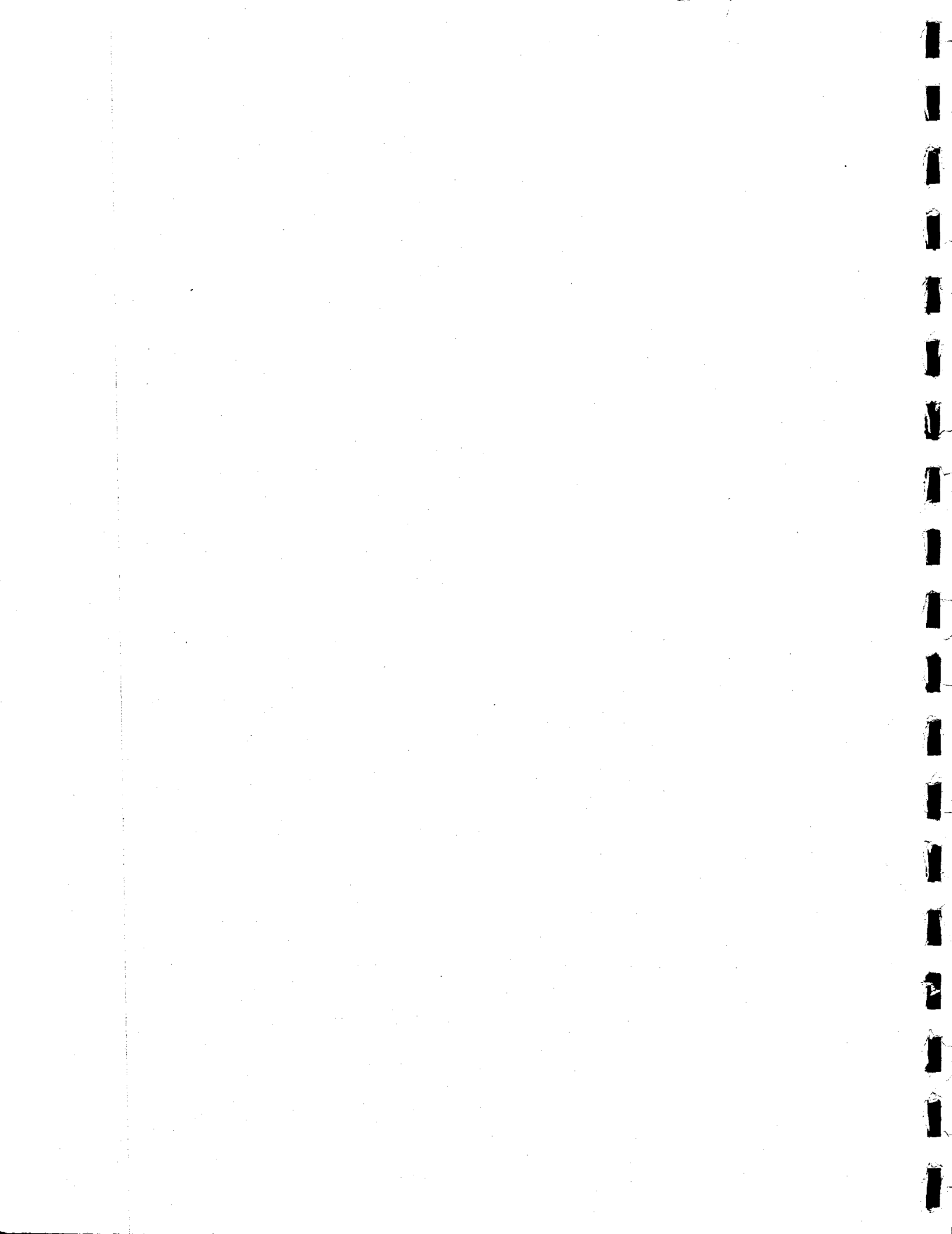


SOUTH DAKOTA RAIL PLAN 1997



**SOUTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

APRIL 1997



South Dakota Rail Plan

April 1997

Prepared by:

Office of Planning and Programs

Office of Railroads

South Dakota Department of Transportation

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Preface



PREFACE

This document, the South Dakota Rail Plan 1997, is South Dakota's official rail planning document. This plan is a component of the Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan adopted by the South Dakota Department of Transportation in 1994.

