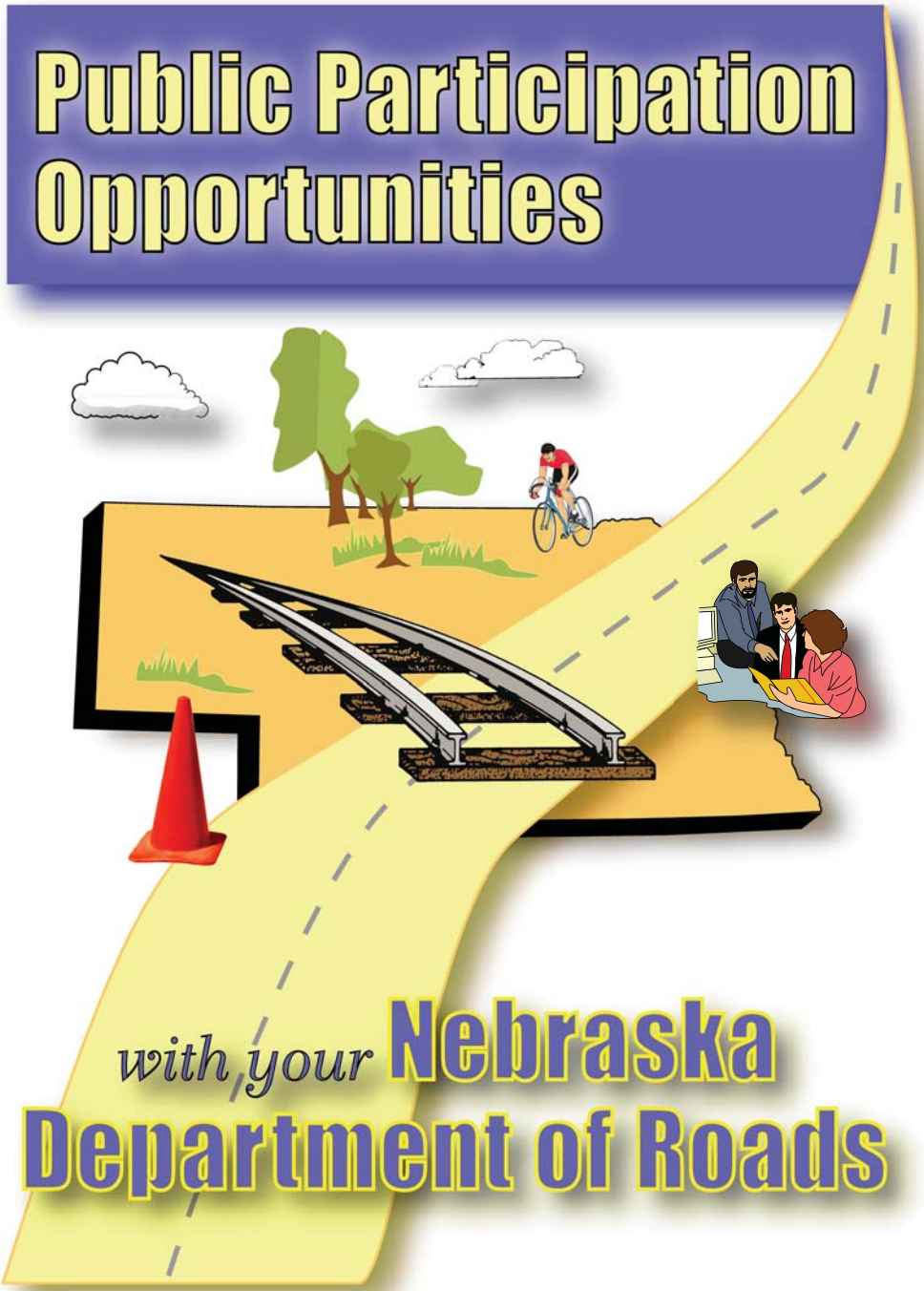
Public Participation Opportunities



with your **Nebraska Department of Roads**

Public Participation Opportunities

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NDOR's Mission

We provide and maintain, in cooperation with public and private organizations, a safe, reliable, affordable, environmentally compatible and coordinated statewide transportation system for the movement of people and goods.

