

Public Comments – US85 Fm WY to Cheyenne Crossing

Fri 05/29/2026 3:36 PM

Please leave US85 in its present condition. Perhaps lowering the speed limit would improve road safety. I am sure the the revenue allocated for this project could put to better use.

Fri 05/29/2026 3:39 PM

We like to spend time hiking, skiing and driving along this area of Highway 85 and hope that this project would not impact the area negatively. But expanding the right of way to 150 feet does not sound like it would be possible without some very major work. I'm believe it should be scaled back to be done on a smaller scale that maintains the current ambience as much as possible. A small widening to provide better shoulders perhaps? Scenic highways serve an important place in attracting visitors to our area. We. Ed to protect them, not destroy them.

Fri 05/29/2026 4:50 PM

Dear Mark,

I would like to express my concerns about the highway 85 reconstruction project.

This project as proposed would destroy the natural beauty of driving that scenic road. Please do not make it any larger road through that area.

Fri 05/29/2026 4:59 PM

I want to state my opposition to the proposed widening of Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. I have driven this highway and there is absolutely nothing wrong with it as is. I have been horrified to see what happened with Highway 385. I understand progress, but there is no need for this.

Fri 05/29/2026 6:09 PM

I grew up in the northern Hills. From Nemo to Spearfish was my general range. Roughlock Falls, Spearfish Canyon, and trips over to Newcastle were favorite destinations for family day trips when I was young. The crystal clear and ice cold waters were such a beautiful and rare resource to behold. You can actually watch trout silently feeding in the gin clear water. The area around Cheyenne Crossing is such a unique and refreshing area I think careful consideration and input is required by citizens that hold this area dear. Please consider holding an open meeting for locals input.

Fri 05/29/2026 6:33 PM

Greetings Mr Malone,

Please seriously consider the reason many tourists and locals are passionate about the beautiful Black Hills. The slow scenic drive on roads designed to appreciate the beauty of the natural forest and scenery. Our family has spent three generations appreciating and celebrating the unique opportunities we enjoy in the hills. The recent on going changes on 385 have probably provided a bit of safety improvements but at the cost of damaging the very reason many people choose the Black Hills for the vacation or home. Scenic and beautiful driving that appreciates the natural beauty. I'm sorry to say that the sterile but safe scarring of 385 has destroyed much of this. If you are planning a similar project on Hwy 85 from Spearfish Canyon to Wyoming it represents another beautiful drive lost. When do the beauty of the hills and their unique landscape become a part of your decision? I understand your desire to protect people from themselves but at what cost? Would enhancing safety measures protect enough of them to save the beautiful hills the majority of people that visit and live here respect safely? Please consider the majority us that would not be in favor of drastic measures taken to straighten and change highway 85. Highway 385 is enough. Thank you for your help.

Sat 05/30/2026 7:27 AM

I am 100% against the widening of hwy 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. I drive that beautiful, scenic road fairly often. It would be a crime to destroy the beauty of that area. It is one of those drives you just go slow and enjoy the view. Please do not ruin it!!!!

Sat 05/30/2026 8:31 AM

Hi Mark,

I wanted to give my opinion and feedback regarding the proposed Highway 85 reconstruction. I have driven this road many times, and while I agree it needs to be repaved, I do not agree it needs to be widened or straightened. I take those road when I go to Colorado because I live in Lead. Our family often snowmobiles out of Trailhead or our cabin by Rochford. This is one of our favorite drives because its beautiful. I also worry about the geological habitat, particularly the stream that runs right along the road.

Personally, and I hate to make this point, but if people are choosing to drive too fast thru there, it may be natural selection taking its course. I've lived in Lead for 17 years. I remember the Hwy 85 project to make it less dangerous between Lead and Cheyenne Crossing. Every year, there's still some dumbass rider that hasn't spent enough time on a bike and fails to negotiate the curves correctly, landing themselves in a ditch severely harmed or dead. Perhaps that money would be better spent setting up a special permit program for Rally where you have to prove you've been on a bike for more than five minutes in order to participate.

