

THE

# ROADRUNNER

Nebraska Department of Transportation

Winter 2019



From the Director

# Continuing Our Commitment



**Kyle Schneweis**

Welcome to 2019! As the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) closed the book on another year of hard work and service to our fellow Nebraskans, I wanted to take the opportunity to highlight some key takeaways of 2018.

NDOT released our 2018 State Highway Needs Assessment report, which details the future transportation funding needs of our state. NDOT recently presented this report to the Nebraska Legislature and projected that over the next 20 years Nebraska's road and bridge funding needs are estimated

to be \$12.5 billion. When calculating for inflation, that cost estimate jumps to \$18 billion.

To reach these conclusions, NDOT breaks our state transportation system needs into three key categories: Asset Preservation, System Modernization and Capital Improvements. From there, we examine the condition of our existing transportation assets, project deliverability, and revenue projections. While we know the cost of our needs will always far outpace the resources available, NDOT will continue to do our part to make sure that taxpayers continue to get the biggest bang for their pavement buck.

Bringing awareness to the challenging job NDOT's snowfighters do is another important message we stressed, just as the season's first snowstorms blew in. As part of our winter operations campaign, NDOT placed billboards in the Omaha, Lincoln-Seward, North Platte and Scottsbluff-Gering areas. They showcase our axiom this winter: Your Safe Travel Is Our Business. Each of the billboards highlight local snowplow drivers, letting motorists know their neighbors are the everyday heroes blazing the path through difficult conditions. Serving their communities and doing their part to keep our roads open are what keep them focused.

In October, it was my honor to participate in a ceremony that recognized eight NDOT employees who have been with the department for 45 years. Along with staff members celebrating important milestone work anniversaries, these individuals were celebrated at the State Capitol during an event to recognize their contributions and dedicated work. When asked about their time with NDOT, they sounded an almost universal theme about the quality of their coworkers, the importance of hard work and the reward of service to their fellow Nebraskans.

When we note the recent undertakings of the agency, we also must highlight our continued commitment to becoming a more efficient and effective customer-focused agency. During the past several years, we have undergone different process improvement projects that have saved or will save millions of dollars. We were excited to add Linsey Sousek to the NDOT team as our new Process Improvement Supervisor, along with her new staff.

Moving in to this New Year, I am excited for the opportunities in front of our agency as we strive to build the best possible statewide transportation system. Thanks for all you do in the process of working towards this mission! ■

## the Roadrunner

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**NEBRASKA**

Good Life. Great Journey.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NDOT Partners with Nebraska VR Creating Opportunities...One Door at a Time

By Linda Wilson  
Communication Division

Where doors had once closed, opportunities came knocking. Thanks to one agency reaching out to another, good things began to happen.

Nebraska Voc Rehab (VR) had an opportunity in their Work-Based Learning Program, designed for high school students and above, aged 14 to 21, with physical, intellectual or learning disabilities, who were eager to learn new skills that they could put to use on the job. Marsha Silvey, Nebraska VR Program Coordinator, contacted NDOT and discovered several divisions needed extra help with short-term projects during the summer. This aligns with their mission of helping people with disabilities prepare for employment and helping businesses employ them. In the end, it was a perfect match, according to Todd Ludwig, Recruiter in Human Resources.

"Although NDOT had worked with Nebraska VR in the past, this was the first time we participated in their Transitions Summer Program, which builds on what is learned during the school year and provides opportunities to develop skills to meet workplace expectations and further develop employability skills. Since we had some restrictions on filling positions, I knew many of our NDOT employees were stretched thin already, so I was hoping it could be a win-win situation where we were getting help that we didn't have to get approval to fill, because it wasn't out of our budget.

## Willing to Participate

"At the same time we would be helping young people get experience and their foot in the door, possibly even matriculating into employees in the future. For these



Photo by Jake Daniels

NDOT was recognized for their participation in Nebraska Voc Rehab's (VR) Work-Based Learning Program, employing four high school students. Pictured (l to r): Brock Wettstead, Nebraska VR; Jacqueline Baird, Roadway Design; Patrick Costello, BTSD; Nicolette Klein, Right-of-Way; Joseph Haines, Roadway Design; Jean Todd, Right-of-Way; Marsha Silvey, Nebraska VR; and Todd Ludwig, Human Resources.

reasons, I was pleased to see several people at NDOT with a strong interest in the program who were willing to participate," Ludwig noted.

NDOT participants in the summer program each had unique reasons for their involvement. Jacqueline Baird,

Roadway Design, did it as a way to give back, having benefited from the program when she was a college student. Nicolette Klein, Right-of-Way, liked the idea of collaborating with other agencies to help each other out and to find a way to show those with disabilities that there

are good paying jobs for them. Joe Haines, Roadway Design, wanted to help a student who he discovered had an interest in the field of engineering. Pat Costello, BTSD, was looking for someone to assist in the heavy workload of the division.

Three of the participating students were high school seniors at Lincoln high schools. The fourth student, who worked with Costello in BTSD, is a freshman at

*"At the same time we would be helping young people get experience and their foot in the door, possibly even matriculating into employees in the future."*

- Todd Ludwig, NDOT Recruiter



Photo by Jake Daniels

Loriana Lee, a student at Southeast Community College, sits among the computers she has been working on while assisting with BTSD's heavy workload.