Table of Contents

History of the Nebraska Department of Roads' Public Participation Process 1

Public Participation—What It Is and What It Does 2

Opportunities for Public Participation 4

- State Highway Commission Meetings 4
- District Transportation Meetings 5
- NDOR District Offices 6
- Public Information/Open House Meetings 7
- Public Hearings 7
- Informal Meetings with Department of Roads' Staff 8
- Board of Public Roads Classifications & Standards Meetings 8
- Nebraska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Meetings 9
- Nebraska Railway Council Meetings 9

Participation in Transportation Programs 10

Participation in State Highway Project Level Activities . . .12

Participation in Local Roads and Street Projects 13

Additional Participation Opportunities for Specialized or Particular Groups 13

Information Available "24-7" 14

Public Notification Process 15

Contact Personnel for Meetings/Hearings Information 16

Helpful Links 17

History of the Nebraska Department of Roads' Public Participation Process

The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) encourages public participation in all of its transportation projects. Public hearings were used to establish our customer focus for over 15 years before the federal government established them as the required procedure for gathering citizens' input. Under Nebraska Statute 39-1110, the Nebraska Highway Commission was formed. The statute directs the Highway Commission to "… conduct studies and investigations … advise the public regarding the policies, conditions and activities of the Department … hold hearings, make investigations …" The Commission and the Department established a systematic public hearing method under which they have operated for many years.

In 1991, federal transportation legislation, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), was passed by Congress. That law required Nebraska and other states to develop a comprehensive transportation planning process that included a Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan to facilitate an efficient, affordable, safe, and environmentally sound transportation system for the movement of people, goods, and services. The law also mandated a strong public participation process. In 1998, Congress passed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). This Act continued the emphasis on a strong public participation process.

Public Participation – What It Is and What It Does

Public participation is the process a government entity or organization uses to gather information from the public when some transportation action is being contemplated. The thoughts and feelings of the public are then taken into consideration when evaluating the action.

Planning is a continuous decision-making process that involves the ongoing evaluation and refinement of policies, programs and plans. Throughout this process, it is necessary to build a strong partnership with the citizens of Nebraska. A long-lasting partnership with the general public, tribal governments, metro planning organizations, universities, local governments and other state government agencies is the goal.

The Department has developed a public participation process ("*Pursuing Solutions Through Public Involvement*" -Feb.2009) that offers the citizens of Nebraska the opportunity to speak out on all transportation issues and needs. It can be found online at www.transportation.nebraska.gov/docs/public-involvement.pdf. This process is designed to ensure that all of Nebraska's mobility needs are addressed. The process provides for:

- Opportunities for early and continuing participation.
- Timely dissemination of information to the public and other interested groups.
- Reasonable public access to technical and policy information.
- Timely public notice and an adequate review period through this process.

- Consideration of the needs of those under-served by transportation.
- Adequate public review of major project revisions.
- Opportunity for review of proposed and final plans.
- Encouraging public comments.
- Documentation of public comments.

As a government agency, the Department's practice for gaining public participation is to use information/open house meetings to gather input on projects the public would like to see included in future programs. The public notification practice for proposed transportation projects is to inform the public of the issues and impacts of projects as early in the life of the projects as possible.

The Department conducts a series of meetings throughout the state. These meetings are designed to explain the proposed projects and changes in design criteria. Listed below are some of the meetings during the planning, development and design stages where there are opportunities for participation by the general public and other agencies:

- State Highway Commission Meetings
- District Transportation Meetings
- Public Information/Open House Meetings
- Informal Meetings with Department Staff
- Pre-Appraisal Meetings
- Public Hearings for relaxation of standards, corridor studies, project development, roadway design, etc.
- Statewide Long-Range Transportation Planning Meetings
- Board of Public Roads Classifications & Standards Meetings
- Nebraska Railway Council Meetings

