

8:30 a.m., Friday, December 8, 2023
State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes

On Friday, December 8, 2023, the Nebraska State Highway Commission convened at NDOT Headquarters Highway Commission Room 103 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 December 1, 2023.
- 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.
- There were 28 in attendance via Webex.

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 via Webex |
| • Commissioner Jim Hawks | District 6 |
| • Commissioner Greg Wolford | District 7 |
| • Commissioner Jerome Fagerland | District 8 |
| • Director Vicki Kramer | Ex Officio |

Sarah Soula, 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 Copple called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
- The Chair requested an attendance roll call. A quorum was present.

MINUTES

- Approval of October 27, meeting minutes
 - Motion for approval made by Commissioner Meginnis; Commissioner Hawks seconded.
 - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 7-0

INTRODUCTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The new District 2 Highway Commissioner, Heath Mello of Omaha was introduced. Heath is CEO of the Greater Omaha Chamber. As a Senator he has worked with Commissioners in the past as well as his time with the University of Nebraska.
- Richard Meginnis also introduced himself. Richard is President of NAI FMA Realty. As a realtor infrastructure is very important to him.

MEETING BUSINESS

- **Director's Remarks**
Vicki Kramer, NDOT Director
 - Welcomed Commissioner Mello and Commissioner Meginnis. This is the first time in a long time that we have a full commission.
 - Touched base on the email that was briefly discussed at the last meeting from Mr. Nelson about US 81 Expressway Project from York to Columbus. A previous study was done by NDOT recommending that the communities of Stromsburg, Osceola, and Shelby be bypassed but it is a question of funding. A bypass costs anywhere between \$60 million and \$100 million. It is also a matter of what is best for the community so it continues to thrive.
 - Safety is a top priority for NDOT which is why it is so saddening to lose two NDOT teammates. So far this year there has been 182 fatalities on Nebraska roadways. Even one is too many.
 - The entire month of November was dedicating to acknowledging and calling attention to the importance of safety for all crash responders.
 - The Motorist Assist Program in the Omaha Metro Area was launched. In partnership with the Nebraska State Patrol this program will significantly improve safety in this region to help manage traffic on the roadways.
 - NDOT conducted a Traffic Incident Management Training Exercise (TIMEX) in Grand Island. This was a statewide effort to improve traffic incident management on our roadways.
- **Vulnerable Road Users Assessment**
Don, Butler, Highway Safety Engineer
 - Vulnerable road users are anyone who walks, bikes, or rolls on or across Nebraska roads. They are users that don't have a steel cage to protect them.
 - The goal of the assessment is 0% fatalities on the roadway. This is the shared responsibility of road users and road stewards.
 - Safety trends for Vulnerable Road Users include crashes at night which is seventy six percent of pedestrian related fatalities. People of color are more likely to die while walking, as well as those of higher social vulnerability.
 - Vulnerable Road Users are more likely to have fatalities where there are clusters of people.

- We received 563 survey responses from stake holders. The barrier most often encountered is the lack of or disconnected with sidewalk or trail systems.
- The report results indicate that we need to focus on existing strategies and work on new strategies to reach the goal of 0 fatalities.

- **TIMEX Event Debrief**
Michelle Weigel, Assistant Operations Division Manager
Jessica Sherwood, Communications Service Manager for Operations
 - TIM is a planned and coordinated multi-disciplinary effort to detect, respond to, and clear traffic incidents and restore traffic flow as safely and quickly as possible.
 - The program consists of 6 TIM groups located along the I-80 corridor. There are 260 active agencies that meet quarterly.
 - There are 5 key strategies to become SAFER TOGETHER: creating a statewide safety culture, after-action reviews, future-focuses, efficient incident response, and relationship building.
 - In partnership with the Nebraska State Patrol, Law enforcement officers, fire and rescue personnel, emergency medical services, transportation agencies, towing and recovery professionals, notification and dispatch personnel, hazardous materials management responders, and public works professionals were represented from across the state.
 - Participants worked side-by-side to walk through scenarios involving livestock emergencies, hazardous materials spills, establishing a traffic incident management area, safe, quick clearance strategies – push, pull, drag, drive, expedited crash investigation, and air ambulance services.
 - Commissioner Kindig and Commissioner Copple attended the event and were very impressed with the training. Commissioner Kindig was very impressed with how knowledgeable towing companies were and how they handle the scene. Commissioner Copple really encourages others to attend in the future.

