

# Service Awards

**Congratulations** to these dedicated individuals for their work and continued service with the Department of Roads. They celebrate their service dates in *December and January*.

## 40 Years

Dennis Baumfalk, Information Systems  
Ardith Bohling, Roadway Design  
Dennis Hatfield, Roadway Design  
Judy Kelly, Communication  
James Morris, Bridge

## 30 Years

Loretta Abel, District 5  
Ernest Bennett, District 8  
George Collins, District 2  
Alan Dent, District 2  
Larry Hawkins, District 5  
Roger Kalkwarf, District 1  
Dennis Meinecke, Roadway Design  
Dan Nichols, Materials & Research  
Esther Shepherd, District 4  
Donna Splichal, Logistics

## 20 Years

Brian Bussey, District 3  
Darrel Claus, District 3  
Lyle Dvorak, District 1  
William Lewis, District 4  
Vester Reichman, District 5  
Jerry Salmon, District 4  
Timothy Urwiler, District 3  
Kristine Winter, District 3

## 10 Years

Syed Ataullah, Roadway Design  
Roger Byrne, Information Systems  
Gary Carson, District 3  
Joel Hayse, District 4  
Russell Hintz, District 4  
Dan Johnson, District 4  
John Metzger, District 7  
Shawn Pohlman, District 3  
Wayne Rhamy, District 5  
Shirley Schafer, Hwy. Commission  
Scott Vanover, District 1

## the Roadrunner

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contributed by employees, retirees and friends of NDOR.

## From the Director

*To every Department of Roads employee*

*Best wishes to you and your families  
for a joyous holiday season. As we  
pause to reflect on the past year,  
let's take time to celebrate our  
successes and resolve to work  
together for a safe, peaceful  
and positive new year.*



## Summit Held for NDOR Project Managers

**By Cindy DeCoster**  
Human Resources Division

The first Summit for Project Managers was held November 13-15 at the Riverside Inn in Grand Island. The Summit provided the Project Managers, Construction Engineers and District Engineers an opportunity to compare and contrast current business practices while sharing different styles and perspectives. Both Project Managers and Central Headquarters personnel were selected to serve on discussion panels.

Six specific topics were discussed over the three days:

- ✓ Relating to Contractors,
- ✓ Relating to Traffic Control and Law Enforcement,
- ✓ Relating to Design Divisions,
- ✓ Relating to Right-of-Way and Railroad Divisions,
- ✓ Relating to Construction and Materials & Research, and
- ✓ Relating to the Media and Public Relations.

A special thanks to both the panel members and participants who contributed their time and talent in order to make this event a great success. ♦

# Centerline Rumble Strips Installed

Centerline rumble strips have recently been installed at two locations, on U.S. Highway 34 between Seward and Lincoln and on Nebraska Highway 77 and 92 between Wahoo and Yutan.

A total of 27 miles, 16 miles on Highway 34 and 11 miles on Highway 77 and 92, now have centerline rumble strips, according to the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR).

Centerline rumble strips, 16-inch strips placed across the centerline of a highway, have a similar intent as shoulder rumble strips. When a driver crosses the centerline of the highway the resulting noise and vibration alert the driver of the pending lane change.

These two locations were chosen because of the high number of head-on collisions over a five-year period. It is hoped that the centerline rumble strips will significantly reduce the number of head-on collisions by alerting drivers that stray from their lane due to inattention, fatigue or other causes.

This is a pilot project for Nebraska, and it will be evaluated for several years before further implementation. According to NDOR Traffic Engineer Randy Peters, the evaluation will



Photo by Babrak Niazi, District 1 Project Manager

Centerline rumble strips on U.S. 34, west of Lincoln.

include accident reduction, public acceptance, maintenance requirements and choice of appropriate locations.

At the Nebraska Highway Safety Summit in 2001, NDOR Roadway Design Engineer Eldon Poppe suggested the use of centerline rumble strips. Phil TenHulzen and Roger Grant, both in the NDOR Roadway Design Division, helped with the design of the centerline rumble strips in Nebraska. Bob Grant and his staff in the NDOR Highway Safety Section provided the accident statistics that helped in selecting the two experimental sites.

Although new to Nebraska, centerline rumble strips have been tested in ten other states, including Colorado, Delaware, Minnesota, Virginia and Washington. Initial reports indicate that head-on crashes are down 34 percent in Colorado and 90 percent in Delaware, and that sideswipe accidents are down 36.5 percent in Colorado and 100 percent in Virginia. Although there have been mostly positive comments in many states where centerline rumble strips have been tried, there have been a few negative comments in Alaska. ♦

## Weather/Road Conditions

Nebraska....**511** toll-free in NE  
402-471-4533 toll call outside NE

Colorado.....	303-639-1111
Wyoming .....	307-772-0824
Kansas .....	800-585-7623
Iowa.....	515-288-1047
Missouri .....	800-222-6400
South Dakota .....	605-773-7515
Minnesota.....	800-542-0220
Illinois .....	800-452-4368
Oklahoma .....	405-425-2385

## A Rewarding Thought

*"What makes employees come to work is a sense of pride, recognition and achievement. Workers committed to their jobs and recognized for their work will work whatever hours it takes to get the job done."*

- Thomas Kelley

Society for Human Resource Development

Brought to you by the Rewards & Recognition Agency Panel.

Nomination forms can be found on the Intranet at <http://www.dor.state.ne.us> on the Human Resources page.

