wind resistance. Considering the windy conditions that were seen during and at the end of the project, the white burlap exceeded all expectations.

Team Recognized

The bridge subcontractor was KEA Constructors of Milford, Nebraska. Kiewit Project Manager was Kevin Coulter, Project Engineer was Louis Smetana, and Project Superintendent was Norm Henderson. NDOT Project Manager was Greg Henrikson and NDOT inspectors on the project were Carl Hart, Brent Long, Justin Ripley, and John Raymond.

WS Bunch from Omaha, Nebraska, removed the paint from the superstructure. International Straightening, Inc. from Bismarck, North Dakota, repaired sections of the superstructure steel that did not need to be removed. HDR Project Engineer from Omaha, Nebraska, was Hussein Khalil.

The NDOT/AGC Bridge Construction Award recognizes and encourages high quality workmanship, partnering and environmental stewardship in Nebraska bridge construction. The award is presented biennially during the Project Managers' Conference. ▲

Kiewit using three teams working together to move the N-11 bridge back to the original location.
Photo by Greg Henrikson, NDOT District 8



'Top Clod' Award Goes to Perrett Construction and Paulsen, Inc.



Grading subcontractor Perrett Construction, Ltd. hauls dirt from excavation sections to fill sections on the US-83 Super 2 project, "Frazier Creek North and South."

The 2020-2021 'Top Clod' Grading Award went to contractor Paulsen, Inc., Cozad, Nebraska, and grading subcontractor Perrett Construction, Ltd., Valentine, Nebraska, for their work on the Frazier Creek North and South project in District 7. A prime contractor plaque went to Jim Jewell, Asphalt Pavement Manager and Dustin Walker, Project Manager—Asphalt Division at Paulsen; and a grading contractor plaque went to Gregg Perrett, President of Perrett Construction, and Rob Wemhoff, Project Manager, Perrett Construction. Seth Vlieger was NDOT's Project Manager.

"Frazier Creek North and South" is a 9.75-mile project located on US-83 between mile markers 35 and 45 in Frontier County. It is the first of six "Super 2" projects between McCook and North Platte, adding four one-mile-long passing lanes to allow for safer passing in the hills found in the area. Many of the slopes were flattened to allow for the removal of most of the guardrail on the project. The project included culvert work, grading, fly ash stabilization, asphalt, guardrail, drainage flumes, and seeding.

Perrett Construction ensured the needed equipment and personnel were onsite and the project progressed according to schedule, with no delay to the work of other subcontractors on the project. They worked closely with NDOT personnel, including placing and compacting dirt along the 10-inch drop-off and removing and replacing soft spots while building fill sections.

Perrett Construction employees took pride in the work they were completing. They installed the cover crop seeding shortly after the slopes were finished and installed temporary silt checks as they built the project to help minimize erosion. Perrett's accuracy with GPS grading was evident when NDOT checked the slopes in random places after grading was complete, and the difference between the cross section plans and the elevations shot was all within an acceptable tolerance with no adjustments required.

This year's 'Top Clod' Grading Award epitomizes the spirit of the award, as the contractors and NDOT personnel on this project demonstrated a high standard of accuracy and attention in the areas of cooperation, innovation, prosecution, quality of work, and safety. ▲



Just north of Frazier Creek, grading subcontractor Perrett Construction, Ltd. works on cutting the backslopes and drainage on the US-83 Super 2 project. Photos by NDOT

Pictured, l to r: Gary Brinker, NDOT Project Manager; Travis Smith, Simon Contractors, Inc., Moe Jamshidi, NDOT Deputy Director-Operations; Rocky Torres, Contractor Services, Inc., and Jim Knott, NDOT Construction Engineer, during presentation of the 2021 NDOT/AGC Work Zone Safety Award to the North Platte Area Bridges project on March 8 at the Project Managers' Conference in Kearney.



Photo by Melissa Lally, NDOT District 5

North Platte Area Bridges Project Receives Teamwork in Work Zone Safety Award

The Teamwork in Work Zone Award for 2021 was presented to the North Platte Area Bridges project on March 8 during the Project Managers' Conference in Kearney. The prime contractor was Simon Contractors, Inc. and the traffic control subcontractor was Contractor Services, Inc., both of North Platte, Nebraska.

