SDDOT 2006 Statewide Customer Satisfaction Assessment
Study SD2006-03

Appendix F
External Stakeholder Summary Report

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Overview

ETC Institute conducted one-on-one interviews with leaders of organizations outside the Department of Transportation who use transportation services or influence transportation decisions in the State of South Dakota. The interviews were conducted June 5-16, 2006.

The purpose of the external stakeholder interview was twofold. First, it was designed to help identify issues that should be addressed in the 2006 External Customer Survey. Second, it was designed to involve external customers in the survey development process to educate key customer groups about the Department's process for gathering customer input.

Some of the topics that were addressed during the interviews included the following:

- Overall perceptions of the quality of the State’s Transportation System
- What External Customers think SDDOT does best?
- What SDDOT can do to improve the services it provides?
- Concerns External Customers have about travel safety on state highways
- Concerns about construction and maintenance on state highways
- Suggestions for improving the way SDDOT communicates with its customers
- Perceived adequacy of transportation funding in South Dakota

A total of 40 external stakeholders were interviewed. The interviews were conducted by phone. Most interviews took about 10-15 minutes to complete. The names and organizations of those interviewed are provided below.

- Doug Schmitt, Huron Police Department
- Jason Forrest, South Dakota Office of Emergency Management
- Kristi Turman, South Dakota Office of Emergency Management
- Jon Farris, South Dakota Department of Agriculture
- Rick Vallery, South Dakota Wheat, Inc.
- Jennifer Gabriel, Sturgis Chamber of Commerce
- Karen Waltman, Rushmore Mall
- Jeff Gillespie, Midwest Coast Transport
- Dawna Leitzke, South Dakota Petroleum and Propane
- Shawn Lyons, South Dakota Retailers Association
- Jerome Miller, Sioux City Police Department
- Roy Meyer, South Dakota of Public Safety
- Marcia Elkins, City of Rapid City
- Gary Johnson, A-G-E Corporation
- Peggy Woolridge, Huron Chamber of Commerce
- Betty Hanson, South Dakota Soybean Association
- Kari Karst, Buskerud Construction
This report contains a summary of the external stakeholder interviews. The information from the external interviews will be used to develop questions for the focus groups that will be conducted during July 2006.

**How External Stakeholders Rate the State’s Transportation System**

Thirty-three (33) of the external stakeholders interviewed rated the State’s Transportation system as “good” or “excellent.” Six (6) rated the system as “average” and one (1) rated the system as “poor.” Some of the reasons that external stakeholders gave their ratings are provided below:

- We have great roads; our roads and air service is good for a state with such a small population.
- There are opportunities to improve our secondary roads. They need to be widened, resurfaced, and made safer.
- I don’t know much about our rail and water services, but our roads are excellent and air service is fair considering our states population.
- Our roads are good, but they could always be improved.
• Compared to other states our signs, roads, and transit systems are above average

• Our roads and rail services are good but our air and water services are average at best.

• Quality roads are provided in every part of the state.

• Given the size of our state, its low population and number of road miles, it is unrealistic to assign it a rating of excellent. It is much closer to above average or good.

• I would say our transportation system is average mainly because new construction on state and inter-state highways is counter-balanced by major opportunities to improve our secondary roads.

• DOT does a really good job with the funds they have available.

• The road infrastructure we have is good to excellent; rail service is average to poor; air service is pretty good, at least in the southeast part of the state.

• We have a good new highway construction program and a great maintenance/repair program.

• I have no complaints. The roads I typically use are just fine.

• Our roads are on par with other states.

• DOT has decent road maintenance program.

• The roads just aren’t up to par with the surrounding states. The infrastructure is deteriorating and necessary improvements are not being made because the DOT does not have the funds to do so.

• Compared to other states, our roads are worse, they should use signage more appropriately, and the speed limits should be evaluated and changed when appropriate.

• The removal of snow after storms in done extremely well. Also, roads in the eastern part of the state are well maintained and are much safer than those out west.

• Overall the roads are in good condition. The DOT seems to make necessary improvements when needed and continually maintain the heavy traffic volume highways throughout the state.
The roads we have are adequate for current use, but there are opportunities to improve out of date bridges, widen roads, add shoulders, and resurface roads.

A solid infrastructure is in place, but there is so much more that could be done if funding would allow.

The road networks we have are outstanding. When construction is needed, it happens as quickly as possible and as conveniently as possible.

The roads I travel on seem above average, but nothing great.

The overall infrastructure is good. However, secondary roads do not get the maintenance attention they need. They are becoming very dangerous to travel on.

The roads are good, snow removal is good, communication is good, but opportunities still exist to make improvements.

DOT has provided a good quality route everywhere I choose to go.

The infrastructure we have is in good condition.

Our roads are excellent! However, our air passenger service is inadequate.

The state lacks adequate passenger air service, rail service, rail freight service. Overall interstate and state highways are in acceptable condition.

I’ve never had huge issues and the roads are acceptable.

While interstates and primary roads are in very good condition, our secondary roads require significant improvement.

The state lacks adequate interstate air passenger service.

DOT has no control over rail service; we have to accept whatever the railroads will provide. Our air service could be better. DOT has a pretty good plan to identify roads that need improvement and then schedule and budget those improvements.