*Photo by Roger Klasna,  
District 6 Maintenance Superintendent*

An aerial view of the new partial clover-leaf interchange at Interstate 80 and U.S. Hwy. 83 in North Platte, looking southeast. The new ramps allow motorists to turn directly into traffic lanes on Hwy. 83, which intersects I-80. Cars and trucks no longer have to cross lanes of oncoming traffic when they leave the Interstate and head north or south.



## Traffic Flow, Safety Increased with North Platte I-80 Improvements

The North Platte Interstate 80 interchange has a new look. Two loops, one eastbound and one westbound, have been added to the existing interchange. The new loops were opened to traffic November 11 at a ribbon cutting that included North Platte city officials, E & A Consulting Group Inc., representatives of the contracting firms associated with this project, and NDOR staff.

These loops will aid traffic exiting I-80 to make right-hand turns onto US Highway 83.

"Work on this project began May 20 of this year, but planning on this project has been going on for many years and through several administrations," according to Rich Morrell, NDOR manager for the project. "The ramp tie-ins to I-80 were constructed in 1991 when this section of the interstate was reconstructed and when the US 83 structures were modified in 1996 and 1997," Morrell noted.

Installation of permanent striping and cantilever signs will be completed in the spring of 2003.

The improvements to the interchange were made to improve safety of the traveling public and provide a more effective traffic flow. No additional right-of-way was needed for this work. Traffic was maintained at the interchange while the loops were installed.

Although some phasing was necessary, the majority of the work was accomplished with no disruption to the adjacent business. For approximately two weeks the northbound traffic along US 83 was limited to one lane. This created quite a traffic jam, as construction of a Wal-Mart Distribution Center had alternate routes closed to the public.

NDOR personnel involved with this project were Bruce Malsbury, Construction Tech III; Ryan Hilderbrand, Construction Tech I; and Mary Gibbons, Construction Tech II.

E & A Consulting Group Inc., of Omaha, was the project designer. Khalil Jaber, of the Roadway Design Division, was the NDOR coordinator for the project.

Paulsen, Inc. of Cozad was the prime contractor, and Dave Neill was the project superintendent. The project cost was \$3,289,839. ♦



*Photo courtesy of Fred Beck, P.E., E & A Consulting*  
Local dignitaries and NDOR officials participated in the ribbon-cutting for the opening of the new ramps at the I-80 North Platte Interchange, including, / to r, James Keenan, former Highway Commissioner from North Platte, Ron Books, Highway Commissioner from North Platte, North Platte Mayor Jim Whitaker, and Gary Thayer, District 6 Construction Engineer. Standing in the back: Dave Neill, Paulsen Construction Co., and Rich Morrell, District 6 Hwy. Project Manager.



# Winter Safe-Driving Tips

Nebraska Department of Roads employees are urged to set the example for safe travel by reviewing these winter safe-driving tips and sharing them with friends and family members. Taking some extra precautions can help drivers protect themselves and their passengers.

- ❄ Before you start your trip, make sure your vehicle is tuned up and in good shape for travel.
- ❄ Restrain yourself and your passengers properly in seat belts and car safety seats.
- ❄ Be flexible in setting your travel plans. Leave early to avoid peak traffic hours. If snow is predicted during the time you plan to travel, consider changing your schedule.
- ❄ Stay fresh and alert when driving. Take plenty of breaks and do not push yourself to meet an unrealistic schedule.
- ❄ Keep your speed down. Give yourself plenty of time and distance to react to the traffic around you.
- ❄ Turn on your lights—to see and be seen. Brush the snow off your headlights and taillights frequently.
- ❄ Stay a safe distance (at least 100 feet) behind snowplows and allow plenty of room when passing.
- ❄ Slow down gradually when you approach curves and stops. Beware of icy spots especially on bridges and in sheltered areas.
- ❄ Pull off the road if you have to use your cellular phone.
- ❄ Keep a winter survival kit in your vehicle, with some basic items, including blankets, 3-pound coffee can, matches and candles, flash-

**Snowplows need extra room. Stay 100 feet behind and pass only with extreme caution**



light and extra batteries, battery-operated radio, first-aid kit, bottled water, high-energy food, sand or kitty litter, shovel, basic tool kit, spare tire, signal flare, and any special items, such as medications or baby products. ♦

## You Drink and Drive – You Lose

This holiday season, the Nebraska Department of Roads joins the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and thousands of transportation and law enforcement agencies across the country to stop impaired driving in its tracks. From December 20, 2002 to January 5, 2003, local and state officials will be out in full force conducting sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols to help make the roads safer for everyone.

After years of gradual improvement, fatalities in alcohol-related crashes are on the rise nationally. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that in 2001, 17,448 people were killed in



alcohol-related crashes, representing approximately 41 percent of the 42,116 people killed in all traffic crashes. That's one fatality every 30 minutes and an injury every 2 minutes.

In addition to the 17,000 people killed by drunk and drugged driving, more than 300,000 people are hurt and 1.5 million are arrested. One in three Americans will be affected by this violent

crime in their lifetime. It is one of the most randomly committed crimes, which means you, your family or friends are equally likely to be innocent victims. Unlike other violent crimes, this one is 100 percent preventable.

During December, National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, and all year long, the message is simple. If you drink, don't drive. Choose a designated driver who will remain alcohol-free, call a taxi or spend the night wherever you choose to celebrate. Stop impaired family members or friends from getting behind the wheel.

***Remember – When you drink and drive, you lose. ♦***

## Three Extra Mile Awards Presented

Three NDOR employees received Extra Mile Awards at the quarterly Rewards and Recognition ceremony held recently at Central Headquarters in Lincoln.

