

## TransAction Update

TransAction, North Dakota's statewide transportation plan, was developed to focus the use of state and local resources to meet our ever-changing and growing transportation needs. Since TransAction was introduced four years ago, a great deal has been done to improve our transportation system. This newsletter highlights what has been accomplished toward achieving the 16 initiatives identified in TransAction.



### **Initiative 1: North Dakota will strategically prioritize its use of transportation resources.**

Established state priorities are:

- **Highways**—Improve safety, ride quality, and load-carrying capacity.
- **Rail**—Improve system connectivity, safety, security and performance; enhancing economic growth, diversification and environmental and community impacts.
- **Air**—Maintain infrastructure; expanding economic development, medical access and competitive service; and improving safety and security.
- **Personal Mobility**—Provide access to basic levels of education, medical and emergency services.

### **Initiative 2: North Dakota will define the levels of service it will strive to provide and maintain.**

NDDOT has developed the [Highway Performance Classification System](#) (HPCS), a five-tier system that established target levels for highway service. The HPCS was endorsed by the 2005 state legislature. NDDOT created a team to develop guidelines for highway performance and infrastructure within budget constraints. NDDOT recently completed its annual Highway Performance Classification System report which indicates that good progress has been made toward achieving improved ride quality and load-carrying capacity.

ND Aeronautics classified all 90 public-use airports within two levels of commercial airports and five levels of general aviation airports.

### **Initiative 3: North Dakota will enhance communication and facilitate cooperation and collaboration between and within governmental units, tribal authorities, modes of transportation, and the public and private sectors.**

Regular meetings have been held with stakeholders such as the sugar beet and potato industries, metropolitan planning organizations, Class 1 railroads, the ND Association of Counties, and the ND League of Cities.

Public information meetings have been held for large projects.

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The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program process has been enhanced to provide more opportunity for public input.

NDDOT published the 2004 and 2006 Transportation Handbooks and TransAction electronic newsletter. To order a copy of the Transportation Handbook, please e-mail your request to [dot@nd.gov](mailto:dot@nd.gov).

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), NDDOT, and tribal cultural resource partners created a multi-state Tribal Consultation Programmatic Agreement. The agreement, which is the first of its kind addresses tribal consultation concerns pertaining to transportation projects and includes twelve tribes on nine reservations.

The Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), funded by the FHWA, provides technical training and assistance to cities, counties, states, townships, tribal organizations, and other agencies. The Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) is expanding to become involved at both the local and national levels.

Last fall, the UGPTI and the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), were awarded a contract to operate the national LTAP Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse serves as a repository and source of training and technical material for the 51 LTAP centers and seven Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) centers across the country.

The 2007–2008 [state highway map](#) was published in January. The map is similar to the 2005–2006 map—larger in size, more detailed tourist information, and larger city insets. A map advisory committee, comprised of public and private sector interests, was used to guide the map's development. A total of 1.2 million maps were printed.

NDDOT presented an overview of trends, challenges and opportunities facing the state's transportation system at the Midwest Shippers Association Conference held at Colfax, Devils Lake, Bismarck, and Stanley in February of 2007.

The annual Upper Midwest Aviation Symposium was held in Minot March 4–6, 2007. Over 300 airport managers, pilots, mechanics, aerial sprayers, flying farmers, and other aviation businesses attended the seminars. Airport of the Year awards were presented to Jamestown Regional Airport (commercial class) and Lisbon Municipal (general aviation class).

Staff of the North Dakota departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Transportation, and the North Dakota Trade Office met quarterly to discuss transportation-related issues.

NDDOT is funding a study to address concerns voiced by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe regarding ND State Highway 24 and BIA Route 31 (Sioux County Highway CMC 4320) near Fort Yates. The study will consider existing and future land uses within the area transportation network in order to enhance the safety and performance of Highway 24.

