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Focus Groups
Executive Summary

Overview

During July 2006, ETC Institute facilitated a total of 12 focus groups with residents and key customer groups of the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT). The focus groups were conducted with transportation stakeholders at four sites across the State of South Dakota including Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. Three focus groups were conducted in each city.

Those who attended were recruited from the following groups:

- Residents
- Emergency Vehicle Operators
- Farmers/Ranchers
- Senior Citizens
- Truckers/Shippers

A total of 131 persons attended the 12 focus groups. Four focus groups were conducted with residents while two focus groups were conducted with each of the other groups. Of the 131 individuals who attended the focus groups, there were 20 emergency vehicle operators, 23 farmer/agriculture participants, 24 seniors, 18 truckers/shippers, and 46 residents. A breakdown of attendance by location is provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Vehicle Operators</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Farmers/Ranchers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Seniors</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Truckers/Shippers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
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<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>12</td>
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The purpose of the focus groups was three-fold: (1) to identify the core expectations residents and key customer groups have with regard to the delivery of transportation services, (2) to understand how residents and key customer groups evaluate the SDDOT’s performance in different areas, and (3) to identify ways that residents and key customer groups think the SDDOT could improve the delivery of specific services.

A wide range of topics were covered during the focus groups. These topics were grouped into the nine major areas of discussion listed below.

- First, participants were asked a series of questions about their general perceptions of SDDOT.
- Second, they were asked questions specifically dealing with construction and detours.
- Third, they were asked to discuss how well SDDOT interacts with local communities.
- Fourth, participants were asked to discuss various issues regarding urban/rural transportation.
- Fifth, they were asked to discuss economic development, more specifically airport and rail service adequacy.
- Sixth, they were asked a series of questions dealing with the environment.
- The seventh area dealt with how well SDDOT keeps the public informed.
- The eighth area covered issues and concerns with funding in South Dakota.
- Finally, the ninth area focused on overall priorities for SDDOT.

At the end of each focus group, all participants were given an opportunity to make closing comments on any topic.

The following pages summarize the comments that were made by focus group participants. This information will be used to develop surveys that will be administered to South Dakota residents and transportation stakeholders during August/September 2006. Detailed comments are provided in a separate section at the end of this report.

**General Perceptions of SDDOT**

Seventy-three percent (95 out of 131) of the people who attended the focus groups thought the quality of the transportation system in the state of South Dakota was either “good” or “excellent;” 22% (29 out of 131) of the participants gave a rating of “average” and 5% (7 out of 131) rated the transportation system as “poor.”

Many of the concerns that focus group participants had about the state transportation system related to the length of construction projects, limited shoulder widths, poor striping, and lane width. Several participants commented that they thought SDDOT did an excellent job with the budget they have available. Only seven of the 131 participants thought the value received from their transportation dollars in South Dakota was poor.
Most Important Transportation Issues in South Dakota

Participants were asked to make a list of the most important transportation issues in South Dakota. Once the participants had recorded their ideas, each person shared their ideas with other members of the group. The moderator wrote the ideas on a large piece of paper for everyone in the room to see. Once everyone’s ideas had been presented, the moderator asked each member of the group to identify the three most important issues for SDDOT to address over the next five to ten years.

The top issues that were identified by all respondents are listed below based on the number of participants who selected the item as one of their top three issue. A more complete list of the most important issue is provided at the end of this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Issue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Maintenance to existing highways</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Safety upgrades</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Wider lanes and shoulders</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>More four-lane highways</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Better striping/markings/signage</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Reduced construction time/length of construction zones</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Improvements to traffic flow in construction zones</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Keeping the public informed</td>
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Funding for SDDOT Services

Focus group participants were asked a number of questions regarding funding issues. As previously mentioned, nearly all of the participants indicated that they trusted the South Dakota Department of Transportation and believed the organization provided good services given the resources available. When asked if they thought funding for transportation in South Dakota is adequate sixty-three percent (83 out of 131) of participants indicated “yes;” 22% (28 out of 131) thought “no,” and 15% (20 out of 131) did not have an opinion. Some of the specific comments that were provided are listed below:

Selected Comments

- Compared to other states our funds are adequate.
- SDDOT is able to provide quality services which indicate to me that funds are adequate.
- From a trucking standpoint, I think transportation funds are adequate and are used wisely.
- Roads are deteriorating quicker and quicker now days…we don’t have the necessary funds to maintain them.
- The gas tax isn’t going to keep up with the cost of building and maintaining roads.
- The quality of roads I see each day is very good so I am inclined to say yeah, funds must be adequate.
• Given our population and the fact that we get back more money than we put in I think funds are plenty adequate.
• I think our funding would be adequate if we stopped performing unnecessary projects.
• Funds must be adequate to achieve smooth and safe roads.
• There are many necessary safety upgrades that need to be made to certain intersections in my area…hopefully they are not happening because funds aren’t adequate.

Closing Comments and Suggestions

At the end of the focus group, participants were given a chance to provide any final comments. These comments generally summarized the concerns that participants cared about most. Listed below are some of the closing comments that were provided by participants from each of the groups. Detailed comments from all of the topics that were discussed during the focus groups are provided in a separate section of this report.

Selected Comments from Residents

• SDDOT needs to focus on the safety of their highway construction workers.
• Public transit needs to be improved at the local level here in Rapid City.
• Safety upgrades are needed in the western part of the state during Sturgis.
• Overall, SDDOT is doing an outstanding job.
• I believe they do all they can with the resources they have available.
• Overall they are doing a good job…however, on many roads throughout the state turning lanes are desperately needed.
• Need to focus on finding new ways to fund their operations.
• SDDOT needs to keep informing the public about road construction, timelines, future projects, road conditions, and plans that directly affect businesses.
• Look in to alternate modes of transportation…we are far behind other states in regards to public transit.
• Signage improvements are concerns I have…especially in work zones.
• SDDOT needs to shorten the length of construction zones.
• Overall, the DOT is doing a great job…senior management is making good decisions and keeping the best interest of the public on their minds.

Selected Comments from Emergency Vehicle Operators

• Design and safety enhancements are needed on highways.
• Be decisive when closing roads in the western part of the state.
• Allow road closure decisions to be made at the local level.
• I like the fact that the DOT cares about what emergency vehicle personnel think.
• There needs to be better communication between DOT employees and emergency personnel.
Focus Group Summary Report

• Focus on secondary roads…I-90 and I-29 aren’t the only roads in South Dakota.
• They do a great job with their long range planning.
• I think for the most part they do a good job keeping us in the loop.
• Communication is pretty good, but always could be improved upon.

Selected Comments from Farmers and Ranchers
• Keep making snow and ice operation improvements.
• SDDOT needs to focus on secondary roads.
• Intersections need to be safer and turning lanes are needed on various highways throughout South Dakota.
• I have concerns with the design and engineering of roads.
• Need to hire qualified employees…especially engineers because a lot of road designs are unsafe.
• Overall, DOT is doing a great job…especially in their dealings with emergency personnel.
• Maintain roads, reduce traffic congestion, and be more farmer friendly.
• They do a good job prioritizing and using resources wisely.