The award was created in 2004 by the joint AGC/NDOR Traffic Control Committee. The award is *"in recognition of excellence—through demonstrated cooperation and communication—in installing, coordinating, and maintaining effective traffic control. The traffic control utilized and maintained on these projects reflect the goals of both the Department of Transportation and the Nebraska AGC—a work zone maintained in a safe condition for both workers and motorists."*

The North Platte Area Bridges project involved bridge repairs and overlays at four different bridge locations. Temporary traffic signals were required at three of the locations, and traffic was switched to a head-to-head configuration at the fourth location. Phased construction was required at all four locations.

Project Manager Gary Brinker stated, "Contractor Services, Inc installed and maintained the traffic control devices at the four bridge locations for several days while work was being done at two locations concurrently. There were multiple phasing switches for the bridge repairs and asphalt overlays. All traffic switches went smoothly as the work to be done was discussed prior to the traffic switches."

Brinker noted that Contractor Services actively participated in project coordination with the prime contractor, Simon Contractors, Inc, and NDOT. This coordination, along with their execution of work, made this a successful project for all involved, including the traveling public. ▲

NDOT District 2 Engineer Tim Weander Honored by AGC Chapter

Tim Weander, Nebraska Department of Transportation's District 2 Engineer, was presented the David Coolidge Memorial Award on March 8 during NDOT's Project Managers' Conference at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney. He was recognized for extraordinary commitment and exceptional contribution to the State Highway System and the promotion of industry cooperation and harmony.



Photo courtesy of AGC Nebraska Chapter
Tim Weander holds the David Coolidge Memorial Award, presented to him by Tyler Chicoine, AGC Nebraska Chapter President, right, during their annual convention on March 8. Katie Wilson, AGC Nebraska Chapter Executive Director, is pictured on the left.

Weander has served the State of Nebraska as an engineer at NDOT for 39 years. He attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, graduating in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Construction Management. After graduating from UNL, Weander began his career at NDOT as a Project Engineer at District 2 in Omaha.

Six years later, in 1989, he accepted a position as a Roadway Designer at the Central Complex in Lincoln. In 1995, the opportunity to serve as District Construction Engineer at District 4 in Grand Island arose, where Weander worked until he was selected the following year to be the District 5 Engineer at Bridgeport in 1996. He left District 5

in 2003 to head back to Omaha and District 2, as District Engineer, where he has served for almost 20 years.

Tim and his wife, Alice, have three children and three grandchildren. ▲

The David Coolidge Memorial Award is presented to a person either employed by or retired from NDOT. This person shall reflect the high standards represented by David Coolidge's years of service to the department. Coolidge, who passed away in March of 1999, was District Engineer in District 7 in McCook from 1948 to 1977 and State Engineer from 1977 until his retirement in 1983.

Signature Award Goes to Jerry Kabourek

Jerry Kabourek, formerly with M.E. Collins, was recognized with the 2021 Signature Award for his outstanding leadership and involvement with the “In Winnebago” project. He was honored at ceremonies on March 8 during NDOT’s 2022 Project Managers’ Conference at Younes Conference Center in Kearney.

Rob Davis, District 3 Construction Engineer, presented the award, noting, “I have worked with Jerry on several projects in the past, and he handles all project-related obstacles with poise and composure. During the ‘In Winnebago’ project, Jerry was attentive to the needs of residents and motorists within the limits of the project and was willing to accommodate them as much as possible. He quickly resolved any concerns that were within his power and was always cordial while doing so.”

“An example was when the existing roadway was severely deteriorated with numerous potholes. Jerry was aware that the NDOT Maintenance Crew assigned to the area was overworked and understaffed. He took it upon himself to patch the potholes and he did so without a request for additional compensation.”

Pride in Work

Davis emphasized the pride that Jerry takes in his company’s accomplishments that flows to his crew and shows in the work they perform.

