

2025 Impact Award Recipients

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At SDDOT, our team powers our success. Thank you to all nominators for recognizing the dedicated work of co-workers by submitting a 2025 Impact Award nomination.

The Impact Award program is tailor-made to recognize SDDOT employees (either individually or as a team) who exceed expectations through their efforts, service, and performance. This employee-driven award program is designed to increase engagement and expand recognition throughout our organization.



**U.S. Highway 14A Rockslide
in Spearfish Canyon
on July 4th Weekend**

The Executive Team had 11 very detailed nominations to review, all which truly highlighted the hard work of our employees! Clearly, all Impact Award nominees demonstrate our strategic plan objectives in action!

Congratulations to the U.S. Highway 14A rockslide response team members chosen for the 2025 Impact Award. The nomination was submitted by Mike Carlson, Rapid City Area Engineer.

At 9:30 a.m. on Sat., July 5, 2025, a rockslide occurred in Spearfish Canyon. As a SDDOT organization, we would like to thank our team who immediately responded to the situation and spent hours on-site closing the road, monitoring traffic, and coordinating rock removal.

By 5 p.m. on Sunday, the road was reopened. Thank you to the communications team for sharing vital information to keep the public well-informed and safe on this busy holiday weekend!

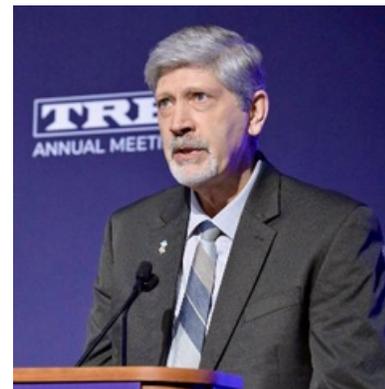
Rock Slide Response Team Members:

Zac Heller, Tate Anderson, Brian Laymon, Mike Sanders, Bob Kobes, Craig Whitford, Chris Waterland, Jeff Sampson, Andy Motzko, Dale Johnson, Scott Hymans, Jesse Nelson, Ryon Schimke, Julie Stevenson, and Taylor Brusven

Read a summary of all the 2025 Impact Award nominations at <https://intranetdot.sd.gov/docs/empl/Impact-Award-Summary-2025.pdf>.

The 2026 Team Impact Award nomination forms are available on the Intranet. Please consider nominating an individual or team that exemplifies SDDOT core values.

The Secretary's Corner



Moving South Dakota Forward Through Proactive Engagement

Transportation does not happen in a vacuum. Every mile of roadway, every bridge improvement, and every safety initiative is shaped by relationships at the national, state, and local levels. Active engagement is not optional for us; it is essential to ensuring South Dakota's transportation system continues to serve our citizens well.

I was recently selected as **Transportation Research Board (TRB) Executive Committee Chair**. The TRB provides tremendous information and resources at every level . . . to the states, nation, and world. As part of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, the TRB mobilizes expertise, experience, and knowledge to anticipate and solve complex transportation-related challenges. The Board annually engages more than 5,500 engineers, scientists, and other transportation researchers and practitioners from the public and private sectors to contribute expertise in the public interest.

National engagement is critical. Federal policy and funding play a significant role in how states plan, build, and maintain transportation systems. By participating in national discussions and building relationships with federal partners and peer states, we ensure South Dakota has a voice at the table. These connections help us stay ahead of emerging trends, share best practices, and advocate for policies that recognize the unique needs of rural states.

During legislative session, engagement at the state level becomes especially important. Policymakers are seeking information to make decisions that directly affect funding priorities and long-term strategies for infrastructure. By providing data and real-world experience, we ensure decisions are made with an understanding of how transportation truly impacts communities across South Dakota.

At the local level, engagement is where transportation becomes uniquely personal. Whether we are partnering with counties on bridge projects, working with cities on safety improvements, or coordinating with tribal governments on planning and access, listening is key. Cities, counties, tribes, businesses, and citizens experience our work every day. Strong local relationships build trust and ensure projects reflect both technical expertise and community needs.

Across all levels, engagement is about more than meetings or formal presentations. It is about credibility, consistency, and mutual respect. When people know they can count on accurate information and thoughtful dialogue from the SDDOT, collaboration becomes easier and outcomes improve.

