

8:30 a.m., Friday, January 17, 2025
State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes

On Friday, January 17, 2025, the Nebraska State Highway Commission convened at NDOT Headquarters located at 1500 Nebraska Parkway in Lincoln, Nebraska. The agenda, a recording of meeting, attendance sheets, and handouts relevant to the business of this meeting are a part of the permanent minutes of record and are on file at NDOT Central Headquarters. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act (Statutes 84-1407 to 84-1414) was posted in the meeting room.

MEETING NOTICE

- Notice of the regularly scheduled meeting, including the time, location, and agenda, was advertised on the Department of Transportation and the State of Nebraska's websites no less than ten days prior to the meeting.
- The agenda was emailed or mailed to commission members, NDOT staff, and interested persons no less than ten days prior to the meeting.
- A media release was emailed to all statewide outlets on _____, 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

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|---------------------------------|------------|
| • Commissioner Richard Meginnis | District 1 |
| • Commissioner Heath Mello | District 2 |
| • Commissioner David Copple | District 3 |
| • Commissioner James H. Kindig | District 4 |
| • Commissioner Doug Leafgreen | District 5 |
| • Commissioner Jim Hawks | District 6 |
| • Commissioner Greg Wolford | District 7 |
| • <i>Vacant</i> | District 8 |
| • Director, Vicki Kramer | Ex Officio |

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

CALL TO ORDER

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

MINUTES

- Approval of December 6, 2024, meeting minutes
 - Motion for approval made by Kindig; Meginnis seconded.
 - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 7-0

INTRODUCTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Welcoming state senators in attendance – Senator Lonowski, Senator McKeon, Senator Strommen, Senator Storer

MEETING BUSINESS

- Director's Remarks
 - **Vicki Kramer, Director of NDOT**
 - Congratulating agency success over the last few years, including moving to innovative finance state. State was awarded over \$72 million over the last week in grants, with the primary being for the City of Lincoln, with the 33rd and Cornhusker project. \$25 million in Nebraska DOT funds going to that project. Norfolk received a RAISE grant as well.
 - Expect a slight delay in decisions by USDOT. A pending grant is the Regional Infrastructure Accelerator, excited to see if NDOT can get those dollars. Working to invite Secretary Duffy to the state along with FHWA.
 - Currently a lot of focus on the budget, majority of NDOT's budget request will be to match the IJA funding. NDOT is working with legislative members to improve the safety of our roads.
 - Bonding Update
 - **Lyn Heaton, Chief of Staff/Director of Innovative Finance**
 - Working with advisors to prepare preliminary official statement – as much information as is needed for investment community to understand how NDOT will be using funding and background information. That and notice of sale was sent to bond rating agency, have received bond rating – AAA. Next step is to sell the bonds, scheduled to happen on Thursday.
 - Highway Relinquishment Overview
 - **Jeff Schroder, Assistant Attorney General, Transportation Bureau Chief**
 - NDOT brings relinquishments to commission as part of the approval process. By statute, surrender all or part of rights and responsibility related to all or part of the state highway system to a local government (like cities and counties). NDOT relinquish the segments of highway specifically the parts of the corporate limits to city and outside the cities to the counties.
 - There are 3 events that led to state highway system – 1) in 1955, the Legislature approved a map showing the existing roads it felt should be on the state highway system. 2) the Legislature decided that every major city and village should have a state highway leading up to outskirts. 3) in 1969 the Legislature determined that Nebraska should have an integrated system of public roads – including state highways, county roads and city streets
 - The Legislature decided that NDOT is responsible for highways classified as interstate, the expressway system and major arterials. By rules and regulations, the state is supposed to stay at about 10,000 miles of roadway.
 - State highway system serves statewide transportation interests with highways that connect to surrounding states and carry major Nebraska traffic around the state to all

counties, rural and urban. Counties and cities are responsible for the roads and streets that serve the local traffic needs and are vital to local counties and cities.