#### **Initiative 4: North Dakota will improve the performance of priority corridors and facilities.**

Accelerated four-laning of US 2 from Minot to Williston. In October 2006, an additional 34 miles of highway was opened. The four-laning of the US 2 corridor is scheduled to be completed in 2008.

Congressional High Priority Corridor status was secured for US 83 and US 85.

Completed the US 52 bypass (Jamestown), and improved vertical clearances on I-94 and I-29.

US 281 near Minnewauken was realigned due to rising water levels in Devils Lake. Approximately 25 miles of highway was constructed and ND 19 was extended to tie into the re-aligned highway. The project was completed in the fall of 2006 at a cost of \$35.4 million.

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Improved state highway load-carrying capacities.

Improved airport infrastructure and built new terminals at the Bismarck, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Jamestown, and Williston airports.



Four Bears Bridge, New Town

NDDOT replaced the Four Bears Bridge at New Town with a new \$66 million, 4,500-foot structure.



Liberty Memorial Bridge, Bismarck

The [Liberty Memorial Bridge](#), built in 1922, was the first North Dakota bridge to span the Missouri River. Due to the age of the structure and the need for major repairs, a new four-lane bridge is under construction just south of the existing bridge at a construction cost of approximately \$47 million. Traffic will be switched to the new steel bridge in 2008. The old bridge will be demolished late in 2008 or early 2009.

**Initiative 5: North Dakota will incorporate economic competitiveness as an integral component of transportation investment strategies.**

The North Dakota Public Service Commission hired a consultant to investigate rail rates for grain shipments. The 2005 Legislature authorized pursuit of a formal complaint before the Surface Transportation Board.

In conjunction with NDDOT, UGPTI researchers have completed a study which assesses the economic impact of transportation infrastructure in North Dakota. The report can be accessed at <http://www.ugpti.org/pubs/pdf/DP187.pdf>.

**Initiative 6: North Dakota will analyze the economic impacts of load limits and the benefits of establishing a statewide program to coordinate the administration of load limits.**

NDDOT adopted new policies for posting load restrictions that provide greater uniformity with adjacent states and provinces.

Under contract to NDDOT, the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute studied existing truck weight, size and permitting issues and published a report in 2005. The report identified:

- sub-state truck size and weight regulations and permitting processes
- differences between local units of government, and
- examples of multiple-county permitting systems

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**Initiative 7: North Dakota will determine the feasibility of, and identify the conditions necessary for, developing an intermodal freight facility or facilities.**

NDDOT contracted with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute to complete an intermodal freight feasibility study. The report was published in November 2002.

NDDOT committed funds to Bismarck, Fargo, and Minot for intermodal studies.

A five-member team has been created to implement the statewide rail freight strategy that promotes transload and intermodal service.

NDDOT and the cities of Minot and Fargo have signed a joint powers agreement creating a seven-member Regional Co-service Intermodal Coordinating Board (RICCB). The RICCB selected the firm of Wilbur Smith and Associates to conduct a study analyzing the feasibility of regional intermodal co-load freight service from Minot and Fargo-Dilworth to the Pacific Northwest. Results are expected in the summer of 2007.

**Initiative 8: North Dakota will determine the opportunities for, and the economic and safety impacts of, a regional uniform truck size, weight, and permitting system.**

In June 2005, NDDOT held a [cross-border truck transportation conference](#) that was attended by representatives from six states and two Canadian provinces.

NDDOT contracted with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute; the results of the research [Truck Size & Weight and other Motor Carrier Issues within the region and intrastate](#) was published in August 2005, and:

- identifies regional truck size and weight regulations
- proposed the concept of regional corridors
- presents costing information based differences, and
- examined truck safety data

NDDOT has initiated truck size, weight and permitting discussions with neighboring state departments of transportation.

- In December 2006, staff members from NDDOT and MNDOT met to discuss common truck size, weight and permitting issues. Topics discussed at the meeting included common permitting processes and envelope vehicles, sharing weigh-in-motion data, reciprocity agreements, truck/freight corridors, and shared freight generators and destinations. A follow up meeting is planned for spring 2007.