Bottom line, repave the road if you must, but don't widen and straighten it please. Its so beautiful and we've already destroyed too much of the Black Hills.

Sat 05/30/2026 8:33 AM

Dear Mark,

I'm writing to express my objection to the proposed road construction between Cheyenne Crossing and the WY border. This is a bad idea esthetically. Having a wide highway through one of the most pristine areas of the Black Hills is not good for us, for views, for nature, for wildlife. The construction around Sheridan Lake and the redo of Sheridan Lake Rd has destroyed the natural beauty of the area.

I urge you to listen to citizen input and do not to this massive construction project.

Sat 05/30/2026 11:02 AM

Dear Mr Malone,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed project on Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border.

I urge you to reconsider this development and preserve the road's scenic nature. The potential destruction of the landscape and its natural beauty is deeply concerning and, to me, feels comparable to the impact of mining.

Please leave this area as it is to protect its unique character.

Sat 05/30/2026 11:56 AM

Mr Malone,

Please consider NO grand work on highway 85. It is scenic area that needs an occasional patching but no straightening!

Thank you!

Sat 05/30/2026 1:24 PM

LEAVE IT ALONE!!!!

Sat 05/30/2026 1:51 PM

Please accept this as public comment for the upcoming public meeting regarding this proposal to reconstruct portions of Highway 85.

I am not a resident of South Dakota, but I am a visitor to your beautiful state. I do not support a reconstruction project of this type. Highway 85 is a beautiful route in the Black Hills and efforts to

straighten it out will destroy that beauty and allure, in addition to upsetting the ecosystem and wildlife habitats that co-exist there. Not all fixes are created equal, and this proposal, as I see it, does not add to the character and beauty of South Dakota.

Sat 05/30/2026 3:39 PM

Mr. Malone,

Regarding the proposed HWY 385 alterations between Cheyenne Crossing & the Wyoming State line.

I do not support pouring taxpayer dollars into this project no matter where they come from. HWY 385 is a scenic drive and should be left as such. If truckers and or campers want a wide road they can angle up to the I90 Interstate. This beautiful piece of the world should be left alone. This plan is very destructive of the natural wild area and the creatures that depend on it. Leave it alone.

Sat 05/30/2026 5:35 PM

Please do not alter the physical section of Highway 85 south of Cheyenne Crossing in any way, except to perhaps lower the speed limits during the Sturgis Rally.

There is a summer camp located two miles north of O'Neill pass that has property on both sides of Highway 85. In addition, we biker groups have stayed at the camp during the Rally and they love the peace and quiet and beauty of the area. They have never had an accident as they travel this section of Highway 85, nor have I in the many years I have been traveling between Lead and the camp and Newcastle and back. I have driven these roads in all kinds of weather and have also not encountered accidents.

The reason this part of the Hills is special is because one can enjoy it as one drives. It's bad enough that some of the roadside stops have been removed. Please leave Highway 85 alone!

Sat 05/30/2026 6:09 PM

Mark Malone,

I am writing to formally express my strong opposition to the proposed developments regarding Highway 85.

I believe the project is unnecessary and will cause irreparable damage to the natural landscape. The removal of trees and the disruption of the scenic beauty along this route would be a significant loss for both local residents and the tourists who visit the area specifically to enjoy the Black Hills.

I urge you to reconsider these plans and prioritize the preservation of our environment over this proposed progress. It is essential that we maintain the integrity of our natural landmarks for future generations.

Sat 05/30/2026 6:10 PM

I want to register my dismay at the proposed widening and straightening of Highway 85. A major part of the charm of the highways in the Black Hills is that they wind around and expose the beauty of the scenery. For awhile, nature is the focus and life slows down for just a bit. Widening and straightening make it just another highway. That is what has happened with 385. I currently live in Kansas but grew up in South Dakota and my parents had a cabin in Silver City. I have gone back to the Hills every chance that I was able. Please don't change an integral part of the beauty of the Hills.