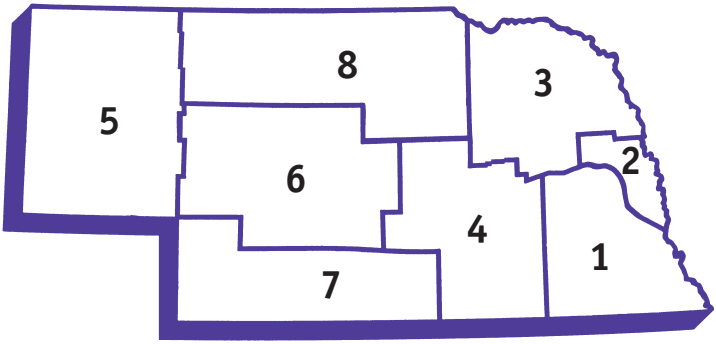
The public may attend these meetings, serve on advisory committees, write, fax, e-mail, telephone, or visit the Department. Department personnel will review and evaluate concerns, opinions, information provided, and take appropriate action.

State Highway Commission Meetings

In 1953, the Legislature created the Nebraska State Highway Commission. It acts as a liaison between the public and personnel of the Department of Roads regarding highway matters. The Commission consists of eight private citizens appointed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature for a six-year term.

The State Highway Commission meets at least six times a year, most regularly in Lincoln at the NDOR state headquarters. They also hold hearings on major highway projects and road improvements within their respective districts. Anyone wishing to speak at a State Highway Commission meeting or who has questions about an agenda item, may contact:

Greg Weinert, Secretary
Voice: (402)479-4871
Fax: (402)479-3989
E-mail: greg.weinert@nebraska.gov



District Transportation Meetings

Each autumn, the Department, along with the members of the State Highway Commission, holds District Surface Transportation Program meetings in each of the eight field districts. These meetings are designed to present the Department's One- and Five-Year Highway Program*, the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), to receive input on any transportation-related subject matter citizens are interested or concerned about, and other topics of interest.

By soliciting input and feedback on past, present and future Department activities, these meetings are key forums for public involvement in state transportation planning issues. The public can comment on the program that is presented, projects they would like to see in future programs, and any other transportation issue. Department personnel are available to listen and respond. The public comments are recorded and transcribed and are referenced when developing the subsequent program.

All citizens interested in transportation-related issues such as transit and rail programs, local federal-aid programs, state highway improvement projects, enhancement programs, trails and transportation funding, are encouraged to attend and comment on these programs, or any other transportation issues in which the Department is involved. Interested individuals should contact their District office.

*This constitutes the State's Six-Year Plan.

NDOR District Offices

District 1
302 Superior St
Lincoln NE 68521
(402)471-0850
Fax: (402)471-3401

District 2
4425 S 108th St
Omaha NE 68145
(402)595-2534
Fax: (402)595-1720

District 3
408 N 13th St
Norfolk NE 68701
(402)370-3470
Fax: (402)370-3473

District 4
211 N Tilden
Grand Island NE 68802
(308)385-6265
Fax: (308)385-6269

District 5
140375 Rundell Rd
Gering NE 69341
(308)436-6587
Fax: (308)633-6614

District 6
1321 N Jeffers St
North Platte NE 69103
(308)535-8031
Fax: (308)535-8034

District 7
619 Auditorium Dr
McCook NE 69001
(308)345-8490
Fax: (308)345-8492

District 8
736 E 4th St
Ainsworth NE 69210
(402)387-2471
Fax: (402)387-1498

Public Information/Open House Meetings

There are many public information/open house meetings held throughout the year. Some of which include:

- Strategic Planning Meetings
- Highway Corridor Study/Corridor Routes Meetings (location studies)
- Pre-Appraisal Meetings (right-of-way property acquisition)
- Wetland/Environmental Meetings
- Noise/Air Studies Meetings
- Preliminary Design Meetings
- Change of Plans or Location Meetings
- Rules and Regulations Changes Meetings
- Rail Planning Issues Meetings
- Rail Grade Crossing Assessment Meetings
- Transit Planning Meetings
- District Construction Project Meetings

These meetings provide information and answer questions from citizens about the highway program, projects, or current transportation issues. The Department also gathers information for use in preparing the upcoming highway program. Public participation in the above meetings follows standard procedures. All public comments received from these meetings are given full consideration in the final development of the project.