**Initiative 9: North Dakota will appropriately use Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies to enhance service, performance, mobility, safety and security.**

NDDOT published its [Intelligent Transportation System Plan](#) in September 2005. The plan focuses on improved traveler safety and maintenance in order to provide safe highways.

NDDOT employed [511 Traveler Information](#), Amber Alert and Roadway Weather Information System (RWIS) programs; equipped two bridges with anti-icing systems; and expanded the use of ITS for flood monitoring, freeway surveillance, weigh-in-motion, automatic snow-gate closures, and animal (deer) detection.

Wireless internet access was installed at nine interstate rest areas.

NDDOT is active in the deployment of Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) throughout the state. The Department currently uses 19 portable signs along the Interstate and four-lane highways for winter traveler information and for construction and maintenance projects during the summer months. In

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2006, the Department installed the first permanent message sign along northbound I-29 in Fargo near 7th Avenue. This summer, the Department will install a second permanent message sign along I-29 southbound, near 19th Avenue.

Last winter and spring, traffic signal control technology and communications equipment was installed at a high traffic area in Fargo. Advanced Traffic Analysis Center (ATAC) is collecting data via Fargo's fiber optic network using four Autoscope image processing cameras. The city has access to the data, research findings, and use of a video surveillance camera with a powerful zoom that can support traffic management during special events. Traffic Control Corporation supplied the necessary equipment for the project and the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Network Services assisted in design and installation.

The Mountain Plains Consortium sponsored a trip for several NDSU faculty and students in October 2006 to a national conference on transportation applications for Radio Frequency Identification Technology (RFID). More than 80 experts in transportation, technology and research policy from universities, government, and private industry attended the Washington, D.C., conference.

The ND Aeronautics Commission opened bids to install 11 Automated Weather Observation Systems (AWOS) at Crosby, Watford City, Rugby, Carrington, Cooperstown, Harvey, Langdon, Cavalier, Grafton, Oakes, and Linton airports in April 2007. These airports transferred their federal funds to the state so that a lump sum purchase could be made. Aviation weather systems must be located on airports to qualify for FAA funding. Airports installing AWOS must also have at least 10 based planes. Using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) teamed with AWOS allows communities to get flight certification for all weather air ambulance and business for air travel.

Future additions to the RWIS system will bring the total number of sites to 24, nine of which will have traffic cameras.

**Initiative 10: North Dakota will conduct a statewide freight origin and destination study and identify priority transportation corridors and facilities.**

NDDOT contracted with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute to conduct a statewide freight study that will be used to develop a state freight plan. The plan has three purposes:

- Understand how North Dakota's freight system integrates with national and global freight systems.
- Inventory North Dakota's current freight system (infrastructure, regulatory environment and safety/security).
- Recommend changes and improvements to maintain safe, secure and efficient future freight movements.

Currently, UGPTI is gathering and analyzing data on freight movements. The information will be used to identify freight corridors and their current impediments and capacity constraints. Next, UGPTI will identify and analyze issues affecting the state's freight system and how freight movements are changing. NDDOT will use the data generated by the UGPTI study to develop a statewide strategic freight transportation plan.

**Initiative 11: North Dakota will create a special transportation program (infrastructure funding and technical assistance) to facilitate economic development and competitiveness.**

NDDOT established the ND STREET program to assist cities with populations of 5,000 or less to make infrastructure upgrades and improve their competitiveness. Ashley, Center, Hillsboro, and Watford City were the first cities approved for projects; construction is scheduled for 2008. For more information, contact Bryon Fuchs at (701) 328-2516 or [blfuchs@nd.gov](mailto:blfuchs@nd.gov).

NDDOT established the Small Rural Economic Development program to provide assistance to upgrade infrastructure to new businesses in rural areas. For more information, contact Dave Leftwich at (701) 328-4334 or [dleftwic@nd.gov](mailto:dleftwic@nd.gov).