Achieving our mission to provide a safe, efficient public transportation system requires us to engage—thoughtfully and proactively—at every level. By doing so, we strengthen not only our transportation network, but the partnerships that make progress possible.

2026 Employee Engagement Survey

Here in South Dakota state government, we're committed to doing all we can to ensure that your workplace is a positive, productive, and civil environment. It's been a privilege to see your dedication to serving the people of our state – you play a key role in helping me keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free.

We want to hear your thoughts and opinions on your workforce experience. I am asking each of you to complete a 10–15-minute survey. Employee IDs will only be used for demographic purposes, and all results are completely confidential. No individual survey results will be shared with anyone, not even me.

Please complete the survey by Jan. 31, 2026, using this link: <https://forms.office.com/g/jnQtHcFMqV>

You may take the survey during work hours, and I encourage you to work with your supervisor if arrangements need to be made to ensure you can complete it on time. Please plan to finish the survey in one sitting – responses will not be saved if you exit before completion.

Later this spring, I will share the statewide results so we can all see how we're doing and where we could work together to improve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Governor Larry Rhoden



January topics include: New LiveWellSD Challenge, Heart Health/Annual Wellness Exam, 1095-Cs, 2026 Employee Engagement Survey, and Compliance Training Curriculum.

Click to watch on [YouTube](#).

Links:

- Take the 2026 Employee Engagement Survey: <https://forms.office.com/g/jnQtHcFMqV>
- Benefits Email: benefitswebsite@state.sd.us
- LiveWellSD Portal: <https://livewellsd.sd.gov/>
- LiveWellSD (BHRA Website): https://sd.gov/bhra?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0044577
- SDLearn: <https://sdlearn.csod.com/>

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Please complete the 10–15 minute 2026 employee engagement survey: <https://forms.office.com/g/jnQtHcFMqV>

COMPLETE ON A
COMPUTER,
PHONE,
OR TABLET!

This survey helps your leadership understand what you value most and identify where meaningful changes will have the greatest impact. Your honest responses are invaluable and maximize the benefits and outcomes of the survey.

- Make sure you have enough time to finish the survey once you begin.
- You will not have the option to save your progress and continue at a later time.
- Your responses will not be recorded until you hit "Submit" at the end of the survey.

SURVEY CLOSING JANUARY 31, 2026!



The Rewards Deadline Will Be Here Soon!

The new year is here, which means the deadline for earning the incentive rewards for FY27 is coming up.

Complete your Health Assessment and Annual Wellness Exam with blood work by **April 1st** to earn the reward!

Log in at <https://livewellsd.sd.gov>, or scan the QR code below to learn more!



SCAN HERE!



Complete Your Health Assessment and Annual Wellness Exam!

Don't Miss the April 1, 2026 Rewards' Deadline!



Nominations are now open for the Governor's Awards of Excellence through Feb. 20, 2026!

Nominations are Live!

Submit Your Nomination for the Governor's Awards of Excellence by February 20!

Governor Rhoden is looking to recognize state employees who have gone above and beyond their daily duties.

This is your opportunity to highlight fellow state employees for excellence in one of these categories:

- Civility 
- Innovation 
- Safety 
- Leadership 

SCAN THE QR CODE TO SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION!





Mentoring Minute

Celebrate National Mentoring Month – Join the Movement!

By: John Villbrandt and June Hansen

January is National Mentoring Month, and it's the perfect time to celebrate the incredible impact mentoring has on our agency. A strong mentoring program benefits everyone—mentees, mentors, and the Department:

- **Reduces turnover** by helping employees feel valued and engaged;
- **Builds a culture of trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement;**
- **Develops future leaders** and creates a strong talent pipeline; and
- **Preserves institutional knowledge** so it isn't lost when someone retires or leaves.

Hundreds of SDDOT employees have generously shared their time and expertise to make our Mentoring Program a success. As the saying goes, "The more you give, the more you receive."

If you've ever considered participating, now is the time! Watch for details on the next mentoring program and **take the plunge—you won't regret it.**

And don't forget - **Thank a Mentor!** Take a moment to reach out to someone who has made a difference in your life and say thank you. Together, we can continue building a stronger, more connected SDDOT.