“On several occasions Jerry’s crew would rework the finish of the imprinted concrete without a prompt from the NDOT inspector. Jerry’s team shares his willingness to cooperate and assist. They would often help the inspection staff carry equipment and materials. They were often enthusiastic to take a few minutes to discuss the project with passersby.”

Planning is another strength that stands out. “Jerry seems to be thinking three steps ahead. He made a significant change to phasing which left the project in a better navigable configuration, easing traffic flow through the winter suspension.”

The Signature Award is given by NDOT District Construction Engineers to individuals in the contracting industry possessing certain characteristics, including excellence in leadership, good communication, problem solving, organization, attitude, safety, and achieving above and beyond standard management practices. Nominations for the award are submitted by NDOT Project Managers, then the winner(s) (occasionally there is more than one) are selected by NDOT Construction Engineers. In addition to receiving a trophy, plaque and having their names added to a permanent plaque at the NDOR Central Headquarters, a \$500 scholarship is given in the recipient’s name to a University of Nebraska student majoring in construction engineering or construction management. Prior to this year’s recipients there had been 20 Signature Award winners since it was first awarded in 2002.

Davis also noted that during the project Jerry sent a weekly email updating subcontractors and the Winnebago Tribal Management on the previous week’s progress and hopes for the forthcoming week; an email that many looked forward to receiving on Monday mornings.

Future Success

Davis concluded by stating, “After working with Jerry on a number of projects, I look forward to working with him in the future as I know that any project that includes Jerry in a leadership role will be a success.” ▲



Photo courtesy of AGC Nebraska Chapter.
Pictured l to r: Katie Wilson, AGC Nebraska Chapter Executive Director; Joe Kuehn, NDOT District 1, Project Manager of the Year; and Tyler Chicoine, AGC Nebraska Chapter President.



Kuehn Named Project Manager of the Year

Joe Kuehn, of Lincoln, was honored by the Nebraska Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) with the Lyle Leader Award as Nebraska Department of Transportation’s (NDOT) Project Manager of the Year. Kuehn received a traveling trophy and plaque on March 8 during NDOT’s Project Managers’ Conference at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney.

Kuehn started with NDOT in May 1991 as an Engineering Aide in District 3. He received a permanent position on June 12, 1994, as an Engineering Aide in District 4.

After being promoted through the ranks up to a Highway Technician III, he accepted a position as Hwy. Utilities Coordinator I in Project and Planning Development at Central Complex in 2005. He was then hired as a Highway Project Manager in District 1 in June 2005 and currently has over 31 years working for NDOT, including his temporary positions.

Kuehn has managed many projects in District 1 over the last 17 years as project manager in the Lincoln office. His highlight was building the first diverging diamond interchange in Nebraska, which included a portion of the six-lane expansion of I-80. He is currently part of the team working on the Lincoln South Beltway, and has been a great asset to NDOT, especially in District 1. ▲

The Lyle Leader Memorial Award is presented annually by the AGC to an NDOT Project Manager who has displayed the highest level of ethics and integrity in the conduct of their business within the highway construction industry. The award is a tribute to Mr. Leader, who was a project manager at NDOT for 34 years. He was active in the District 3 Hartington office at the time of his death in August 1991 and was highly respected by his peers within the department, by the contractor members of AGC, and all with whom he worked.

NDOT Named Winner of 2021 Perpetual Pavement Award

The Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) was recently named a winner of the 2021 Perpetual Pavement Award (PPA) by the Asphalt Pavement Alliance (APA) for a 4.68-mile section of two-lane Nebraska Highway 1 from mile marker 2.65 to mile marker 7.33 in Cass County. This prestigious award celebrates long-life asphalt pavements that reflect the characteristics of a perpetual pavement design.



Hwy: 001 | Type: Highways | Ref. Post: 5.77 | Dir: Asc | Date: 10/01/2020 | Coordinate: 40.896148, -96.293736

File photo taken by NDOT profiler vans that collect pictures and distress data on all 10,000 miles of Nebraska pavements. This shows a segment of Highway 1 north of Elmwood, south of Murdock, looking north.