Dan Horn, Highway Design Technician II in Construction Division, was instrumental in the recent remodeling of the Contract Letting and Project Scheduling and Estimates (PS&E) offices. His assignment involved laying out a feasible and agreeable floor plan for all involved. Dan worked on locating and designing space for 15 employees who were displaced in the auditorium during the 13 weeks required for the remodeling.

According to Dan's nominator, he was very enthusiastic and worked many long hours on the project with deep dedication. Dan took all the complaints and changes in stride and was instrumental in the success of the project.

Julie Slechta and Deb Thompson, both Office Clerks in the Highway Safety Section of Traffic Engineering Division, were recognized for taking on additional responsibilities of managing a satellite operation to reduce a backlog of accident data. This was necessary after the workflow system was changed to adopt new technology.

In mid-February of 2002, they began overseeing a staff of 12 temporary employees located in one of the training rooms on "the hill." Their duties included initial training of the temporary staff, assigning workload, answering questions, dealing with computer problems and keeping track of employee attendance and other personnel issues. During the 7½ months this operation was in place, Julie and Deb were required to work long hours, with 12-hour days the norm.

According to their nominator, the satellite operation was very effective in eliminating the backlog problem. By the end of August 2002, data entry was working within a month of the current date. The ultimate success of this operation was largely due to the efforts of Julie and Deb.♦

# Rewards & Recognition

July, August & September 2002

## Employees & Managers of the Quarter

### Employees

### Managers

#### District 1

**Bill Swanson**  
Hwy. Const. Tech III  
Lincoln

**Ryan Hobelman**  
Hwy. Const. Tech IV, Supvr.  
Lincoln

#### District 2

**Scott Wuster**  
Hwy. Maintenance Worker Sr.  
Elkhorn

**Joe Baratta**  
Hwy. Project Manager  
Omaha

#### District 3

**Sheila Puls**  
Staff Assistant I  
Wayne

None

#### District 4

**Mae Meyer**  
Hwy. Construction Tech III  
Hastings

None

#### District 5

**Cheryl Dinnel**  
Hwy. Construction Tech II  
Scottsbluff

None

#### District 6

**Arline Miles**  
Staff Assistant I  
Lexington

**Toby Thomsen**  
Hwy. Project Manager  
North Platte

#### District 7

**Rob Bryan**  
Auto/Diesel Mechanic  
McCook

**Terry Einspahr**  
Hwy. Maintenance Supvr.  
McCook

#### District 8

**Ted Ross**  
Hwy. Construction Tech II  
Valentine

None

#### Central Headquarters

**Dale Dreeszen**  
Printing Tech IV  
Communication Division

None

**Clay Duncan**  
Hwy. Design Tech III  
Traffic Engineering Division

**Laura Lenzen**  
Engineer V  
Right-of-Way Division

*Awardees receive a certificate, pin and a monetary award of \$250 before taxes.*

# Oforah's Efforts Honored by NAACP

Steve Oforah (ThridWorld Oforah), Right of Way Consultant Manager at NDOR, received a Community Award from the Lincoln Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in recognition of his involvement in promoting ethnic diversity in Lincoln. Oforah received the award during ceremonies at the NAACP 2002 Freedom Fund Banquet held October 19 at the Cornhusker Hotel.

Oforah was honored for his "unselfish devotion to the community." A key example was his involvement in replacing statues at the Lincoln Children's Museum to more accurately represent ethnic diversity of the local community. Oforah has participated in other community development efforts through his involvement on the Urban Design Committee for the City of Lincoln.

Oforah and his wife, Jennifer Severe-Oforah, also work with refugees in the community, and are involved with another organization, Citizens Against Racism and Discrimination (CARD). His wife received the Negussie Negawo Memorial Award in 2001 for her efforts in working with economically disadvantaged people in Lincoln.

According to Oforah, the significance of the award involves the opportunity it provides him to increase people's awareness and understanding of civil rights issues and of the NAACP.

## NAACP History

On February 12, 1909, the NAACP was founded by a multiracial group of activists, who were united on one premise—that all men and women are created equal. The organization works at the national, regional and local level to secure civil rights through advocacy for supportive legislation



Steve Oforah

and by implementation of their Strategic Initiatives. The organization's emblem features the scales of justice, representing "Equality Before The Law."

Oforah noted that one of the first presidents of the NAACP was Jewish and that all ethnic groups are represented on membership rolls.

The current president and Chief Executive Officer of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization is Kweisi Mfume (pronounced Kwah-EE-see Oom-FOO-may). For additional information, log on to the website, [www.NAACP.org](http://www.NAACP.org).

The Lincoln Branch of the NAACP was formed in 1918, and the organization's first chair, Oliver Burckhardt, recruited influential citizens including a Nebraska Governor and Lieutenant Governor. The Lincoln Branch has a rich history of involvement over the past 80 years, particularly during the Civil Rights Movement between 1955 and the mid-seventies. Some of those who were actively involved included Dr. Patrick Wells, Rev. G.I. Collins, Lt. Colonel Paul Adams, Mrs. Lenora Letcher, Mrs. Leola Bullock and Rev. Dr. Everett Reynolds.

## Society Impacted

Oforah thinks many people are unaware of important events that have changed the course of history and affected millions of lives. He believes the manifestation of the institution of slavery continues to impact our society and its perceptions because of a lack of understanding by many about ethnic discrimination.

Oforah said he is an orphan from the Middle Passages, which occurred as early as the 1400s and on through the early 1800s, when slaves were brought through the North Atlantic Trade Route and lost their identity and freedom.

As a statement against this mentality and loss of identity, Oforah said he changed his name to more accurately reflect his African heritage. His first name, "ThridWorld", represents the African people's accomplishments and his last name, "Oforah", means "God's Society," an Ibo society name.