The goals of the rail plan are:

- to inform the public and transportation officials of the transportation planning process and the importance of the rail plan component to an integrated intermodal transportation plan,
- to establish the goals and objectives to be achieved by the rail planning process,
- to inform the public and transportation officials of the current rail system characteristics,
- to examine the future of rail transportation in South Dakota.

To achieve these goals, the rail plan is divided into four chapters.

Chapter 1 documents the transportation planning process and the interrelationship of the rail plan with the Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan. The importance of intermodalism is examined.

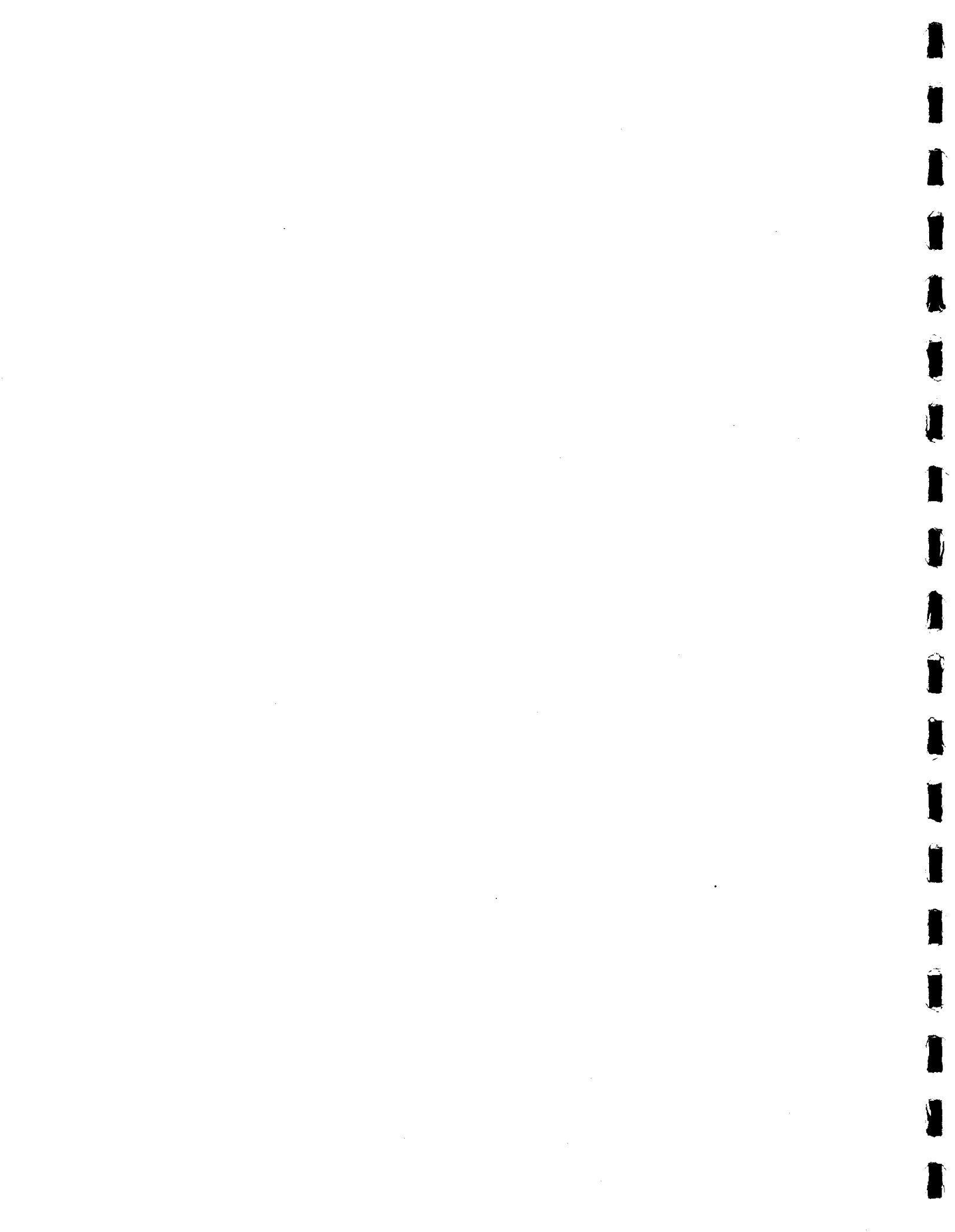
Chapter 2 outlines the goals and objectives of the Department's rail planning process. The Local Rail Freight Assistance Program selection process is discussed in this chapter. Significant events since the last plan are also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 3 documents the characteristics of the current rail system and contains information on the rail carriers, rail miles in service, traffic levels, types of commodities carried, and other information to assist the reader in understanding the rail network and its importance. The State-owned rail system is also examined in this chapter.

