

Connecting the DOTs



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SDDOT Launches New “Don’t Crowd the Plow” Campaign By Kristi Sandal

The SDDOT launched two new TV ads and three extended cut videos for our social media channels for the annual “Don’t Crowd the Plow” campaign. Since 2014, the communications and leadership teams have been focusing on the “human behind the machine”. You hear us say it all the time, safety is our number one priority. That goes for drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and of course our employees.

This year’s 2020-2021 campaign brought the stories of Corey Weerheim, Highway Maintenance Worker in Mitchell and Tyler Small, Highway Maintenance Worker, Junction City (Vermillion), and Trooper Shannon Orth, Senior Trooper, South Dakota Highway Patrol to the TV screen.

The main message this year is focused on the families of these public servants. These three men represent hundreds of DOT and SDHP employees who work long hours, holidays, weekends, miss birthday parties and family events, all so the drivers on South Dakota’s Highways can make it safely home to their families. These guys truly LOVE their job, but they also love their families and all they are asking is for motorists to slow down and pay attention so everyone can arrive alive.

You can help keep your fellow employees safe by following their advice: slow down, leave 15 minutes early to get to work, pay attention to the weather and sd511.org, don’t drive distracted, drive for conditions, and, of course, Don’t Crowd the Plow.

Share this message with family and friends. Share the SDDOT social media posts on your own personal accounts. Every little bit, every share, can be the difference between everyone home safe and healthy every day or tragedy. The videos can be found on our YouTube Channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SouthDakotaDepartmentofTransportation/videos>

Thank you to Tyler, Corey, and Trooper Orth for sharing your story to improve safety on our state’s highway system.



The Secretary's Corner

Congratulations to our first Leadership Development Program graduates!

The Leadership Development Program was established to provide employees with an opportunity to augment their leadership skills. The program fosters personal and professional growth, prepares people for tomorrow's challenges, as well as helps with future departmental advancement.

The 16-month LDP also enables the department to foster a culture of continuous learning and create an atmosphere of innovation - all geared toward achieving the department's strategic objectives and goals.

Employees are selected for the LDP through an application process. This series targets employees who desire the opportunity to better themselves.

Our 2020 LDP graduates were honored during the December Transportation Commission meeting.



Top left to right by row:
 Shane Stewart, Steve Kerr, Steve Kamarainen.
 June Hanson, Tom Strubel, Jason Smith, Keith Winter.
 Thad Bauer, Alan Wimer, Joanne Hight, Teri Morford.
 Kelly VanDeWiele, Tanner Fitzke, Patricia Devitt, Tom Kallemeyn,
 Harry Johnston, Steve Gramm, David Jennings, and Dustin DeBoer

Innovation Drives Workload Vs. Staff Shortage Balancing Act for Winner Area

By Doug Sherman, Winner Area Engineer and Brad Norrid, Winner Area Engineering Supervisor

In recent years, and again next year, the Winner Area's annual construction projects total 80 to 100 million dollars. This extensive project workload occurs due to projects getting delayed and rescheduled, coupled with the timing of planned major reconstruction projects. In his role as Winner Area Engineering Supervisor, Brad's team includes eight technicians and four engineers. With the Winner Area encompassing nearly a quarter of the DOT's construction budget in 2019 and 2020, Brad knew he needed to become innovative in his approach to cover the extensive projects with a limited work force. Both Brad and Doug praise SDDOT employees who went above and beyond to assist. Jeff Hrabanek was a Project Engineer who officially retired in June, 2020. Jeff understood the situation and actually volunteered to stay on as a seasonal staff member until the end of December. (Hoping Jeff comes back as a seasonal again in 2021.)

Brad began contemplating various approaches for thinking "outside the box". Brad and Doug conversed about innovative ways to solve the continuing workforce issues. Their challenge (and proposed solution) was to level the workload vs. workforce shortage equation by reaching out to other Area Offices who had available staff and provide compensation to encourage work assignments in the Winner Area.

"The Department recognizes there are times short-term staffing shortages require asking employees to cross area or region boundaries to ensure DOT provides our vital services," states Craig Smith, Director of Operations. "Knowing this requires time away from home and looking for ways to recognize their willingness to relocate, the Operational Continuity Response Volunteer Payment was established. When assignments last 2-3 weeks, a \$300 payment is provided as recognition for their commitment to DOT."