Oforah said he was born in the basement of a hospital in Kentucky in the 1950s. His parents endured the loss of identity and poverty associated with racism, but because of his father's ability to play baseball, opportunities became available for him to join the Apartheid Negro Baseball League. Their family eventually moved to Nebraska.

## Key Events

Oforah cited key historical events and individuals that were pivotal in providing the impetus for turning the tide in racial relations and equality. Events mentioned included the Civil War; Emancipation Proclamation; passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments; Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896); Brown vs. Board of Education (1954); Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Key individuals mentioned included abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, W.E.B. Dubious, President Abraham Lincoln, Thurgood Marshall, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., as well many other freedom fighters, past and present, who fought for rights of minorities, including United States Africans, women, Hispanics, Asians, and 1st nations (Native Americans).

Oforah believes it is imperative in our global society for people to be more aware of human rights issues and their impact upon society. By doing so, people will gain more respect for each other's ethnic differences, which in turn, will benefit society.

Oforah observed, "As my wife and I have worked with refugees in the community, we experienced language barriers, but respect is universal. When you respect others, they reciprocate." ♦



# State Road Crews Target Winter Weather with Technology and Tradition

**Nebraska's highway snow removal fleet will continue to leverage technology in their arsenal of weapons in any upcoming battles with winter weather.**

Several innovations introduced within the last two years, including methods for early detection of changing road conditions and the use of bridge de-icing systems, proved successful, and their expanded use is planned for the season ahead. In addition, traditional approaches from past seasons will be an important part of the equation in lessening winter's blast.

## 511

Nebraska's statewide 511-telephone system, introduced last year, is available to provide 24-hour-a-day, year-round traveler information. By dialing 511 on their cellular telephone or landline telephone, motorists will be able to access the quickest, most up-to-date information about weather conditions, road conditions and travel advisories. The 511 system is also

available on the Internet at [www.nebraskatransportation.org](http://www.nebraskatransportation.org).

Traveler information is provided by mile marker or by road segment. Nebraska's 511 system provides information for Nebraska and South Dakota highways, and for the following highways in bordering states: Wyoming I-80 Cheyenne to the Nebraska State Line; Colorado I-76 from Sterling to Nebraska I-80 junction; Iowa I-29; and Iowa I-80 Omaha to Jct. US 71.

## RWIS

Nebraska has expanded its remote weather information system (RWIS), with a total of 41 towers along roadways throughout the state. Instruments on the tower measure wind speed, temperature, humidity, barometric pressure and precipitation. Pavement and subsurface pavement conditions are also transmitted. The data is relayed by telephone line to NDOR maintenance crew computers about every 30 minutes during winter. The RWIS system increases safety on the state's roads by allowing crews to respond more quickly with de-icing materials, and road crew supervisors to make fewer trips to check on road

conditions. Crews can also tailor de-icing applications to the conditions of the road, which means more efficient use of materials.

## De-Ice Systems

Several districts installed bridge de-icing systems last year. These systems are temperature and precipitation sensitive and can be activated manually or by computer. District 4 (Grand Island) has a system located on Interstate 80, five miles east of Kearney (Reference Post 277). District 5 installed a new system on a bridge on Highway 71 between Terrytown and Scottsbluff. The automated program will be operational for the first time this year. District 6 (North Platte) installed the system on two Interstate 80 bridges located over the Platte River at Brady (Reference Post 201). Because of the ability to pre-treat the pavement, bridge de-icing systems have proven helpful in preventing accidents and are especially effective for frost conditions.

Approximately 900 units of equipment make up the Department of Roads' fleet, including trucks, snowplows, front-end loaders and motor graders. Trained employees are prepared to handle weather-related highway emergencies and equipment across Nebraska.

## Frost Fighters

The Department plans expanded use of liquid chemical processes for frost, ice and snow control on roadways. Maintenance crews will use several liquid chemicals on the roadways, including salt brine and agricultural-based products mixed with magnesium chloride.

The agricultural-based mixtures result from ethanol production and help prevent ice and snow from bonding to the pavement surface, or they may be applied as de-icing materials to help remove ice and snow

### Year-Round Nebraska Traveler Information



Dial from anywhere in Nebraska,  
cell phone or landline.

Short-term, route specific  
weather forecasts and  
road condition reports for  
state highways.



[www.nsp.state.ne.us](http://www.nsp.state.ne.us)



Nebraska  
Department of Roads  
[www.dor.state.ne.us](http://www.dor.state.ne.us)

- ✓ Stay safe when you drive.  
Wear your safety belt.
- ✓ Use your cell phone responsibly. Don't dial and drive. Find a safe place to stop.
- ✓ Stay 100 feet behind snowplows. Pass only with extreme caution.
- ✓ If snow is blowing, should you be going? Don't Push It!

### Call 511.

If outside of Nebraska,  
call (402)471-4533



*Photo by Jim Morpew, District 6 Permit Officer*

**This roadgrader, headed eastbound on I-80 near North Platte, cleared the way after an early blast of winter October 23.**

buildup on the roadway. They may also be used as pre-wetting agents to make other chemicals more effective. They are used in various concentrations from 10-50 percent in association with magnesium chloride or sodium chloride. Salt brine is a chloride solution that may be applied to roadways up to two hours before a winter storm to prevent ice and snow from bonding to the pavement surface.

### What's New

District 2 (Omaha) will use a new salt dome facility for the first time this year. This will eliminate the salt supply problems of the past as well as avoiding increased cost of salt during a hard winter. District 2 also has a weather service that will call maintenance personnel when a winter storm is two hours away. The automated system is capable of calling four people at a time, which will improve response times during winter events.