DOT has invested a great deal of money in roads and too little in rail freight service. DOT participation/influence would help encourage railroads to provide less than 110 car unit trains to carry specialty wheat crops. Wheat farmers have identified markets for several different kinds of specialty wheat. These markets are much smaller than the market for commodity wheat. Production of specialty wheat will not fill a 110 car unit train. The BNSF railroad is reluctant to make available small unit trains or will make them available only for high fees.
DOT should encourage our several intra-state regional railroads to increase their services for specialty crops and also to establish connections to the Union Pacific and BNSF railroads.

Our air and rail services are deficient. We only have one Class 1 railroad and our smaller communities lack adequate air passenger service.

We lack rail passenger service; air passenger service is very limited; our roads are excellent considering the funds available.

Our roads have been improved and updated by being widened from 2 lanes to four lanes and re-surfaced. Our air service is fairly good.

How the Quality of the State’s Transportation System Is Changing

Compared to five years ago, most external stakeholders thought the quality of the State’s Transportation system had improved. Twenty-six (26) thought it had gotten “somewhat better” or “much better.” Eleven (11) thought it had stayed “about the same.” Two (2) of the 40 stakeholders thought the quality of the State’s transportation system had gotten worse, and one (1) did not have an opinion. Some of the reasons for their ratings are provided below.

While some roads have been improved others continue to deteriorate. Overall, there really haven’t been great strides in one direction or the other.

Our roads and rail service are somewhat better than they were; air freight service is about the same, air passenger service is worse, and I don’t know much about water service.

DOT has added lanes and turn lanes to state highways. Our interstate highways have also improved along with other improvements currently in progress.

I can’t remember any significant improvements or deterioration of services.

In the past few years, they have implemented a more aggressive road repair plan. Roads are now being repaired before they get too bad.

Our current level of air service is worse than it used to be because airlines have eliminated or reduced service to our smaller cities like Pierre and Aberdeen.

They have constructed new highways and rebuilt sections of the interstate highway system.
• I have seen re-paving efforts and inter-changes added to interstates in the Sioux Falls area. However, opportunities exist to improve rail freight services and bridge replacement.

• In our area, there’s been a major improvement to Highway 37. It was widened from two lanes to four lanes from Huron to the inter-state highway.

• The DOT has improved rail freight service, constructed new roads and re-built existing ones, improved the availability of information for the public, but I haven’t seen any changes in air service.

• I haven’t seen any major changes lately.

• Significant road way improvements have been made as of late. Also, I have seen an adequate number of bike and pedestrian facilities along state roads.

• We have seen better public access to planning processes, more sensitive treatment towards businesses affected by construction disruptions, and less political influence during the selection of projects.

• Redesigning and rebuilding I-29 in the Sioux Falls has greatly improved traffic flow.

• DOT has improved traffic control management in work zones making it safer to drive through work zones.

• The transportation system has improved but more significant improvements are still needed.

• Drive-through scaling for trucks has been huge improvements. The whole process is now much more convenient. However, the scales at Elk Point are still not finished. It would be nice to get them completed as soon as possible.

• Interstate driving has improved because of all the road construction that has taken place over the past few years.

• The work on Interstate has been great. I love the 4-lanes coming into Pierre!

• The quality of work done by the DOT has dramatically improved as of late. Pavement lasts longer because they are using a better grade of oil, and overlays seem much more effective.

• I have noticed the construction of new roads, widening of roads, and the resurfacing of roads recently.
• Overall the roads are pretty good, but in rural areas I see no improvements. The DOT needs to make improvements to all the roads and not just focus on the heavy traffic highways.

• For the most part I am satisfied with the roads that I travel. Other than that I couldn’t tell you specific reasons why it has improved.

• The transportation system has decline as of late. A lack of funding has prevented very necessary upgrades from taking place.

• In the Sioux Falls area, overpasses have been built and roads improved so that traffic flow is better and less of a nuisance.

• The improvements made to Exit 32 have been great. I still think more improvements can be made though.

• Locally, there’s been significant improvement. For example, a new interchange is currently being built on I-90 in Sturgis.

• In our area Highway 12 was expanded to 4 lanes and a new by-pass (Route 281) was built around Aberdeen.

• DOT is continually trying to upgrade roads, bridges, and other infrastructures to meet growing traffic demands.

• I have noticed safety improvements on highways that I typically travel. These roads are much more convenient to travel and I feel safer when I try to pass.

• Most years there’s a shortage of covered grain hopper cars, especially when crop yields are high.

• Primarily because we recently reached an agreement that will increase access to Class 1 railroads (Union Pacific and BNSF) by our intra-state, short line railroads. This agreement will make it easier and, hopefully, less expensive for our agricultural industry to ship to its markets.

• Our roads have been improved and updated by being widened from 2 lanes to four lanes and re-surfaced. For example, Highway 12 has been widened and re-surfaced. Our air service is fairly good.

What External Stakeholders Think SDDOT Does Best

When asked what they thought the South Dakota Department of Transportation does best, a wide range of responses were provided. Some of the specific comments are listed on the following page.
Public relations and services are great. Road reports on South Dakota highways available by phone are a valuable asset.

I like the way new roadways and turn-offs (exits) are designed (i.e. I-29, interchange area near Russell St. in Sioux Falls)

DOT does a great job maintaining our roads and making them smoother and safer to travel on.

DOT communicates, collaborates, and cooperates with a lot of various organizations.

They communicate and inform the public extremely well. DOT uses various media outlets including the 511 hotline to communicate with the public.