Doug and Brad felt the need to explore tactics to entice employees to relocate and sacrifice their personal lives for the construction season. The Operational Continuity Response Volunteer Payment program hadn't been fully established as an option and only focused on short term relocations. Doug's motto became, if we don't ask the questions, we won't know the answers. They engaged in conversation about temporary work pay increases with Jason Humphrey, Pierre Region Engineer, Craig Smith, and Heidi Olson, Human Resources Manager. They proposed more substantial pay increases to employees who voluntarily worked onsite in Winner for a significant portion of the construction season uprooting from their family for four months and living in a hotel.

Gratitude:

The temporary pay increase was discussed in multiple conversations. Doug praises DOT and BHR Leadership for spending considerable time on the process; and providing a fair, and worthwhile compensation structure for potential participants. While the logistics had to be ironed out, they were extremely grateful to have the DOT Executive Team's full support of the effort. The final decision was to provide a 5% temporary work increase for the season for employees who agreed to work in the Winner Area away from families for an extended period of time. "First and foremost, we want to thank executive leadership for allowing us to be innovative to meet workload challenges; everyone was in sync from top to bottom," states Doug. "We were asking a lot of employees to be away from their families, missing kids' ball games, camping trips, and other summertime family activities. We felt offering a 5% temporary work increase was significant enough to encourage available employees to participate, and on the flip-side, we definitely tried to be flexible to accommodate life events."

Brad's 5% temporary work increase proposal hadn't been done before, but he was grateful for the chance to discuss with others to get Winner out of a tight spot. "Some areas were willing to send their people knowing they could secure consultants easier based on their location versus ours," Brad noted. "We cannot express how unselfish the DOT team has been in helping us address our workload issues these past two summers."

Innovation in Winner Area continued:

Win Win Situation:

While Doug and Brad know the Winner Area benefited with the 5% temporary work increase option, they also heard from employees who felt the opportunity provided valuable cross training and skill development for career advancement. Brad noted in some cases he was asking Winner Area employees to assume different roles as new people from other areas were added to the team. On some major projects, Winner Area's experienced technicians assumed the role of Project Engineer. Doug and Brad noted appreciation for their own staff's flexibility to welcome and absorb extra staff, and to direct work in various positions.

Doug noted that after a recent employee engagement survey, Winner Area rated low in employee development. As a result, supervisors held employee development interviews with every single person in the Winner Area and discovered a few Highway Maintenance Workers who had interest in helping with the workload. Brad reached out to these employees and had them take some technician certification courses. He also had some veteran technicians, such as Dan Riedl and Mike Hausmann, work with these maintenance workers to train them on proper testing.

With the temporary work increase option, the Winner Area was able to put interest by others into practice. Maintenance staff from Murdo and Kadoka were trained in-house in the Winner Area and then sent to soils & aggregate certification classes. A couple employees also took the ACI testing course certification.

Overall, these innovative ways to involve others in Winner Area helped to knock down common barriers. Having maintenance and engineering staff working side by side helps the organization overall. Doug believes the opportunity to cross train ties directly into the SDDOT mission stating, "Our employees are the most vital cog in our wheel. Hats off to these employees for not only joining us in Winner for this long-term commitment; but also going out of their comfort zone and learning new skills."

Brad notes the Winner Area was excited to provide once in a lifetime big "reconstruction" projects like the Interstate work being done. But, also quickly adds that taking three employees out of one unit creates a burden on that supervisor. "We simply cannot stress how much we appreciate everyone in the DOT family who graciously allowed these temporary assignments to assist us in the Winner Area," states Brad.

Cost efficiency:

While both gentlemen say using consultants is valuable during regular times, as well as heavy construction seasons, they also recognize the additional overhead costs. And, in addition to being cost conscious; it is always preferable to have your own DOT staff members on a project who know how to run tests and understand DOT protocols. Having DOT employees on site takes stress off project engineers. When compared to using consultants, both Doug and Brad believe finding ways to engage available DOT employees in projects is the preferred option. Even with a 5% temporary pay increase, the cost savings is considerable compared to using consultants.

What's the worst thing they can say, NO?

Doug and Brad both encourage Field Supervisors to think outside the box; and not be afraid to ask questions to solve work shortage issues! Innovation is good; and the worst anyone can say is no! The "opportunity" to go to Winner, and participate in the 5% temporary workforce increase, is expected to be offered again in 2021 with more than 80 million in estimated projects on track. Doug and Brad want to express a sincere thank you to those who assisted the Winner Area during the 2019 and 2020 construction seasons.

Innovation in Winner Area Story Continued:

Below is the list of people who assisted the Winner Area to balance work demand and staff shortages. Each person's Winner-based projects are noted. A huge thank you to the Area supervisors (bolded) who made it possible for their employees to shift from normal duties.