Southeast Community College (SCC) in Lincoln. They each worked 20 hours per week during the six-week program.

As with any new endeavor, there were a few initial concerns. Baird noted that her supervisor had concerns about the extra time required for training and getting the student started on tasks, and how that might affect her already full workload. These concerns were alleviated, however, when several co-workers were willing to assist with this task.

### Challenging Work

Another concern was that some of the tasks assigned might seem monotonous and not as challenging. However, feedback from the students showed that they were engaged in learning new and varied tasks, with enough challenging work to counterbalance the routine tasks.

Baird's student had the opportunity to test and critique a new training program as well as update a database. Haines' student assisted with organizing plans and other administrative work. Klein's student was engaged in a project involving preparing files for archiving sign permit records.

Klein said her student was highly motivated. "She was very accurate, meticulous and took a lot of pride in seeing the stack of work go down at the end of the day. She was working four hours each day and getting great experience toward future employment."

Costello's student, who attends SCC, has continued beyond the summer program. "My student already had an interest in computers and she learned very quickly. We just showed her how to open a computer and change the memory, the hard drive or whatever we needed to do. She can keep up with the best of us now. She is still working for us part-time, and I'm going to continue for as long as we can manage it."

He has the perfect opportunity in mind. "I recently got word that the NDOT is going to get around 1,000 computers in January, and I told Lorianna that she was going to be a big part of getting all of these computers built and ready to go. She smiled and said she was looking forward to it."

### Great Outcome

Not only does Lorianna continue to work at BTSD while attending classes half days, Costello said she told him she plans to use her salary to move into an apartment with two other girls. "This is a great outcome for her to be self-sufficient. As a result of this program, these kids get the idea that they *can* be productive, they *can* hold a job outside of their home."

Very few accommodations were required for the students, but NDOT participants expressed appreciation to Nebraska VR for providing those that were needed. For example, they provided a riser to increase the height of the table for one of

the students who used a wheelchair.

Overall, everyone's experience with Nebraska VR's Summer Transitions Program was positive. Whether it was a personal connection, the idea of partnering with another agency, the mentoring aspect or necessity, all agreed that their commitment was well worth it.

Klein noted, "Our experience with the VR Summer Transitions Program showed us just how capable these students are. I would encourage other NDOT divisions and even districts to consider trying this, even if only for six weeks. Just think of what these youngsters could learn and do. For those with disabilities, this might give them a chance to say, 'well, maybe I *can* do this.' After that, who knows where this could lead?"

Possibly even opening that door when opportunity knocks. ■

*"I would encourage other NDOT divisions and even districts to consider trying this."*

- Nicolette Klein, Right-of-Way



## NDOT's Message to Motorists:

# "Your Safe Travel is Our Business"

By Linda Wilson  
Communication Division

Planning and preparing for potential winter storms is something that the Nebraska Department of Transportation takes very seriously.

Each of NDOT's eight highway districts plays a major role in these efforts, including one of the most important jobs at the department—plowing snow to make the state's roads safe for the traveling public and keep commerce moving. Technology plays an important part in aiding these hard-working snowfighters with this challenging work. Several tools, including the Maintenance Decision Support System, Plow Tracker and Statewide Radio System provide improved information to increase efficiency and help make the winter journey on roads safer. As technology evolves, we continue to look for ways to serve our customers in their decisions as they make their travel plans.

These star performers are featured in the inaugural message of NDOT's safety awareness campaign, reminding motorists: "Your Safe Travel is Our Business." Their efforts, along with the latest innovations, equipment and materials make it possible to maintain the safe and reliable transportation system that motorists expect.

