

Capital Improvement Projects Regional Meetings

Gering, NE – July 19, 2016

In the final of eight regional stakeholder meetings, the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) met with Nebraska residents on Tuesday, July 19, in Gering 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 and economic development:

- **US-20 and US-385 East Junction in Chadron (intersection improvements, \$1M)**
 - Discussion: safety improvements, existing traffic
- **U-26 from Minatare to US 385 (4-lane divided highway, \$80M)**
 - Discussion: as a segment of the Heartland Expressway it would complete a key north-south connection, safety improvements, and potential economic development opportunities. Stakeholders noted that they'd like to see the entire Heartland Expressway completed, but understand funds are limited and prioritized this segment.
- **US-385 from Alliance to South Dakota State Line (4-lane divided highway, \$327M)**
 - Discussion: safety improvements, existing truck traffic from oil fields, progress towards completion of corridor.
 - Scope options: stakeholders stated that they preferred the 4-lane divided highway to match the South Dakota 4 lane highway entering Nebraska; stakeholders suggested that consideration be given to a 2+2 option, a Super 2 would be preferred in lieu of making no improvement.

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 west region supported the projects above, including:

- US-26 from Minatare to US 385

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.