The award-winning section of SR 1 was originally built in 1931 as a gravel roadway that was 1.5 to 3 inches thick. In 1962, a 3-inch asphalt concrete surface course was added to the highway. NDOT resurfaced the project with 4 inches of Type B asphalt in 1985.

This two-lane highway currently has a daily traffic count of approximately 1,900 vehicles per day, and the estimated loading since the original construction is approximately 1.2 million equivalent single-axle loads (ESALs).

The road has performed well during its 59 years of use and has served the traveling public in Nebraska well. As it has only been resurfaced one time since 1962, the pavement exceeds the minimum average interval of 13 years required to win the PPA.

This is the fifth PPA for NDOT since the program began in 2001. The other awards were earned for US-6 in Hitchcock County (2019), US-30 in Deuel County (2009), Hwy. 35 in Wayne County (2006), and US-20 in Holt County (2003).

Benefits Exemplified

“The Nebraska Department of Transportation is honored for the selection of Highway 1 at Reference Posts 2.65 to 7.33 in Cass County for the 2021 Perpetual Pavement Award: By Performance category,” says NDOT’s Materials and Research Engineer, Brandon Varilek.

“This section of roadway exemplifies the benefits of good design and construction practices that have allowed the roadway to reliably serve the public and agricultural community with minimal maintenance costs.”

- Brandon Varilek, M&R Engineer

“One key indicator of quality in construction is a smooth, long-life pavement,” said Amy Miller, P.E., National Director of the APA. “Long-life asphalt pavements serve the community, reduce the money needed for maintenance, and conserve raw materials, ultimately leading to a truly sustainable structure that exemplifies the triple bottom line.”

To qualify for this prestigious award, a pavement must be at least 35 years old and never experienced a structural failure. The average interval between the resurfacing of the winning pavement must be no less than 13 years. The pavement must demonstrate the characteristics expected from long-life asphalt pavements: excellence in design, quality in construction and value for the traveling public. Engineers

at the National Center for Asphalt Technology (NCAT) evaluated the nominations and validated the winners.

The Asphalt Pavement Alliance is a coalition of the National Asphalt Pavement Association, the Asphalt Institute, and the State Asphalt Pavement Associations. The Asphalt Pavement Alliance’s mission is to establish asphalt as the preferred choice for quality, performance and the environment. ▲

Aviation Art Contest: 2022

DESIGN YOUR PERFECT AIRCRAFT

By David Morris
Division of Aeronautics

Since 1986, the Department of Transportation—Division of Aeronautics has sponsored an annual Aviation Art Contest for the benefit of our youth. The goal is to motivate and encourage young people to become more familiar with and participate in aeronautics, engineering, math and science. There are three age categories of contestants: 6-9, 10-13 and 14-17 for boys and girls.

Due to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, the Aviation Art Contest 2022 awards ceremony was canceled. This is a challenging time and our priority is to do our part in helping everyone stay healthy. This year the winning participants again received their awards in the mailbox.

Congratulations to all the contestants as your work was outstanding making tough decisions for the judging committee. Also, thank you to the parents, teachers and mentors for all the time, hard work and support you have put into this program. ▲

ART CONTEST WINNERS

Category I Junior (Age 6-9):

First – Julia McNamara, Papillion
Second - William Pearson, Wahoo
Third - Jerome Bleicher, Omaha

Category II Intermediate (Age 10-13):

First – Sydney Huber, Grafton
Second – Brigham Hollon, Lincoln
Third – Hallie Hartman, Gibbon

Category III Senior (Age 14-17):

First – Eliza Kuker, Falls City
Second – Jackson Kiefer, Fremont
Third – Lillian Thomas, Falls City



Category I Junior (Ages 6-9)
First Place
Julia McNamara, Bellevue Elementary School



Category II Intermediate (Ages 10-13)
First Place
Sydney Huber, McCool Junction Public



Category III Senior (Age 14-17)
First Place
Eliza Kuker, Falls City High School



Photos by Samuel Malan, NDOT

Bloomfield Elementary School students had the opportunity to sign the snowplow blade of "Ice Breaker 2000" during a recent visit to their school by NDOT District 3 Maintenance Workers.