Chapter 4 addresses future rail needs and expectations. Rail lines which may be abandoned, and those which may need financial assistance to maintain operation are identified.

Chapter 1

The Transportation Planning Process and the Importance of Intermodalism



CHAPTER 1

The Transportation Planning Process and the Importance of Intermodalism

The Transportation Planning Process

The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) has established a transportation planning process which includes specific planning considerations. Planning considerations will ensure equity among the modes and comprehensive decision-making. The planning considerations specified by SDDOT are shown in Figure 1. Those that are closely linked are combined for simplicity.

Figure 1

NEEDS ANALYSIS-PRIORITIZATION -PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS
Management Systems
- Pavement
- Bridges
- Highway Safety
- Traffic Congestion
- Public Transportation
- Intermodal Transportation
Energy Use Goals
Bicycle Facilities & Pedestrian Walkways
Intermodal Access to Major Attractions
Non-metro Transportation Needs
Metropolitan Area Plans
Metropolitan Connectivity
Recreation and Tourism
Water Pollution Plans
Transportation Systems Management
Social Economic and Environmental Effects
Traffic Congestion
Transit Enhancement and Expansion
Complementary Transportation - Land Use Decisions
Transportation Enhancements
Innovative Financing
Right-of-Way Preservation
Long Range Needs
Commercial Vehicle Movement
Life-Cycle Costs
Coordination of Transportation Plans
Adjoining State and Local Roads
Concerns of Tribal Governments

The challenge to the SDDOT is to coordinate the solutions which best balance these considerations and to ensure they are implemented. The SDDOT will meet this challenge by including these planning considerations at each junction of decision-making in the development of the Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan and its components including the Rail Plan, the STIP, and in the Statewide Planning Process.

Input Groups and Coordination

SDDOT has emphasized public input and review in the transportation planning process since the late 1970's. In planning, this input must be analyzed and coordinated using the Executive Management Team and the Transportation Commission. As decisions are made, the following should be done to incorporate public input and review:

1. Use the Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan and its components along with the STIP planning processes to inform the public about the intermodal options and tradeoffs.
2. Use ad-hoc and annual review meetings to gather input, to develop suggested revisions to the Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan and its components including the Rail Plan, and to assess new projects for the STIP.

3. Use input from citizens, Tribal Governments, MPOs, local governments and other public agencies, transportation agency employees, providers, Planning Districts, the Secretary of the Interior, other Federal Agencies, and the BIA to formulate, guide, and coordinate new policies (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

<u>OTHER INPUT GROUPS</u>
Citizens
Local Governments and other Public Agencies
Transportation Agency Employees
Providers
MPO's
Tribal Governments
Planning Districts
Secretary of the Interior
Other Federal Agencies
BIA

4. Use input from appointed input groups, including TEAM, the Aeronautics Commission, the Railroad Board, the Transportation and Coordination Task Force, the Transportation Commission, and the Scenic Byways Committee to update the Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan and its components including the Rail Plan (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

<u>APPOINTED INPUT GROUPS</u>
Transportation Commission
TEAM Task Force
Aeronautics Commission
Railroad Board
Transportation & Coordination Task Force
Scenic Byways Committee

The SDDOT will coordinate data collection, analysis, and evaluation of transportation plans with the Management Systems, other plans, and all the input groups.