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**Initiative 12: North Dakota will take a lead role in promoting public-private partnerships to bring about selected transportation initiatives.**

Midwestern states and Prairie Provinces were surveyed to identify best-practice transportation programs for promoting economic development.

NDDOT staff were among the more than 300 who recently attended the Global Business Connections Conference hosted by the North Dakota Trade Office. The conference, designed to assist North Dakota exporters in accessing new markets to participate in the global economy, featured several transportation-related sessions.

NDDOT, BNSF Railway and several North Dakota cities entered into an agreement to raise the railroad mainline threatened by the rising waters of Devils Lake.

NDDOT approved eight rail assistance projects totaling \$7.6 million.

The West Dakota Feed & Seed (WDF&S) Freight Rail Improvement Program (FRIP) rail project has been completed. WDF&S is now loading rail cars at their Ross facility. A \$1.2 million FRIP loan was approved for rail access to an intermodal co-load center in Minot.

<http://www.dot.nd.gov/divisions/planning/rail.html>



A \$1.3 million Local Rail Freight Assistance (LRFA) loan to the Northern Plains Railroad was approved to rehabilitate 9.6 miles of track from Ardoch to the Red River Bridge in northeast North Dakota.

<http://www.dot.nd.gov/divisions/planning/rail.html>

North Dakota Aeronautics entered into an agreement with NDDOT to collect runway pavement data for 72 of the state's airports. Data will be used to develop a pavement management tool.

**Initiative 13: North Dakota will actively participate in regional and national transportation initiatives, programs, studies, and projects.**

NDDOT actively participates in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (WASHTO), and Transportation Research Board (TRB).

NDDOT meets annually with the General Services Administration (GSA), Federal Highway Administration (FHA), Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Department of Homeland Security to coordinate projects and security at the state's 18 points of entry.

NDDOT cooperated with the Montana Department of Transportation by providing information for the Transportation Regional Economic Development-Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Study. The study examines whether four-lane highway improvements to the Montana portion of the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway can be justified by economic, safety, regulatory and other considerations. A copy of the study can be viewed at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov>.

Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation, Customs and Border Protection, and NDDOT representatives met in Pembina in December 2006 to discuss a number of transportation border issues. Topics of discussion included: Road closure coordination (due to flooding and snowstorms), notification of the public, and exchange of information on future road construction projects near the border to lessen travel delays and coordinate project timing and goals.

North Dakota is a member of the Midwest Rail Passenger Compact, and the NDDOT director is the ND Governor's alternate on the North Great Plains Regional Authority.

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NDDOT and Minnesota DOT have held joint rail planning meetings and cooperated on numerous bridge projects.

**Initiative 14: North Dakota will increase its emphasis on safety and security as integral components in planning, developing, and maintaining the transportation system.**

The [Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#) (SHSP) was adopted in 2006. The SHSP is a statewide plan that provides a comprehensive framework for all highway safety-related activities within North Dakota. It helps provide unified direction for the steps needed to significantly reduce fatalities and injuries. It serves as a resource for development of other associated plans, such as the annual ND Highway Safety Plan. The SHSP is updated on an ongoing basis to ensure it reflects current safety goals and priorities.

NDDOT continues to work with railroads and communities to improve rail safety through programs such as [Operation Lifesaver](#).

The NDDOT worked continuously with the railroads to identify crossings that needed safety upgrades.

A rail “quiet zone” is being developed in the Fargo–Moorhead metropolitan zone.

ND Aeronautics developed emergency response and security plans for 82 general aviation airports.

NDDOT and ND Aeronautics are using Intelligent Transportation System technologies to improve efficiency and safety.

More than 90 policy makers, elected county officials, emergency planners and responders, and representatives from transportation agencies and private transportation firms attended a Rural Transportation Safety and Security Summit in Bismarck Aug. 23–24, 2006. The conference identified and increased awareness of safety and security risks in the state and region. For more information, contact [kimberly.vachal@ndsu.edu](mailto:kimberly.vachal@ndsu.edu).