2019 - Rapid City Area:

Darrel Henrichsen – Project Technician

Christal Collins – Region Operations Technician

Darrel and Christal were the first employees who earned the 5% pay increase for working away from home for extended periods of time.

John Gerlach – Engineering Supervisor

Mike Carlson – Area Engineer

Mobridge Area:

Kelly Armfield – Project Engineer – handled 4 projects in the Bennett, Todd & Mellette County area, also helped on our I-90 project.

James Bieber – Journey Technician – Oversaw lab and inspections on grading project in Bennett County, also helped on the I-90 project and some of our US 83 grading project.

Eric Stroeder – Engineering Supervisor

John Villbrandt – Area Engineer

Pierre Area:

Elodio Falcon – Project Engineer – US 83 Grading and Structures

Brandon Olson – Journey Technician - US 83 Grading and Structures & I-90 Reconstruction

Rod Larson – Project Technician – I-90 Reconstruction

Damon Hoftezier – Journey Technician - US 83 Grading and Structures & I-90 Reconstruction

Joseph Scott – Journey Technician – US 83 Grading and Structures

Cody Asher – Journey Technician – Survey

Dan Vockrodt – Engineering Supervisor

Dean VanDeWiele – Area Engineer

Watertown Area:

Dale Adams – Project Technician – US 83 Grading and Structures

Jeff Brink – Engineering Supervisor

Matt Brey – Area Engineer

Central Office:

Nate Buscher – Project Engineer - US 83 Grading and Structures

Sam Weisgram – Squad leader

Andrew Brown – Project Engineer - US 83 Grading and Structures

Mark Malone – Squad Leader

Maintenance:

Josh Gullickson – LHMW Murdo

Steven O'Dell – HMW Murdo

Sam Spence – HMW Kadoka

Jim Lolley – Highway Maintenance Supervisor Winner Area

Maintenance staff trained in-house in the Winner Area and then sent to soils & aggregate certification classes. Josh and Steven also took the ACI testing course certification.

Research Tools for Forecasting and Tracking the Highway Construction Cost Index

By Thad Bauer, SDDOT Office of Research

Research project SD2016-06 was created to update the highway construction cost index (HCCI) used by the SDDOT. An HCCI indicates cost changes and trends in the construction market and illustrates the purchasing power of a highway department. The HCCI currently used by the SDDOT does not accurately portray market conditions because it is based on only eight bid items, a small fraction of all bid items used by the SDDOT. To increase the number of bid items, the research team from the Texas Transportation Institute proposed using a Dynamic Item Basket, which compares all items bid during two consecutive years to better represent cost changes.

The research team created a software tool to track costs and forecast future trends. HCCI values generated by the tool can improve the accuracy of engineer’s cost estimates and STIP cost projections. The tool can provide HCCI values by region, contract size, federal oversight or no federal oversight, rural or urban, and reservation or non-reservation. It also contains a bid analysis feature, which provides contract or project statistics and bid item specific information, such as unit prices of a bid item over time.

Figure 1 shows HCCIs by region from 2010 to 2019.

Figure 2 shows the unit price over time from 2010 to 2019 for Class Q2 Hot Mixed Asphalt Concrete.

To learn more about this project or the HCCI tool, please contact thad.bauer@state.sd.us.

