



Nebraska Department of Roads
**Innovation
Task Force**

Innovation Task Force Supports Practical Design Concept and Applauds NDOR's Increased Collaboration Efforts Through Expanded Project Prioritization Outreach

In its third meeting, the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) Innovation Task Force gathered on June 8, 2016, to discuss the concept of practical design as well as the status of the expanded project prioritization process and upcoming stakeholder outreach meetings.

Task Force shows their support for a practical design approach

Practical Design: How do we modernize our business practices. Mike Owen, NDOR Roadway Design Engineer, presented information on the idea of practical design, which could provide engineers flexibility in addressing transportation issues and the ability to tailor solutions that may not always meet the state's minimum design standards. Currently, if the engineering solution being proposed does not meet standards, NDOR must seek a design exception from the Nebraska Board of Classifications & Standards. Using a practical design approach would allow engineers to focus on meeting the specific needs of a project rather than focusing on meeting standards. Doing this can empower engineers to be more innovative and creative and it puts an emphasis on being practical and cost-efficient. Mike stressed the importance of applying good judgement in these decisions and that safety remains the agency's top goal.

Practical design in action: The practical design approach is being used in Missouri, Idaho, Kentucky, Kansas, Oregon and Utah and at the federal level they recognize that flexibility in design is important. Mike presented examples of projects in other states where transportation agencies saw savings of nearly \$800,000 - \$11 million by taking practical design approaches. An example of practical design in Nebraska and fact sheets about two approaches, 2+2 and Super 2, were shared.

How might NDOR embrace practical design?: Internal and external shifts would be needed to implement practical design at NDOR. The internal shifts, which could start right away with no changes to statutes or regulations, include empowering employees to think beyond what's been done in the past, focus on needs not standards, and work to be more flexible. Externally, an NDOR-led design exception process could be explored to increase flexibility and efficiency.

Task Force weighs in. Task Force members support the idea of NDOR utilizing practical design and feel that people across the state would be supportive as well. There were some questions about how decisions would be made regarding building a 4-lane roadway versus a Super 2 and also being sure that the agency looked at both short and long-term needs when making these decisions. Task Force members had questions about how this would affect cities and counties and their design processes and encouraged NDOR to include them in future conversations. Specifics on how NDOR would implement a practical design process and the potential of an NDOR-led design exception process will need more conversation.

Task Force members happy with increased outreach efforts and look forward to upcoming project prioritization stakeholder meetings

NDOR analyzing candidate projects and preparing for upcoming stakeholder meetings. NDOR Engineer, Brandie Neemann provided an update on the project prioritization process, sharing that NDOR is currently analyzing economic performance for more than 200 candidate project options based on stakeholder feedback from January. Tying into the earlier practical design discussion, Brandie described the various scope options that NDOR was developing for discussions at the July stakeholder meetings, including looking at smaller segments of long corridors and alternatives such as 2 + 2 and Super 2. The group heard details about how the economic performance analysis is done and they walked through examples illustrating the importance of using economic factors in the prioritization process.

Task Force fully supports NDOR's efforts and will help promote July's stakeholder meetings. The Task Force asked questions and had discussions to learn more about NDOR's approach to the economic performance analysis. There were several questions about contingent development and how that would be accounted for. Members supported NDOR's plan to analyze rural and urban projects separately. There was a lot of interest in the upcoming July stakeholder meetings and members provided good feedback on ways to communicate with stakeholders. Members also offered support in publicizing and participating in the meetings.

Task Force to meet again this fall

The next Task Force meeting will be scheduled in the fall where they will discuss the environmental review process and opportunities for streamlining. Task Force members expressed their appreciation for NDOR engaging them in these discussions and the increased collaboration efforts.

Information about the Innovation Task Force and materials presented at the third meeting are available at:

<http://roads.nebraska.gov/innovation-task-force>.