Selected Comments from Senior Citizens
• SDDOT needs to keep up maintenance and reduce the number of 4-lane highways so local and rural improvements get some attention.
• Snow and ice removal is great.
• The DOT needs to focus on local issues and concerns.
• Find ways to get as much money as they can.
• Develop methods for obtaining extra funds specifically for air service and secondary roads.
• Overall, I’m pleased with the way the DOT operates and allocates funds.

Selected Comments from Truckers and Shippers
• Designing roads that are more trucker friendly.
• Please address some of the safety concerns brought up during this focus group.
• Focus on improving the safety in construction zones.
• They do a great job working with outside organizations.
• Utilities appreciate DOT keeping them informed.
• Shorten construction zones…they are too long and no one is ever working.
• Widen I-90 between Rapid City and Sturgis.
• Keep maintaining our existing roads.
• Find alternatives to the magnesium chloride used to remove ice…it is killing the power lines.
• Improvements to highways that are cement…they get slick way too fast in the winter.
MAJOR TOPICS
Comments By Group

**TOPIC #1: Perceptions of the State’s Transportation System**

Focus group participants were each asked to rate the overall quality of the State’s transportation system as either “excellent”, “good”, “average”, or “poor”.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of **residents** rated the transportation system as either “excellent” or “good”, 22% rated it as “average”, and 11% rated it as “poor”.

Sixty percent (60%) of **emergency vehicle operators** rated the transportation system as either “excellent” or “good”, 30% rated it as “average”, and 10% rated it as “poor”.

Eighty-seven percent (87%) of **farmers/ranchers** rated the transportation system as either “excellent” or “good”, 13% rated it as “average”, and nobody rated the transportation system as “poor”.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of **seniors** rated the transportation system as either “excellent” or “good”, 17% rated it as “average”, and nobody rated the transportation system as “poor”.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of **truckers/shippers** rated the transportation system as either “excellent” or “good”, 33% rated it as “average”, and nobody rated the transportation system as “poor”.

Some of the reasons that focus group participants gave their ratings are provided below.

**RESIDENTS**

- For the amount of funds available DOT does a pretty good job providing quality roads.
- There is a lack of public transit…especially for the disabled.
- Snow removal is good for the most part but still could be quicker and more efficient.
- We need different types of transit options.
- Fairly extensive interstate system that is in fairly good shape
- I drive on HWY 14 and it is really good.
- Natural Resources are protected but not at the expense of roads.
- Certain areas of the state are hard to reach because of poor access.
- All the 4-lane improvements have been great…especially the 4-lane into Pierre.
- A bus system that runs north and south is greatly needed in South Dakota.
- The roads I travel are good compared to other states.
Focus Group Summary Report

- Transit service is way behind cities like Denver and Kansas City.
- The highway upgrades, specifically 4-lane improvements, have made our road networks much more user friendly.
- It is hard to be excellent, but I definitely think our roads are good…especially when you compare them to Nebraska and Iowa.
- The rail system in South Dakota is non-existent. Also, railroad crossing are very rough.
- Overall the transportation system is good. It could still be improved by safety upgrades and secondary road upgrades.

EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS
- I don’t think our transportation system is outstanding…but there are no really huge problems.
- The services DOT provides are good…but not excellent. I think it is pretty hard for any state DOT to get an excellent rating.
- The transportation system seems to be good. DOT is always making repairs when roads need them.
- Compared to other state’s highways, I think South Dakotas are pretty good.
- Generally, DOT does a good job of maintaining roads throughout the state.
- Overall, I think the system needs a lot of improvement. Secondary roads are too narrow and very dangerous.
- The system isn’t great…but not bad either.
- Roads near Indian reservations are terrible.

FARMERS/RANCHERS
- Overall the transportation system is good. It would be nice to have a bypass here in Aberdeen, but I’m still satisfied.
- Roads, snow service, information is all good, but public transit is terrible.
- Roads don’t seem to last as long as they used to.
- The amount of traffic roads can hold is perfect.
- Repairs are made in a timely manner and result is always satisfactory.
- DOT does a great job of clearing snow after storms.
- Compared to other states I have driven in South Dakota roads are among the best.
- The shoulder improvements made to highways in this area have been great.
- Roads are smooth.
- If you want to go somewhere…there is always a road to get you there.
- Roads are well maintained in our state.

SENIORS
- The transportation system is good…but there is always room for improvement.
• In comparison to other states, our transportation system is excellent.
• Roads are smooth, nice and wide, and marked well. I really don’t have any complaints about the highways.
• I was driving from Kansas City to St Louis last summer and found that I-70 is terrible. I think we have a pretty good in South Dakota.
• Because of the extreme temperatures we have in South Dakota roads are hard to maintain. DOT does a good job though.
• It’s not great, but definitely not terrible either. For me the transportation system is just middle of the road.
• I really don’t have any complaints as far as the actual roads go, but if we are talking about the entire transportation system then there is definitely room for improvement.
• The roads are well maintained and I haven’t noticed any areas that are just terrible.

TRUCKERS & SHIPPERS
• The quality of roads just aren’t up to par with other states.
• Given the resources the DOT has the roads are pretty good.
• Compared to Minnesota the roads are great.
• Urban highway planning is good and I see a lot of consistency across the state.
• Our state doesn’t have the money other states do…that’s why I’m very satisfied with the roads we have.
• The roads are good. Some highways aren’t very smooth but that’s probably because of the extreme temperatures here in South Dakota.
• I said good because I think it is hard to be excellent and there is always room for improvement.
• Generally it is very easy to transfer cargo across the state because there is access to every city.
• Construction slows us down a lot but otherwise the roads are good.
• The roads are decent and in pretty good shape.

Each focus group participant was asked to provide some GOOD THINGS seen on South Dakota highways during the past two years. Listed below are some of the comments that were provided.

RESIDENTS
• I’ve really liked the Heartland Express.
• I have seen exit improvements on and off I-90.
• Highway 79 is great. It is wider and much safer now.
• I’ve seen wider lanes. Thicker asphalt and more steel are being used and have made roads last longer.
• Lighting improvements to exits have been awesome.
• Resurfacing and the marking of roads have improved the safety.
• I really like the variable message boards. I think they provide good, important information.
• The 4-lane into Pierre is great.
• I have noticed smoother roads and more efficient snow removal.
• I like the emergency response system in interstate.
• I love the interstate improvements in the Sioux Falls area.
• There seem to be more rest areas along interstate.
• The widening of Highway 12 is great…much safer now.
• I really like the striping and pavement markings on Highway 12.
• I like that the condition of Interstate has been kept up.
• I-29 improvements have been great.
• Highway 12 through Aberdeen is wider and much better to travel on.
• The new traffic signals and other safety improvements on Aberdeen are great.
• I like that the shoulders are wider on many highways that I travel.

EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS
• The Heartland Express is great!
• I have noticed how clean the roads are. Grass along interstate is mowed regularly and really makes driving long distances much more pleasurable.
• The digital message boards are great information tools. However, I think they are greatly underutilized.
• The expansion of Highway 85 North to Belle Fourche is great!
• Highway 18 is well maintained.
• The bypass to Sturgis has been awesome. It really helps during rallies.
• I have liked the widening efforts of SDDOT. I have noticed in the past few years that the DOT has widened many highways throughout the state.
• I would really like to see Exit 10 project possibilities.
• Signage and visibility in work zones is much better now than last summer.
• I like how the highways give motorist access to almost all the small rural communities throughout South Dakota.
• Road designs seem to be getting better. They are reducing traffic congestion, have better signage, and are much safer.
• I like how the DOT is adding turning lanes to certain highways throughout state.

FARMERS/RANCHERS
• The 4-lane expansion has been great.
The 281 bypass and 4-lane expansion is great.
Off ramps are very convenient.
Diagonal roads are nice.
I like the 4-lane expansion all the way to the border.
I like some of the safety designs DOT incorporates into their roads. For example, I like how they fill low draws, reducing hills and increasing visibility.
It seems to me that the materials used to resurface roads are much better now days. Roads seem to last longer.
I have noticed the addition of reflectors to markings and striping.
The safety upgrades to Highway 83 have been nice.
Turnoffs and rest areas are well marked and are easy to read.

**SENIORS**

- Stops signs are located in the right places when you are coming off secondary roads onto heavy traffic roads.
- Animal debris has really improved over the past year or so.
- Highway 83 to I-90 has been improved a lot.
- I have really liked the safety features to highways in this area.
- I love the 4-lane coming into Pierre.
- I have noticed the widening of lanes and shoulders to highways around the Pierre area.
- I like how the DOT is following erosion control requirements.
- Me and my family really enjoy the road side parks along interstate.
- In the past couple of years I have noticed continuous maintenance along interstate. I think it is great that the DOT won’t allow interstate to deteriorate.
- We have long distances from city to city here in South Dakota. I find it relatively easy to travel from place to place because we have access to all parts of the state.
- Marking and striping on interstate is done correctly.
- Snow removal in our state is second to none.

**TRUCKERS & SHIPPERS**

- Planning and designing is done correctly. They take their time and build roads right.
- The signage and markings on interstate makes it easy to get where you’re going.
- Highways are well maintained.
- I-90 exits are clear and the on/off ramps are adequate for big trucks.
- I like the bypass around Rapid City.
- They do a great job of removing snow for our power company.
- I like the 4-lane on Highway 79 south.
The new interchanges and on/off ramps are much safer.
I have noticed the block repairs on I-90 and I-29.
DOT has done an effective job of re-routing without slowing us down too much.
I like the fact that Highway 18 is being widened. It needed it.
I like all the expansion work to state highways, specifically I-29 in Sioux Falls.

Each focus group participant was asked if they had observed any **CONCERNS or PROBLEMS** on South Dakota highways during the past two years. Listed below are some of the comments that were provided.

**RESIDENTS**
- Construction zones are way too long. I drive for miles upon miles in construction zones and never see anyone working until the very end.
- I’m concerned with construction worker safety. The work zones are too close to traffic.
- There are a ton of potholes of Highway 44...when it rains they become dangerous.
- There are a lot of rough roads throughout the state. It would be nice if SDDOT would resurface some of the secondary roads.
- There is a lack of merging lanes coming off of interstate and on to busy roads. A good example is interstate and Omaha.
- It is difficult to get traction on Highway 44.
- It takes way too long to fix bridges. Walgreens goes up faster than bridges do.
- In many areas visibility is poor because signs are placed too close to the roads.
- Pedestrian crossings are needed on certain areas of the truck bypass.
- Shoulders are narrow on many highways in this area.
- There is a lack of guard rails in the Black Hills.
- I hate how many detours are on unsafe gravel roads. Find better roads to re-route traffic.
- The speed limits on truck routes are too slow.
- The placement of signs needs to be improved…it is confusing.
- DOT needs to widen some highways throughout South Dakota.
- The shoulder heading north on 281 desperately needs to be widened.
- Signs are needed around Webster were black ice is a problem.
- The designs of many on/off ramps are unsafe and not very user friendly.
- State highways that don’t get much traffic should still be widened because they are dangerous.
- Traffic flow in construction zones is a huge problem.
- Snow removal in certain area of the state needs to be more responsive.
**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**

- Some of the scenic roads through the Badlands need to be repaired.
- Road closings don’t happen quickly enough. I’m risking the safety of my crews because the DOT won’t close Interstate in bad weather.
- The closing procedures are terrible.
- Snow removal after snow storms is a joke. Snow plow drivers push the snow off the roads right up against parked cars. We have to pull them out…which is good for business but is still getting a little ridiculous.
- In the Black Hills, roads need continuous service area lanes.
- Exit 32 construction is taking way too long.
- There are too many narrow roads with no shoulders.
- The shoulders on many rural highways are not wide enough.
- Rumble strips in certain areas are not adequate.
- Signal coordination is terrible. Traffic gets backed up for miles because of the extremely poor coordination.
- I have concerns with the designing/planning of right-a-ways in our state.
- The number of stop signs coming off of rural roads and on to U.S. Highways is inadequate.
- It is very difficult to see when you enter into a work zone in a small vehicle.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**

- The smoothness could be improved here in central South Dakota.
- Highway 12 shoulders aren’t big enough.
- Highway 12 and 14 intersections are not large truck friendly.
- Acceleration lanes are needed on many rural area roads.
- Bypass roadways should have the right-a-way.
- Intersections are dangerous because they are confusing.
- Rumble strips are killing the tires on our farm equipment. We need alternatives in rural, farming parts of the state.
- Roads are too narrow and make transporting farm equipment unsafe.
- 1804 and Highway 14 intersection is dangerous.
- Culverts on 4-lane highways are poorly engineered. When it rains they back-up and flood our fields.

**SENIORS**

- I didn’t like to see the “Jack Rabbit” bus service discontinued.
- I don’t think Highway 12 gets enough traffic to justify the 4-lane expansion.
- There are not enough rest areas along interstate.
There need to be more service areas along interstate so motorists have places to pull over in bad storms or when they experience car trouble.

There are too many large trucks on our highways. They are destroying the roads and are major risks to regular vehicle drivers.

After construction is complete, the DOT needs to do a better job cleaning up loose and left behind gravel.

When overlays are needed do a better jobs keeping the lanes level with shoulders.

Limit the amount of truck traffic on newly built roads. Allowing large trucks to travel on these roads just destroy the smoothness.

I am concerned with the amount of politics involved during the planning and prioritizing process.

TRUCKERS & SHIPPERS

Some of the highways need smoother surfaces. Some highways are so rough they can bounce your load off.

The cement highways that are being built now days get slick very easily.

The DOT doesn’t close the highways quick enough in the winter time.

I don’t like the DOT using magnesium chloride to treat roads for ice. They are getting to our power lines and eating them up.