District 3 (Norfolk) will be testing a new product called Liquid Corn Salt at two locations, Norfolk and Neligh. The product is designed to lower the freeze temperatures of salt brine and to decrease the corrosiveness of salt.

District 5 (Bridgeport) will use salt brine production for the first time this year at Sidney and Chadron.

District 6 (North Platte) will have an additional maintenance yard for winter

response this year. The facility houses additional salt storage as well as being closer to personnel and equipment for I-76 and I-80 junction maintenance.

District 7 (McCook) will use salt brine for the first time this year, in the McCook area, and expand throughout the rest of the district as soon as possible.

### Timely Messages

Seventy-five Changeable Message Signs (CMS), including 33 positioned along Interstate 80 from Kimball to Omaha and 42 to be used on other highways throughout Nebraska, will be used to alert motorists of immediate and/or upcoming closures. Over 100 pre-programmed messages are available. State Roads personnel will be able to access the signs using personal computers and modems to either initiate or verify the messages.

Real-time weather and road information is available on the Roads Department website, [www.nebraskatransportation.org](http://www.nebraskatransportation.org) by clicking on the "511" icon at the bottom of the home page. Various weather links are also available on the website by clicking on the heading "Road Reports & Travel Info." Information about 511 can also be obtained by clicking on [www.safetravelusa.com](http://www.safetravelusa.com). Winter road information continues to be available on DTN monitors at most of the I-80 rest areas across the state. ♦

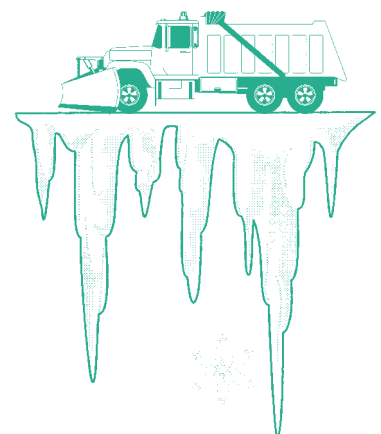
## Electronic Message Signs Aid Travelers

Nine new Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) are in operation on the Omaha Metro Interstate system, according to John Jacobsen, NDOR District 2 Engineer. The 10-foot-by-24 foot electronic message signs are constructed over the Interstates, with six signs on I-80 and one each on I-680, I-480 and Kennedy Freeway. In addition to notifying drivers of construction, lane and road closures, accidents and inclement weather, signs also will be a part of the Amber Alert system that will inform drivers when a child is abducted.

According to Jacobsen, the signs will eventually become part of a high-tech traffic management plan giving drivers information on traffic flow and commuting time and directing traffic to alternate routes. This will be a valuable tool for the effective and efficient movement of traffic on the freeway systems.

Besides the nine message signs now operating, there are plans for a half-dozen more in the next three years and more are under consideration.

**Beware when you go on ice and snow.**





# NDOR Hosts Rail & Freight Summits

The Nebraska Department of Roads' Rail & Public Transportation Division recently hosted two summits, Rail and Freight, held November 5-6. The daylong sessions were held at the Embassy Suites Hotel & Conference Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The overall theme throughout both summits was the need for enhanced communication and teamwork among the many transportation partners to resolve issues and meet Nebraska's future rail and freight transportation needs.

## Rail Interests Agree: Communication is Key

Communication issues between NDOR, local political subdivisions and railroads operating in Nebraska were the primary topics of discussion at the Rail Summit held November 5. Participants represented a variety of entities, including the Roads Department; railroads; County and City Engineers; Highway Superintendents; members of the Associated General Contractors; Engineering Consultants; and the Federal Highway Administration.

The rail summit included remarks by representatives of NDOR, as well as Union Pacific Railroad, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Nebraska Operation Lifesaver.

NDOR Director John Craig noted there are several thousand miles of railroad track in Nebraska and approximately 6,800 railroad crossings, both public and private. With that in mind, we need to ask ourselves: "Do we have the right contacts for maintenance on these railroad crossings?"

Regarding railroad safety issues, Ellis Tompkins, NDOR Rail & Public Transportation Engineer, said the department receives \$8 million in Federal Railroad safety funds each year for both on- and off-system projects, but the state has approximately \$420 million in railroad safety needs statewide. He also mentioned

new rules and regulations being formulated to deal with railroad safety issues, including major changes in how NDOR operates within corporate limits, with cities and towns having final decision-making authority.

Bill Wimmer, Vice-President of Engineering at Union Pacific, and Bob Boileau, Assistant Vice President of Engineering Services at BNSF, discussed operations and changes in the industry over the last decade due to many factors, including deregulation. Private and public partnerships were seen as crucial to future operations. Boileau indicated there has been good communication with NDOR over the years.

Bennie Howe, Grade Crossing Safety Manager at the Federal Railroad Administration, said that safety, engineering, education and enforcement are keys to his agency's operations. He said what was referred to as safety enforcement has now become a safety assurance program, and it is much more effective for agencies to work together to enhance safety, rather than competing against each other. Howe said grant money is essential for funding safety projects.

## Successful Partnering

Nebraska Operation Lifesaver was cited as an excellent example of successful partnering. Shelly Harshaw, Executive Director, discussed this rail safety education program, which started in 1972. Harshaw said there is a train-vehicle collision every two hours, and noted their organization is looking for a reduction or elimination in the number of crossings to increase safety.

A number of breakout sessions convened throughout the day, including discussion on the following topics: bridge design and highway design issues; highway/railroad crossing maintenance; highway/railroad crossing signals; crossing surface installation/temporary closures; flagging and procedures/designs to minimize flagging; and safety issues—bike/pedestrian crossings, trespassing

on railroad property, blocked crossings and contractor safety training.

