

Capital Improvement Projects Regional Meetings

Norfolk, NE – July 14, 2016

In the third of eight regional stakeholder meetings, the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) met with Nebraska residents on Thursday, July 14, in Norfolk to provide the results of potential capital improvement projects analyzed under the expanded project prioritization process.

In addition to sharing the engineering and economic analysis results, NDOR also sought input on local and regional project priorities from the stakeholders. NDOR staff recognize that residents have important information about how projects can best support local priorities, and staff wanted to hear firsthand from stakeholders why some projects should be prioritized over others from the candidate list.

Participants expressed support for a variety of projects in the region, and NDOR described that there are always more transportation needs than funding. Based on facilitated discussions at that meeting, the breakout groups identified the following projects as their priorities for important reasons such as safety, a need for passing lanes, traffic congestion, and economic development:

- **US-30 from Grand Island to Columbus (Super 2, \$87M)**
 - Discussion: safety improvements, congestion on current highway, existing truck traffic from industrial developments in the area, improve passing opportunities between communities.
 - Scope options: stakeholder groups stated that they prefer the 4-lane scope option, but would be willing to accept the Super 2 scope option due to limited funding availability.
- **N-35 from Norfolk to Wakefield (Super 2, \$56M)**
 - Discussion: safety improvements, improve sight lines in hilly areas, existing truck traffic.
- **US-81 from York North (4-lane divided expressway, \$214M)**
 - Discussion: this expressway corridor would help keep traffic in Nebraska, improve pedestrian safety, existing congestion from Columbus north.
- **US-81 from Norfolk to South Yankton (Super 2, \$78M)**
 - Discussion: existing traffic, requested safety improvements, potential economic development opportunities.
- **US-275 from Pilger to Scribner (4-lane divided expressway, \$297M)**
 - Discussion: progress towards completion of the Expressway system, existing traffic limits passing opportunities between towns, potential economic development, safety improvements, would provide a benefit to the entire region.
 - Scope options: many groups stated that the bypass option should be considered on a town-by-town basis, improvements should start in the east and move west due to higher traffic volumes in the eastern section of the corridor, some groups asked NDOR to revisit the engineering to see if there are options to lower the project cost.

More than 275 comments were also received online during the comment period, which was open through Friday, July 29. Comments related to candidate projects in the northeast region supported the projects above, including:

- N-35 from Norfolk to Wakefield
- US-81 from York North
- US-81 from Norfolk to South Yankton
- US-275 from Pilger to Scribner

NDOR staff is now taking a hard look at some of the candidate project scopes and evaluating stakeholder feedback from the regional meetings. In addition to engineering performance, economic performance and stakeholder input, NDOR has to balance many other important considerations, such as geographic inclusion, corridor completion, and the availability of supplemental funding. NDOR will announce a list of initial projects selected under the Build Nebraska Act and Transportation Innovation Act programs this fall. It is likely that less than \$1 billion in projects will be selected so that some funds will be available in future years to address evolving capital improvement project needs. This approach will allow NDOR to create an ongoing evaluation process to identify sets of projects that are best suited to address Nebraska's needs.