NDOT's 'Ice Breaker 2000' Visits Bloomfield Elementary School to Celebrate 'Name a Snowplow' Contest Winners

Bloomfield Elementary School students hit the jackpot, with eight of the 17 winning names in NDOT's first-ever "Name a Snowplow" Contest. This was no small feat, as more than 300 snowplow names were submitted by students from across the state.

By Linda Wilson
Communications & Public Policy Division

The NDOT judges all agreed that the creativity of the submissions was impressive, making it difficult to narrow down the list. But in the end, the Bloomfield Bees prevailed. The other winners were from McCool Junction Public School; Our Redeemer Lutheran School, Staplehurst; Emanuel-Faith Lutheran School, York; High Plains Community School, Clarks; Malcolm Public Schools; and Shelby-Rising City Public School.

The Bloomfield students' creativity was rewarded recently with a visit on May 16, 2022, by one of the newly named snowplows, "Ice Breaker 2000," along with maintenance workers from NDOT's District 3 Maintenance Yard in Bloomfield who brought the snowplow to the school for all the students to see. The students even had the opportunity to sign the snowplow blade, a highlight of the visit.

During the recognition, each of the eight students proudly held a sign with their winning plow name. The other seven

winning names were Blizzard Buster, Blizzard of Oz, Drift Slayer, Plower Power, Snow Angel, Snowbuster, and Snow-tal Annihilation.

Those with winning names received a mini snowplow, a letter from NDOT Director John Selmer, congratulating the students on their efforts, as well as candy, which was also available for all 130 students at the school.

In addition to all the newly named snowplows being emblazoned with their new monikers, they have also been updated on NDOT's [plow tracker website](#), where the name and location of each plow is available in real time. While NDOT has over 600 snowplows, these 17 winners will be the only ones identified by name for now. NDOT will share additional information on its social media pages, including when all 17 names are placed on the snowplows.

According to Shannon Ankeny, NDOT Director of Communications and Public Policy, NDOT plans to have another contest next year, with the goal to have 30 new names to add by early October.

Ankeny added, "We were excited to give Nebraska's students the chance to get involved in naming our plows. It's also a great way to recognize our hardworking snowplow drivers and maintenance workers, who are often the unsung heroes of keeping our roads safe during and after winter weather." ▲

Schools with winning snowplow names and the districts to which they will be assigned.

Snowplow Name	Dist.	School
Blizzard Buster	D7	Bloomfield Elementary
Blizzard of Oz	D2	Bloomfield Elementary
Darth Blader	D1	McCool Junction Public
Dragon Flame	D4	Our Redeemer Lutheran
Drift Slayer	D6	Bloomfield Elementary
Flurry Force	D5	High Plains Community
Ice Breaker 2000	D3	Bloomfield Elementary
Peppermint	D8	Malcolm Public
Plower Power	D3	Bloomfield Elementary
Snow Angel	D7	Bloomfield Elementary
Snow Beast	D8	McCool Junction Public
Snow Big Red	D4	Shelby Rising City
Snow Blade	D4	Emmanuel-Faith Lutheran
Snow Day Hunter	D6	McCool Junction Public
Snowbuster	D1	McCool Junction Public
Snowbuster	--	Bloomfield Elementary
Snow-tal Annihilation	D2	Bloomfield Elementary
Winter Warrior	D5	McCool Junction Public



Eight Bloomfield Elementary School students stand in front of the newly named snowplow, "Ice Breaker 2000" as they proudly hold signs with their winning snowplow names in NDOT's first-ever "Name a Snowplow" Contest.

Mick Syslo New Roadway Design Engineer

“I try to keep it simple:

- 1) Lead by example;*
- 2) Be respectful to each other; and*
- 3) Say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ – a must for everyone.”*

- Mick Syslo, Roadway Design Engineer



Mick Syslo is the new Roadway Design Engineer for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). Syslo, a licensed professional engineer, succeeds Mike Owen who retired in November of 2021 with 38 years of state service, five years as the Roadway Design Engineer.