Signs are placed far enough in advance of work zones allowing drivers the time needed to safely stop.

DOT does a great job keeping our roads open after snow and ice storms.

Interstates and state highways are well maintained.

At every exit on our interstate highways there are signs that indicate what services (i.e. food, fuel, and lodging) are available.

Winter road maintenance is outstanding. DOT field workers do a better job clearing the roads then what is required of them. They are a bunch of over achievers!

DOT informs our police department about future projects that will affect our jurisdiction.

SDDOT collaborates well with other state agencies regarding safety issues. The DOT actually participates with the safety department on committees and makes useful suggestions.

Identifying roads that are in need of maintenance or re-construction, then planning needed improvements and executing the plans.

The DOT does a great job of winter maintenance, building rural roads, and maintaining interstates.

DOT responds quickly to snow and ice storms.

The 511 road condition hotline is easy to use, convenient, and frequently updated.
Whenever I’ve contacted the DOT with a request, they’ve been courteous and responsive.

DOT’s web processes increase public participation in decision making. I really like the fact they are concerned with customer satisfaction.

Information about road conditions and bad weather is easy to find, and use on the website.

Prompt snow removal and treatment of icy roads.

DOT involves the public and contractors during the planning and priority stage.

The information provided on their website is great. SDDOT website has project updates, timelines, road conditions, etc.

Offer public meetings on projects impacting public and business owners to collect outside input.

They promote safety extremely well. I have seen promotional campaigns encouraging safe travel on roads and techniques to keep highway workers safe.

Planning is very objective, systematic, and well sequenced with lots of opportunities for consumer input along the way.

Project sequencing is done skillfully. Masterful scheduling and sequencing of project components minimize driver and business disruptions during construction.

Snow removal is excellent! Despite South Dakota winters, it is rare that roads are too snow covered to drive. Winter road condition reporting is good to.

Long term planning is great. The process used to create 5 year plans does a good job assigning priorities to competing demands for service and DOT does an excellent job adhering to plans in the face of pleading special interest groups.

Road side ditches are kept free of obstacles so they drain water.

Signage is good on our roads. They’re easy to understand and not cluttered with information.

DOT does a great job informing the public about its choice of projects, when projects will start and end, and how to reduce motorist inconvenience and delay.

The DOT’s winter road maintenance is great! Snow is removed early in the morning so roads are cleared when the majority of people leave their homes.
External Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Involving the public and holding public hearings is a couple of things the DOT does well.

- Providing road conditions via the hotline has made it easier for the public to travel.

- Communicating with the public through the use of news media seems to happen quite regularly. I know the majority of the public appreciates the DOT’s effort to keep them informed.

- The response time of the snow removal crews is outstanding. Our highways are rarely closed and are always opened before Wyoming’s are.

- The DOT does a great job handling the flow of traffic during Sturgis. The improvements made to I-90 and state highways near Sturgis have definitely reduced congestion during rallies.

- The DOT provides up to date information regarding which roads are under construction.

- They have done a great job of increasing safety in work zones. Proper signage is placed in visible lines of sight construction zones, which are easy to maneuver through.

- The DOT leaders always make rational planning decisions and utilize the resources they have very well. The individuals in charge are definitely the DOT’s biggest strength.

- Snow removal on major highways is fast, effective, and planned well.

- The DOT manages and prioritizes funds extremely well.

- The way projects are selected without regional or political favoritism is no easy task, the DOT seems to do it effortlessly.

- They do a good job of allocating funds to projects that are needed the most.

- Winter operations are extremely good in South Dakota.

- Their truck/vehicle inspections keep the roads safe.

- I think the DOT communicates well with the public. They tell us what projects are on the way, traffic delay and backup information, road closings etc. all through a wide variety of sources.

- DOT does a great job of maintaining I-90 and making necessary improvements.
• Upgrading state roads to meet growing traffic demands.

• They do a good job of providing the tourist department with construction maps. These maps are extremely helpful when attempting to inform tourist of areas under construction and provide alternate routes.

• Plowing, sanding, and salting are done quickly and effectively on all major roads.

• Managing construction zones safely, with proper signage, and with the least amount of inconvenience.

• During construction, the DOT collaborates with local businesses to reduce the adverse impact of the construction, and always notify the public of construction areas in advance.

• DOT prioritizes funds so they get maximum value for its money.

• The DOT is responsive to community needs especially near Sturgis where in recent years projects have been completed that helped reduce congestion during rallies.

• I’ve dealt with DOT employees on numerous occasions and have always been impressed with how courteous and professional they are.

• They do a good job providing assistance during Sturgis. I work with Dan Staton during rallies and he and his department are always very responsive and great to work with.

• Road repair is prompt, snow and ice removal is quick. Our roads are always open because the DOT is very timely.

• They’re constantly identifying opportunities to improve future traffic volume when project planning.

• DOT resurfaces roads when they need it. Roads that I travel are always smooth and safe.

• I think the DOT does a good job of reviewing traffic plans and then making necessary improvements in problem areas.

• DOT easily reaches agreement with my department about which roads need improvement to facilitate agriculture related commerce.

• They have an effective process for assigning priorities to roads that need improvement, then scheduling and budgeting the improvements.
• Snow removal and treatment for ice is done well.

• DOT does a really great job of making current, accurate information about road conditions available to the public on its road condition hot line.

• DOT cooperates well with Sturgis city government to support the motorcycle rally.