In February 2007, representatives from NDDOT, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, and the Fargo–Moorhead Council of Governments met to discuss federal requirements to incorporate security elements into transportation planning. A timeline and a set of benchmarks were developed to meet the March 2008 program deadline.

The Resource Corridor of the Red River Valley held an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) conference in Grand Forks March 26–27, 2007. With a change of mission, the Grand Forks Air Force Base and ND Air National Guard units will use UAS to patrol our borders and provide for national defense. The UAS conference brought together military, commercial, university, and private industry to communicate developments. UND Aerospace staff has requested FAA create an airspace demonstration triangle from Nekoma to Park River to Lakota for researching flight tracking movements in today’s air traffic environment. <http://www.dot.nd.gov/docs/planning/2007paxcharts.pdf> <http://www.dot.nd.gov/docs/planning/2007airline%20route%20map.pdf>

**Initiative 15: North Dakota will develop a statewide personal mobility plan.**

NDDOT contracted with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute’s (UGPTI) Small Urban and Rural Transportation Center to develop a statewide personal mobility plan entitled “[Personal Mobility in North Dakota](#).” This included an inventory of services, base and supplemental service recommendations and best practice programs.

NDDOT also contracted with UGPTI for the James River Transit demand study and the Southwest North Dakota Rural Transit study.

NDDOT, in collaboration with governmental entities and the private sector, maintained intercity bus service between Billings, MT, and Fargo, ND.

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[Safe Routes to School Program](#) is a new federal program that provides funds to substantially improve and promote elementary and middle school students walking or bicycling to school safely. The purposes of the program are to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school, and make these options a more appealing transportation option. The goal of the program is to empower communities to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and routine activity.

[Small Urban Rural Transit Center](#) (SURTC) researchers helped Rolette County and the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation develop a three-phase plan for improving transit services in the area.

A new [intercity bus route](#)—the **North South Shuttle**—was established through the cooperative efforts of Standing Rock Transportation (Fort Yates, ND), Bis-Man Transit (Bismarck, ND), River Cities Transit (Pierre, SD), and the North Dakota and South Dakota Departments of Transportation. The new route serves Bismarck, Mandan, and Fort Yates, ND; Mobridge, Onida, Pierre, Vivian, and Rapid City, SD.

Two of the four bus storage facilities under construction for **West River Transportation** are nearly complete; the other two are expected to be ready for use before summer. The facilities are located in Beulah, Carson, Center, and Garrison.

**Initiative 16: North Dakota will monitor trends in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, recreation, and energy production to identify potential transportation impacts and opportunities.**

The North Dakota departments of Agriculture, Commerce and Transportation hosted the TEAM Transportation Conference in 2005. The conference focused on transportation's role in making North Dakota more economically competitive.

NDDOT staff annually attends events showcasing innovative agricultural, manufacturing and economic activities.

ND Aeronautics published the [Aviation Economic Impact Report](#), which is used in planning airport development.

NDDOT participated in events such as seminars and teleconferences to develop an awareness of trends that may effect transportation.

ND Amtrak ridership increased 9.8 percent in federal fiscal year 2006, with a total of 114,739. That is up 10,257 from the previous year's total of 104,482. Numbers by station are available on the Amtrak web site <http://www.amtrak.com>.

The greatest challenge the transportation industry faces is the rising cost of road and bridge construction, which increased substantially the past couple of years. The average cost per mile for a three-inch asphalt overlay increased from \$150,000 in 2004 to about \$275,000 in 2006. During the same time frame, the average cost per mile for asphalt surfacing reconstruction increased from \$450,000 to about \$770,000. As a result of increased construction and maintenance costs, the Department was forced to delay about \$130 million worth of projects in 2006 and 2007. To offset the impacts of inflation, modifications have been made to our design guidelines in an attempt to lower per-mile construction costs.