For 27 years, Syslo has worked at the Department in a variety of capacities, including the past 17 years in Materials & Research as the State Materials & Research Engineer and as the Pavement Design Engineer. His first 10 years were in Roadway Design, serving as an Expressway Section Designer, Interstate Section Supervisor and Unit Leader.

Born in Columbus, Nebr., and raised on a farm in Tarnov, 20 miles north of Columbus, Syslo graduated from Lakeview High School in Columbus. He started with NDOT in 1994 as part of the Engineering Intern program while attending UNL. After earning his Bachelor of Science degree from UNL in 1996, Syslo began his full-time career at NDOT.

Syslo said he enjoys the people at NDOT and has appreciated the opportunities that each step in his career has provided to increase his engineering

experience while meeting great people.

In discussing goals he would like to achieve in his new position, Syslo said, “My goal is to try to improve upon our already great highway products while making a work environment that allows us to enjoy what we do and look forward to coming in every day to do it.”

Regarding his management approach, Syslo noted, “I try to keep it simple: 1) Lead by example; 2) Be respectful to each other; and 3) Say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ – a must for everyone.”

Mick and his wife, Tonya, have been married 26 years. Tonya manages their cattle farm back in Columbus. They have two daughters, Caitlyn, and Ellie. Caitlyn graduated from Southeast Community College with a Medical Lab Technician degree and is working in Nebraska City at CHI hospital. Ellie graduated from Lincoln East in May 2022 and will be attending UNL majoring in Construction Management with a minor in Spanish.

In his spare time, Mick enjoys camping and boating with his family. He also keeps busy with “do it yourself” home improvement projects. Mick is an avid Husker fan and has an extensive memorabilia collection. ▲



Brandon Varilek New Materials & Research Engineer

“I want to lead an already strong M&R Division into the future, keeping pace with ever emerging materials and technologies to support Nebraska’s critical highway system in the most cost efficient and sustainable manner possible.”

- Brandon Varilek, M&R Engineer

Brandon Varilek is the new Materials & Research Engineer for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). Varilek, a licensed professional engineer, succeeds Mick Syslo, who was named the Roadway Design Engineer after Mike Owen’s retirement.

Varilek grew up on a farm west of Culbertson, NE, and graduated from Culbertson High School in 1995. After earning his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from UNL in 2000, he served as a Civil Engineer and Officer in the United States Air Force from 2000 to 2006, stationed at Offutt AFB, NE; Scott AFB, IL; and a deployment to Baghdad, Iraq.

He started his career at NDOT in 2006, serving more than 14 years in various roles in Materials & Research, including Pavement Design Engineer and Roadway Asset Management Engineer. He also served as Assistant Construction Engineer—Structures & Grading from Sept. 2020 – Nov. 2021, when he was promoted to Materials & Research Engineer.

In his new role, Varilek is responsible for the research, design, and testing of all construction materials used in highway projects, including asphalt, concrete, soils, geotextiles, steel,

etc. He also leads the Interstate Task Force, responsible for the maintenance, resurfacing and reconstruction planning of the Interstate system. Another responsibility involves overseeing Roadway Asset Management, which collects and reports the inventory and condition of approximately 10,000 miles of state highways to the Federal Highway Administration, ultimately justifying Nebraska’s annual Federal construction funding.

Varilek likes to play an active role in construction projects from concept to design to construction. In describing his managerial approach, Varilek noted, “I seek input from stakeholders whenever possible to make the most informed decisions and I treat everyone with the respect they deserve.”

Brandon and his wife, Bradette, who is a physician at Bryan West, live on an acreage with their three sons: Will, Blaine and Wyatt. He enjoys farming on a limited basis and spends his spare time training and responding to emergencies as a volunteer Firefighter/EMT with the Raymond Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department. As time allows, he enjoys hunting and fishing throughout Nebraska and the surrounding states. ▲



Ross Barron New State Bridge Engineer

Noting what he has enjoyed most about his work so far, "I like a good engineering challenge and seeing a structure get built and used. Additionally, I have enjoyed mentoring some great young engineers who have gone on to have fulfilling and successful careers in structural engineering across the country."

