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PUBLIC FEEDBACK FOR PUBLIC MEETING #2

Union County Master Transportation Plan

Public Meeting #2 was hosted at the Union County Courthouse in Elk Point, SD, on December 15, 2021. Stakeholder meetings were hosted at the same location in the afternoon of the same day. Public comments were accepted until January 3, 2022. Stakeholders identified by the Study Advisory Team were emailed direct invitations for the meetings, and public advertisements were posted in the following official Union County newspapers on November 25 and December 2, 2021:

- *Alcester Union & Hudsonite*
- *Beresford Republic*
- *Dakota Dunes / North Sioux City Times*
- *The Leader-Courier*

Meeting Schedule

- 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM – Stakeholder Meeting 1: Townships
- 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM – Stakeholder Meeting 2: Municipalities
- 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM – Stakeholder Meeting 3: Other (Coops, Homeowners Association, etc.)
- 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM – Stakeholder Meeting 4: School Districts
- 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM – Public Meeting #2

Attendance

- Stakeholders – 8
- Public – 4
- Study Advisory Team and Staff – 8

Summary of Materials Provided

Exhibits were placed in the room for attendees to browse. A presentation was made using PowerPoint. Attendees were asked to record their presence on the sign-in sheet and leave optional comments on the comment cards provided.

Comments and Questions

During the meetings, attendees commented and asked questions about the study and materials presented.

Comments During Meetings on December 15, 2021:

- What is the feasibility of Trail plan along Big Sioux River with periodic flooding?

Response: Since flooding is frequent along rivers in this region, it is recommended to construct the trail with a natural surface and/or gravel rather than a paved surface.

- Who owns the trails? Who maintains it?

Response: An entity to construct trails would need to be identified, and an entity to maintain the trails would need to be identified, these entities do not necessarily need to be the same, however they will work closely together. One idea is that a trails network could be constructed and maintained by a non-profit entity. Another option is to form a Union County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Department or Division, this entity could fall under the Highways Department, or be a stand-alone department.

- Do the costs for trails cut into the budget of the roads and bridges?

Response: Funding for a trails network can come out of the same fund for roads and bridges. However, a goal should be to find alternative funding sources such as grants to lessen the financial impact that trails have on roadway funding, or the possibility exists to pass a voter approved trails fund.

- Township roads are only 18-20 feet wide, and 66 feet of Right-of-Way. We have concerns about combine widths that are as wide as the road bed. There is no state law about size of farm equipment. The roads were designed many years ago and did not account for such large vehicles.

Response: Improving township roads solely to accommodate very large farm equipment is probably not feasible. A different kind of discussion may need to take place.

- The delineators placed as a result of a signs project have presented maintenance challenges. It is hard to mow, and the long grass causes snow drifting in the winter. Sometimes large farm equipment needs spotters on the road to flag vehicles ahead, because the farm equipment needs both lanes of the road.

Response: The intentions of the delineators along roads with steep slopes and along curves are well intended, to improve safety and visibility of the roadside. There may have been some unintended consequences that cause new safety concerns.

- In Beresford, there is a problem with people running stop signs in town because they don't notice the stop signs.

Response: There are ways to increase the conspicuity of stop signs, including larger signs, advanced signing, flags, LED flashers, and other engineering solutions. The location(s) described are within Beresford jurisdiction, not Union County.

- There is a path that connects Wynstone Housing Development to the Adams Homestead and State Nature Preserve.

Response: Noted that this connection exists for non-vehicular transportation modes.

- How much funding will there be for the County from the big new infrastructure bill?

Response: Appropriation of funding has not been passed yet.

- How does the new interstate interchange plan near North Sioux City affect this study?

Response: New interstate interchanges or a moved interchange have not been programmed for SDDOT funding. The recent Decennial Interstate Corridor Study did not include a new or moved interchange in North Sioux City. Interstate plans take a long time, and the preference is to time it when the bridges have reached their useful service life. This led to additional discussion about development in North Sioux City and cooperation with SDDOT and likely timelines. This discussion topic did not directly apply to the Union County MTP, but potential modifications at the interstate would likely affect the transportation network nearby, including Union County highways.