- **Needs Assessment & Expressway Update**
Amy Starr, NDOT Project Delivery Engineer
 - There is a 15% increase (\$16.7 billion) in need than when the assessment was last done. A readjustment on projections will need to be done.
 - The \$16.7 billion breaks down to \$9.7 billion in asset preservation, \$2.4 billion in system modernization & operation, and \$4.6 billion in capital improvements.
 - In 1988, the Legislature placed into law the creation of an expressway system. The Nebraska Expressway System encompasses 16 corridors with approximately 600 miles.
 - Prior to construction, an expressway expansion project requires 5-11 years of preparation.
 - Expressway System Schedule
 - Hwy 77, Lincoln West Bypass, anticipate construction 2025-2026
 - Hwy 275, Scribner to West Point, under construction through 2024
 - Hwy 275, Norfolk to Wisner, anticipate construction 2025-2027
 - Hwy 275, Wisner to West Point, anticipate construction 2026-2029
 - Hwy 75, Murray to Plattsmouth, construction complete 2024
 - Hwy 75, Nebraska City to Murray, anticipate construction 2033-2036
 - Hwy 77, Wahoo to Fremont, anticipate construction 2027-2031
 - Hwy 30, North Bend to Fremont, construction complete 2024
 - Hwy 81, York to Columbus, construction projected 2029-2034

- **State Recreation Road Program & Certification (Garfield & Loup Counties)**

Jodi Gibson, Local Assistance Division Head

- SRR Funds are available for roads giving direct and immediate access to or located within state parks, state recreation areas or other recreational or historical areas.
- It is approximately \$4 million in funds, which transfers into the State Park Cash revolving fund which cannot exceed \$14 million annually.
- The Nebraska Game and Park Commission determines eligibility. Once a road is recommended the State Highway Commission must recommend/approve that the proposed road not be incorporated into the State Highway System.
- We are requesting using SRR funds for the Calamus State Rec Road Program in Loup and Garfield County and is 14.4 miles.
- The formal request of the Highway Commission is that this roadway not be added to the State Highway System.
- Questions:
 - How many parks will this affect?
 - 8 campsites inside and outside park
 - Garfield county will pay 50% and Loup County will pay 50% of one mile of the segment.
 - Wouldn't the funds be better used for other projects already being discussed?
 - The funds are pass through money. None of it is NDOTs funds.
 - The statutes dictates where these funds must go.
- Approval of State Recreation Road Program & Certification
 - Motion for approval made by Commissioner Hawks; Commissioner Wolford seconded.
 - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 7-0
- The resolution passed.

- **Highway Naming Request, US-30 Wood River**

Ryan Woitalewicz

- In 2004 Volunteer Firefighters, Captain Kenny Woitalewicz and Captain Bob Heminger responded to a house fire in Wood River, where an elderly woman was trapped inside. The house collapsed on them and both men died from their injuries.
- The families request that a segment of Nebraska Highway 30 (N-30) in Wood River be named the Fallen Firefighters Memorial Highway. The proposed segment is from Burwick Road to 150th Road in Hall County.
- The families also request that a sign dedicating it to Captain Woitalewicz and Captain Heminger be placed.
 - Commissioner Wolford felt that "Fallen Firefighters" met the criteria for naming a highway, but it was a gray area adding the names.
 - Director Kramer said there are some constraints on signage.
 - Moe Jamshidi, Deputy Director of Operations said we would work with the family on signage.
 - After discussion it was decided that the families can place a dedication sign at that segment of road at their own expense.
- Commissioner Wolford requested an amendment to the Resolution presented to say, "All Volunteer Fallen Firefighters." The amendment passed.
- Approval of US-30 Wood River Highway Naming Request

- Motion for approval made by Commissioner Wolford; Commissioner Hawks seconded.
 - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 7-0
- The Resolution was passed. It was determined that the NDOT would coordinate the official sign language with the application following the meeting.
- **2024 Calendar Review and Discussion**
Sarah Soula, External Affairs Manager & Hwy Commission Secretary
 - Four Program Hearings
 - March 21, Thursday, 6:00 pm
 - May 31, Friday, 8:30 am
 - August 23, Friday, 8:30 am
 - October 24, Thursday, 6:00 pm
 - January 19 and December 13, NDOT Headquarters, 8:30 am-

PUBLIC INPUT

- **Julie Harris, Bike Walk Nebraska (attended virtually)**
Julie thanked Don Butler for his presentation on Vulnerable Road Users (VRU) Assessment. It is a very important issue and glad NDOT is including it in future plans.
- **Mike Helgerson, MAPA (attended virtually)**
Mike echoed Julie's comments. MAPA was happy to collaborate with NDOT on this study.

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

- No remarks from the chair.

PUBLIC MEETINGS CALENDAR

- NDOT will hold a public hearing for the Norfolk to Wisner Project from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on December 21, 2023, at Wisner-Pilger High in Wisner, NE.
- My team is working hard to push out a few more Public Meetings and/or Hearings for the following:
 - US-81, York to Columbus – Targeting February
 - N-66 Connection, Louisville – Targeting March
 - Lincoln West Beltway – Targeting March
 - In Red Cloud – Targeting March
 - Two Pre-Construction Meetings for:
 - US-281, In Grand Island – Targeting March
 - In Seward – Targeting April
- The next scheduled Highway Commission Meeting will be on January 19, 2024, 8:30 a.m. NDOT Headquarters located at 1500 Nebraska Parkway in Lincoln, Nebraska.

ADJOURNMENT

- The chair adjourned the meeting at 10:29 a.m.