- Legislature created a couple of methods to remove state highways from highway system. NDOT uses relinquishment.
 - After relinquishment, city or county has duty to design, construct, reconstruct, maintain and operate the relinquished segment. State either resurfaces or pays the city the cost to resurface the highway before relinquishment. Do not transfer title to highway, city does not need to own the road to operate or maintain it.
 - 3 situations when NDOT seeks to relinquish – 1) when state constructs new state highway bypass around the outskirts of a city or a highway is constructed on a new highway alignment 2) a state highway that is now completely located in an urban area 3) a state spur or link, and city has annexed property along state spur or link
 - Process NDOT uses:
 - For bypass or new alignment, early on NDOT discusses plan with city and county. NDOT receives agreement that city or county will accept relinquishment of old highway and integrate old highway into their road or street system. NDOT will not go forward with the design of a project until confirmation from local partners. When relinquishment occurs, the district engineer notifies the local entity of the relinquishment. A formal relinquishment instrument is filed with the register of deeds, which makes it final. A negotiated memorandum is required, state law contemplates renegotiation of relinquishment if economic conditions change in future.
 - State reserves certain rights concerning segment. For example, if property owner requests change in control of access, NDOT must be consulted and NDOT will evaluate the proposed change.
 - Wolford: With right of way of a relinquished section still the State's? Don't think the small cities know that.
 - Routine sorts of work that needs to occur, that happens transparently. They have the duty to operate and maintain it. NDOT just needs to be consulted like in instances of control of access to determine if appropriate from engineering standpoint. Also, if there was compensation involved, sometimes that portion needs to be purchased back by requester
 - Wolford: Want to mention, one of statutory requirements of the Highway Commission is if there is relinquishment in your district, must go physically inspect.
 - Copple: That's what happened on 84th St. in Omaha.
- Highway 92
Brandie Neemann, Roadway Design Division Head
 - Actively designing a 4-lane expansion of US-77 Wahoo-Fremont expressway project. This project extends east on 92 to junction of US-6 and N-31, West Center Road. Along with north-south segment starting at L-28B/W. Dodge Rd. Currently depending where at on these highways there's anywhere between 5,900 & 9,000 cars a day – a lot of traffic on a 2-lane highway. These highways are not part of the expressway system.
 - Conducted study in the 1990s' and presented that information at a public meeting in Yutan. Established general project layout and Corridor Protection Plans.
 - NDOT maintains map on website showing corridor protections. Project was tabled as NDOT began focusing on asset preservation over capital improvements but was reprioritized when the Build Nebraska Act and Transportation Innovation Act passed. Will be taking 2+2 approach – build out two lanes on one side of existing 2-lanes, once done, will do asset preservation on existing 2-lanes and open to 4-lane expressway. Several new developments have popped up along the project, so need to consider during a redesign.
 - Will begin public involvement process and NEPA, will take about 18 months.
 - Highway 75
Kyle Keller, Project Development Division Head