Some of the on/off ramps on interstate need to be longer.

Wider shoulders are needed on state highways. When we break down there is no where to go.

Each focus group participant was asked to think of specific highway improvements that are needed in their part of South Dakota. Listed below are some of the improvements that were suggested.

RESIDENTS

Placing signs further back from roads would improve short distance visibility.

Safety improvements are needed around Rapid City and Sturgis.

On I-90 signs are placed too far apart. You can drive for miles without knowing where you are.

Need to re-think some of the intersection designs…they are unsafe in someone is going to get seriously injured.

Widen the shoulders on secondary roads.

Do a better job controlling traffic flow in construction zones during peak hours.

Place cement barriers between construction workers and passing traffic…other states do it, why don’t we.

Reduce the speed limit on secondary roads that are not in the best condition.
EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS
- Close the roads quicker after bad storms.
- Design exits/on and off ramps to be safer and handle large amounts of traffic during peak hours.
- Communicate road closings with emergency vehicle operators.
- Widen roads on secondary highways.
- Add shoulders and more turning lanes on highways that get a lot of traffic.

FARMERS/RANCHERS
- Add acceleration lanes
- More frequently placed signage
- Increase the speed limit on secondary roads.
- Improve the surfaces on highways in this part of the state.
- Re-design some of the dangerous intersections
- Outlaw the planting of alfalfa on roadside ditches because they attract deer to the roads.

SENIORS
- Use better quality materials during construction and maintenance.
- I would like to see stop signs outside of Walmart.
- Widen some of our secondary roads around Pierre.
- Turning lanes are needed on many state highways in this area.
- Limit truck traffic on newly built roads.
- Enlarge approaches so they can handle large trucks and semis…they are currently too narrow.

TRUCKERS & SHIPPERS
- Longer on/off ramps.
- Quicker response time when it snows and ices.
- Reduce the bottleneck on on/off ramps so traffic doesn’t get backed up.
- Overlay rough roads.
- Fix the areas of interstate that are settling and sinking. They are dangerous when you’re carrying a load.
TOPIC #2: Construction/Detours

Focus group participants were asked if they are generally satisfied with the way work zones are designed with regard to traffic flow, safety, and signage.

Sixty-five percent (65%) of residents indicated that they were generally satisfied with the way work zones are designed. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the participants felt the opposite.

Eighty percent (80%) of emergency vehicle operators indicated that they were generally satisfied with the way work zones are designed. Twenty percent (20%) of the participants felt the opposite.

Seventy-four percent (74%) of farmers/ranchers indicated that they were generally satisfied with the way work zones are designed. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the participants felt the opposite.

All (100%) of the seniors indicated that they were generally satisfied with the way work zones are designed with regard to traffic flow, safety, and signage.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of truckers/shippers indicated that they were generally satisfied with the way work zones are designed. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the participants felt the opposite.

When asked why they felt that way, the following responses were provided.

RESIDENTS

- They are way too long. Work zones go on for miles and miles and no work is ever being done.
- There isn’t enough police enforcement in construction zones.
- Marking and striping in construction zones are unsafe and confusing.
- Sign placement is very confusing.
- Traffic congestion during peak hours is terrible. Vehicles can get backed up for miles.
- Overall the design is good. Sure it could be improved but most things can.
- For me the general design is fine. I have never had any really negative experience with traffic flow or signage in work zones.
- The overall design is fine. However, I do have concerns with the safety of construction workers.
- Sometimes cone placement can be confusing, but for the most part construction zones are easy to navigate through.
EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS

- Construction zones are way too long. It is unnecessary to have work zones 15 miles long when the actual work is being done in a 5 mile long zone.
- Signage throughout the state is not up to date. South of Brookings there is a sign that reads “construction work ahead”, but you never see any construction going on. I haven’t seen any cones, barrels, or employees working in a year now in that specific area.
- The monotonous designs of work zones don’t make the motorist pay attention.
- Exit 32 construction is confusing and dangerous, especially at night.
- The signage in work areas is terrible. It is difficult sometimes to understand were exactly you are supposed to go.
- The road surfaces in work zones are bad. I know that is hard to have a good surface in work zones but someone is going to get hurt if they don’t get smoother.
- Traffic back-up in construction zones are a serious safety issue.

FARMERS/RANCHERS

- I think that typically the right signage and proper lights are used in construction zones.
- Work zones employees use caution when working. They also seem to take pride in what they do and are concerned with the safety of those passing by.
- Work zones disrupt the flow of traffic. DOT needs to design work zones to enhance traffic, not back it up for miles.
- There are not enough speed limit signs in work zones. Sometimes I get confused about how fast to drive.
- The construction zones are way too long.
- DOT field employees never work!
- Sometimes signage can be confusing when you enter a work zones.
- I think DOT designs work zones pretty well. You are always going to have some traffic flow disruption when you tear up roads…just deal with it.

SENIORS

- The big electronic message boards are easy to read and do a good job of telling you where to go.
- I think the work zones are very safe…even at night.
- Work zone workers do a great job keeping them and us safe.

TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS

- Construction zones are too long. I never see anyone working until the very end of work zones.
- I pass by work zones time after time. It never looks like they are making progress. DOT should finish the projects they start before they move on to the next one.
Focus Group Summary Report

- I have concerns about the planning and design of work zones that have large amounts of traffic passing through. They are too narrow, merge lanes aren’t adequate, and they seem to back-up traffic during rush hour.
- DOT needs to shorten the work zones.

Each focus group participant was asked if they had any suggestions to make work zones better. Some of those suggestions are listed below.

**RESIDENTS**
- Do a better job placing signs, cones, and markings.
- Put concrete barriers between workers and passing traffic.
- Shorten the length of construction zones so people don’t get so used to them that they don’t pay attention.
- Shorten work zones so that only the area where actual work is being done gets diverted.
- More visible signage and striping.
- Every once and awhile change the design of the construction zone so people pay more attention and stay alert.
- Actually enforce the speed limit in work zones.

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**
- Remove the out of date signage from the sides of roads.
- Construction needs to be done 24/7 so projects are completed in a timely manner.
- Do a better job informing public safety personnel of future construction plans.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**
- Shorten the length of construction zones.
- Design work zones in a way that traffic stills slows down, but doesn’t completely stop.
- Place speed limits signs every quarter mile inside work zones.

**SENIORS**
- This isn’t a huge issue, but it would be nice if signage was placed earlier in the work zones so motorist have the proper time to prepare.
- The only design improvement would be to some how widen work zones to accommodate the larger traffic volume around cities.

**TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS**
- Make exit improvements along interstate.
- Improve exit 60’s on/off ramp. It is dangerous because you don’t know who is yielding.
- Work zones are too long. Why doesn’t the DOT shorten them?
**TOPIC #3: Interaction with Local Communities**

Focus group participants were asked to rate SDDOT’s process for notifying the public about projects as either “good”, “OK”, or “poor”.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of **residents** rated the notification process as “good”, 50% gave an “OK” rating and 15% “poor”.