Mentoring Coming Events:

Extra Mile Mentoring Book Club – Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2026, from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. CT
 "The 7 Commitments of a Great Team" by Jon Gordon
 Discussion Leader – Phil Clements

Next Mentoring Program – Registration Opens in March 2026

Make Time for Mentoring!



2026 SD Airports Conference

Wednesday, April 8, 2026
 Ramkota, 920 West Sioux Ave. in Pierre

This conference is for airport managers, finance officers, mayors, and other city/county personnel to learn more about how to better run their local airport. Many consultants and aviation vendors were also in attendance as this conference is a great networking opportunity for everyone.

Additional information will be available on our website at
<https://dot.sd.gov/transportation/aviation/airports-conference/>

Safety Awards

Congratulations to each Area office that received one of this year's Safety Awards at the Field Engineering Meetings held in Pierre in December! Thanks for all you do to keep us safe!

Aberdeen Region



Safest Operations Statewide - **Aberdeen**



Safest Area Engineering - **Watertown AND**
Safest Engineering Statewide - **Watertown**

Mitchell Region



Safest Area Engineering - **Sioux Falls**

Rapid City Region



Safest Area Engineering - **Custer**

Pierre Region



Safest Area Engineering - **Winner**



TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Learn ~ Engage ~ Improve

Expand Your Expertise with TLN Supplemental Training

Looking to strengthen your professional development plan? Consider adding **Transportation Learning Network (TLN)** supplemental training to your schedule!

TLN is a collaborative distance learning partnership among the Departments of Transportation in **Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming**. Its mission is simple: **support quality transportation through enhanced communication, education, professional development, technology transfer, and research.**

The best part? TLN training is virtual, so you can learn from the comfort of your own workspace—no travel required.

Getting started is easy:

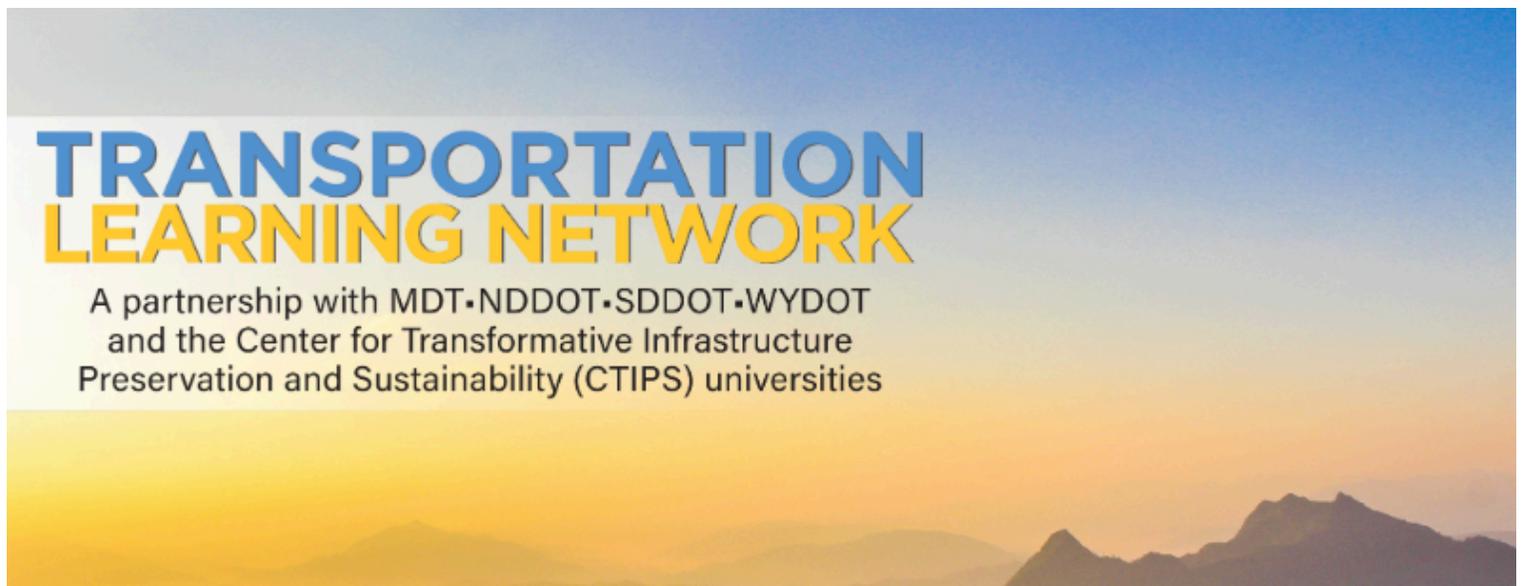
1. Log in to **SDLearn**
2. Select **Upcoming Calendar Events**
3. Search for **TLN**