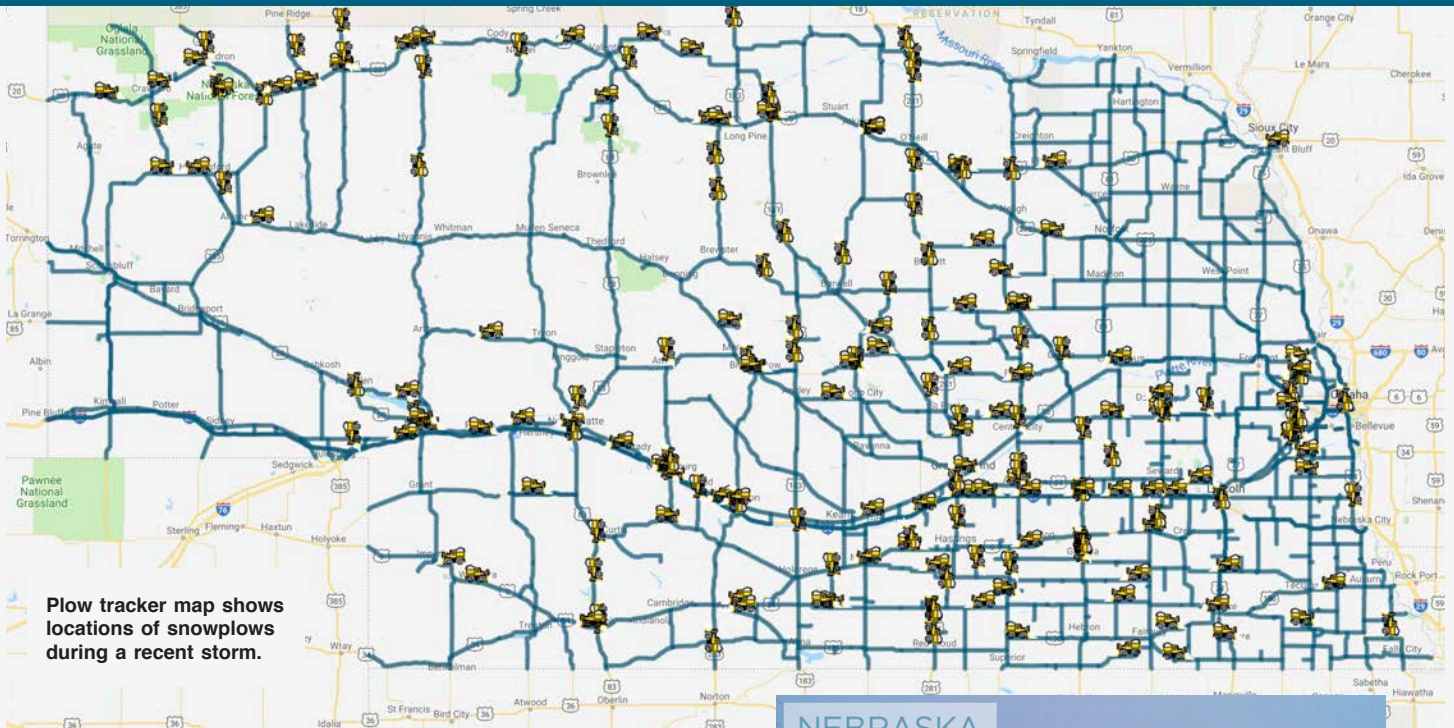
### MDSS

The Maintenance Decision Support System (MDSS), a five-year, \$6 million contract with Parsons Corporation to modernize the state's road-clearing operations, is in its third year of implementation at NDOT. According to Austin Yates, former

Four roadside billboards were unveiled in December, part of NDOT's new safety awareness campaign, "Your Safe Travel is Our Business." The campaign highlights NDOT's efforts to maintain a safe and reliable transportation system by bringing the work done by maintenance staff to the attention of drivers.

Each billboard is strategically located along I-80 and features NDOT snowplow operators with catchphrases, including "We are Your Snowfighters," "Respect the Plow," and "Respect the Snowfighters." The billboards represent the people, the work they do and the values they hold, working days and nights, holidays and birthdays to keep roadways open for safe travel.

Emphasizing the importance of the campaign, NDOT Director Kyle Schneeweis noted, "It tells the story of our people and their dedication to keeping their communities safe, and it improves the awareness of winter operations by putting the safety message on the road."



Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSMO) Engineer in NDOT’s Operations Division, the system is a computer application for managing and improving highway maintenance practices during winter weather events.

Combined with Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Mobile Data Collectors (MDCs), NDOT Maintenance Managers are able to view sophisticated weather and pavement models, plow truck locations, camera views of roads ahead, material usage, and more. Snowplow operators receive current and predicted weather information, location of other plow trucks, and recommended material application rates and time to apply.

“MDSS enables uniform response to road weather events across district boundaries and optimizes resource usage to achieve the desired outcome,” Yates noted.

This year NDOT’s highway districts are closer to full implementation of MDSS and have worked on identifying and addressing any issues as they arise. According to Kelly Doyle, District 7 Operations and Maintenance Manager (DOMM), “We have been busy providing training to our new and current employees to assure all operators are familiar with the MDSS system and what is expected of them to assure the system is being utilized to the fullest.”

### Plow Tracker

Each snowplow has a camera installed to provide an image of what the operator is seeing and reporting systems that are forwarded to the forecaster, along with



Plow tracker image from in-cab camera during a recent storm.

vehicle and treatment data as well as operator inputted road or weather conditions. In January 2019, the camera became available for the public on a new [“Plow Tracker” website](#).

Districts 1 and 2 continue to expand on the use of tow plows in the Lincoln and Omaha areas, with District 3 getting their first tow plow this season. Equipped with the capability to clear two lanes at once, tow plows speed up the process of snow removal, particularly on I-80 and other highways with multiple lanes in each direction.

### Statewide Radio System

Also new this year, a Statewide Radio System (SRS) is available to all NDOT districts. Roger Klasna, District 6 DOMM, reported that every snowplow in his district is fitted with a P-25 radio capable of reaching anywhere in the state where service is available. “The new system

makes it easier to coordinate and communicate with NDOT responders and other state agencies. By communicating on the SRS, all operators on the assigned channel are able to hear all communication, which provides continuous situation awareness to those involved in the response.”

Klasna also noted that District 6 has prepared a strategic communication system (AlertSense) and user group to receive notices and updates during winter emergencies. They have started planning messages to local stakeholders and agencies that are impacted by transportation emergencies in west-central Nebraska.