• Road construction is done right the first time; re-work is not required.

• DOT avoids or minimizes construction delays by not doing construction on roads that serve as alternate routes to a road that is under re-construction.

• Identifying the roads that require improvement and assigning priorities to them.

How External Stakeholders Think SDDOT Can Improve

Some of the areas for improvement that were suggested by external stakeholders are listed below.

• Need to monitor construction workers more affectively. I have seen many situations where contractors over load trucks with material and then drive to the site while damaging cars that follow.

• Do a better job of scheduling construction around events. It never fails that during state fair time they have a piece of highway in or around Huron that is all torn up. They need to get contractors started earlier in the season.

• Marking and signal lights need improvement. The new intersection at 21st and Dakota in Huron has the turn lane signal directly under the inside driving lanes. Motorist think when the turn signal is green it also means it is okay to drive ahead. Someone is going to get seriously injured because of such poor planning.

• Make intrastate agricultural trucks meet the same requirements placed on interstate non-agricultural trucks.

• DOT could better inform the public by utilizing its website effectively.

• It would be great if DOT added pharmacies to their information signs on interstate.

• They could do a better job of collaborating with county/city agencies regarding safety issues.
Some sections of roadways have poor lighting, reflectors, and guard rails.

Do a better job of enforcing the speed limit. Motorists exceed speed limits creating an increased chance of accidents.

Message sign information along interstate is often inactive and not up-to-date.

Allow lower level employees to make decisions. This will speed up construction because workers aren’t waiting around for a decision to be made.

Lessen the time it takes to buy land for anticipated right of way. DOT should buy the land when they anticipate that they will need it, don’t wait for the value to increase.

They need to increase rail freight service. The railroad infrastructure is in poor condition, yet we could still use better rail freight service to keep all those trucks off the roads.

As I hear this survey I realize that I don’t know very much about what the DOT does. Maybe they should do a better job informing the public about what exactly they do.

Improve relations with the public. DOT needs to offer fair market value to land owners when purchasing right of way. Also, be candid with land owners impacted by construction. Accurately inform them of adverse consequences they will experience due to the construction.

Value contractor’s suggestions. Too often DOT personnel reject out of hand suggestions made by contractors instead of giving the suggestions serious consideration.

Make it easier for contractors to contact DOT employees. Too often DOT personnel are “in meetings” when contractors call to ask for a decision.

Focus more resources on urban areas.

South Dakota is way behind other states in providing pedestrian and bike facilities on state routes.

Continue expanding the distribution of information on road closures.

Often it seems that city and state projects in close proximity to each other create a mega cone zone. The city and state need to coordinate projects more carefully.

Sometimes it seems bridges get too far “over the hill” before they receive upgrades.
“Welcome” signage is to humble. Let’s see something with style and class. Make visitors feel excited about being in our great state.

Continue to improve public information processes to ensure residents and businesses are informed about DOT’s plans and current activities.

Need to resurface, widen, and add shoulders to secondary roads.

Make passenger air service available, more convenient, and less expensive for residents.

I think DOT could raise better awareness regarding construction in the summer.

Focus on finding alternatives to oil and rock resurfacing. Cars are damaged all the time because of loose rock and gravel on roads during maintenance.

They need to focus on project priority. Bad roads are neglected and don’t get fixed while roads that are still all right get the attention. I don’t understand it.

It would be nice if they would finish the Elk Point drive through scale. It sure makes our lives easier.

The snow removal in rural areas is not very good. It takes too long for snow plows to clear rural roads. They need to start earlier in the morning or get more trucks on the roads.

Do a better job of listening to the public. For example, Sturgis by-pass road will be built in spite of almost unanimous opposition.

Improve the surface on secondary roads because large semi-truck traffic has made it un-even.

Expand Highway 12 to 4 lanes on the west side of Aberdeen to accommodate the traffic volume.

Work zones are way too long and most of the time now one is working. DOT needs to setup construction zones so they’re more convenient.

Improve the time it takes to get projects approved. There are too many “hoops to jump through” in order to get projects up and running.

The DOT needs to find ways to increase funding.

Human resource operations could use some improvement. They need to hire more qualified engineers and pay the ones they have more appropriately.
• They need to do a better job of partnering with contractors. Too often the DOT acts alone and ignores the useful ideas from contractors.

• Listen and use the suggestions made by contractors. They are qualified individuals with innovative ideas.

• Consider delegating more responsibility to field offices so decisions can be made quicker.

• Creating 2 or 3 more area offices would make it more convenient to meet with DOT employees.

• Road and bridge repair needs to happen before they get so bad.

• Intersections need to be engineered to accommodate large truck traffic.

• They should listen to their customers. Be more responsive to their needs, issues, and concerns. The customer satisfaction survey is a great start.

• Delegate responsibility to local DOT staff. They’re more than capable of making decisions that takes their boss twice as long.

• When it rains, on/off ramps in construction zones along I-90 are dangerous. Water builds up and floods residential property. The DOT said flooding wouldn’t be a problem in Sturgis but they were wrong.

• It takes way too long for construction projects to be completed. It would be nice if they would work on smaller portions of the road rather than long stretches.

• Experience shows that it is difficult for ordinary citizens to determine who to contact at DOT about particular issues and it is also difficult to use email and phone system to contact DOT personnel.

