

Federal Budget Update From the Director

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) expired on September 30, 2003. Federal highway and transit programs are now operating under a fourth short-term extension as Congress has not been able to come to an agreement regarding the reauthorization legislation. This extension runs through July 31, 2004.

The extensions have resulted in funding distributions based on the same level as FY 2003 until a highway bill is passed. NDDOT designed projects in anticipation of the 2004 appropriation level. With distributions based on FY 2003, NDDOT has had to delay about \$17 million in construction projects. We are in the process of moving those projects to our 2004 fall bid lettings to be completed during the 2005 construction season.

The reauthorization legislation is currently being negotiated through conference committee. The biggest hurdle for the conferees to deal with is achieving agreement on the overall six-year funding level between the Senate bill's \$318 billion program, the House bill's \$284 billion program, and Administrations figure of \$256 billion. Once a funding level is agreed upon, the remaining details can hopefully be addressed in a timely manner.

Under the Senate bill, it is anticipated that North Dakota's annual share for highways would increase from \$197 million to \$246 million over the life of the bill. Transit funding would average about \$50 million per year. Under the House plan, North Dakota's share for highways would increase from \$182 million to \$212 million over the life of the bill. Annual transit funding would average about \$46 million.

Initiative 1: Strategically prioritize the use of transportation resources, and

Initiative 2: Define the levels of transportation service to provide and maintain, and

Initiative 3: Enhance communication and facilitate cooperation and collaboration between and within governmental units, tribal authorities, modes of transportation, and the public and private sectors.

In March, the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) held a series of public meetings to present, and receive input on, the Highway Performance Classification System (HPCS). An extensive effort was made to involve the public. Those in attendance generally supported the HPCS concept and recognized that we must prioritize our use of transportation resources and identify levels of service. For the most part, it seemed many people who attended the meetings would be satisfied if current highway service levels are maintained.

Dickinson's airport has a new name, and additional air service. A ceremony was held at the airport terminal on June 9 to officially designate the Dickinson Municipal Airport as the Dickinson Theodore Roosevelt Regional Airport. In addition to the new name and logo, a third daily flight from Dickinson to Denver was announced. The added flight was made possible by a grant to the City of Dickinson from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) under the Small Community Air Service Development Pilot Program. The program provides small communities with financial and other types of assistance to address local air service issues.

**Dickinson**
Theodore Roosevelt
REGIONAL AIRPORT

Bismarck's new airport terminal is taking shape. The nearly 70,000 square-foot structure should be completed by late March of 2005. Passengers will notice improved ticketing and boarding features, including two new jet bridges that will allow 99% of all passengers to board aircraft without having to step on to the tarmac. The terminal and additional upgrades will cost about \$24.9 million, with 74% paid for by the Federal Aviation Administration.



The Bismarck Airport also has a new airline. Allegiant Air began service in May from Bismarck to Las Vegas. The airline is hoping to use low fares and the attractions of Las Vegas to get North Dakota residents to take a weekend or week-long trip. The airline has flights leaving for Las Vegas on Friday and Mondays, with return trips to Bismarck scheduled the same days. Additional flights could be added in the future.

Initiative 4: Improve the performance of priority transportation corridors and facilities.

Rail service is an essential part of North Dakota's transportation system. Short line railroads are a vital link in providing this essential service. The Red River Valley & Western, a key short line serving North Dakota, is receiving assistance through the NDDOT Local Rail Freight Assistance program for a \$3.5 million track upgrade on their third subdivision from Oakes to Independence. This is a priority corridor which provides a link to the national rail network. The upgrade will allow for the use of 286,000 lb. cars, which should give shippers better market access locally and regionally as well as through the national rail network.



The four-laning of US 2 from Minot to Williston is officially under way. Ground breaking ceremonies were held May 24 in Tioga to mark the event. The 100-mile project was supposed to be completed in ten years, but NDDOT engineers were able to come up with a plan to complete the project in five years. Supporters of the project say it will bring economic development opportunities to the northwest corner of the state, and will provide a safer roadway for motorists to travel on.