There was a general consensus on seeking ways to improve communication and increase public/private partnerships.

## Freight Transportation Issues Vital to Nebraska's Future

Representatives of all modes of transportation, including rail, trucking, water, and air, as well as shippers, met at the Freight Summit on November 6 to focus on freight transportation issues in Nebraska. Other participants included customers, the Federal Highway Administration and other public transportation agencies. Topics included improved communication, the future of each transportation mode, and shippers' growth and expectations.

NDOR Director John Craig noted a seamless transportation system is becoming more critical for the movement of goods as congestion continues to increase. He said it is imperative to better define performance measures and utilize new technology. Craig mentioned three important questions to consider: 1) What are future freight trends? 2) How does NAFTA affect the way business is done? 3) How do we partner successfully to manage these demands?

Al Wenstrand, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and Roy Frederick, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Professor of Agricultural Economics, presented information on Nebraska's economy, targeted industries projected for future growth and outlined anticipated transportation needs. Wenstrand said the growth of certain industries within Nebraska, including agribusiness and biotechnology, would have a direct impact on freight transportation needs of the state. Frederick noted that the state's agricultural receipts total \$9-\$10 billion annually (before manufacturing), ranking fourth in the nation, and when combined with

Nebraska's population ranking of 36th, freight ramifications involve a lot of movement out of the state. Frederick said the demand side of the market is extremely important for industrial products, such as ethanol, with export markets critical.

Nebraska Senator Curt Bromm, Speaker of the Legislature, said as Chair of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, he saw the importance of maintaining the state's transportation infrastructure and working with the trucking industry, rail industry and others involved with transportation in the state.

### Advances in Safety

During rail transportation discussions, several key spokespersons, including John Gray, Executive Director of Interline Marketing at Union Pacific, Boyd Andrew, General Manager of BNSF, and Bob Brocker, Executive Vice President of the Nebraska Central Railroad, identified issues including technological advances in safety and the importance of public/private partnerships to rail infrastructure development. They emphasized the interdependence of their organizations and relationships with many partners, including railroads, State DOTs, Federal government, customers, suppliers, investors and insurers.

During a discussion of trucking, Duane Acklie, Chairman, Crete Carrier Corporation, stressed the need for safe, efficient highways, the lifeblood for the state's economy, and he noted more money is needed in the highway trust fund to achieve this.

Regarding air transportation, Geoff Gallup, Suburban Air Freight, said there is a trend toward fewer airports, with the smaller ones having to close, impacting economic conditions of communities. He emphasized the importance of infrastructure for air routes.

During shipping discussions, representatives from several companies, including Bob Kelly, Crossroads Coop, Sidney; Terry



*Photos by Jay Bailey*

**Above** - NDOR Director John Craig, standing, and railroad officials, seated, **l to r**, Bill Wimmer, Vice-President Engineering, UP, and Bob Boileau, AVP Engineering Services, BNSF, offered their insights during the Rail Summit Nov. 5 in Lincoln.

**Left** - Duane Acklie, Chairman, Crete Carrier Corporation, shared his views on transportation needs during the Freight Summit Nov. 6 in Lincoln.



Lundgren, Corporate Transportation Manager, Valmont Industries; Terry Voss, Sr. Vice-President Transportation, AgProcessors; Lynn Myers, Executive Vice-President of ConAgra Foods; and Bob Kirkpatrick, Warehouse/Shipping Supervisor, Nucor Steel Nebraska, shared factors in their transportation selection process, including delivery service, reliable sales reps., financial stability, equipment availability, operations, shipment tracing and flexibility.

Bruce Lind, Division Administrator, FHWA, said that Nebraska would see increased truck and traffic congestion in the future, with a projection of over 10,000 trucks per day on all of I-80 by 2020. He said although a huge amount of freight traffic passes through the state, only 22 percent originates in or is destined for the state. He noted that Nebraska's Interstates and Expressways are major assets.

Michael Smith, Manager, Reebie & Associates said while Nebraska is about half a percent of the U.S. population, 2 percent of truck traffic goes through state, and rail traffic is even more heavily concentrated, at

about 6½ percent. Nebraska ships about 10 million tons of grain a year and UP operates 140 trains a day through Nebraska, examples of the large volume of movement through the state.

### Improving Mobility

Bruce Lambert, Transportation Economist, FHWA, discussed ways to improve freight mobility. He presented the Freight Analysis Framework (FAF), a comprehensive national database and analysis tool that examines freight flows for the truck, rail, water and air modes. In looking at highway capacity analysis, he said with highway congestion projected to spread over the next 20 years from urban to rural areas, a key question to ask: "Can we develop realistic strategies for increasing capacity?" In addition to public/private partnerships, Lambert said it would be important to look at what other states are doing, funding issues and the dynamic issue of freight-shippers.

Additional information regarding the rail and freight summits is available on the NDOR website, [www.nebraskatransportation.org](http://www.nebraskatransportation.org). ♦



# We Get Letters ...

September 21, 2002

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

The purpose of this e-mail is to commend a group of your road workers for their recent quick actions and efforts that may have saved at least two lives from serious injury or death.

My wife and I are traveling the country in our motorhome and on Sept. 17, 2002 at about 4 p.m. we were about to end our driving day and stay in North Platte. We exited Interstate 80 at exit 177 and noticed a great deal of construction in progress. As I drove off the off-ramp, I saw a car traveling the wrong way towards us. The construction restricted the off-ramp, but I moved to the right as far as I could and began sounding my air horn to get the wrong-way driver's attention. The driver slowed, but continued towards us.