• DOT should be planning ten to fifteen years in the future. Experience shows that DOT lacks adequate planning for stronger roads to handle increased truck traffic at proposed unit train sites. DOT should proactively identify possible sites for unit trains and talk with the landowners about their plans to build a unit train facility.

• Encourage competition between railroads

• DOT does not do a good job of involving the public and all interested and impacted parties in its decision making (Example: the new interstate interchange in Sturgis) and then basing its decisions on the preferences of its customers. The DOT’s current public involvement process appears to be a sham and just going through the motions because the preferences of its customers are ignored.
• DOT has not yet cooperated with our office by informing us about their capabilities to cope with emergency situations or informed us about the equipment they can make available during emergencies.

• Sometimes it takes the DOT too long to complete a construction project. One of the highways in the Wolsey area was under construction for three or four consecutive summers. I wish it didn’t take so long.

How SDDOT Can Serve Its Customers Better?

Each of the external stakeholders was asked to identify specific ways that the South Dakota Department of Transportation could serve its customers better. Some of the suggestions are provided below.

• Take the initiative to contact us 2 to 3 times per year in order to get feedback about services and take requests.

• It would be nice if the DOT would include the police department during the planning stages of projects that affect us locally.

• Help promote the use of seatbelts. They could help inform the public about seatbelt safety by: putting messages on DOT vehicles, using variable message boards, adding messages to work zones, and making DOT employees wear seatbelts.

• Be responsive to local and urban needs. Things have improved with the addition of the access management staff.

• Do a better job of managing personnel. Because of the “flex-time “policy, decisions requested by contractors cannot be made in a timely manner because no one is available.

• Return phone calls in a timely manner. Too often DOT staff does not respond quickly to phone calls or emails from contractors who seek an immediate decision regarding construction issues.

• Encourage economic development so airport improvements can be made.

• Help raise awareness about driving while intoxicated. It is important that they communicate with high schools around state about the consequences of drinking and driving.

• Continue attending the Ag Outlook trade show in December. This show provides a good market segment of farmers and agri-businesses that will make it easy for DOT to ensure weight limits are fully understood.
• Scenic by-way mapping would be great for us. These are currently absent on many “official” maps.

• It would be nice to see more interchange lighting outside of cities.

• Continue to build relationships with county commissioners to ensure DOT and county officials agree on project priorities.

• Hire more qualified employees because too many DOT positions are held by individuals with little technical education and field experience.

• Do a better job alerting us when construction will start and providing project timeline details.

• Finish the Elk Point drive-through scale.

• Involve the public and welcome criticism. In addition to public meetings, meet with small groups of community leaders to identify various transportation issues.

• It would be great if DOT could give us tailored information regarding road conditions for motorcycles during Sturgis.

• DOT should meet with growers and processors on a regular, frequent schedule to tell us about DOT plans and to solicit feedback, questions, suggestions, and requests for service.

**Things SDDOT Does Now That It Should Not Doing**

External stakeholders were asked if there was anything the South Dakota Department of Transportation does now that it should not be doing. Some of the suggestions are provided below.

• Construction projects at the height of summer tourism create inconveniences for our visitors. Maybe the DOT should rethink doing so much construction work in the summer.

• Don’t mow roadside ditches. Let farmers cut and bale the hay and use it to feed their livestock.

• They pay attention to unnecessary environmentalist groups. DOT requires its contractors to comply with DOT policies on erosion control, historical artifacts, and environmental degradation that increase project costs and delay deadlines.

• There are certain maintenance activities that should be done by contractors.
The paint used on lane striping and marking gets pretty dim too quickly. They need to replace the paint they currently use with something abstract.

**Things SDDOT Should Do That It Is Not Currently Doing**

External stakeholders were asked if there was anything the South Dakota Department of Transportation should be doing that it is not currently doing. Some of the suggestions are provided below.

- Law enforcement is needed in construction areas where speeds are reduced.
- Over-sized and over-weight Ag trucks damage roads just the same as non-Ag trucks, yet Ag trucks seem to escape fines when they are over-weight.
- Provide pedestrian and bike facilities on state routes.
- Allow contractors to serve on claim committees. This will ensure that contractors get a fair hearing when they submit a claim for payment created by the DOT changing orders on project contracts.
- Faster decisions regarding material testing. Sometimes it takes too long to decide on results of material tests supplied by contractors.
- Do a better job of landscaping along roads, especially on interstate. Plant tree belts and shelterbelts along interstate. Also, the grass along interstate is weedy and visually unpleasant.
- The DOT should evaluate and analyze different transit services. They need to identify modes of transportation other than private passenger car. With fuel prices rising, more and more of the public will rely on passenger rail, bus services, and other transit services.
- The DOT should hire more individuals with field experience and technical skills. Currently, the DOT has too many employees with legal and business degrees.
- Use signs and the website to notify the public about detours that use gravel roads so motorcycles can avoid gravel roads.
- Improve air passenger and freight services.
- Use materials that meet contract specifications during construction.
- DOT could do more planning and preparing for emergencies and cooperate more with other state agencies that are responsible for managing emergencies.
Concerns About **Travel Safety** on State Highways

Approximately one-third (12 of 40) of the external stakeholders who were interviewed had specific concerns about travel safety on state highways in South Dakota. Some of the concerns that were mentioned are provided below.