Thirty percent (30%) of **emergency vehicle operators** rated the notification process as “good”, 50% gave an “OK” rating and 20% “poor”.

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of **farmers/ranchers** rated the notification process as “good”, 52% gave an “OK” rating, 4% “poor”, and 5% didn’t know.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of **seniors** rated the notification process as “good”, 29% gave an “OK” rating, and 4% “poor”.

Forty-four percent (44%) of **truckers/shippers** rated the notification process as “good”, 12% gave an “OK” rating, and 44% “poor”.

Some of the reasons that focus group participants gave their ratings are provided below:

**RESIDENTS**

- Information that the DOT provides is adequate but could be better.
- DOT does not do a good job informing the public during the planning stages.
- 511 services are excellent and very helpful.
- If you don’t have a computer or don’t get a newspaper it is hard to keep up with what is going on.
- I think timelines and project deadlines need to be put in the paper.
- DOT does a good job informing the public when jobs start but not when they finish.
- Information is always available if you are willing to go and find it.
- I had a very negative experience with the DOT. I missed a flight because I was not informed about construction in my area.
- Winter road condition information is great.

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**

- DOT does a poor job of informing us about road closings. DOT employees that emergency vehicle operators deal with should be the ones making the decision whether or not to close roads.
- Closures aren’t happening quickly enough. They do a good job informing us when they do get shut down but the entire process needs to be improved.
Focus Group Summary Report

- Construction zone information is provided quickly and very accurately. The road closing policies, however, are not good.
- John Smith is great as resident engineer. He always notifies me of changes in plans.
- DOT is always holding public meetings regarding future projects.

FARMERS/RANCHERS
- Major projects are always publicized and timelines are available if you are willing to find them.
- They did a good job informing us about the 4-lane expansion in our area.
- Their 5 year planning meeting is always publicized and I know the DOT appreciates the public attending.
- I have no idea…I would like to think they tell and inform us of everything but sometimes I wonder.
- I was disappointed that nobody notified me of the construction a couple miles from my house. I had to learn about by stopping for 10 minutes.

SENIORS
- It would be nice if they broadened the means by which they advertise. A lot of people don’t get cable or even have internet access.
- I think they do a pretty good job of letting us know what they’re up to.
- Public meetings are held very frequently here in Pierre. If you are curious the information is easy to find.
- I generally don’t go to public meetings unless the topic of discussion directly affects where I live.
- DOT does a good job disseminating information. All they can do is make it available. It is up to us to pay attention.

TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS
- They do a great job of interacting directly with utilities.
- They really don’t have any information that is given directly to the trucking industry.
- The DOT needs to provide information for the trucking industry by the same means as the spring load limit.
- The DOT always involves the public during construction projects. I have attended public meetings where the DOT specifically discusses construction issues.
- I wish the DOT would contact us directly regarding what areas are under construction. It would be nice if they would reach out to us instead of the other way around.
**TOPIC #4a: Rural Issues**

- Focus group participants were asked if they feel safe when driving on rural highways in South Dakota.

Ninety-one percent (91%) of *residents* felt safe when driving on rural highways in South Dakota. Only nine percent (9%) felt unsafe driving on rural highways in the state.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of *farmers/ranchers* felt safe when driving on rural highways in South Dakota. Seventeen percent (17%) felt unsafe driving on rural highways in the state.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of *seniors* felt safe when driving on rural highways in South Dakota. Twelve percent (12%) felt unsafe driving on rural highways in the state.

When asked why they felt that way, the following responses were provided.

**RESIDENTS**

- There are major road safety concerns on rural highways. Roads are rough, not very wide, and not cleared properly in the winter months.
- I feel safe on rural highways. They probably could be wider but the funds won’t allow DOT to do so.
- Generally I feel just as safe on rural roads then any other highway in South Dakota.
- The only concern I have is the sparsity of cities along rural roads. If something would happen it would take too long for emergency personnel to get there.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**

- Visibility is poor on hilly highways.
- I think sight distance is good. Markings and signage is easy to read and lighting is adequate.
- Roads are well maintained on secondary highways.
- The deer population is too high. DOT can’t do anything about that though. I guess overall, DOT does everything possible to make rural roads safe.
- Sometimes dead animals are left to lay for extended periods of time…but for the most part DOT does everything possible to make driving on rural highways safe.
- Litter and debris is still pretty bad…but isn’t near the problem it was a couple of years ago.

**SENIORS**

- Roads in rural areas are being widened and upgraded. These improvements make me feel pretty safe.
- Visibility and striping are generally good even on rural roads.
- The only concern I have is with the other people driving on these rural roads. They drive too fast and are not responsible.
- I feel safe…I haven’t had any reason to feel the opposite.
Focus group participants were asked if they thought emergency services are adequate on rural highways in South Dakota.

Seventy-three percent (73%) of residents thought emergency services are adequate on rural highways in South Dakota, while twenty-eight percent (28%) thought they were not adequate.

All (100%) of farmers/ranchers thought emergency services are adequate on rural highways in South Dakota.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of seniors thought emergency services are adequate on rural highways in South Dakota, the remaining 36% did not know.

When asked why they felt that way, the following responses were provided.

RESIDENTS

- Because the space between cities is so far it is difficult for emergency services to respond in an efficient manner.
- There is absolutely no cell phone coverage in rural areas of the state. Roadside phones would be a great tool and help emergency services respond quicker because they would now exactly where they need to go.
- I would say yes, but until you experience an emergency you never really know.
- There aren’t enough signs in rural area. If something happens you don’t know where you’re at…that makes it difficult for emergency services to respond.
- I think emergency services are adequate given South Dakota’s population.

FARMERS/RANCHERS

- I think realistically, emergency service is the best that it can be. Especially when you factor in the distance from town to town in rural South Dakota.
- It is alright considering where we live.
- It would be nice if signage was better so emergency personnel could navigate quicker, but for the most part the responsiveness of emergency services is pretty good.
- I have used emergency personnel in the past. I was astonished how quickly they responded…what took the longest was waiting for a doctor at the hospital.

SENIORS

- I have no idea. I have never used emergency services.
- Signage on rural roads allows emergency services to easily find where they need to go.
- Once again, I don’t have concerns with the physicality of the roads, but rather the stupid people driving on them.
- I think they are fine…it is hard to tell unless you have needed service.
Focus group participants were asked if they thought transportation services for older people in rural parts of the state are adequate.

Thirty-six percent (36%) of residents thought transportation services for older people in rural areas of the state are adequate; 59% thought they were not adequate and 5% didn’t know.

All (100%) of farmers/ranchers thought transportation services for older people in rural areas of the state are adequate.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of seniors thought transportation services for older people in rural areas of the state are adequate, 37% thought they were not adequate.

When asked why they felt that way, the following responses were provided.