### Pathfinder

Another new innovation is Pathfinder, a strategy for proactive system management ahead of and during adverse weather events. This is a collaborative effort between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), National Weather Service (NWS) and weather service contractors to share and translate weather forecasts and road conditions into consistent transportation impact messages for the public.

After a successful Pathfinder Pilot project last fall led by Jessica Sherwood, State Operations Center (SOC) Manager, and Jesse Schulz, SOC Meteorologist, NDOT expanded the effort statewide. Information is shared through NDOT’s twitter feeds, other social media platforms and DMS message boards.

*“The intended outcome of Pathfinder is drivers who are well informed and able to make safe and efficient travel decisions.”*

- Jessica Sherwood, SOC Manager

A NWS online chat room is available for anyone to quickly ask questions and share weather-related information. NDOT districts utilize the Pathfinder chat room to closely monitor ever-changing weather forecasts, watches, advisories and warnings as a tool in preparing for potential storms. Pathfinder also aids driver decision making and planning activities.

Sherwood noted, “The intended outcome of Pathfinder is drivers who are well informed and able to make safe and efficient travel decisions.”

### Clear Roads Research

NDOT recently received funding from the Clear Roads Research Program for a research proposal to produce a nationally accepted test procedure for measuring ice-melting capacity and sucrose additive research to ascertain which sources have the ability to satisfy Nebraska’s requirement for a sucrose additive. The Program is a consortium of transportation professionals from around the country that drives innovation in the field of winter maintenance. By evaluating materials, equipment and methods in real-world conditions, the program identifies the most effective techniques and technologies to save agencies money, improve safety and increase efficiency. ■



Tow plow in action east of Lincoln on US-77 near the I-80 on-ramp.

Photo by Jake Daniels

# 2018 Needs Assessment Presented to the Legislature

NDOT Director Kyle Schneweis presented the agency's annual Needs Assessment to a joint hearing of the Nebraska Legislature's Transportation & Telecommunications Committee and Appropriations Committee in mid-December. Director Schneweis' testimony outlined the particulars of the assessment, which estimates the state's 20-year infrastructure needs to be \$12.5 billion in today's dollars.

Nebraska Statute requires an annual assessment and reporting of the needs of the State Highway System. This assessment is done annually as a way for the department to strategically manage resources and investment. The 2018 estimates were compiled under the categories of Asset Preservation, System Modernization and Capital Improvements. Asset Preservation composed \$7.1 billion, System Modernization composed \$1.8 billion and Capital Improvement composed \$3.6 billion of the estimated \$12.5 billion in needs.

When adjusted for inflation over the 20-year reach of the Needs Assessment, the predicted costs rose to \$18 billion. Director Schneweis put the numbers into perspective by stating Nebraska's average yearly expenditures on infrastructure needs are around \$500 million.

Still, he said, the department is able to provide a safe transportation system that serves Nebraska well and helps drive the state's economy.

As senators viewed the report, Director Schneweis reminded them that it represents a strategic snapshot of the state's infrastructure needs.

"Tracking and assessing needs is a dynamic and constant process," the Director said. "The future of transportation has more uncertainty and opportunity than at any other time in my career. Major changes like autonomous vehicles, connected infrastructure, rideshare services, e-commerce, electric vehicles and 3D printing could all have profound impacts on the way Nebraskans travel and the way freight moves through our state."

## Summary 20-Year Needs (2018)

|                           |                |     |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----|
| Asset Preservation .....  | \$ 7.1 billion | 57% |
| System Modernization ...  | \$ 1.8 billion | 14% |
| Capital Improvements .... | \$ 3.6 billion | 29% |
| Total .....               | \$12.5 billion |     |

## Technology Influence

Anticipation of technology's influence on the Nebraska transportation system's future was included as a standalone category in the assessment for the first time, highlighting the department's budgeted costs for Transportation Systems Management and Operations' (TSMO) efforts.

"Pulling out costs that were previously included in specific project costs allows NDOT to strategically

manage operational improvement investments," Schneweis said.

The agency spends \$4 million annually on cameras, messages boards and traffic-control systems.

Such expenditures certainly will increase, the Director said, as technology becomes more entwined with transportation, forcing NDOT to anticipate and plan to meet mobility obligations.