- Improve upon current techniques of removing snow.
- DOT should educate the public about safety concerns that might be encountered while traveling different types of roads.
- Dead animals and truck tire debris on roads cause huge safety concerns.
- Work zones are not safe enough. Barriers, signs, cones, and signals used by flagmen could all be improved.
- Deer and other wildlife continue to be serious hazards. Is there some high-tech way of keeping them off the road?
- Reevaluate the current policy and practice of allowing over-weight agricultural equipment to use roads and causing safety hazards.
- Teen driving deaths are increasingly rapidly.
- Narrow lane and 2-lane highways in rural areas with high traffic volume are dangerous and becoming un-safe to drive.
- In the western part of the state, long monotonous stretches of highways are hazardous.
- During snow/ice storms Interstate is not closed down quick enough. This puts the safety of traveling public and rescue personnel at risk.
- When it snows, the DOT does not consistently do a good job clearing the main road near Pierre that our residents use to commute to work.

Concerns About **Construction and Maintenance** on State Highways

Nearly one-fourth (9 of 40) of the external stakeholders who were interviewed had specific concerns about construction and maintenance on state highways in South Dakota. Some of the concerns that were mentioned are provided below.

- Do a better job informing businesses and interested parties about construction that may impact them and disrupt them.
Directions for lane changes and re-routes in work zones aren’t always as clear as need be…especially when turns are required.

The DOT sometimes has construction or maintenance on two parallel roads giving drivers no alternative route and forcing them to pass through the work zone. This increases the chance of an accident occurring.

DOT does maintenance operations that could be done by contractors.

Intersections are poorly designed and don’t accommodate truck traffic.

There is no need for 10 mile long cone zones when the actual road work is one mile long. It’s frustrating to drive in a construction mode when no construction is occurring.

Do our interstates last long enough? Are the materials and methods used to build our interstates good enough? It seems that our interstate highways are always under re-construction. Is this due to poor materials and/or methods?

Work zone speed limits are ignored by too many drivers; we need better enforcement of speed limits in work zones.

Types of Information Stakeholders/Organizations Requested

Only one-fourth (9 of 40) of the external stakeholders who were interviewed indicated that they would like the South Dakota Department of Transportation to provide them (or their organization) with additional or other types of information. Some of the types of information stakeholders requested are listed below.

- Take the initiative to contact us in regards to plans for our region.
- It would be nice to receive an email alert when construction is under way.
- I would like and email message when roads are closed or under construction. It would really be nice if the website had real time information.
- We need to receive information about rule changes that effect utilities directly.
- The DOT could do a much better job involving the public in planning future services.
- Provide information about road conditions specifically for motorcyclist.
- Create a pamphlet that overviews DOT services.
• DOT does not do a good job of involving the public and all interested and impacted parties in its decision making (Example: the new interstate interchange in Sturgis) and then basing its decisions on the preferences of its customers. The DOT’s current public involvement process appears to be a sham and just going through the motions because the preferences of its customers are ignored.

Perceived Adequacy of Funding for Transportation in South Dakota

More than half (21 of 40) of the external stakeholders who were interviewed did not think funding for transportation was adequate in South Dakota; eleven (11) thought it was adequate, and eight (8) did not have an opinion. Some of the reasons stakeholders gave for their rating are provided below.

• Yes funding is fine; I know I don’t want to pay an increased gas tax to fund the DOT.

• Given our population, we do a darn good job of getting state and federal funds to improve our transportation system.

• Our roads need safety and maintenance upgrades.

• There is a lot more that needs to be done to our road infrastructure.

• In order to achieve the great infrastructure that we have funding has to be adequate.

• The backlog of projects far exceeds the funds that are available for the DOT.

• There’s a huge backlog of projects and not enough funds to pay for them.

• Sections of interstate need to be rebuilt. I am guessing that inadequate funds are preventing upgrades from happening.

• The backlog of projects exceeds available funds.

• Roads are being rebuilt and upgraded, driving surfaces are smoother, and snow removal is outstanding.

• There is never enough dollars to satisfy our infrastructure needs.

• They definitely have adequate funds because an 18 cent state gasoline tax is too much.

• I have no idea, but if I had to guess I would say funding is inadequate.
• Desired transportation services are not met because funding is inadequate.

• DOT’s “wish list” for transportation services far exceeds available funds.

• Given the limited funds that are available from a low population state, the allocation of funds to transportation is adequate.

• The lack of funding is the reason our secondary roads are in such bad condition.

• It is adequate given the public’s willingness to pay.

• Our requirements for transportation services far exceed the available funds.

• We have a high volume of intra and inter-state traffic, but our state has a small population which makes it difficult for us to adequately fund the DOT.

• Our state has many miles of road, by the time construction is completed, where they started needs to be redone. It is obvious that we don’t have adequate funds or we would start and finish projects without delays.

• South Dakota lacks internal funding mechanisms and requires federal funds.

• There is too much competition for the same money and the DOT lacks political importance.

• State Legislators need to give the DOT more funding.

• I think funding for transportation is adequate. I personally don’t know of projects that don’t get done due to limited funds.

• We’re a state with a small population. We can generate only a small amount of revenue to fund all government services, including transportation.

• Under-funding of rail freight service has made South Dakota Ag industry a captive of BNSF railroad. DOT should find ways to help our five intra-state regional railroads to increase service to Ag industry.

• The demand for air, rail and road services exceeds the available funds. If the DOT had more funds it could get more done and do it more quickly.

• The highways are the lifeline for the state and they must be adequately funded.
Does SDDOT Use the Resources It Has Wisely?