Ross Barron is the new State Bridge Engineer for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). Barron, a licensed professional engineer, succeeds Mark Traynowicz, who retired in December 2021.

Barron was born in Lincoln, NE, and grew up in Omaha. After graduating from Millard West High School, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering with Structural Emphasis and a Master of Engineering Management degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Following completion of his bachelor's degree, Barron accepted a position to serve as an Assistant Resident Construction Engineer for a small consulting firm in Santa Cruz, California. This role allowed him to serve daily as the owner's site representative for several major bridge projects throughout the region, including his favorite in the Santa Cruz mountains near giant redwood trees.

After several years in sunny California, Barron moved back to Nebraska to transition from being a construction engineer to a design engineer. He joined a local consulting firm and had opportunities to work on bridge and structural projects throughout his tenure.

In discussing goals, Barron said, "I hope to find the best way that NDOT can serve the public, and to find ways for the Bridge Division to support our internal 'customers' to provide excellence in our service. This includes process improvement that shares a focus on communication and teamwork, and an innovative mindset."

Barron's management approach revolves around trust. "I believe that trust, stemming from effective teamwork and empowerment, is key to successfully delivering projects and managing our bridge assets. Taking time to ensure we're planning and acting on long-term strategic thinking, while aligning with the department-wide strategic plan is what ultimately leads to success."

Barron noted that he is grateful for everyone he has met over the past few months, adding, "I've never seen a more kind, dedicated, and experienced workforce – probably why we accomplish such great things here at NDOT!"

Ross and his wife, Michele, have been married for nearly 10 years and have four children, Jack, Violet, Rosemary, and Theodore. In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with family and kids and enjoys working on projects of all kinds around the house. He also enjoys outdoor activities, including mountain biking, skiing, golf, and the beach. ▲

"I like a good engineering challenge and seeing a structure get built and used."

- Ross Barron, State Bridge Engineer



Tim Koenig New District 3 Operations & Maintenance Manager

Tim Koenig is the new District 3 Operations and Maintenance Manager (DOMM) for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), in Norfolk. Koenig succeeds Ray Branstiter, who retired December 17, 2021, with 43 years of state service, 10 years as the DOMM.

Koenig has worked at NDOT for 37 years, all in District 3. The last four years, he was a Highway Maintenance Superintendent in Norfolk. He also worked as a Highway Maintenance Supervisor for 12 years in Lyons and for 14 years in West Point.

The maintenance field offers Koenig the opportunity to work with many great people on a variety of projects. He also likes exploring the "how's" and "why's" of what maintenance projects involve and helping crews learn new techniques and methods to achieve their goals and finish projects. Past accomplishments that have made him proud include when the West Point maintenance yard was selected Yard of the Year in 1999 and when the Lyons and South Sioux crews' project involving bridge deck repair was selected as Maintenance Project of the Year in 2010.

As far as goals, safety is always number one. "We want to utilize all our resources to the best of our abilities to keep the roads safe for everybody," Koenig said. "We also want to try new ideas and techniques to help our employees do their jobs to their best abilities in a safe manner."

"I want to try new ideas and techniques to help employees do their jobs to the best of their abilities in a safe manner."

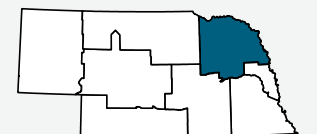
- Tim Koenig, District 3 Construction Engineer

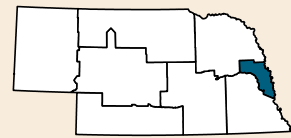
His philosophy toward management involves having an open-door policy, where people feel comfortable talking to him and knowing that he is listening to their opinions and that they are an important part of the department.

I want to create an environment where we can work together to accomplish our projects. Throughout this process, I want to make sure everyone is treated fairly and equally."

Tim grew up in Madison, Nebraska, where he and his wife, Deb, attended school. They have lived in West Point since 1984 and have four children and 8 grandchildren, who all live in Nebraska. In his spare time, Tim enjoys spending time with his family and attending their activities. He and his wife like to travel and camp. He also enjoys hunting and watching sports. ▲

District 3 includes Antelope, Boone, Burt, Cedar, Colfax, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Knox, Madison, Pierce, Platte, Stanton, Thurston and Wayne counties.