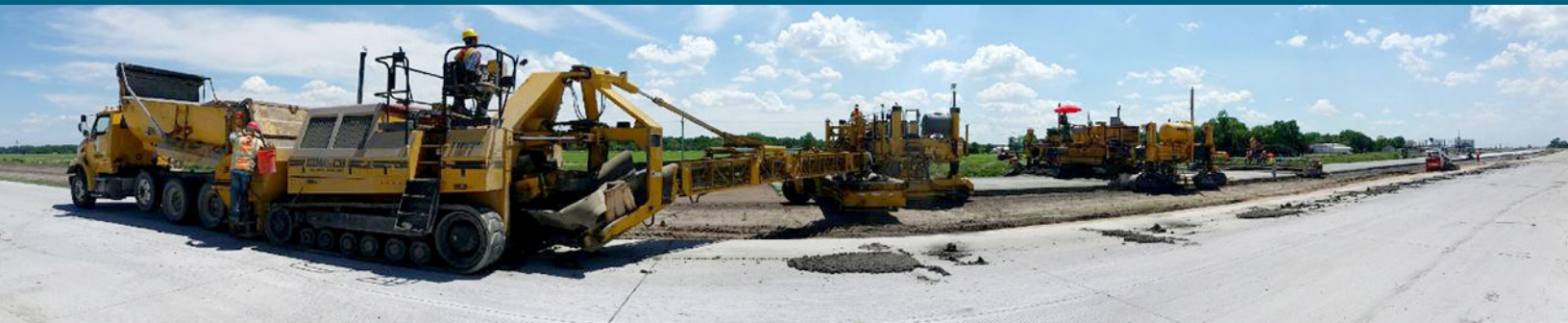
Anticipating the needs of tomorrow was central to another addition to the report: The Metro Area Travel Improvement Study, developed by NDOT, in coordination with the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA). The study is establishing future transportation improvement needs of the Omaha metropolitan area. Current estimates from the study call for \$590 million to be spent over 20 years to make the necessary capacity needs on state highways in the Omaha area.

Strategic management of investments focused on current and future infrastructure needs helps the department stay focused on delivering the best possible transportation system. Because of that, Nebraska has a well-preserved transportation system, and its communities are receiving long-awaited projects that will continue to grow its economy. ■

*"The future of transportation has more uncertainty and opportunity than at any other time in my career."*

- NDOT Director Kyle Schneweis





Paving operations on US-30, Schuyler to Rogers.

Photo by Mike Steffensmeier

## Build Nebraska Act

# Work Completed Early on US-30, Schuyler to Rogers

By Jake Daniels  
Communication Division

The US-30 Schuyler to Rogers project was slated for 993 calendar days of construction, with a majority of the work to be done in under 789 days. Project team members decided to push things a little bit, resulting in completion in January, about five months ahead of schedule.

“We worked a little extra and got it done,” said Shawn Sleezer, Hawkins Construction Company site supervisor.

Contractors and NDOT personnel worked long days and many weekends to push the completion date ahead of schedule. Project Manager Michael Steffensmeier attributes much of the project’s early finish to good planning, coordination and efficiency. “A very big thank you is in order for all those who contributed,” Steffensmeier said.

Sleezer also attributed the success to planning and timing. The crews tried to organize their tasks to minimize the amount of downtime and waiting on the site. There were minor snags—a right-of-way issue cost the project 4-6 weeks, in the supervisor’s estimation, but the project pushed forward regardless.

### Focus on Safety

While a speedy construction schedule was a plus, Steffensmeier said the foremost concern on the site was safety. Both at weekly meetings between the NDOT and Hawkins, or during everyday interactions between NDOT inspectors and Hawkins field staff, all parties involved were focused on safe and efficient work. “We and the NDOT got along real well,” said Sleezer.

A majority of the project’s construction – including Phase 1 and 2 grading, drainage, mainline and surfaced shoulder pavement, a crossover, and switching the two-lane, two-way traffic into new westbound lanes – was contracted to be completed by December 1, 2018, in 789 calendar days, which included two winter seasons. Construction began October 3, 2016.

The contractor utilized earthwork files, GPS equipment and made use of a stringless paver system for all mainline paving operations. Sleezer says the company has been using the stringless system for at least six years.

### Regional Connectivity

The project’s primary purpose was to improve regional connectivity on US-30 for both public and commercial travelers. As the only direct connection between Columbus and Fremont, the highway sees a lot of traffic – the average daily count in 2016 was 6,640 vehicles, 710 of which were heavy vehicles. Those numbers are projected to grow to 10,240 vehicles, with 1,030 being heavy vehicles, by 2036.

“It was a much-needed project for the state,” said Sleezer. He said the upgraded roadway will benefit both residents and commercial interests in the area.

Highway 30 isn’t done improving, though. The next project in the area picks up where this one left off – improving the roadway from Rogers to North Bend. This next project began in September 2018, and is slated for completion in November 2020.

The Build Nebraska Act project, known as Schuyler to Fremont, is comprised of three projects: Schuyler to Rogers, Rogers to North Bend, and North Bend to Fremont, which is now in the planning stages. ■

# Aviation Economic Impact Study In Progress

By David Moll  
Aeronautics Division

In 2002, a rough Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) snapshot of aviation's impact on Nebraska's economy was estimated at \$8.5 billion. In 2014, the FAA estimated 41,000 Nebraskans were employed due to civil aviation, which was 3.2% of all jobs. With this in mind, in October the NDOT commissioned GBA, an engineering firm from Lenexa, Kansas, to do an economic study for better decision-making on how best to support aviation and grow Nebraska.

The study, "Aviation Counts!" is funded by the Federal Aviation Administration at a cost of around \$400,000, and is the first of its kind since 2002. This time, the task given to GBA is to make an Economic Benefits Calculator enabling an updated economic impact analysis in between studies so the information will not be just a snapshot in time, but a living document updated as needed by the Division of Aeronautics.

Some of the economic impacts you might consider are obvious, such as aerial applicators supporting \$23 billion in crop and grain sales. But have you considered doctors flying to rural communities to conduct clinics for specialized medical attention?