Almost all (35 of 40) of the external stakeholders who were interviewed thought the South Dakota Department of Transportation uses the resources it has wisely; two (2) thought SDDOT did not use the resources it has wisely, and three (3) did not have an opinion. Some of the reasons stakeholders gave for their rating are provided below.

- I don’t know of any instances where DOT wasted resources.
- Considering the size of the department and the diversity of our roads DOT does a great job utilizing available resources.
- DOT uses its labor and equipment on maintenance projects that could be done by contractors.
- I personally am not aware of any waste and am satisfied with the project selection processes.
- DOT sells equipment that has very few hours of actual use and buys replacements that have fancy “bells and whistles” for a lot of money.
- They plan and budget their projects extremely well.
- Because of the process used to assign priorities to projects there are no wasteful projects.
- DOT gets the best possible bang for its buck. They do not select frivolous projects.
- DOT plans and scrutinizes projects before they are approved. They never start a project and then back out halfway through it.
- Haven’t seen any examples of waste.
- I believe resources are used wisely because I don’t know of any evidence that suggest otherwise.
- Most of the projects are wisely chosen and well managed.
- I think they attempt to prioritize projects and use resources intelligently
- DOT is very aware of the importance to stretch limited funds as far as possible.
I think so, it seems like they accomplish a lot even with financial limitations.

The majority of their projects are selected wisely and necessary.

I believe they’re visionary enough to make rational decisions and plan projects without political influence.

The integrity of the organization is good. The individuals I personally know at the DOT have integrity, make good rational decisions, and do the best they can with available resources.

Improvements that they have made are very much warranted. Funds are so limited that they must be using them wisely or the improvements I have seen lately wouldn’t have happened.

Future Challenges for Transportation in South Dakota

The external stakeholders were asked what they thought would be the greatest challenges to good transportation services in the State of South Dakota over the next 10 years. Some of their responses are provided below.

- Upgrading 2-lane roads to 4-lane roads to keep up with increasing traffic flow.
- Maintaining the current level of state and federal funding.
- Continuing to improve and expand partnerships with construction and maintenance contractors.
- Limited funding will make it difficult to make rapid progress on proposed projects that have been approved.
- Providing adequate air services to keep up with business growth.
- Increasing rail freight services to keep pace with food processing plants.
- Sustaining the current level of road and rail service.
- Keeping over-weight Ag vehicles off the roads.
- A huge challenge will be keeping up with the population boom we have seen in Sioux Falls and Rapid City. As population increases in these areas, bigger and better highways will be needed to ease traffic congestion.
• Growth in population, especially in the southeastern part of the state, and the growth in attendance at special events like Sturgis, is faster than the rate of improvements to roads in these areas.

• DOT employees, field and administration both, must always act as if they are under scrutiny by the public and avoid unauthorized breaks and delays responding to requests.

• Salary, wage, and benefit costs for DOT will increase in the future. Where will money come from to attract and hold qualified, experienced personnel?

• Improving the quality of DOT personnel. Too many DOT people in key decision making positions lack field experience, yet they manage people who have plenty of field experience. This has resulted in a loss of experienced personnel and loss of morale.

• As the cost of gasoline and diesel fuel escalates, more people might look to travel by air, but we don’t have good air passenger service.

• Demand for better rail freight services to move agricultural products and ethanol requires major improvements to the railroad infrastructure.

• It will be increasingly difficult to attract and hold qualified employees.

• As motor vehicles become more fuel efficient, revenues from fuel taxes will decrease creating inadequate funding.

• Our needs for transportation services will grow faster than funding. Where is the money going to come from?

• Increased truck traffic will be created by a growth in ethanol and agricultural processing plants causing roads to deteriorate faster.

• Maintaining our roads as large truck traffic increases.

• Finding adequate funding relative to the increasing construction and maintenance costs.

• Reserving adequate funds for highway aesthetics will be increasingly tough in the future. The “artistic side” of road and bridge designs and landscaping is soothing for drivers and are points of pride for locals and are interesting to visitors.

• Keeping gasoline taxes focused on highways.

• The urban sprawls of growing cities create transportation needs that must be anticipated. This will be no easy task.
In the future, competing user groups will clamor louder for their share of diminishing funds.

Costs are rising faster than the growth in funds. Eventually this will impact how well our roads are maintained.

Second beltway for Sioux Falls.

Maintaining federal funds and competing with other organizations that are after the same dollar will become increasingly difficult.

One challenge will be finding mechanisms that will properly fund their operations. In the future, where will the money come from and will it be adequate?

Rapid growth in population may create increased demands for transportation services faster than the DOT can provide.

I am uncertain whether the DOT will anticipate and plan for road improvements needed for future growth in traffic volume. If they don’t anticipate the growth, it will be very difficult to cope with when it happens.

Identifying modes of transportation that reduce or eliminate the use of fossil fuels.

As traffic volume grows, it will become increasingly important to provide transit services other than automobile.

Dealing with the rising cost of fuel will be a challenge in the future.

Making necessary road improvement to secondary roads that were previously neglected.

Where will commodities be located?

Funding issues will definitely be a challenge for the Department.

Acquiring qualified employees without paying them huge salaries.

Constraints/restrictions on accessing and using natural resources will reduce the supply of materials available for transportation construction. All as a result of environmentalist.