“Continuous learning is key to staying ahead in the transportation field. TLN offers practical, high-quality training that benefits both employees and the communities we serve.”

— **Joel Jundt, Secretary of Transportation**

Take advantage of this opportunity to grow your skills and stay connected with the latest in transportation. **Add TLN supplemental training to your schedule today!**

Check out the TLN Highlights on the next page . . .



TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Learn ~ Engage ~ Improve



Click on the SDLearn graphic or use this link to sign in: [SDLearn](#)

Search by the **complete course name** listed.

SIMPLIFIED CODING FOR ALL TRAINING COURSES: Use function 1175; no AFE needed!	
	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p><i>If Pays to Train</i> sessions highlight SDDOT's core values while diving into timely, relevant topics.</p> <p>Date: Monday, Feb. 2, 2026, 11 am CST Location: Teams Core Value: High Ethical Standards and Remote Work with Heidi Olson</p> <p>Ask DOTLMS@state.sd.us for a meeting invite so we are on your calendar each month!</p> </div> </div>
TLN SPECIAL EDITION	
	<p>TLN: Intelligent Construction Jan. 28 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. CST Zoom</p>
	<p>TLN: Leading a Productive Meeting Jan. 29 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. CST Zoom</p>
	<p>TLN: The Art & Science of Uncomfortable Conversations Feb. 3 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. CST Zoom</p>
	<p>TLN: Sole Survivors Feb. 5 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. CST Zoom</p>
	<p>TLN: Roadway Resurfacing Roundtable Conversation Feb. 17 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. CST Zoom</p>
	<p>TLN: ATSSA Traffic Control Supervisor March 4-5 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. CST; 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. CST Zoom</p> <p>TLN: ATSSA Traffic Control Technician March 3 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. CST Zoom</p>
TUESDAYS WITH TRAUNER CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERIES	
	<p>TLN: Scheduling Toolbox TLN: Reviewing a Baseline Schedule Watch the recordings at www.tln.learnflex.net TLN: TIA/Time Extension Request Review Jan. 27 9:30 – 11 a.m. CST Zoom</p>

Jon Collins, Rapid City Region Surveyor - Named 2025 Surveyor of the Year



Congratulations to **Jon Collins, Rapid City Region Surveyor**, for being awarded the **Surveyor of the Year Award** at the South Dakota Society of Professional Land Surveyors Convention on Jan. 7, 2026!

Jon has been an active SDSPLS member since 2019 and served as president in 2021-2022. During his time with SDSPLS, Jon led significant initiatives, including implementing Low Distortion Projection Zones, advancing GPS on Bench Marks, and modernizing corner record processes.

His dedication to education, leadership, and professional excellence exemplifies the spirit of the award. **Congrats Jon!**

Pictured with Jon is his wife, Megan Collins.



Congratulations to **Brian Chase, Watertown Area Highway Maintenance Supervisor (Milbank and Sisseton)** on his recent retirement celebrating 22 years of dedicated service with the SDDOT.

Brian is pictured receiving his plaque from **Matt Brey, Watertown Area Engineer**, and also with his wife, Tammy.



South Dakota Engineering Society Blood Drive

The annual **South Dakota Engineering Society Blood Drive** will be on Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2026, from 9:40 a.m. through 2:30 p.m. at the Capitol Lake Visitors Center in Pierre.

You can sign up to donate by clicking the icon. For overall questions, please contact **Patrick Wellner, P.E. Engineering Manager II in Bridge Design**.



Finance Corner

VENDOR & REMIT ADDRESS VERIFICATION

REMINDER



If the vendor address on the voucher is different than on the invoice:

1. Check to see if it is the correct remit address.
2. Stamp the voucher cover sheet with remit address verified.



If you do not stamp **REMIT TO: VERIFIED** on the voucher cover sheet, your voucher will be returned by the Office of the State Auditor with the message below. You will be contacted by **Brandy Hansen in Finance** to check the address and stamp the voucher.

OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

Your voucher needs more information and/or correction.
DO NOT REMOVE THIS NOTE. Thank you.

Please verify remit address

Date returned 4-11-25 Claim Auditor Emma Bigby – 773-2876

Finance & Management “Post - Christmas” Party

The Finance & Management team got together one evening for a “Post-Christmas” Party with food, competitive games, and fun prizes!



SDDOT Employee News and Updates

Pictured are Brad and Mary Whitley of Winner. Brad has served as a SDDOT Highway Maintenance Worker in Winner.

In addition to serving the public through his SDDOT role, Brad also dedicated 36 years to the Winner Volunteer Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter. **As pictured, he was recently honored for his retirement from the Fire Department.**

Congrats Brad for your many years of dedicated service as a volunteer firefighter! What a wonderful accomplishment.



The “Josh” Effect

By: Joshua Janes, Region Design Engineer

In December, the Pierre Region shop had a lunch gathering in the maintenance building. We finally got a chance to take a photo together!

We are all named Joshua or Josh – and there was a time where we all shared a building. (One Josh has since moved across the street.)



The Josh group pictured from left to right:

- Josh Dohmen, Pierre Area Journey Transportation Tech
- Joshua Janes, Pierre Region Design Engineer
- Joshua Christensen, Pierre Region Design Engineer
- Josh Reep, Pierre Region Materials Technician

SDDOT Employee News and Updates

January New Hires:

Trevor Devitt, Engineer I (Foundation Engineer), Pierre
Aaron Climer, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Mitchell
John Hunt, Highway Maintenance Worker, Kadoka
Jacob Severson, Highway Maintenance Worker, Pierre
Rachel Soulek, Information Officer (Marketing & Communication Specialist), located in Pierre
Rebecca Soukup, Information Officer (Marketing & Communication Specialist), located in Yankton

January Longevity:

Brandy Hansen, Accounting Assistant - 20 years (Central Office/Finance)
Joanie Blair, Accountant IV - 20 years (Central Office/Finance)
Marty Harre, Equipment Technician - 20 years (Rapid City Region)
Dan Strand, Highway Construction Project Engineer - 40 years (Pierre Area)



Brandy Hansen, Accounting Assistant - Finance & Management Division (Pierre) (on left) recently received her 20-year longevity pin from **Patti Devitt, Accounting Manager**.



Joanie Blair, Accountant IV - Finance & Management Division (Pierre) (on left) recently received her 20-year longevity pin from **Patti Devitt, Accounting Manager**.



Marty Harre, Rapid City Region Equipment Repair Technician, (on right) received his 20-year longevity pin from **A.J. Hatch, Rapid City Equipment Shop Foreman**



SDDOT Employee News and Updates

Brad Richards, ROW Acquisition & Relocation Manager (Pierre) (on left) recently received his 10-year longevity pin from **John Keyes, ROW Program Manager (Pierre)**.



Allie Kay Boese was born on Dec. 16, 2025, weighing 9 pounds and 6 ounces.

Allie's parents are Nick and Hailey Boese. Hailey is a Project Engineer for Winner Area. Allie joins two older brothers Noah and Jack.

Boone James Waagen was born on Dec. 5, 2025, weighing 6 pounds and 15 ounces.

Boone is the son of **Samantha Coats and Josh Waagen, Journey Transportation Tech in Huron.**



In Sympathy with our co-workers:



Sympathy is extended to **Mike Welch, Aberdeen Region Design Engineering Supervisor**, on the recent passing of his father.

Leslie (Les) Raymond Welch, Jr., Ada, MN, passed away on Jan. 10, 2026, in Fargo, ND. A gathering of family and friends to celebrate Leslie's life took place on Jan. 24, 2026, at Fredrikson-Ganje Funeral Home, Ada, MN.



Sympathy is extended to **Kellie Beck, Director Finance & Management (Pierre)** on the recent passing of her grandmother.

Agnes Arlene Brasel, passed away on Jan. 2, 2026, leaving behind a lifetime of memories and stories.