Several of the road workers either saw the driver or heard my horn and stepped out into the roadway to get the driver's attention. They eventually directed him off of the off-ramp onto a dirt shoulder.

Traffic had backed-up behind me, and since no collision took place and I could not find a safe place to stop, I did not get a chance to thank the workers for their efforts. I don't know what transpired after the man was directed off of the off-ramp, but I do know that the workers' actions prevented a serious accident and possible injury or death to the elderly driver, his passenger, or other motorists.

Your crew is deserving of some type of commendation or recognition for their brave efforts and I hope that this letter will find its way to the persons who supervise this crew.

Thank you,  
David Abrecht  
Palm Desert, CA.

**Editor's Note:** The helpful NDOR employees included Bruce Malsbury, Engineer Tech III, and Tim Yocom, Project Foreman with Paulsen, Inc. of Cozad who were working on the North Platte Interchange Loop project.

October 4, 2002

Last Monday morning our daughter, Kendra Ahrens, blew a tire enroute from Valentine to Chadron. She was two miles west of Merriman when this happened. She did not have her portable phone with her, so she headed back to town on foot. The conditions were not conducive to pleasant walking—it was raining. She reported that several "state road workers" picked her up and took her to Buckles Station. She was very grateful for the ride, as are we for the assistance given her. Thanks for going above and beyond.

Most sincerely,  
Ruth Ahrens  
Valentine, Nebraska

**Editor's Note:** The helpful NDOR employees are Stuart Hooper and Dale Kalenda, Hwy. Maintenance Workers Sr. at District 8 in Merriman.

October 2, 2002

Tom Vogt and Todd Peterson,

Thanks so much for your help after our tire blew on our trip from Colorado to Iowa. We were absolutely amazed when you took the time to help change the tire and to talk with us. How great to know there are still some "good guys" in our world.

Brenda Gritters  
Faith Church Youth Group  
Pella, Iowa

**Editor's Note:** Tom is a Hwy. Maintenance Superintendent in Sidney and Todd is a Supervisor at Chappell.

A 511 caller left this "testimonial" on the recorded message line:

"Hi. I just wanna tell you this is the bomb. I mean it's so cool. It tells you everything you needed to know for my trip. Bye!"



November 6, 2002

Doris Thiel  
Department of Roads

*Just wanted to take a quick moment and send a big thank you from the Gretna Area Chamber of Commerce, and me personally for your assistance in processing our welcome sign paperwork... You were a pleasure to work with, and your expeditious handling enabled us to finally put this project on the "completed" list before the ground froze.*

*Sincerely,*

Ron VanOeveren  
Cornhusker Sign & Mfg. Corp.  
Gretna, Nebraska

**Editor's Note:** Doris Thiel is the Hwy. Relocation/Hwy. Beautification Supervisor in the Right-of-Way Division.

November 1, 2002

Nebraska Department of Roads

*On October 22 at Hwy. 71 & 2, south of Crawford, I had a rollover accident due to black ice. Two gentlemen almost immediately appeared to help me. They apparently were working just south of this location.*

*I do not remember their names, but want to let you and them know how much I appreciated their assistance at that time. I shall be ever grateful for it.*

*Sincerely,*

Leatrice Pulaski  
Denver, Colorado

**Editor's Note:** Mrs. Pulaski was helped by Merle Thornton and Kelly Walker, Construction Tech IIs assigned to the District 5 Chadron Construction office.

October 28, 2002

Rich Ruby  
District 1 Engineer

*Dear Rich,*

*Thank you for the addition of Ernest Murillo to the East "O" Street team. He has been a great addition and a big help in only a short time.*

Linda Beacham  
The Schemmer Associates

**Editor's Note:** Ernest Murillo is a Project Manager at District 1 in Lincoln.

October 3, 2002

*I would like to express my thanks to the person that was in charge of the Hwy. 14 repairs by Verdigre, Nebraska. We appreciate the way you helped with a dangerous intersection at Hwy. 14 and 54 Spur. That intersection was a big concern for the people of Verdigre. The road crews that you hired did an excellent job and were always friendly and ready to help. I want you to know how much we appreciate what you have done on Hwy. 14.*

*Sincerely,*

Linda Sokol, Village Clerk  
Village of Verdigre

**Editor's Note:** The Project Manager for this job was Roger Becker, District 3 Hartington Construction office. His crew is Bob Filips, Jerry Swails, Keith Koertje and Rick Kuehn.

October 16, 2002

Tim Weander  
District 5 Engineer

*Dear Tim,*

*Since you may not get a lot of praise on your road projects, I want to tell you how impressed we were with the road to Crawford.*

*The paving contractor moved right along and it will preserve the beauty of the canyon. All of us felt we could plan a better road, but now we unpaid engineers have to say that your Department did a good job.*

Tom Spence  
Crawford, Nebraska

**Editor's Note:** Western Engineering Co., Inc. was the contractor for the 9-mile N71 project, which involved culverts, structures and resurfacing.

**The Department of Roads receives numerous complimentary letters. The letters printed here are representative of those often sent praising the many fine and deserving employees of the Department of Roads.**

# Congratulations for a 2nd Place Finish!

By **Carrie Williams**  
Human Resources Division

As part of our Wellness program, the Nebraska Department of Roads recently participated in "Fitness Challenge Nebraska," hosted by WorkWell, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department. NDOR had 43 participants, including 30 employees, 5 spouses and 8 children.

The five-week program was designed to analyze the amount of daily physical activity and encourage participants to make an effort to increase that activity level in frequency, duration and intensity. The program gave everyone a better understanding of how easy it can be to increase physical activity without too much sacrifice on the participant's part.