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## Federal Transportation Funding Update

On February 14, 2007, Congress passed a continuing resolution to provide federal transportation funding through the rest of fiscal year 2007, which ends September 30. The resolution provides highway funding at the same level the states received in 2006. The Federal-Aid Highway Program is funded at \$39.1 billion and North Dakota anticipates receiving about \$226 million in 2007.

Federal Transit Administration funding (busing) for federal FY 2007 is also under a continuing resolution and is expected to remain at near federal FY 2006 levels.

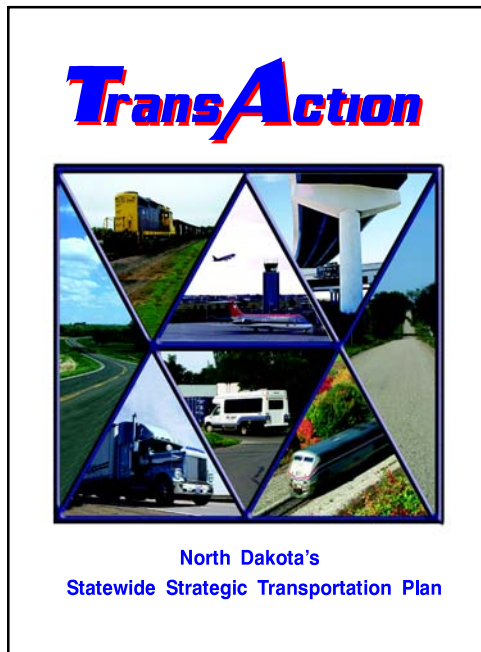
Amtrak received \$1.3 billion in 2006. Amtrak has historically operated on year-to-year appropriation with little funding for capital improvements. This year Congress is considering an Amtrak reauthorization bill that would provide operational funding adequate to maintain service through 2011. The bill would also provide some funding for capital improvements.

The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) new proposed funding bill "NEX-GEN," starting in 2008, calls for a 58 percent cut in general aviation grants. Grants to commercial airports would remain or increase based on airport activity numbers. Congressional debate is expected as a 50-cent increase in fuel taxes is proposed. This increase would require aviation users in North Dakota to contribute an additional \$6 million in fuel taxes to support the FAA programs and services. Aviation related industries will be hit hard paying over \$4.50 per gallon for aviation fuel.

## TransAction II

Although significant progress has been made on achieving the 16 initiatives identified in TransAction, it is now time to transition to the next chapter in transportation planning. Throughout 2006, NDDOT staff facilitated numerous meetings obtaining public input that culminated in a new plan, **TransAction II**.

To read or download a copy of the 2007 TransAction II, go to <http://www.dot.nd.gov>.

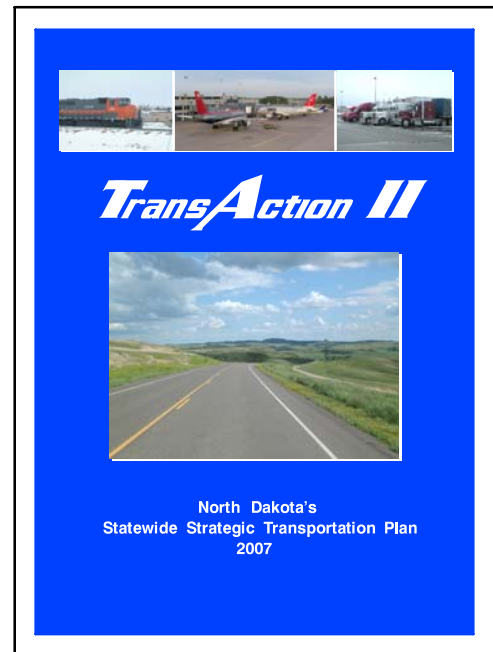


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Building on the foundation created by TransAction, TransAction II continues to provide broad direction for improving the state's transportation system.



TransAction II identified 12 strategic initiatives that will be addressed in the next few years.



2007

The next newsletter will provide information about the progress of the strategic initiatives of TransAction II.