

Jim Wilkinson, NDOR Local Projects Engineer

Mr. Wilkinson's speech addressed the Local Projects Section goals and identified the responsibilities and major issues for consulting engineers and agents.

- SPEECH OUTLINE -

If you want Federal money, you must follow the Federal process....

We (NDOR and local agencies) thought we had been following Federal guidance. A **national study** by FHWA two years ago pointed to local projects, nationwide as the highest risk program. Very little or no fraud nor abuse was found. However, scrutiny of local projects receiving Federal-aid has needed to increase and Nebraska is no exception.

NDOR's Local Projects Section

The Government Affairs Division was reorganized into the Local Projects Section.

Why the reorganization?

- To administer all local projects in one section (urban projects had been administered in the Roadway Design Division).
- To provide consistency and uniformity in the way we process local Federal-aid projects.
- To more effectively coordinate 13 current employees. The deceptively small number is supplemented by staff in other divisions who also dedicate time and effort to support statewide local projects.

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1) Goals

Our mandate is to change the way we do business.

- a) **Increased NDOR Oversight.** Key word: **PROACTIVE**
 - i) Right-of-Way (ROW) – past two years NDOR has exercised much more oversight.
 - ii) Environmental Process - This year has changed significantly.
 - iii) Quality Assurance (QA) and Monitoring – construction site; State representative's role in local projects is now more extensive.
 - iv) Audits – Reviewing and monitoring performance. NDOR will be visiting Local Public Agencies (LPAs).
- b) **Document the Federal-aid process**
 - i) LPA Manual – January 30 anticipated completion. ...“the larger picture.”
 - ii) Corrective Actions [John Craig's October 6, 2008 letter, etc.]
 - (1) Local Projects are #1 Priority at NDOR. “It's a huge effort”
 - (2) Changing the process without closing down local projects
- c) **Help** local public agencies understand the federal-aid process.
 - i) **Training** (NE-Local Technical Assistance Program - LTAP). Certification.

2) Responsibilities

- a) As the “grantee,” NDOR is delegated the responsibility and authority by the Federal Government to obtain compliance.
- b) Mission (<http://www.nebraskatransportation.org/gov-aff/index.htm>) – key words **partnership, oversight, eligibility.**

Major Issues - How is all of this relevant to you?

Disclaimer: We are still working out the details.

- a) **LPA “Responsible Charge Person.”** This is a big change in the way we do business. This would require local agencies to have a full-time public employee (can be an existing employee) qualified to administer federal-aid projects. This person:
 - i) Knows the project
 - ii) Knows the process

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- iii) Is in control of the project on a day-to-day basis.
 - (1) Invoices, changes orders, etc., sent through the local agency.
- b) All of us – ***need to know more Federal-aid process and plan for it.***
 - i) *Training* – take it. Announcements will be on NE-LTAP’s website <http://www.ne-ltap.unl.edu/>
 - ii) *Ask before starting work* – verify – has it been *authorized*? The federal-aid process is linear, step-by-step.
 - iii) *Eligibility* – make it clear what is eligible and what is not.
- c) ***Documentation/Records/Retention*** – if it isn’t documented, it didn’t happen.
 - i) **Local agency** must keep a complete (and organized) file.
- d) ***Revisions***. Make sure you inform NDOR when plans are revised. NEPA and ROW.
- e) ***Jobsite*** - You will notice the state representative more; have your documentation complete and orderly.

3) Miscellaneous

- a) Some of you may be contacting resource agencies to try to expedite your projects: I cannot tell you not to do that, however, please understand that coordination with resource agencies for roadway projects is *through NDOR*. **Ask NDOR** for the status of your requests.
- b) NDOR’s *website* will post information as we transition into the new process. <http://www.nebraskatransportation.org/gov-aff/fed-aid.html>
- c) *Give us your feedback* on the process. How can we improve? We welcome your input.

4) Closing

We have been given no choice but to make changes. After all of the effort and coordination, we hope the end result will be that other agencies around the country will view ours as a **model local projects program**.

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Let’s work together and together things will work.

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