Transportation plans will also be coordinated with other agencies responsible for recreation, tourism, economic development, intermodal facilities, environmental resources planning, corridor preservation, rail planning, and social, economic employment, energy, environmental, land use, housing, and community development effects of transportation actions.

Coordination, Decision-Making, and Approval Process

SDDOT advocates an approach to decision-making where each mode is considered before the most efficient mode is chosen to combat a particular transportation problem.

This approach to decision-making is intended to avoid inefficient, modal-biased solutions. The Department is organized into three divisions, including Fiscal and Public Assistance, Planning/Engineering, and Operations. The organization of the SDDOT promotes an intermodal approach to decision-making.

The decision-making process in SDDOT is a coordinated effort. The Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan and its components were reviewed by many different groups before it was finally adopted. Components of the Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan include studies of each mode and of intermodalism. The Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan brings the various components together into one cohesive decision-making

system. The Statewide Intermodal Long Range Plan will affect each junction of decision-making.

The future transportation challenges and intermodal relationships outlined in this rail plan must be considered by each member of the SDDOT during planning and decision-making. Management and staff need to be trained to look at transportation systems as a whole, to use the Intermodal Data Base for analysis purposes, and to determine the most efficient and effective mode or intermodal solution to serve a particular transportation need.

Rail Planning Process

As part of the rail planning process, the Office of Planning and Programs of the Division of Planning/Engineering performs the following tasks:

- conducts research on basic railroad problems,
- works with the Office of Air, Rail, and Transit of the Division of Fiscal and Public Assistance in development of solutions,
- maintains the State/Federal relationship on programs relating to rail transportation, and

- assists SDDOT and any other public or private agency in coordinating railroad services with those of other transportation modes.

The Office of Planning and Programs is jointly responsible with the Office of Air, Rail, and Transit for conducting planning and analysis functions necessary to maintain the Rail Plan. This includes the collection, analysis, and evaluation of data pertaining to rail lines and services in South Dakota. Such activities include:

- monitoring rail traffic and commodity flow,
- performing detailed line analyses on lines threatened by abandonment or in need of governmental financial assistance,
- evaluating changes in the status, condition, and service on rail lines,
- analyzing State-owned Rail Line operations.

Rail planning in South Dakota has long recognized the importance of public involvement. The Department will continue to keep the public informed and actively solicit their input. Rail planning grew out of public awareness of the rail crisis facing the State and the public's desire to solve the resulting transportation problems. Direct public involvement in the rail planning process is generated through news releases, Department mailings,

meetings, and seminars. SDDOT personnel also interact directly with shipper groups and the rail carriers to solicit their input into the planning process.

Shipper surveys are conducted on rail lines selected for intensive study for financial assistance. These surveys provide information on the shipper's usage of rail transportation, future needs for rail service, and other related information. For additional information and points of view, SDDOT coordinates its rail activities with the surrounding states.

Public meetings on the rail plan and planned railroad improvement projects are held in conjunction with the public meetings on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program held annually at various sites across the State. The meetings afford the public to review the plans and proposed projects for all modes of transportation, including rail. Public involvement is essential in ascertaining the needs and concerns of local rail users and will continue to be a major component of the transportation planning process in South Dakota.

Intermodalism

South Dakota has a long history of intermodalism. In South Dakota, the major intermodal transfer is grain from trucks to rail cars at elevators and unit train loading facilities. Following the late 1970s and early 1980s when many rail lines were abandoned and some elevators lost rail service, the Department identified the Preferential

Truck Network, long before the passage of ISTEA. The network consisted of state highways which linked elevators which had lost rail service to elevators and unit train loading facilities which maintained a rail connection. Improvements such as widening of lanes and shoulders, and improving turning radii at intersections were made on the network to accomodate twin 42 foot trailers.

To assist the development of unit train facilities, elevators capable of loading 25 rail cars or more, the Department developed a program in the 1980s to provide state highway funds to improve local roads that connected unit train loading facilities to state highways. The local roads were improved to handle the increased truck traffic generated by the unit train loading facility.