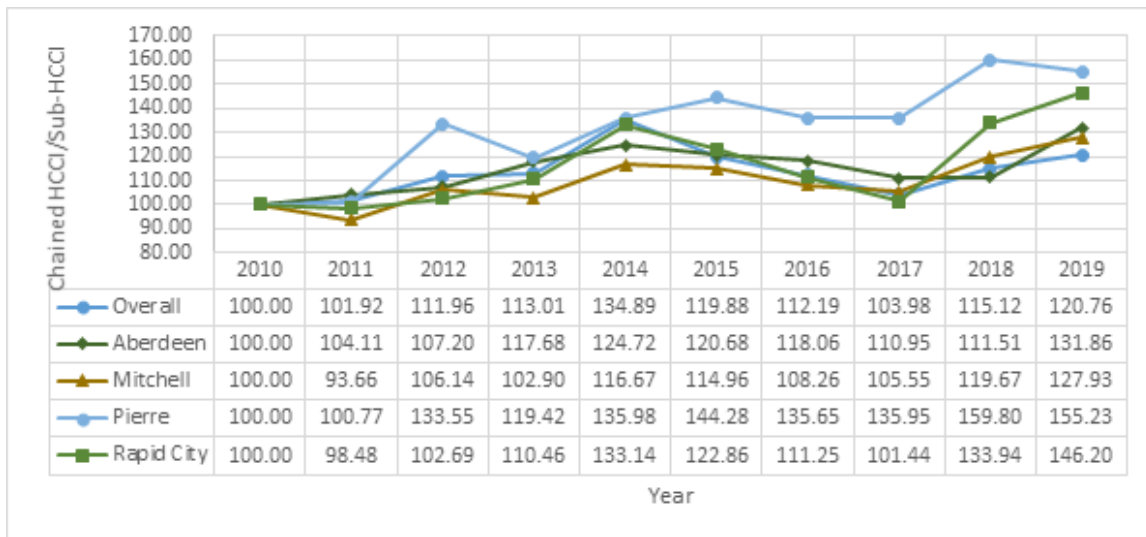


Figure 1: HCCIs by Region from 2010 to 2019

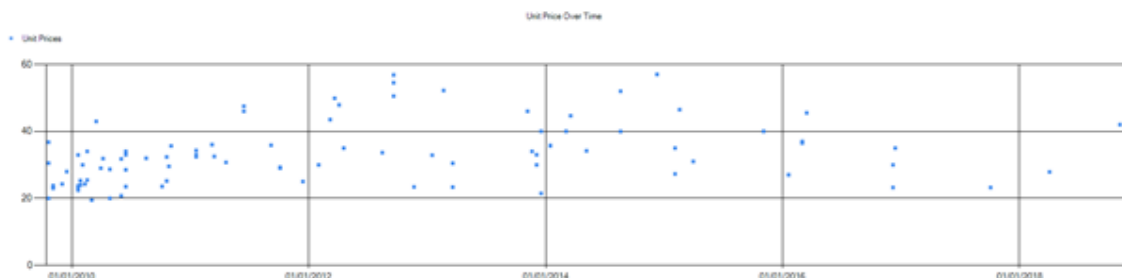


Figure 2: Unit Price for Class Q2 Hot Mixed Asphalt Concrete, 2010 - 2019



New Health Plans – New Opportunities

The Benefits Program is excited to introduce four new health plans for FY22, constructed using both feedback provided by over half our state employee population during the summer's benefits survey and focus groups, as well as state-of-the-art market research. We will continue to maintain a zero premium option for employee coverage with the opportunity to buy up to coverage levels that are more appropriate for you and your family.

The **Washington Plan** offers a \$5,500 deductible for single coverage or an \$11,000 deductible for coverage for two or more members. This plan offers zero premium for employee coverage.

The **Lincoln Plan** offers a \$3,000 deductible for single coverage or a \$6,000 deductible for coverage for two or more members. This plan has includes an employee premium.

The **Jefferson Plan** has a \$1,750 deductible for single coverage or a \$3,500 deductible for coverage for two or more members. This plan introduces a mix of copayments and coinsurance.

The **Roosevelt Plan** offers a zero-dollar deductible, whether you elect single or family coverage. You will not need to meet any deductible before the plan starts paying benefits.

We encourage you to visit the New Plans page on the BHR website. In addition to videos and write-ups on the new health plans for FY22, you will see other informative content, including additional plan enhancements such as revised dental plan premiums and a covered eye exam for all plan members, a list of frequently used terms, our expanded FAQ, premium side-by-side comparison, and a comparison chart of out-of-pocket maximums.

To provide you with as much information in advance of FY22 Open Enrollment, a number of informational sessions, both virtual and in-person, will be scheduled for the next few months. A list of dates and times for January will be available soon on the BHR website.

New Employee Information:

The **Bureau of Human Resources** presents a **New Employee Orientation webinar** on the third Wednesday of each month from 10 a.m. to Noon CT via Zoom.

A copy of the recorded webinar and a pdf of the presentation are posted after each session at <https://bhr.sd.gov/NewEmployeeOrientation.html>

Please note the new AFE assigned within the TKS (Time Keeping System) for BHR New Employee Orientation: **AFE --- 78Z0**

January Mentoring Minute by Matt Dorfschmidt & Wyatt Reis

In the December Mentoring Minute, written by Greg Rothschadl and John Villbrandt, they encouraged people to really focus on emotional health as well as physical health. On behalf of the entire Mentoring Committee, we hope everyone truly found ways to enjoy the holiday season.



You may or may not know that January is National Mentoring Month! With that being said, take time this month to keep your eyes out for informal mentoring opportunities that happen on a day to day, if not hour to hour, basis across the Department.