Bridge replacement will be crucial in the future. Our bridges are out of date and in crucial need of replacement.
External Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Future increases in traffic volume will probably exceed the rate of increase in funding. How is the DOT going to make road and maintenance improvements when that time comes?

- Will there be enough money for road maintenance, expansion, and other operations vital to our road network.

- Population growth in the eastern and western parts of the state will require road improvements to accommodate increased traffic. It is important that DOT offices in the center of the state, where growth is relatively non-existent, stay in tune with the traffic demands and congestion problems in Rapid City and Sioux Falls.

- Increased use of alternative fuels and high fuel efficiency engines will reduce gas and diesel consumption, resulting in less money from fuel taxes. In the future, DOT will need to examine other funding mechanisms.

- As business expands and diversify, we’ll need better inter-state air service.

- One challenge will be building more 4 lane highways to accommodate truck traffic to/from ethanol plants.

- Developing rail freight services that can carry increased freight to/from ethanol plants.

- Maintain secondary roads in rural areas where population is declining. These roads are still used and need major safety upgrades.

- It will be challenging for DOT to keep up with the population growth in Rapid City. Traffic congestion is becoming a problem and new road networks are needed to in areas of rapid growth. It would be great if DOT could anticipate future growth and take action now.

- Finding new and increasing current funds will be difficult in the future. It is important that they increase their funding so they can address traffic volume growth.

- As traffic volume grows, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain and expand our highways.

- Maintaining the current rate of traffic flow in metropolitan areas such as Rapid City, Pierre, Aberdeen, and Sioux Falls. These areas are growing quickly so we must plan ahead and expand now.

- It is important for the DOT to continue recognizing changes in traffic volume. This is an ongoing process, traffic volume won’t stop growing so it is imperative that the DOT study the traffic flow and make adjustments.
• Rate of growth in demand for DOT services may exceed rate of growth in revenue to pay for those services.

• Maintaining/improving roads in rural areas with decreasing population. As our rural population decreases, at what point does DOT decide to reduce its level of service to rural areas and to increase its services to areas of growing population?

• Developing transportation services for specialty crops. Transportation of specialty crops requires small trains, not 110 car unit trains. We need unit trains of less than 26 cars that are affordable and the ability to ship specialty crops in containers by rail.

• Funding for municipal and county roads. Municipalities and counties have already experienced revenue decreases as population shifts from our rural areas to urban areas. As rural populations continue to shrink, it will become increasingly more difficult for municipalities and counties to fund needed improvements to their roads.

• Keeping growth in transportation services in synch with growth in population and growth in attendance at special events that attract visitors from other states. As population of South Dakota increases and as attendance increases at special events (example: Sturgis motorcycle rally), there will be an increased demand for more and better road and air passenger service. DOT must anticipate this growth and prepare for it.

• Providing rural areas with adequate roads. Maintaining current quality of roads in rural areas will become difficult to justify and to fund as our rural population decreases.

• In the future, competition for federal funds will intensify and our share of federal funds might decrease, especially since we have a small population compared to most other states.

• Providing real time, accurate road condition information that’s affordable. As more of the general public becomes familiar with newer information technologies, there will be an increased demand for accurate and detailed information on the road condition hotline. DOT may not have the funds to meet this demand, and may need to manage this demand rather than attempt to fully meet it.
Specific Questions that Should Be Asked on the 2006 Survey

External Stakeholders were asked if they could think of any questions they would like to ask on this year’s External Customer Survey. Some of the types of information they were interested in learning for the 2006 survey are listed below.

- What kinds of information would you like to receive from the DOT?
- Should Ag trucks be required to follow the same rules as non-Ag trucks?
- Are you satisfied with the State’s passenger and/or freight rail system?
- How much are you willing to pay to reduce inconvenience when you travel?
- Should DOT study and research alternative modes of transportation?
- How well does DOT involve the public in its decision making?
- How well has DOT delegated decision making to its first level managers and supervisors?
- How should DOT handle the increased rail and truck traffic due to ethanol plants that are built in South Dakota?
- What is your impression of DOT workers?
- What is your impression of construction workers?
- What mechanisms should the DOT use to increase funding?
- What dollar amount are you willing to pay in the future to fund the DOT?
- What are you willing to pay to fund the DOT?
- How satisfied are you with various roads (interstate, state highways, county, etc.) in South Dakota?
- Ask how well changes in speed limit, especially increases to 70 MPH and decreases from 70 MPH are communicated by existing signs at the exact locations where the changes in speed limit occur.
Other Comments

At the end of the interview, each stakeholder was asked if there were any other comments they would like to make. These comments are provided below.

- I appreciate the DOT's responsiveness to our requests over the years.

- Thank you for the chance to participate in this survey.

- I think it’s great that the DOT is doing a customer satisfaction survey.

- I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this study.

- I appreciate being asked to participate in this survey. The customer satisfaction survey is a step in the right direction.

- The concept of brand new 4-lane expressways to interconnect with existing Interstates is very important and has huge economic potential.

- DOT should require its construction contractors to reduce the potential risk of work zone accidents by improving signals, speed control, and the use of cones.

- There is too much micro-management in the DOT. Seldom do field supervisors and managers have decision making responsibility. It seems as if they always say “I’ll have to ask my boss” even when an immediate decision is required.

- The DOT does a great job!

- DOT staff are easy to work with and very responsive.

- Make sure to look into modes of transportation other than motor vehicles.

- There is a lack of safe bicycle facilities in South Dakota.