- Part of the 1988 expressway system designation. Plattsmouth to Bellevue (2.5 m), Murray to Plattsmouth (10 m), Union to Murray (7.5 m), Union South (9.7 m). Environmental Impact Studies have been done for corridor beginning in 1971 and completed in 1979. Since then have done supplemental EIS documents, before moving into construction corridor. Plattsmouth to Bellevue, construction was from 2016 to 2019. Murray to Plattsmouth, construction was from 2021 to 2023. Remaining segment is Union to Murray and Union South. Terminates prior to interchange on Hwy 2. Current cost estimate is over \$180 million. Taking a 2+2 approach. Next steps are planning, design and NEPA. Must do analysis on existing lanes. Assess corridor, entire 17 miles, 200 ft. on both sides – look for impacts like threatened and endangered species, wetlands, properties. Looking to do an RFQ in summer of 2025 for environmental, planning, public involvement. Slatted to begin in 2033, but NDOT is working to prepare the project if there are any future opportunities for funding.
- **Winter Operations Update**
Tom Renninger, Operations Division Head
 - Start in April, order bulk of salt and in June begin ordering snowplow blades for winter, in September begin ordering liquids. Ready to go by October through May. When storm looks like it's coming in, Districts and Operations Division coordinate to facilitate and support operations in the field, coordinate through Webex chat and meetings, NEMA coordination and FHWA notifications and pathfinder.
 - In September meet with Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Nebraska out west to prepare for closures and what each state is doing. Talk about closures across states to prepare for traffic changes.
 - Working 24/7, no set hours. Coordinate with locals to review truck parking, hotels and other accommodations. Types of forecasts determines level of involvement and communication. Collaborate with the National Weather Service to learn about what the storms are looking like.
 - A few years ago, began doing preemptive closures because of concern with tow trucks and operators being able to get to the scene of accident. Began using Variable Advisory Speed Signs this year out in Western NE. Had very few accidents in the last storm. Should have them turned on all the way to Ogalla in next few weeks, then out to Overton by the end of winter.
 - Have State Operations Center out of Omaha – control DMS boards, monitor state radio systems, monitor NDOT operated cameras especially in high-population areas, operate motorist assist in Omaha. Use 511 system and is successful, people like seeing the plow tracker. Helps schools know if they should shut down or not.
 - In the off season – NDOT hosts a Snow Rodeo where snowplow operators compete in own district, then compete statewide, after, they go to a national competition.
 - Copple: With the Variable Advisory Speed Signs, are there plans to have those on expressways or other US highways that aren't the interstates?
 - Currently, it is not planned, but assumption is that is the eventual goal.
 - Hawks: Where are you at with staffing? Especially in rural areas.
 - NDOT's always short staffed, probably will be for a while, but has made great strides especially compared to a couple of years ago. Nebraska just doesn't have the population like we did in rural areas anymore.
 - Kramer: NDOT seems good, with the hiring practices recently. Especially getting those employees trained to be safe. NDOT is very young, in terms of experience, in the districts there are challenges, but NDOT will keep working through it.
- **Proposed 2025 Highway Commission Meeting Calendar**
Amanda Callaway, Highway External Affairs Manager and Highway Commission Secretary
 - Approval of Proposed 2025 Highway Commission calendar.
 - Motion for approval made by Meginnis; Wolford seconded.

- Motion carried by rollcall vote, 7-0
- Election of 2025 Commission chair & Vice Chair
- **Amanda Callaway, Highway External Affairs Manager and Highway Commission Secretary**
 - Approval of Commissioner Wolford as Chair and Commissioner Leafgreen as Vice Chair
 - Motion for approval made by Copple; Meginnis seconded.
 - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 7-0

PUBLIC INPUT

- **Sarah Soula, Transit Program Manager at NDOT**
 - **Hawks** (asked Sarah to discuss transit system): Contacted by Hooker Co. that they were possibly losing their transit system. Concerning that there's no medical service in areas, they go to North Platte and Scottsbluff for those services.
 - **Soula**: Grant County is also going to lose service; they are unable to obtain drivers. Looking for options of how to fill that void. Already dealing with service interruption up north already.
- **Jerry Johnson, Mayor of Wahoo**
 - Glad to see the Wahoo to Omaha project on the agenda. The roundabout has been working well, even though it's not completed due to the 4-lane. One comment heard, it's so close to the lake, asking if there will be a guardrail to the Northwest side. When first started in Legislature, Omaha Steel announced they were moving to Wahoo, concerned about the traffic and that some would commute back and forth – have about 250 employees. Comments about getting to Mead, the conditions of the roads, hills and the traffic. When interstate between Omaha and Lincoln is closed, see traffic double along the expressway

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

- Appreciate the opportunity to serve as chair over the last year and that several state senators attended today. Important that they show interest in the transportation field because it's important to our commerce and

PUBLIC MEETINGS CALENDAR

- NDOT will hold a public information meeting for the Wisner-West Point US 275 project from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on January 21, 2025, at Wisner-Pilger Schools in Wisner, NE
- The next scheduled highway commission meeting is March 21, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. in Fremont, Nebraska

ADJOURNMENT

- The chair adjourned the meeting at 10:01 a.m.