FINDING MENTORS EVERYWHERE by Nicole Bridge from The Training Connection (article link: <http://www.thetrainingconnection.com/news-article.php?id=123>) dives a little deeper into what to look for and how to get the most out of those interactions.

Happy National Mentoring Month from the entire Mentoring Committee!

New Rail Parcel GIS Viewer now featured on DOT web page

The new South Dakota Rail Parcels Viewer is now available from the GIS Web Map Gallery found at <https://dot.sd.gov/transportation/highways/planning/gis> or directly using this link: <https://bit.ly/2XC45yt>.

This GIS web map includes railroad centerlines, land parcels and leased sites that are included in the state-owned railroad facilities. Data can be viewed by zooming into an area and clicking on the parcel. The DOT GIS Team worked with Air Rail, and Transit to make this available to the public.

This month, the GIS Team would like to introduce you to our newest member. Meet Kathryn!

For those who don't know me, my name is Kathryn Wesson! I'm the newest GIS Analyst with Transportation Inventory Management.



I started working here in February, 2020 after packing up and moving from the East Coast. I love GIS because of the creative problem solving involved, and because it is so useful in a variety of subjects. Some of my favorite projects in this position to date include developing MaRLA (a field app to survey road maintenance repair locations), using ModelBuilder to prioritize state highway projects, and calculating crash rates at intersections and along roadway curves. Our team is happy to help, please feel free to reach out to Kimberly Zerr, Roger Brees, or me with any GIS needs or questions! My email is Kathryn.Wesson@state.sd.us and my phone number is 605-773-3861.

Employee Spotlight - January, 2021

Employee Longevity:

Mark Preszler, Equipment Shop Foreman - 30 years (Aberdeen Area)

David Timmons, Pilot/Mechanic - 35 years (State Airplane Operations)

Janice Reede, Senior Secretary, Road Design - 35 years (Central Office)

Dan Strand, Engineer - 35 years (Pierre Area)

Employee Retirement:



Jeff Lemieux, Pierre Region Bridge Crew Technician, retired on Friday, January 8.

Due to CDC guidelines, there wasn't a retirement coffee, but fellow employees made sure his dedicated service was recognized.

Jeff worked for the SDDOT 37 years and 1 month. He started in the Rapid Region before transferring to the Pierre Region.

Congratulations Jeff!

New Hires/Transfers/Promotions:

Peter Costello, Highway Maintenance Worker (Sioux Falls) - New Hire

Matthew Waldner, Highway Maintenance Worker (Ipswich) - New Hire

Andrew Prickett, Journey Transportation Tech (Mitchell) - New Hire

Nicholas Wassilak, Engineer I (Pierre) - New Hire

Brittany Coupe, Engineer I (Pierre) - New Hire

Christopher Byre, Highway Maintenance Worker (Mobridge) - New Hire

Blair Kuhlman, Journey Transportation Tech (Sioux Falls) - New Hire

Damon Hoftiezer, Materials Lab Technician (Pierre) - Promotion

Luke Kohls, Project Technician (Watertown) - Promotion

Jennifer Boehm, Transportation Specialist II (Pierre) - Promotion

Andy Jacobs, Journey Transportation Tech (Custer) - Promotion

**Our thoughts and prayers are with the family, friends, and co-workers
of SDDOT employees who have passed away**

James Olson, Retired Project Engineer

Our sympathy is extended to Transportation Commissioner
Rod Fouberg of Aberdeen.

Rod's wife, Glenna, passed away on Jan. 5.

Employee Family Spotlight - January, 2021

Please feel free to share personal news such as marriages, babies, and other noteworthy achievements via email to julie.stevenson@state.sd.us.

The Connecting the DOT's newsletter is shared internally with staff via email as well as externally with the public on our website. If you had previously shared a birth announcement, wedding, trip photo, etc. that wasn't published this past year, please feel free to send an updated photo or details for our next issue!



Introducing . . .

Freya Rose Kindsfater

born on December 19, 2020

8 Lbs 3 oz and 20 ¼ inches

Granddaughter of Polly Hart,
Right of Way Appraiser (Sturgis)

Two down, two to go!

Doug Sherman, Winner Area Engineer, and his wife Val became grandparents to **Isabella and William** within a week! And, two more grandbabies are due, one in February and one in March!



Introducing . . .

Isabella Skye Secker

born on December 30, 2020

7 lbs 4 oz and 19 ½ inches



Introducing . . .

William Leonard Sherman

born on January 4, 2021

7 lbs 11 oz and 20 ¾ inches