**RESIDENTS**

- It has improved over the years but is still not where it needs to be.
- Services are only available at certain times of the day.
- Bus service for seniors is definitely inadequate.
- Inter-state transit is actually pretty good when you factor in our state’s population and just how many seniors actually use transit.
- We are getting much older as a country…DOT needs to recognize that transit service will be needed in the near future and plan ahead.
- There are services available but they are so limited on times and areas of service because the funding just isn’t there.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**

- “Ride Line” services are great in Aberdeen. Sure service is limited but for the number of seniors who actually use it, it isn’t bad.
- Rural transportation isn’t very good.
- Given our needs and usage, I think public transit is adequate.
- There are pretty good transit services…even in our smaller towns.
- Every time I needed transportation it has been available.
- Sure it would be nice to have a bus running 24 hours a day, and from city to city, but South Dakota just doesn’t have the population to support such an elaborate transit system.

**SENIORS**

- Inside the city limits of Aberdeen transit is pretty good. However, for those who live in rural areas transportation isn’t good at all.
- Inter-city travel is poor in our state.
- “Ride Line” is a great service, but it doesn’t do much in rural areas.
Focus Group Summary Report

- “Ride Line” is good…they will pick you up and take you to the hospital if you call in advance.
- Transit exist if you know a day in advance that you need to go somewhere, but if it is spur of the moment than your just out of luck.
- The bus service inside Pierre is great…I don’t think it runs to rural areas though.
- DOT doesn’t provide transit for seniors in rural areas. We must depend on friends for rides.
- Those big buses are not cost effective…especially when they typically have one or two people riding.

TOPIC #4b: Urban Issues

Focus group participants were asked to rate traffic flow on highways in urban areas of South Dakota as “good”, “OK”, or “poor”.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of residents rated traffic flow on highways in urban areas as “OK”; 17% felt traffic flow was “poor” and nobody thought traffic flow was better than “OK”.

Ninety percent (90%) of emergency vehicle operators rated traffic flow on highways in urban areas as “OK”; 10% felt traffic flow was “poor” and nobody thought traffic flow was better than OK.

Forty-four percent (44%) of truckers/shippers rated traffic flow on highways in urban areas as “good”; 56% felt traffic flow was “OK” and nobody thought traffic flow was “poor”.

When asked why they felt that way, the following responses were provided.

RESIDENTS
- Traffic signal coordination at exits along interstate backs traffic up for miles.
- Many highways around Sioux Falls and Rapid City are just not big enough to accommodate all the traffic.
- Traffic flow is alright on DOT highways but not inside city limits.
- Traffic is always an issue during rush hour, but for the most part traffic flow is okay.

EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS
- I have concerns about traffic flow on 12th street, but that probably isn’t the DOT’s responsibility.
- I have some concerns regarding the merge lane capacity on off ramps coming on to busy streets.
- Exit 14 can’t handle the amount of traffic during peak hours.
- I think for the most part traffic flow is pretty good…especially compared to other states and cities.
• It is pretty good. I don’t have any real big concerns.
• Traffic coordination in certain areas needs some improvement.
• I don’t have any complaints. Traffic flow is a little worse during peak hours but that is to be expected.

TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS
• I think it is fairly good. We just have to accept the fact that traffic flow will be slow in work zones.
• It is good. Traffic flow is always moving; at least it never totally stops.
• The one concern I do have is with bridge replacement work zones. It seems like traffic backs-up quickly near bridges. Maybe the DOT should change the designs of these work zones.

Focus group participants were asked if they thought public transportation services for people in urban parts of the state are adequate.

Forty-six percent (46%) of residents thought transportation services in urban areas of the state are adequate, the remaining 54% thought they were not adequate.

Forty percent (40%) of emergency vehicle operators thought transportation services in urban areas of the state are adequate, the remaining 60% thought they were not adequate.

When asked why they felt that way, the following responses were provided.

RESIDENTS
• Given the number of people who actually use public transit I think it is very much adequate.
• “Rapid Ride” is great and very useful.
• Transit is only available during the day…what about the evenings?
• Service is not available to and from rural areas of the state. We need to have a commuter train that runs from city to city.
• We have transit services but they are so limited on what they can do and where they can go.
• “Ride Line” exists but it has to be scheduled 24 hours ahead. There needs to be an alternative.
• A lot of people need transit services. There are a surprising number of people who don’t drive.

EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS
• Transportation services…what transportation services, we don’t have any.
• Yes, transportation is limited, but given the state’s population I would say they are adequate.
• “Rapid Ride” is great but it is hard to get service all day long.
• I don’t think the DOT does a good job of informing the public about transportation services.
TOPIC #5a: Air Service

RESIDENTS
• The air service is really poor in Pierre. We have to drive to other states just to catch a flight.
• It is very difficult to get timely flights.
• Given our state’s population air services is just fine.
• Highway access to the airport in Sioux Falls is very limited.
• We don’t have the population to support a lot of air service.
• The scheduling of flights is terrible…facilities are generally alright though.
• Given the limited funds we have and the size of our state we don’t need anymore air service.
• Not enough flights.
• Services are not going to improve until more people actually fly out of South Dakota.

EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS
• Getting access to the airport in Sioux Falls is difficult. Exit 32 makes it extremely hard to get to and from the airport.
• The roads traveling to the airport are dangerous and need to be improved.
• DOT needs to improve access (road access) to the airport.

FARMERS/RANCHERS
• We need better service to the west…we have to fly east before we can fly west.
• It would be nice to have more carriers and options, but we just don’t have the population to support all those carriers.
• We are an agricultural state. We don’t have the economy to support bigger and better air service.
• Air service is adequate for our state. Every time I have fly there is at most, 10 people on the plane.
• It is way too expensive to fly but the DOT can’t really do anything about that.
• As far as the airport facilities go, we have pretty good amenities.
• It is adequate for the amount of traveling that I do.

SENIORS
• It would be nice to see east to west air service.
• It is too expensive to fly. I think most people drive to Omaha to fly because it is less expensive and more convenient.
• I have no idea. I stopped flying years ago because the service was terrible.
• I think it is fine. Nobody flies here in South Dakota anyways.
Focus Group Summary Report

- It is probably adequate. I don’t think huge improvements can be justified because every time I fly I’m alone on the plane.

**TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS**
- Access to the airport could be better.
- It is way too costly to fly out of South Dakota. There need to be more air carriers.
- Air service is adequate. It isn’t good, but it is adequate for South Dakota.
- Exits around the airport need to be improved.

**TOPIC #5b: Rail Service**

**RESIDENTS**
- Railroad crossings need to be improved.
- It would be nice to have a commuter train.
- South Dakota’s rail service is non-existent.

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**
- Some of the rail crossings in the state are dangerous. They are ruff and have poor visibility…oh and are poorly marked.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**
- I think rail service is fine…I don’t want all those trains coming by my house at night.
- I don’t want more trains coming through town. They are dangerous and pose more of a threat than any plus.
- A good rail service would allow more shipping options.
- I don’t think the DOT is to blame for bad rail service. I think the rail provider currently has a monopoly and there is nothing you, me, or the DOT can do to change it.