Todd Duncan, Chairman of Duncan Aviation, told the kick-off group that 95% of their business is from out of state, and of that number, 15% are from foreign countries. This combined with over 1,300 employees in the Lincoln area and an impressive 300-plus employees companywide who have been employed by Duncan for over 25 years.

The study is expected to take about a year and has been sent to every Nebraska Airport Authority or Airport Manager for the 80 public-use airports in Nebraska. The survey is available at <http://nebraskaaviationcounts.com>. ■



Photo by Jake Daniels

NDOT hosted a kick-off event at Duncan Aviation Hangar B in October for the "Aviation Counts!" economic impact study. NDOT Director Kyle Schneeweis and Aeronautics Director Ronnie Mitchell were among the speakers at the event.

## Trumble New Aeronautics Commissioner

By David Moll  
Aeronautics Division

Tom Trumble was appointed by Governor Pete Ricketts to the Aeronautics Commission on August 10, 2018. He will serve for a term of five years, ending in 2023. The Commission consists of five members and is responsible for allocating and approving state and federal funding for airport projects, approving the sites of public-use airports, authorizing aircraft purchases for the state, approving pilots for state employment, and advising the Director of Aeronautics.

"As a registered Professional Engineer, I have designed and managed the construction of airport projects in the State of Nebraska for the past 20 years. My knowledge of the FAA and Nebraska aviation programs will be useful as a Commissioner."

Trumble's passion for aviation began as a young boy in 1964 with his first ride in a Tri-Pacer at the Fairmont State Airfield. Building radio-controlled models followed in his college years. That passion has soared over the years.

(cont'd. on next page)

“In 1970 I discovered that I could rent a Cherokee 140 for \$12.50/hour through the University Flying club. Doing the math with the rate at which I crashed models led me to the decision to learn to fly. Over time I have observed some faults in this financial plan. I obtained my Private Pilot Certificate from Lincoln Aviation through the University Flying Club in August of 1971 with a huge 40 hours in the log book.”

Trumble graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in Engineering and launched his career of building infrastructure projects, including paving, buildings, water, sewer, airports and industrial plants.

Trumble and his wife Sharon raised six children, which limited his flying until around 1991, when he rented an airplane from Jim Polack at the Wahoo airport. In 1995, they obtained a one-half interest in a Cessna 172 that they currently own—a familiar visitor at many Nebraska airports. He has since added instrument and commercial ratings and 3,000+ hours of time.

His good fortune with aviation has allowed Trumble to share his passion through the EAA young Eagles program by giving over 800 kids an introduction to flight. ■



*Photo Courtesy of Aeronautics Division*

**Tom Trumble, appointed to the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission in August 2018, looks forward to putting his knowledge of the FAA and Nebraska aviation programs to use in serving the state.**

## Mitchell Retires as Director of Aeronautics Division

**By David Moll**  
Aeronautics Division

Along with the New Year came the end of an era at NDOT's Aeronautics Division, with the retirement of Director Ronnie Mitchell. According to Mitchell, “When I first started work for the then Department of Aeronautics on August 21, 2002, I had no idea I would still be part of this great organization. But now it is time for a change.”

Mitchell has over 50 years of experience in the aviation industry. He served 15 years with the Department of Aeronautics prior to the merger with NDOT in 2017, as well as nearly 23 years in the U.S. Air Force as a pilot and staff officer, retiring as a full Colonel, and more than 11 years as a pilot with United Airlines, retiring as a Captain. He also served as Chairman of the Board for the National Association of State Aviation Officials.

Mitchell said flying as a profession has been his most enjoyable experience, with the exception of a few days each year, “when you would rather be on the ground instead of in the air.” He has appreciated the opportunity to work with some talented people who do a great job in their work.

A retirement Open House was held in Mitchell's honor on December 18. NDOT Director Kyle Schneweis and Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts congratulated him on his years of service, his contributions to NDOT and to aviation. ■



*Photo by David Moll, Aeronautics Division*

**Ronnie Mitchell, during a retirement reception honoring his service as Director of NDOT's Aeronautics Division. Also pictured, NDOT Director Kyle Schneweis, left, and Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts.**

# Sousek Seeks to Build on Process Improvement Successes

By Gary Peterson  
Communication Division

When Linsey Sousek took the reins of NDOT's Process Improvement team in November, she topped her to-do list with the goal of building on the department's Lean Six Sigma successes and working toward improved LSS related outcomes. She also made retention of Process Improvement Coordinator (PIC) team members an important goal.

Sousek joined NDOT after serving as Process Improvement Supervisor in Operational Excellence at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Her time at DHHS began in 2002, and Sousek said she fully believes in the agency's mission to help people live better lives. She found the work rewarding, especially in how it touched every Nebraskan in every aspect.

In making her move to NDOT, Sousek cited the pull of NDOT's own ability to touch the lives of everyone in the state, as well as its mission to serve the public. Furthermore, she also saw a chance to leverage her experience to assist the agency with its growing process improvement needs.

"I know with my past experience and my team's experience, we will help accomplish NDOT's strategies and goals," Sousek said, adding her plan is "to drive efficient, streamlined, customer-oriented and common-sense application of Lean Six Sigma to improve business processes."