Interested citizens are encouraged to attend. Watch your local media sources for project information meetings. Department personnel and management are accessible and strive to keep the interested citizen informed. Progress begins with the community and success emerges as everyone works together for a common goal.

Public Hearings

One of the basic methods of providing for the involvement of the general public is through public hearings. Hearings are held for projects involving significant impacts, such as roadway construction on shifted or new alignment and expressway development.

These projects proceed to the Nebraska Highway Commission and to the Governor for approval. Public hearings are designed to present to the general public the proposed project and any changes in design criteria, and to gather and address further public input. Public hearings are also held for new and revised Rules & Regulations and for Relaxations of Standards for projects.

Contact: NDOR Public Hearings Office
Voice: (402)479-4871 Fax: (402)479-3989
E-mail: dor.wordcntr@nebraska.gov

Informal Meetings with Department of Roads' Staff

Informal meetings are held to provide valuable information to concerned citizens and to receive general input. During the course of a project's development, informal meetings are held for various reasons. As conditions—such as corridor location, design, plans or property ownership—change within a project's limits, project design update meetings are scheduled. These informal meetings are intended to promote one-on-one discussion. Examples include meetings with communities, property owners, city/county officials, planning board members, community organizations and tribal governments.

Board of Public Roads Classifications & Standards Meetings

The Board oversees annual reporting for construction planning and operations of state and local highways, roads and streets, and the application of minimum design, construction and maintenance standards for functional classifications (categories) of public roadways.

The Board corresponds with Nebraska's 93 counties and 531 municipalities. The local governments conduct public hearings on their annual "One- and Six-Year Plan" and respond to comments. The counties, municipalities, and NDOR file a copy of their approved plans with the Board.

- The Governor appoints the members and NDOR provides administrative support.
- Board meets ten times a year.
- Mini-hearings on requests for relaxation of standards may be held at the meetings.

Contact: LeMoyne Schulz, Board Secretary &
NDOR Highway Local Liaison Coordinator
Voice: (402)479-4436 Fax: (402)479-3636
E-mail: lemoyne.schulz@nebraska.gov

Nebraska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan Meetings

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) supports NDOR's mission by providing an implementation plan for future transportation development in Nebraska. It is a guide for agencies involved in transportation to *move* Nebraskans safely and efficiently and to strengthen Nebraska's competitiveness in the national and global marketplace, improving our quality of life.

Contact: Brad Zumwalt, Planning & Project Development
Voice: (402)479-4623 Fax: (402)479-3884
E-mail: brad.zumwalt@nebraska.gov

Nebraska Railway Council Meetings

Council members are appointed by the Governor and administer the Light-Density Rail Line Assistance revolving fund which is money to be used to preserve and improve Nebraska's light-density rail lines.

Council meets as needed, but at least once a year. NDOR provides staff support.

Contact: Bev Vonasek, Rail & Public Transportation
Voice: (402)479-4515 Fax: (402)479-3692
E-mail: beverly.vonasek@nebraska.gov

Participation in Transportation Programs

Transportation programs identify those projects proposed to be undertaken during some multi-year period. Since 1969, Nebraska law has required the state, each county, and each municipality to develop a one-year plan and a six-year plan which includes the one-year plan. The State Roads Department and some other jurisdictions refer to these as the One- and Five-Year Program. The Department and some jurisdictions also publish a plan for projects "beyond" the statutory six-year planning cycle. These programs have traditionally addressed highway, road, or street projects. They currently include other types of projects such as Transportation Enhancement programs (trail, scenic, or related projects). This expansion is a result of these and other projects being eligible for federal funding.