**SENIORS**
I would use rail transit if it was available.
- It is not adequate. I agree, some type of commuter rail service would be great!
- It doesn’t even exist anymore. 40 years ago I went everywhere on a train. Now days you are lucky to see a train in a normal month.
- I think it is adequate. Yeah a few people might use a commuter train, but that hardly justifies spending all that money.

**TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS**
- Railroad crossings need underpasses. They currently back-up traffic, are rough, and raise safety concerns.
• Rail service is adequate. As a trucker, I’m glad rail service isn’t very good because it gets us more business. However, I do have concerns with the actual crossings. They are very rough and could use a little attention.

**TOPIC #6: Environmental Issues**

The majority of focus group participants had very little concern with the environment. However, there were a few isolated concerns that were mentioned throughout the focus groups. These concerns along with any other comments dealing specifically with the environment are provided below.

**RESIDENTS**

• I really don’t have any concerns. I think the DOT does a good job following regulations and doing what is best for their customers with little environmental disruption.
• When DOT widens lanes farm ground is lost.
• I think the DOT does what ever they want and if your property is in the way well to bad.
• I believe DOT generally follows environmental regulations. I always see silt fences in and around construction zones.
• Bigger and more roads take away good farmland and trees.

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**

• For the most part I don’t really have any concerns. I guess it depends on the area of concern.
• I’m just concerned with how population growth and more and more drivers will affect the environment.
• DOT generally does a good job following regulations. They follow those regulations so I don’t have to have any concerns about the environment.
• I think everyone is concerned with the environment locally…but on a larger scale, I don’t really care.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**

• I don’t have any concerns. I think the DOT follows the rules and does what is best for the environment while still providing good quality roadways.
• I think they do a great job of protecting the environment. I always see silt fencing during construction and more importantly clean ditches.
• I think about how some day we might have huge environmental issues, but I really don’t loose any sleep over it.
• I don’t think we have any concerns here in South Dakota. We are more rural than urban so we really don’t have any of the problems larger more populated states have.
• I think the DOT is responsible and try to do what is right. However, I don’t like the fact that we have to follow some of the same rules as California does. We have entirely separate issues than larger states…what is best for them isn’t always best for us.
• I don’t have any concerns. I think the DOT is responsible and I trust them to do the right things.
• They do a great job balancing environmental concerns without disrupting new highways.

SENIORS
• I care but it doesn’t keep me up at night.
• I think guidelines are followed and research is conducted so that DOT operates environmentally conscious.
• I would generally pay more but it really depends on the issue…some of them are ridiculous.
• The only major concern I have is when DOT disrupts sod and sediment and they run down streams.
• It is really a tradeoff. If we want nice roads then we have to be willing to give up crop land.
• It is the DOT’s job to follow guidelines so they should be the ones concerned…not me.
• I think the DOT does a great job in this area. They provide us with great roads while preserving the natural beauty of the state.

TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS
• I don’t have any concerns. As long as the DOT follows the rules I’m fine with whatever they do.
• I see silt fences all over the state. It is obvious that the follow soil erosion requirements and other regulations.
• The DOT is a good steward of the environment. They always discuss environmental issues at their public meetings.
• The only concern I have is that they leave silt fences up too long. It is sort of contradictory when they put them up and then let them blow away. That don’t exactly help they environment.

TOPIC #7: Public Information

RESIDENTS
• Winter conditions are always up to date and very accurate. I use the website quite a bit to get information regarding road conditions.
• I like the variable message boards. They have a lot of potential…I just wish they would turn them on more often.
• I like the fact that you can get information regarding winter road conditions on their website.
• The website is easy to navigate through and find the information you are looking for.
• I have been pleased with DOT’s efforts to keep the people involved.
• I think the DOT needs to provide information in means other internet, T.V., radio, and newspaper. I good alternative is the variable message boards and/or billboards.
• DOT does a fairly good job providing information to the public. It would be nice if they would be more bold and decisive when closing roads in the winter.
• They do a great involving the public. Meetings are held periodically, there are always announcements in the newspaper and on T.V., and the website gives you access to all types of information.

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**
• Road conditions aren’t very accurate.
• Employees are very responsive when you call for information, but DOT is not very proactive when it comes to providing information.
• Public meetings are held quite a bit…if you want the information it is generally there.
• We get faxes all the time regarding work zones and re-routes, but road closing information is terribly slow.
• SDDOT’s website is great when you want to find construction site information…and it is usually pretty accurate.
• DOT isn’t exceeding my expectations but not really underachieving either.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**
• DOT does a great job providing information about weather conditions, construction sites, and road conditions on the website.
• I have used their website and it is great. I use it to find out which roads are safe to drive in the winter. I have found that the website is easy and very straightforward.
• When things change, the DOT always tells us.
• Weight limits are made very clear to all farmers…we know the rules.
• Sometimes the accuracy of road conditions isn’t very good, but it is still better than nothing.
• SDDOT relays information to us directly which makes the whole process more convenient.
• If you want to find out what is going on with the DOT you can, you must be willing to actively go find it but it is available if you want it.
• They inform us about possible project timelines, when our fields will be disrupted, and other construction related concerns.
• I think the DOT could make better use of the variable message boards. Every time I pass one it is blank.

**SENIORS**
• Posting information on the website has made it very easy to access.
• When construction took place in our area we were informed by the DOT ahead of time.
• DOT does a good job providing the public with information. It is our job to be conscious and
recognize that it is available.

- I always hear alerts on the radio, T.V., and even see them in the newspaper.
- I have no complaints. I have never felt like the information I wanted just wasn’t available.
- I would like to see more information regarding planning. It seems like they are a little less willing to share that type of stuff with the public.

**TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS**

- They do a great job. If you attend the public meetings you can get a lot of useful information.
- They do fine. It would be nice if they were proactively providing the trucking industry with information.
- The spring load limit emails are great. It would be nice if they did that for other types of information (i.e., work zones, detours, road conditions)
- The website has every type of information you could possibly need. It is a little confusing at times, but it is available.

**Specific Types of Information SDDOT Customers Would Like to Have**

**RESIDENTS**

- weather conditions
- road closings
- signage regarding upcoming services on interstate
- alternate routes to avoid construction
- environmental information (what the DOT is doing to meet regulations)
- project timelines and deadlines
- upcoming construction plans
- winter weather warnings
- cost of projects
- day to day changes to work zones
- plans for local construction

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**

- Road condition information
- Road closings
- Road closings locally
- Local control of road closings
- Upcoming construction plans
- Better information on when we can run “hot”
FARMERS/RANCHERS
- The hours of DOT truck stops
- Weather conditions
- Detours and construction site information
- Road condition alerts on variable message boards
- Timeframes for project X
- Special events that will disrupt traffic
- Information about the cost of certain projects
- Signage during harvest inside Pierre and around rural areas
- Educate the public on how to drive during harvest time

SENIORS
- Where construction sites are
- Accurate weather information
- Proposed construction
- Future plans
- Sturgis and Rushmore announcements
- State map updates
- Local road closings

TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS
- Project timelines
- Purpose of projects
- Notify truckers directly of closings
- Provide alternative routes via email

Comments about the 511 System

RESIDENTS
- 511 is great. I use it all the time to check the road conditions.
- 511 could be made better is the information was more accurate and up to date.
- A lot of times when I call 511 it seems like the information is old.
- 511 is pretty accurate…I know everyone expects the information to be real time but I think that is unrealistic.
- I called 511 to check on the road conditions. I was amazed how detailed the information was. It told me exact locations of slush, snow drifts and ice. I was impressed with how accurate it was.
Focus Group Summary Report

- The 511 process is long and cumbersome. It is hard to understand and sometimes the information is totally wrong. No information is better than the wrong information.
- I thought the information was accurate and was helpful.
- It would be nice if it was easier to understand.
- The information is too general. 511 would be much more useful if the information was detailed and specific.
- I thought the information was great. I used it a couple of winters ago when it started to sleet. It told me what the conditions were ahead of me and for the most part it was right.