Additionally, Sousek said her office will work to fully utilize LSS tools and its collective operational experiences to improve efficiencies and suitability across the department.

## Team-First Approach

Nurturing operational success fits Sousek's nature, as the Wahoo resident takes pleasure in helping others find opportunities and celebrating their individual success stories. Her team-first



Photo by Jake Daniels

Linsey Sousek, the new head of process improvement, and David Jones talk through their morning huddle.

approach also applies to Sousek's methodology for reaching organizational solutions that benefit the entire agency and the citizens of Nebraska.

"In this position, I look forward to learning more about the transportation industry and hearing from NDOT team members regarding the important work they do," Sousek said, "as well as their thoughts on how we can apply LSS concepts to make their work easier and improve the customer's experience."

Workplace success, of course, benefits from staff being able to find enrichment in their personal lives. That applies to Sousek, too. When this Huskers fan looks to recharge outside of work, she enjoys running, spending time with family and friends, and traveling. Regarding the latter, she listed Missouri's Lake of the Ozarks, Wisconsin Dells and Washington, D.C., as her favorite destinations from the past year.

Back in the office, Sousek and PIC Davey Jones look forward to working with the NDOT team in 2019. Anyone who has ideas or questions is encouraged to send Sousek an email at [linsey.sousek@nebraska.gov](mailto:linsey.sousek@nebraska.gov) or call her at 402-432-1244. ■

# New TSMO Council Encompasses Many Strategies

By Linda Wilson  
Communication Division

Many positive steps have taken place since NDOT Director-Operations Moe Jamshidi announced formation of the Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) Council last summer. Pronounced “TIZZ-Moe”, the group replaced the former Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Executive Committee. ITS is but one aspect of TSMO, which also includes such strategies as Traffic Incident Management (TIM), Freight Management, Traveler Information, Integrated Corridor Management, and Connected and Autonomous/Automated Vehicle (CAV) Deployments.

Members of the TSMO Council include: Moe Jamshidi; Steve Ingracia, Deputy Director for Technology and Strategic Planning; Tom Goodbarn, Tim Weander and Gary Thayer, District 1, 2 and 6 Engineers, respectively; Tom Sands, Operations Manager; Dan Waddle, Traffic Engineer; and Mike Owen, Roadway Design Engineer.

TSMO is a set of strategies to anticipate and manage traffic congestion, and minimize the other unpredictable causes of service disruption, delay and crashes. A game plan has been developed with initiatives for each of the components of TSMO. A kick-off meeting was held in November to develop a charter, mission and objectives of the council. Members also attended a Capability Maturity Framework (CMF) workshop in August led by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Future steps outlined for each of the initiatives in the game plan for NDOT include: formation of a new TSMO Strategic Plan in place of the ITS Strategic Plan; establishing their own contract with an Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS) 511 vendor; pursuing capability of in-house support for IRIS, an open-source Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) produced by the Minnesota DOT; pursuing a full-time, professional motorist assist program; leveraging CAVs to improve safety, be forward-looking and support businesses; seeking a statewide TIM group facilitator contract; and exploring social media presence on how best to serve customers and get the word out for relevant, urgent communications. ■

*“TSMO recognizes that we must embrace multiple methods of managing the roadway, and that technology is only one component of our management philosophy.”*

- Steve Ingracia, Deputy Director

Photo courtesy of Nebr. Assoc. of Trans. Providers



A driver maneuvers a small transit bus through cones on the obstacle course.

## “Rodeo” Showcases Transit Drivers’ Skills

By Kari Ruse  
NDOT Transit Manager

The Nebraska Transit Driver Rodeo was held at the Kearney Driving Range in September 2018. The NDOT Transit Section and the Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers sponsor the annual event. The Rodeo provides the opportunity for transit drivers from across the state to participate in a friendly competition that tests their driver skills in the small bus and van divisions. Nineteen drivers were judged on a written exam, mobility device securement, and their proficiency in maneuvering a driving obstacle course.

The top three finalists in each category and their managers won an all-expense paid trip to the National Rodeo and EXPO in Palm Springs, California in May 2019. Nebraska drivers will compete with other drivers from across the country in the National Rodeo. Managers will have the opportunity to attend educational workshops and an industry trade fair.

The NDOT Transit Section is proud to support our drivers and managers as they provide public transportation in the rural areas of the state and specialized transportation services for the elderly and disabled. ■

# Transit Driver Training Program Receives National Recognition

By Kari Ruse  
NDOT Transit Manager

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) highlighted NDOT's Driver Training Boot Camp as a best practice in the November 2018 issue of the RTAP Best Practices Spotlight. The two-day driver boot camps are held quarterly in Kearney at the Nebraska Safety Center Driving Range.

Boot camps offer transit drivers the opportunity for hands-on learning experiences with a variety of mobility devices, wheelchair securement, and high-tech driving simulators. Guest presenters from the Nebraska State Patrol, Kearney Firefighters and CHI Health are invited to educate drivers about distracted driving, safety and first aid. Read more about NDOT's Driver Training Boot Camp at RTAP's website. [www.nationalrtp.org](http://www.nationalrtp.org)

NDOT's transit driver training is provided through a contract with the University of Nebraska. The current program was implemented in 2014 and includes minimum and mandatory requirements for rural public transit drivers. All training is offered at no cost to agencies receiving federal and state funds for the provision of rural public and specialized transportation in Nebraska.

