



Nebraska Department of Roads
**Innovation
Task Force**

Innovation Task Force Supports Exploring Efforts to Streamline Processes and Increase Customer Satisfaction

In its fourth meeting, the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) Innovation Task Force gathered on October 6, 2016, to discuss streamlining the environmental review process and NDOR's ongoing efforts to improve customer service. They also heard an update on the County Bridge Match Program.

Task Force encourages agency to explore opportunities for innovation in program delivery

Jason Jurgens, NDOR Environmental Section Manager, presented an overview of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and NDOR's environmental review processes. NEPA is a procedural law that makes sure environment and related social and economic effects are taken into consideration on federally funded projects.

There is an emerging national trend to streamline the environmental process required for developing transportation projects and Tim Hill, a NEPA expert from the Ohio Department of Transportation, shared information on the trend, called NEPA assignment. Under NEPA assignment, states take on the Federal Highway Administration's responsibility of environmental review. States that have taken on NEPA assignment have seen more efficient environmental assessments, an improved and streamlined project delivery process, while also reporting time and cost savings.

NDOR is currently exploring NEPA assignment as a possible way to streamline its environmental process and accelerate project delivery and presented the topic as an opportunity to get feedback from the Innovation Task Force on potential roadblocks. Task Force members asked thoughtful questions that led to insightful conversation about the prep work NDOR would need to undertake for NEPA assignment and encouraged the agency to continue its exploration.

Task Force members recommend ways to improve public engagement

Director Schneweis provided information on NDOR's efforts to expand public engagement efforts and improve customer satisfaction, including a statewide customer satisfaction survey and surveys of local public agencies, contractors and consultants. Development of NDOR's first freight plan will be underway soon, and specific efforts to engage freight stakeholders will support that plan. The agency is also updating its public involvement manual and will do extensive outreach as part of the update.

Task Force members shared their thoughts on who NDOR should be talking to and what needs to be communicated. Suggestions included: training for those in the field (including contractors) who will implement some of the process changes, hosting town hall meetings, hosting a transportation summit on a regular basis, include the agriculture community and public health in future outreach efforts, and host briefings for new legislators. Overall, Task Force members are pleased with NDOR's efforts to improve customer service and recommended the in-person outreach efforts continue, as they've been very effective.

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

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