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**
- The 511 concept is good but DOT is not being bold enough with their road condition report.
- I don’t like the accuracy of 511 reports.
- I agree, DOT needs to be bolder.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**
- I use it when I travel and run into a storm. I have found that it is generally pretty accurate.
- It is always pretty accurate and detailed. It is an extremely useful tool in the winter…especially when it ices and you are hauling a big load.
- I used because I was curious. I thought it was pretty neat. I don’t think I would use it again because it took so long to get through.
- The time I used it I received accurate information. If I remember correctly I pulled off the road and let the storm pass on by. I made it home safe so I will use it again next time.
- It is a good service…I haven’t used it yet but I’m sure I will in the future.

**SENIORS**
- 511 makes information easy to access
- It was confusing at first…but it worked well.
- Real time information is not also available. Sometimes the reports are old and not accurate.
- I used it to find out which roads were opened after the large snow storm a while back.
- It seemed to work when I used it. I didn’t run into any construction so it must have.
- It would be better if it was easier to actually get through.
- We can’t expect to get real time information.

**TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS**
- 511 information is too vague and general.
- It isn’t very accurate sometimes. I know it can’t be exactly right all the time but at least remove the old information when things change.
- I have found that the information is very accurate.
- When I used 511 it worked well.
• I use it all the time before I send trucks out in the winter months. I have always had good luck with it.

**TOPIC #8: Funding Issues**

**RESIDENTS**
• Sometimes I feel like the DOT doesn’t use funds correctly. I see unnecessary projects all over the state. Funding is not the problem…it is how DOT prioritizes that hinders the transportation system.
• I think funding is adequate in our state. I know that we get a lot more money back then we put in so I really don’t have any complaints.
• We do have funding issues here the state but I’m extremely satisfied with the work and service DOT is able to provide.
• Highways are smooth, safe, and marked well. They seem to be doing the best they can with the funds available to them.
• I like the fact the bidding is competitive. This ensures we as consumers get the most bang for our buck.
• For the most part I’m satisfied with the number of improvements in this area. DOT can’t fix everything, they have to prioritize and I’m satisfied with the job they have done.
• I think funds per capita are adequate.
• Whenever you have a state with such a small population there will be funding issues. I think DOT does a good job working with what they have. We have to realize that we can’t get everything we want.

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**
• Compared to other states we don’t do too bad.
• I think funding is pretty good because all the secondary roads in the state look and drive like primary roads.
• Given the state’s population I think funding is just right.
• I don’t have concerns with the amount of funds, but rather those who decide where to spend the money.
• I think the DOT spends un-needed money on repairing roads that were just finished a year or so ago. Build the roads right the first time and save some money for secondary projects.
• I don’t haven any concerns right now...I don’t think it will become a huge issue in the future when we start demanding transit for the growing elderly population and cars become fuel efficient decreasing the amount of revenue from the gas tax.

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**
• I think funding is fine. However, we pay a lot of lazy DOT workers when we they do nothing.
• I think there should be more competition between construction companies.
• Funding is adequate for the roads we need to maintain and build in South Dakota.
• I don’t have any idea. I know that I see improvements, new construction, and quality services being added all the time so the DOT must have a little bit of money.

**SENIORS**
• I’m just not familiar with funding at all. If I was to guess I would say that it is probably adequate.
• I think funds are used wisely. They have to be because I’m pretty sure the state doesn’t have any money to throw around.
• I think the ethanol boom is really decreasing our funds. It will be a challenge in the future to find adequate funds because of ethanol.
• I think there will be funding issues in the future. Gas tax will not keep up with the cost of building new roads.
• I would be willing to pay a gas tax increase…as long as it was being used for a reasonable cause.
• Transportation should be funded by gas tax, license plate fees, and federal help.

**TRUCKERS/SHIPPERS**
• The quality of roads is very good, so funds must be adequate.
• I haven’t seen any evidence that funds are inadequate.
• Construction and improvements are happening all across the state. I’m sure the DOT has limited funds but they seem to be doing a great job utilizing what they have.
• From a citizen standpoint I get good value for my tax dollars. However, as a trucker I would say no. There are too many projects being carried out that are not trucker friendly.
• I think the DOT uses the resources the have wisely. We don’t have the funding to initiate unnecessary projects. The DOT knows this and does a good job prioritizing and dispersing funds.

**TOPIC #9: Overall Priorities**

**Most Important Transportation Priorities**

The top issues are listed in descending order based on the number of participants who selected the item as one of their top choices.

**RESIDENTS**
1. Maintenance of existing highways
2. Safety improvements
3. Smoother highways
4. Improve rail service
5. Striping/marking
6. Improve public transit access
7. Improvements to traffic flow in construction zones
8. Improve construction methods
9. Snow and ice removal
10. Increase enforcement in work zones

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATORS**
1. Allowing local and regional control of road closures
2. Maintenance of existing highways
3. Safety improvements
4. Wider shoulders/lanes on secondary highways
5. Long range planning (5 to 10 year planning)
6. Cooperating with all safety organizations
7. Smoother highways
8. Joint training/accident management
9. Striping/marking
10. Improve the flow of traffic in work zones

**FARMERS/RANCHERS**
1. Maintaining existing highways
2. Safety improvements
3. Snow and ice removal
4. Communicate with the public
5. Add turning lanes/wider shoulders
6. Help improve local rural roads
7. Reduce construction zone lengths
8. East/west bypass around Aberdeen
9. Redesign Highway 14 and 12 intersection
10. Improve signage and striping in rural areas
**SENIORES**
1. Safety improvements
2. Public transportation improvements
3. Maintenance of existing highways
4. Communication with the public
5. More 4-lane highways
6. Increase funding for secondary roads
7. Striping/marking improvements
8. Length of construction zones
9. Finish existing projects
10. Snow/ice removal

**TRUCKERS & SHIPPERS**
1. Shorten work zones
2. Snow/ice removal
3. Safety improvements
4. Maintain existing highways
5. Speed up construction projects/complete projects
6. Widen shoulders
7. Uniform carrier enforcement
8. Interchange/exit improvements
9. Pavement markings/striping
10. More 4-lane highways/add capacity