This program challenged participants to beat the Huskers' opponents by scoring more than the minimum required scores set by the program sponsors. Each week participants were encouraged to track the yardage

and points they earned through their daily activities.

Numerous organizations and companies participated in this event, including Deeter Foundry, Woodmen Accident & Life, Gallup, and Pfizer. At the end of each week, all companies reported the percentage of people that beat the opponent's score. At the end of the five-week program, a "traveling trophy" was awarded to the company/organization with the overall highest participation. NDOR finished with an overall ranking of 2nd place, less than 1 percent behind the first place winner, UNL Campus Rec.

In addition to the trophy, for every week that a participant beat the opponent's score their names were placed into a drawing for over 50 prizes, including 2003 Husker Season football tickets for two, gift certificates to a variety of businesses and restaurants, gym memberships, and additional prizes appropriate for children that participated.

Congratulations to NDOR's six prize winners: Donna Mapes, Jill Kuhel, Sandy Forsgren and daughter Jena, Laurie Schmid (wife of Gary Schmid), and Josh Adams (son of Vicki Simon).

Participants included Scott Brummond; Terry Danner; Cindy DeCoster; Dave Ells; Mazine Fazel and spouse Dorrance; Sandy Forsgren and family—Eldon, Marcus, CJ and Jena; Larry Griffith; George Howard; Alice Karas; Barb Koehn and spouse Tim; Jill Kuhel; Janice Kollars and spouse Jim; Michelle Lewis; Donna Mapes and children Megan and Morgan; Rick McKeon; Steve Olson; Bobbi Olson; Audra Pacheco and son Spencer; Lloyd Peterson; Linda Piening; Ronald Poe; Sheila Puls; Walt Pytko; Gary Schmid and spouse Laurie; Vicki Simon and children Trisha and Joshua Adams; Janie Vrtiska; Jeremy Weigel; Laird Weishahn; Carrie Williams; and Gary Williams.

Thanks to all who participated, and we look forward to even greater participation next year. ♦



## Health & Safety

By **LoyAnn Rossel, RN,COHN-S**

### Resources Available for Smokers to "Kick the Habit"



In the United States, 47 million people are smokers. These people are at higher risk of heart attack, respiratory problems, cancer, stroke and death. Cessation of cigarette smoking is the *most* important preventable cause of premature death in the United States. Smoking contributes to more than 400,000 of

the 2 million deaths in the U.S. per year.

What are some of the facts about smoking?

- ✓ Smoking is an addiction, not just a bad habit. It can be as addictive as heroin or cocaine.
- ✓ In 1965 smokers made up 45 percent of the population. Now it is down to 24 percent!
- ✓ More than four out of five smokers want to quit.
- ✓ Most smokers can't quit "cold turkey."

- ✓ Most people have to try to quit at least two or three times before they are successful.
- ✓ A pack-a-day smoker spends \$1,000 per year.
- ✓ Approximately 40,000 people die annually from exposure to other people's smoke.
- ✓ The higher the level of education, the lower the percentage of smokers.
- ✓ Some sort of support is always beneficial.

We now have a toll-free number for you to call for support, reassurance and assistance. It is the NEBRASKA TOBACCO QUITLINE. The Nebraska Health and Human Services System provide this service. The phone number is **1-866-632-7848**. Here are just a few of the "free" services available if you call.

- ✓ "Pre-contemplation Kit" for if you are just thinking of quitting.
- ✓ "Quit Kit" for those who want to quit.
- ✓ "Provider Kit" for someone who wants to promote wellness.

These packets contain valuable information and suggestions, but if this isn't enough Quitline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if you need to talk to someone for more support or suggestions.

*Source: American Heart Association and the U.S. Surgeon General*

# NDOR Events Calendar

## — December —

### **National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month**

- 10 New Employee Orientation Program**  
*NDOR Central Headquarters*  
*Contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601*
- 12 Project Scheduling Meeting**  
*8:30-11:30 a.m., NDOR Auditorium*  
*Contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666*
- 13 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
*10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.*  
*Contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530*
- 19 Letting 1:30 p.m. NDOR Auditorium**  
*Contact Contracts Section @ 479-4528*
- 20-31 You Drink & Drive. You Lose.**  
**National Mobilization**
- 25 State Holiday -- Christmas**

## — January 2003 —

- 1 State Holiday – New Year's Day**
- 1-5 You Drink & Drive. You Lose.**  
**National Mobilization**
- 14 New Employee Orientation Program**  
*NDOR Central Headquarters – contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601*
- 17 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
*10:00 a.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.*  
*Contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530*

- 17 Bd. Public Roads Class & Stds.**  
*9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium*  
*Contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569*

- 20 State Holiday –**  
**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

- 31 Project Scheduling Meeting**  
*8:30-11:30 a.m., NDOR Auditorium*  
*Contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666*

## — February —

- 6 Letting 1:30 p.m. NDOR Auditorium**  
*Contact Contracts Section @ 479-4528*
- 11 New Employee Orientation Program**  
*NDOR Central Headquarters*  
*Contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601*
- 9-15 National Child Passenger Safety Week**
- 14 St. Public Roads Class & Stds.**  
*9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium*  
*Contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569*
- 17 State Holiday – President's Day**
- 21 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
*10:00 a.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.*  
*Contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530*

If you would like key events included on upcoming calendars, call the Communication Office 479-4512 or e-mail [lwilson@dor.state.ne.us](mailto:lwilson@dor.state.ne.us). Information for the February/March Roadrunner should be received by January 17.