Contact: James Pearson, Enhancement Program Administrator
Voice: (402)479-4881 Fax: (402)479-3636
E-mail: james.pearson@nebraska.gov

Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) are required for the metropolitan areas, (Greater Omaha, Lincoln and South Sioux City). A Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is required, which includes the TIPs. Both identify at least three years of major projects, including all federally funded transportation projects. Included are state and local roads, transit and other transportation-related projects. The STIP projects flow from the Department's One- and Five-Year Highway Construction Programs and from the Metropolitan Planning Organization's TIPs.

In December or January, each county and municipality drafts an update of its one- and six-year program. Updates are presented at public hearings in February. Subsequent to the hearings, the final updates are produced and filed with the State Board of Public Roads Classification and Standards, where they remain available for public review. Local projects to be funded by the Enhancement Program, the State-Aid Bridge Program, or the Recreational Road Program, must be included in the respective one- and six-year programs.

The local rural area transit programs (local transit vans and intercity buses) originate with a local entity, either a county or a town. Most of these programs are ongoing and presented to the public only as a budget item. Any new programs or a program having a significant change in service must be presented at a public hearing.

Contact: Jerry Wray, Rail & Public Transportation
Voice: (402)479-4694 Fax: (402)479-3692
E-mail: jerry.wray@nebraska.gov

The elderly and disabled transit program applicants (private nonprofit groups) must publish their intent to apply in the area newspaper and also notify other area transit providers.

Light-Density Rail Line Program candidates are presented and discussed at a Railway Council meeting. The published agenda for the meeting must identify the candidate line and the public can then comment either at the meeting or in writing.

Contact: Bev Vonasek, Rail & Public Transportation
Voice: (402)479-4515 Fax: (402)479-3692
E-mail: beverly.vonasek@nebraska.gov

A candidate for the Railroad and Grade Crossing Program can be proposed by the state, a railroad, a local entity or an individual. A team composed of representatives of the railroad, the state, the Federal Highway Administration, the local entity and individual proposers evaluate the crossing and recommend appropriate action.

Participation in State Highway Project Level Activities

Corridor Study - A public information meeting is held at the time a study begins. Another public information meeting is held after the study is completed, but before the Location Public Hearing.

Location and Design Hearings - These hearings are conducted by a Nebraska State Highway Commissioner. Notice of the public hearing is published twice prior to the hearing. Project location and design must be approved by the State Highway Commission and then by the Governor. At times the Location and Design Hearing may be held simultaneously.

Project Update or Pre-Appraisal Information Meetings - These meetings may be held if a long period of time has elapsed since the Public Hearing. Time schedules for future activities on the project are presented.

Nebraska Highway Commission - During Highway Commission meetings, information is presented and recommendations offered by the Department relative to specific highway projects. After an examination of the recommendations, the Commission may either return the project to the Department for further study or submit it to the Governor for final approval. All Commission actions are the result of a roll call vote in public session.

Pre-Construction Meetings - Prior to the completion of the final project design, Department staff may meet with those individuals and businesses directly affected by the construction.

Construction Meetings - After a project is let for construction, and during construction, the contractor and NDOR District staff may meet with residents and/or businesses in the project area to further inform them about the activities that will take place during construction and when those activities will occur.

Participation in Local Roads and Street Projects

A draft one- and six-year plan is developed at the local level. The local governing body then reviews the draft plan and schedules a public hearing for the plan. The local governing body takes comments at the hearing and may or may not revise the plan, depending on public testimony. The local government then passes a Resolution of Adoption of the one- and six-year plan. The county or municipality may revise the one-year plan later, by formal action at a public meeting. Copies of the plan are available to the public at the local highway (county and municipal) offices and at the Local Projects Division of the Nebraska Department of Roads (on behalf of the Board of Public Roads Classifications & Standards).