- Does Union County prioritize “Farm to Market Roads?”

Response: This terminology varies by county. Union County does not officially define roads this way. The Major Roads Plan as part of the Union County MTP prioritizes the roads based on operations, safety, access, and freight capacity. Farm-to-market type routes are part of the consideration.

- County Road 1B would be great to have wider shoulders.

Response: County Road 1B is defined as a “County Paved – Priority Route” in the Major Roads Plan.

- School traffic is bad on Northshore Drive, not designed well. It is also in disrepair.

Response: The area in question is under North Sioux City jurisdiction, and there has been some analysis completed to come up with alternatives for solutions.

Comments submitted by stakeholders who could not attend stakeholder meetings in person:

- Are bus routes considered for roads with bridges that may be closed?

Response: Bus routes can vary over time. It is mostly assumed that bus routes are correlated with annual traffic volumes. The lower the traffic volume, the less likely it is used as a bus route. Low traffic volumes are a factor considered with bridges that are deemed as candidates for future closure. Before a bridge is ultimately deemed to be closed, consideration for its use as a bus route and the resulting detour should be taken into consideration.

- Between Alcester and Hawarden, the railroad tracks appear to be used for storage, and could be a good option for a trail.

Response: Rail Trails or Rails with Trails are good options to consider when designing a new trail plan.

Comments submitted outside of the meetings:

- “What are the plans for raising Hehke Rd. I assume we will be receiving federal money from the infrastructure program.”

Response: Henke Road is a township road. The cost to improve flooding on Henke Road was found to be too high and the project to improve flooding on Henke Road was not pursued. Taxpayers in the township voiced concerns of cost and increased taxes to accommodate the project. As for funding from the new infrastructure bill, we still don't know how that would impact funding for townships.

- “A few years back (possibly 2018) Union county hired your firm to do a study on Henke Road. You found it was possible to raise the road on the south end in order to stop the flooding in order to make travel possible on Henke Road. I would like to see that process carried out. Every time the road floods we are not able to access Henke Road. If ever there was a medical emergency or fire, it would take emergency personnel extra time to go the long way around to get to somebody's house and even then there's a couple of houses that can't be reached when the road floods.”

Response: See comment above.

- “I appreciate the group taking the time to review the roads and take public input, I know it is extra work and appreciate the opportunity to provide my comments. I was unable to attend the meetings that day due to being out of town for work. It appears that adding some shoulders on 23/334th St. is part of the plan, which is good. One thing that I feel the study group needs to still consider and discuss is Chip Sealing, and how to reduce the hazards of this. I understand the need and reasons to chip seal, and am not suggesting it be completely eliminated. As a motorcyclist, this is a VERY dangerous process, both during the chip seal process, and after. After the process is done, and the signs taken down, there are still instances of loose chip, and that is harder to see than black ice is in the winter. Again, I am not suggesting it be eliminated, but what can we do to reduce it uses where possible. Even though this method of repair is economical, there are costs to motorists, rocks getting thrown up and could damage paint, could create rock chips in windows of cars behind, get caught in brake rotors. For where budget does not allow an alternative maintenance method, what can we do to reduce the safety risks.

Ideas:

- Notify public at least 2 weeks prior to the process, what roads, and overall schedule. Notify via Facebook, local papers (NSC/DD Times for example) contact the local ABATE chapter, etc.
- Chip Seal/Loose Gravel Const. signs that state the road work being done, but place signs at a prior intersection so motorcyclists have the option to detour.
- Increase the quality control inspections at the completion of the work to ensure no patches of loose gravel remain and all of the excess chip gets swept up.”

Response: Thank you for your ideas! Union County does a fog seal after every chip seal which results in very high rock retention. The fog seal is applied a day or two after the chip seal. As far as more notice, Union County hires a contractor to do the project, it is hard for the contractor to schedule two weeks in advance.