Initiative 5: Incorporate economic competitiveness as an integral component of Transportation investment strategies.

NDDOT has had ongoing meetings with the North Dakota Department of Commerce to discover economic development opportunities within the state. The two agencies are striving to come up with ways to work together to enhance economic development.

Initiative 6: Analyze the economic impacts of load limits and the benefits of establishing a statewide program to coordinate the administration of load limits.

A study by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) is under way. The Institute has compiled truck size and weight regulations and the permitting processes of states and provinces in the region, and has compared the differences in these regulations. A case study approach is being used to analyze and evaluate costs associated with differences in loads permitted to move throughout the region. Compilation of costs associated with obtaining permits in different jurisdictions was also conducted. A report is currently being drafted that will evaluate differences in jurisdictions, and provide cost comparisons for motor vehicle movements based on the different regulations and permitting processes. The future goal of the study will be to identify obstacles and list opportunities for a harmonized regional size, weight, and permitting system, while bringing together the departments of transportation from around the region for discussions.

Initiative 7: Determine the feasibility of, and identify the conditions necessary for, developing an intermodal freight facility or facilities.

Over the past several years there has been a great deal of discussion regarding the potential of locating an intermodal (truck/rail) facility in North Dakota. The Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute's biennial freight study examined the opportunity for an intermodal freight facility to function successfully in North Dakota. In producing the study, the Institute conducted a survey of potential shippers and found that the southeastern portion of the state between Valley City and Fargo had volumes of container traffic that were marginally sufficient to justify an intermodal facility. The study also analyzed potential intermodal locations based on the adequacy of rail and highway infrastructure. Three locations, Fargo, Valley City, and Minot, were identified as having infrastructure that would compliment the needs of an intermodal facility.



Minot has been actively interested in developing an intermodal site for approximately four years. A private group commissioned a cursory study about three years ago. Since then, the Mayor of Minot appointed a task force which initiated a study to explore the feasibility of building and operating an intermodal facility. The first phase of the study was made public on June 23. The Fargo-Moorhead Council of Governments has initiated a small-scale study to determine the interest and potential for an intermodal site in the Fargo-Moorhead area. The Bismarck-Mandan Development Association has hired the engineering firm of KL&J to determine the economic impact and feasibility of a facility in the Bismarck-Mandan area.

Initiative 13: Actively participate in regional and national transportation initiatives, programs, studies, and projects.

A representative from NDDOT recently attended a meeting in Chicago, IL, with representatives of the General Services Administration and the Federal Highway Administration. The purpose of the meeting was to look at coordinating improvements at the nation's 165 land-based ports-of-entry, including right-of-way, signing, approaches, and security systems.

Initiative 14: Increase the emphasis on safety and security as integral components in planning, developing, and maintaining the transportation system.

On May 14, 2004, representatives from NDDOT met with officials from the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF), Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (FMCOG), Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the Federal Railroad Administration, for a diagnostic review of the railroad grade crossings proposed for the Fargo-Moorhead Quiet Zone. The field review team visited each crossing, and focused on the need for vehicle detection loops in the roadway approaches, traffic movements, location of driveways, pedestrian traffic, and railroad preemption at signalized intersections. There appeared to be a number of engineering concerns that need to be addressed before a final agreement can be reached between BNSF and FMCOG.

NDDOT is in the process of performing field reviews and preliminary engineering at 14 tentative locations for the installation and/or upgrade of flashing light signals/gates at railroad/highway grade crossings. The locations were developed with input from NDDOT, counties, cities, railroads, and school districts. These locations are distributed among the five railroads operating in North Dakota. Also, NDDOT is presently working on a number of crossing closure agreements with local road authorities and railroads. FHWA provides crossing closure incentive funds to be used to permanently close railroad-highway grade crossings.

Initiative 15: Develop a statewide personal mobility plan.