District 2 includes Douglas, Dodge, Sarpy, Washington & Cass counties.

"I enjoy building things, whether it's bridges and roads or software and workflows. But it's working with the people that has been so rewarding."

- Barb Gerbino-Bevins, District 2 Construction Engineer

Barb Gerbino-Bevins New District 2 Construction Engineer

Barb Gerbino-Bevins is the new District 2 Construction Engineer for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). A licensed professional engineer, Gerbino-Bevins succeeds Marv Lech, who retired after almost 58 years of state service, 25 years as the District 2 Construction Engineer.

Born and raised in the Omaha area, Barb graduated from Malvern High School in 2003, and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in Civil Engineering from UNL. While studying for her master's, Barb was part of a research project on the performance of chemical deicers and is proud of the results that led to development of a performance test that is regularly used by NDOT to help vet chemical deicers.

After completing her master's in 2011, Barb started working for NDOT in District 2 Construction as a Highway Technician II. In 2012, she moved to District 1 Construction to fill an Engineer I/II position, and at the end of 2013, she moved to Roadway Design Division as an Engineer II/Consultant Coordinator. In 2016, she began the supervisory part of her career as head of the Scoping Unit in the Project Development Division. In 2020, Barb was given the opportunity to move back to District 2 Construction as the

Project Delivery Engineer and was recently named the District Construction Engineer.

Reflecting on her career so far, Barb noted, "Like anyone in this field, I enjoy building things, whether it's bridges and roads or software and workflows. But it's working with the people that has been so rewarding. We have many great teams and individuals here at NDOT and they've been a joy to work with."

As far as goals she would like to achieve, Barb said that her focus is on process improvement, looking toward bringing in new equipment or software or reorganizing workflows.

While acknowledging that her philosophy toward management will probably change as she progresses in her position, Barb said that she feels fortunate to be working with a very experienced group of project managers who are skilled in their positions. For that reason, she considers herself as their servant leader – trying to remove obstacles in their way.

Barb and her husband, Dave, have been married for 13 years and have two children, Samantha and Tony. When they get a chance, they like to spend time with extended family in Omaha and just over the river in Iowa. ▲

John Lutz New District 5 Operations & Maintenance Manager



John Lutz is the new District 5 Operations and Maintenance Manager (DOMM) for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), in Gering. Lutz succeeds Chris Ford, who retired November 19, 2021, with 38 years of state service, 24 years as the DOMM.

Lutz has worked at NDOT for 22 years, all in District 5. The last six years, he was a Highway Maintenance Superintendent in Gering. He also worked 13 years as a Highway Maintenance Supervisor and three years as a Highway Maintenance Worker Sr, both in Chadron. Prior to that he worked for 16 years for the City of Chadron, seven years as an equipment operator and nine years as a Parks and Recreation supervisor.

According to Lutz, aspects of his job that have brought the most enjoyment include the working relationships he has built over the years. His biggest accomplishments involve helping people reach their career goals at NDOT. He is also grateful that he was able to assist in firefighting efforts during fires that devastated Chadron and Harrison in 2006 and 2012.

As far as goals he wants to achieve in his new position, Lutz focused on several key areas. "I want to help with retention of our teammates and achievement of their goals; to be a voice in building our NDOT team; to help make working conditions more consistent across our district and the state; to reduce crashes on our highways and employee accidents within our district; and to help improve processes across our district and throughout the state."

"I want to be a voice in building our NDOT team and help make working conditions more consistent across our district and the state..."

- John Lutz, District 5 Construction Engineer

Lutz's philosophy toward management centers on the belief that "you are only as good as the people around you. Treat your people with respect and they will respect you. Manage your people to be the best they can be, help them achieve their goals and you will achieve yours."

John grew up on a farm near Loup City and currently lives near Mitchell. He has been married to his wife, Connie, for 29 years. They have two grown daughters and three grandsons. In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with family, golf, travel, camping, and woodworking. ▲

District 5 includes Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan & Sioux counties.