The Department also assists unit train loading facilities by providing loans and grants to railroads and elevators to add or improve track siding to develop or improve unit train loading facilities. The Department is committed to the development or improvement of at least one unit train facility every five years.

Chapter 2

Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Actions



CHAPTER 2

Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Actions

Mission

The mission of the South Dakota Department of Transportation is to deliver a cost-effective, intermodal, transportation system.

Rail Service and Planning Goals

The rail service and planning goals of the South Dakota Department of Transportation are to:

- Coordinate the efforts of rail users, railroad companies, local governments, and the SDDOT in solving rail transportation problems in South Dakota.
- Encourage the continuation of privately owned and operated essential rail service in South Dakota through the use of available public and private funds, where the public interest justifies such assistance.
- Facilitate the consolidation of rail services in South Dakota when opportunities exist for improving the efficiency of rail operations.

- Increase public awareness of rail service issues as they affect South Dakota and to promote public involvement in the rail planning process.

Rail Service and Planning Objectives

South Dakota's objectives in rail service and planning are to:

- Foster safe, efficient, and economical transportation services for the movement of freight in South Dakota.
- Integrate South Dakota's rail transportation system with other modes, with surrounding states, and with the national rail transportation system.
- Provide and maintain essential rail services and facilities in South Dakota which serve the public interest but which cannot otherwise be profitably continued by private carriers.
- Provide a point of coordination for rail users, railroad carriers, and governments (local, state, and federal) in maintaining essential rail transportation accessibility within South Dakota.

Rail Service and Planning Actions

Workable actions are essential to the rail planning process. The following actions have been developed to implement the goals and objectives:

- Identify the essential rail system needed to serve South Dakota's current and future agricultural, natural resource, industrial, and energy-related activities.
- Retain a viable core rail system comprising of essential rail lines which serve the primary traffic-producing areas in South Dakota and which provide accessibility to state and national markets.
- Eliminate non-profitable rail lines which are non-essential and whose services could be more efficiently provided by an alternative rail line or transportation mode.
- Invest Railroad Trust Fund dollars and assist in securing federal funds for the permanent improvement and rehabilitation of essential rail lines.
- Assist in establishing regional railroad authorities and providing loans to develop or improve rail facilities, including unit train loading facilities.

Planning Process for Local Rail Freight Assistance Program (LRFA)

Historically, federal funding has been an important part of the maintenance and rehabilitation of rail lines in South Dakota. Since 1979, South Dakota has received over \$20 million in federal grants under the Local Rail Assistance Program and the Local Rail Freight Assistance Program. Table 1 shows by year the amount of federal funds and the matching funds provided for railroad rehabilitation.

Table 1

Federal and Matching Funds For Railroad Rehabilitation				
Year	Federal Funds	State Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds
1979	\$1,840,000	\$0	\$460,000	\$2,300,000
1980	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$500,000	\$2,500,000
1981	\$1,760,000	\$2,370,000	\$1,540,000	\$5,670,000
1982	\$8,156,404	\$2,065,369	\$1,097,817	\$11,319,590
1983	\$648,933	\$0	\$278,114	\$927,047
1984	\$495,914	\$212,535	\$0	\$708,449
1985	\$852,347	\$810,413	\$0	\$1,662,760
1986	\$626,143	\$0	\$268,347	\$894,490
1987	\$447,318	\$0	\$255,918	\$703,236
1988	\$132,245	\$17,815	\$64,312	\$214,372
1989	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1990	\$256,333	\$0	\$135,167	\$391,500
1991	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1992	\$298,200	\$0	\$127,800	\$426,000
1993	\$274,194	\$0	\$117,513	\$391,707
1994	\$2,457,951	\$0	\$428,572	\$2,886,523
1995	\$536,000	\$0	\$237,827	\$773,827
Total	\$20,781,982	\$5,476,132	\$5,511,387	\$31,769,501

Since 1988, the availability of federal assistance for railroad rehabilitation has become increasingly problematic with the uncertainties of the federal budget process.