To facilitate participation in driver training, workshops including defensive driving, difficult passengers and advanced wheelchair securement are offered at locations across the state. Travel expenses to attend are also eligible for reimbursement.

NDOT's lead driver training instructor, Kaitlyn Richardson, organizes and develops the curriculum for Boot Camp. Ms. Richardson says, "The Boot Camps give a unique opportunity for transit drivers in Nebraska to not only learn best practices through classroom lecture and expert speakers in a centralized location, but to actually practice them hands-on as well. I enjoy watching drivers gain a common ground with each other by sharing stories and experiences from their home agencies and applying what they discuss to the curriculum and practice." ■



Mick Anderson, Nebraska Safety Center instructor, discusses the importance of safety during driver boot camp.

Photo Courtesy of Nebraska Safety Center



Public Transit

## Nebraska Transit Introduces New Website

By Kari Ruse  
NDOT Transit Manager

On January 3, 2019, NDOT's Transit Team and the University of Nebraska launched a new website at [nebraskatransit.com](http://nebraskatransit.com). The redesigned website includes valuable information for the traveling public including a comprehensive list of providers across the state and an interactive map where users can search for transportation options by agency, county or city. A new intercity bus map provides travelers with information about service that connects Nebraska towns and points beyond our state borders.

Tara Grell, graphic designer at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, led the redesign effort. In addition to designing the format and developing content, Ms. Grell received feedback from multiple stakeholders statewide including the Nebraska Federation of the Blind to improve accessibility of the new website for all users.

The new website will continue to connect rural transit systems and specialized transportation providers to NDOT's online portal. The portal leads users to their own unique dashboards where they can submit invoices, reports and funding applications.

To learn more and keep up with transit in Nebraska, follow us at [www.facebook.com/nebraska.transit](https://www.facebook.com/nebraska.transit). ■



# Long-time NDOT Employees Driven by Sense of Service, Relationships

By Gary Peterson  
Communication Division

Putting 45 years into anything is a noteworthy accomplishment. Funnel those 45 years into a single workplace, and noteworthy becomes exemplary.

Eight NDOT staff reached the exemplary plateau in 2018, and they were honored this past fall during a ceremony recognizing 131 NDOT employees with between 10 years and 45 years of service.

As Governor Pete Ricketts and Director Kyle Schneweis noted during the ceremony, the heart of a great public organization is the people who have dedicated their time and talents to improving their communities. NDOT's heart has beaten longest through the service of Roger Grant, Pege Gross-Rhode, Roger Kalkwarf, Dan Lange, Wayne Masek, Karen McCord, Mark Ottemann and Douglas Sittler.

## Source of Longevity

Gross-Rhode cited the people she has encountered daily as a source of her longevity.

"When describing my occupation and other types of jobs at NDOT to new acquaintances," she said, "I tell them in conclusion, there are good people working here."

Lange and Kalkwarf took pride in their lengthy tenures. Lange said to remain standing through all of the changes four-plus decades brings is an accomplishment all by itself. Kalkwarf felt satisfaction, knowing his career began as a \$2.22-per-hour maintenance worker before he worked his way to NDOT District 1 Operations & Maintenance Manager.

Gross-Rhode, Lange and Kalkwarf all extolled the virtues of hard work and commitment as bulwarks of an enduring career.

"Share your talents and ideas with your co-workers and you will all learn something new," Gross-Rhode said.

"Take pride in your work, and do your job to the best of your ability," Lange offered.

Meanwhile, Kalkwarf added, "If (employees) apply themselves there is opportunity to

advance within NDOT. They will not get rich, but there are pretty good benefits, and serving the public, along with other good personnel."

## Memorable Moments

Still, making sure one's nose is firmly against the proverbial grindstone for a generation does not mean there will not be chuckle-worthy moments to recount later. Something to which Lange and Kalkwarf can attest.

Lange recalled inspecting a paving project on U.S.

Highway 77, north of Interstate 80. A vehicle became stuck in fresh concrete while trying to avoid construction equipment. The vehicle was extricated and went on its way before a sheriff's deputy arrived. The deputy had been called because of the damage to the pavement. After he berated Lange for neglecting to get the stuck vehicle's license number or the driver's name, the deputy, too, became stuck in the fresh concrete when he tried to leave. This time, Lange got the license number, and he gave the chastened lawman his own plate information.

For Kalkwarf, it was the time he was mowing a roadside with no umbrella on his tractor – standard for the time. His tractor broke down, and he had to wait for a random car to stop and pick him up. "Now our employees have a tractor with a cab and air-conditioning," Kalkwarf said. ■

*"Take pride in your work, and do your job to the best of your ability."*

- Dan Lange, Roadway Design



Pege Gross-Rhode



Roger Kalkwarf



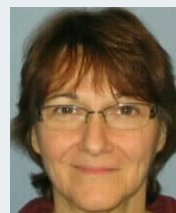
Dan Lange



Mark Ottemann



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Karen McCord



Roger Grant



Wayne Masek