Representatives from nearly two dozen public transportation-related organizations and agencies met in Bismarck on April 22 to learn about the Statewide Passenger Mobility Study. The Small Urban & Rural Transit Center (SURTC) is conducting the study for NDDOT. The meeting also focused on discussions of statewide personal mobility issues and unmet mobility needs. SURTC has nearly completed the state's demographic profile and is currently reviewing what other states are doing with their mobility plans. SURTC is also midway through collecting information on local and intercity passenger services and developing system profiles of passenger transportation services. The inventory includes all forms of personal mobility (personal automobiles, pedestrian travel, rail, car rentals, intercity and transit buses, air, etc.). Data on city bus services, paratransit, and other forms of assisted transit (nursing homes, social services, etc.) are also being collected. Surveys have been sent to known service providers to assess service levels. Questions about the study may be directed to Jill Hough at 701-231-8082, or to Jon Mielke at 701-224-2422.

On June 26, Greyhound wrote to NDDOT Director David Sprynczynatyk saying that effective August 18, they were implementing a new route schedule that will eliminate stops in North Dakota at Beach, Bismarck, Dickinson, Grand Forks, Hillsboro, Jamestown, Medora, Richardton, Steele, Sterling, and Valley City. Greyhound's proposed route change will continue to provide service to Fargo. A Montana intercity bus carrier, Rimrock Trailways, has contacted the Montana DOT and expressed interest in providing daily service between Billings and Fargo. NDDOT will be having conversations with the Montana DOT about this proposal. Jefferson Lines has contacted Bismarck Transit and expressed some interest in going west of Fargo. While this looks fairly negative, informally the transit providers say that a new relationship with another intercity carrier between Billings and Fargo may, in fact, provide better service to North Dakota than Greyhound is providing now. It may also allow the small transit providers along I-94 to better coordinate their riders with linking with a new intercity bus service that replaces Greyhound. Director Sprynczynatyk participated in a meeting on July 1, called by Senator Dorgan, at the Bismarck Bus Terminal. Director Sprynczynatyk explained that the NDDOT is working hard to ensure that inter-city bus service remains in North Dakota. Discussions are underway with at least three inter-city carriers to develop a plan that could continue bus service in North Dakota without an interruption of service on August 18.

Bismarck/Mandan's Capital Area Transit (CAT) service began on May 6. The fixed-route service is the first of its kind in many years in the Bismarck metropolitan area. Six buses operate on 11 routes. Riders could "catch the CAT" for free during the months of May and June to give the new service a try. Plans are in the works to build shelters along the more widely-used routes.



Initiative 16: Monitor trends in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, recreation, and energy production to identify potential transportation impacts and opportunities.

On April 5, NDDOT, in partnership with the North Dakota Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, hosted the TEAM Transportation Conference. The conference theme, "TEAM Transportation," was chosen to emphasize the need for communication, cooperation, and collaboration between government agencies and private sector companies to promote North Dakota's transportation system and economy. The focus was on identifying future transportation trends relative to tourism and recreation, energy, agriculture, and manufacturing. The conference had three purposes: to identify trends that may affect transportation or be affected by transportation, to develop an awareness and appreciation of the interrelationship between transportation and the economy, and to bring diverse groups together to start a dialogue and develop relationships.

North Dakota's Transportation Mission

North Dakota will provide a transportation system that offers personal choices, enhances business opportunities, and promotes the wise use of all resources.

North Dakota's Transportation Vision

North Dakota's transportation system is an important part of regional, national, and global systems, developed strategically to help grow and diversify the economy and enhance our quality of life.

North Dakota's Transportation Goals

- Safe and secure transportation for residents, visitors, and freight.
- A transportation system that allows optimum personal mobility.
- A transportation system that allows the efficient and effective movement of freight.
- A transportation system that enhances economic diversity, growth, and competitiveness.
- Funding sufficient to protect North Dakota's transportation investment and address future transportation needs.