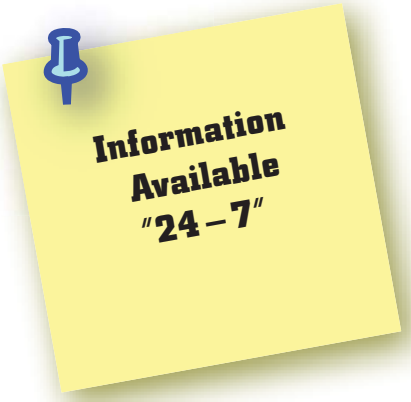
Contact: LeMoyne Schulz, Local Projects Division
Voice: (402)479-4507 Fax: (402)479-3636
E-mail: lemoyne.schulz@nebraska.gov

Additional Participation Opportunities for Specialized or Particular Groups

NDOR provides a separate consultation process for the non-metropolitan elected, appointed local officials and tribal governments. This process will give them the opportunity to provide input into the development of statewide plans and programs.

Each year NDOR will send a consultation request letter to these officials and offer them the opportunity to provide input into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). When other future statewide plans and programs are being developed, such as the Long-Range Transportation Plan, NDOR will send a consultation request letter for input. NDOR will respond to any comments/questions.

Contact: Jill Kuhel, Planning & Project Development
Voice: (402)479-3976 Fax: (402)479-3884
E-mail: jill.kuhel@nebraska.gov



The Department is available online at www.transportation.nebraska.gov. The TransPortal website contains information on current travel, highway projects, automated truck permit systems, upcoming meetings, news releases and maps. It also includes the 511-web system, which alerts drivers to road and weather conditions throughout the state. Also, as a result of national events the Department's website contains information from Homeland Security. The website is Nebraska's transportation portal to a variety of travel information... highway, air, rail, water, biking, hiking, and much more.

Through NDOR's website, information can be obtained or submitted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This provides yet another opportunity for public involvement with the Department of Roads' planning, operation and communication processes, via the internet.

The Department of Roads is placing special emphasis on reaching beyond the "traditional" government agencies, transportation users, and transportation providers to include individuals and organizations concerned with such issues as the environment, rural development, trails, bicycles, the elderly, the disabled, and tourism impacts of transportation. The Department recognizes the need to seek out and consider the needs of those whose transportation needs may not have been well served by the existing transportation system. The Department maintains mailing lists for the dissemination of information. Individuals and organizations who wish to be on these mailing lists should contact the Communication Division at (402)479-4512.

The Department also notifies the public by placing public notices and/or paid newspaper advertisements in the major state and local newspapers, issuing news releases to the media, handing out meeting fliers in the community and providing additional project information at meetings.

Public Hearings are advertised five weeks and two weeks in advance. Notices of other public meetings are advertised three weeks and one week in advance.

For additional information regarding news releases, meetings and hearings go to www.transportation.nebraska.gov/news/

Contact Personnel for Meetings/ Hearings Information

Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards Meetings/Hearings.....(402)479-4436

State Highway Commission Meetings .....(402)479-4871

Nebraska Railway Council Meetings.....(402)479-4515

District Transportation Meetings:

District 1	(402)471-0850	Fax (402)471-3401
District 2	(402)595-2534	Fax (402)595-1720
District 3	(402)370-3470	Fax (402)370-3473
District 4	(308)385-6265	Fax (308)385-6269
District 5	(308)436-6587	Fax (308)633-6614
District 6	(308)535-8031	Fax (308)535-8034
District 7	(308)345-8490	Fax (308)345-8492
District 8	(402)387-2471	Fax (402)387-1498

Public Information Meetings/Hearings.....(402)479-4871

Nebraska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Planning Meetings.....(402)479-3976

Local Program Liaison .....(402)479-4607

General Information and Assistance .....(402)479-4512

Department of Roads
http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov

State of Nebraska Public Meetings Calendar
http://www.nebraska.gov/calendar/index.cgi

NDOR News Release and Public Meetings Page
http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/news/

NDOR Directory of Services
http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/servdirect/

NDOR Highway Projects Information
http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/projects/

NDOR Surface Transportation Program
http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/hwy-pgm/

NDOR Frequently Requested Info
http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/info/

Nebraska
Department of Roads

Monty W. Fredrickson, P.E.
Director – State Engineer

Dave Heineman
Governor

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Communication Division