Sat 05/30/2026 6:43 PM

Hello,

I am writing to respectfully submit my opinion on the proposed Highway 385/85 development project. I live in the Black Hills and have traveled on this road from my home in Sturgis to the Wyoming line and down to Colorado. It is a beautiful road that is a lovely option if one wants to slow down and take in the beauty of the Hills. As a resident, if I feel I need to get to where I'm going quickly, I know to avoid this road during peak times and sometimes avoid it in the winter months. While I hate to see the Hills destroyed further and more and more trees being torn down and leveled for asphalt, I do understand the need for progress. Instead of widening the highway to such an extent, can just passing lanes be strategically placed on the highway to assist with ease and safer passing of slow or heavier recreational traffic? That would be my preference.

Sat 05/30/2026 6:51 PM

Since I cannot attend the meeting in Deadwood regarding the proposed \$57.6 million Black Hills highway to be "reconstructed", please take a minute to read my email.

I'm 83. When I say I've been to the Black Hills at least 50 times, it is not an exaggeration. My family enjoyed many vacations in this area.....going way back to when those little Cheyenne Crossing cabins had cook stoves. I love that area. Therefore, I am very concerned about the plan to widen highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to WY.

The Black Hills is a relatively small area. It can only accommodate so many people. It is mountains, trees, lakes, creeks, and wildlife. People go there to enjoy nature. It is not an area to be passed through quickly. If SD allows beautiful, winding, mountain roads to be reconstructed, then we've lost the value of this SD attraction. Strictly enforcing the speed would reduce accidents while maintaining the aesthetic value of this area. Accommodating a 2-week motorcycle rally should not be a consideration.

The Highway 385 "reconstruction" is horrific. The mountainsides have been knocked down. Beautiful, old trees are gone. What was once a beautiful mountain drive will be a "straight shot". It breaks my heart. I do not want to see the same thing happen to Hwy 85. Have no lessons been learned?

LEAVE IT ALONE.

Sat 05/30/2026 7:23 PM

Good evening Mark!

I am a Black Hills resident of 20+ years and I am reaching out to oppose the project on hwy 85. I believe a project adhering to the current federal standards of 150 ft of ROW is not fitting of our scenery. I am also opposed to the realignment of some corners as there are other traffic mechanisms that can be applied to control collisions such as pull outs for slower traffic or changing speed limits. Do not hesitate to contact me if you'd like to discuss further!

Sat 05/30/2026 7:40 PM

Mark,

While I feel it is a noble thing to attempt to build highways that prevent running off the road from being a death sentence, I feel that SD DOT should delay reconstruction of US 85 to allow time to analyze the results of the US 385 autobahn on traffic accidents and fatalities.

My pre-reconstruction experience on US 385 suggests that the longer the sight distance, the more willing drivers are to exceed posted speed limits and safe speeds (you know, like winter driving). Drivers are also more likely to push limits on passing distance in those longer sight distance areas with wide shoulders. While I do like the highways with wide shoulders that let us meet three abreast, it does not feel as safe as two lanes with a moderate shoulder that helps keep drivers from forcing a pass. I suspect speeding on US 385 will not be within the capabilities of SD Highway Patrol and Sheriff Departments to control.

I expect the new US 385 to produce high speed scenery blurring results. I hope I am wrong. I will be that Red 2000 Tundra driving the posted limit or less depending on weather and traffic conditions.

Sat 05/30/2026 7:51 PM

I live 100 yds off Hwy 385. The noise from the speeding traffic is tenfold at least. People are not being safer, they are driving faster. The beauty of this drive is now destroyed. I STRONGLY oppose the DOT ruining the road from Cheyenne crossing to the Wyo border. That is a beautiful drive with the creek beside it. Believe me, I am all about safety, I worked in a safety department for 18 years. On 385 and 85 accidents are the driver's fault, NOT the highways.

Sat 05/30/2026 8:10 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I write to voice my objection to the plan proposed for Hwy. 85 to expend \$57.6 million plan to "reconstruct" Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing (at the head of Spearfish Canyon) to the Wyoming state line.

While I appreciate the interest in safety, the need to make this stretch of highway safer will not be solved by the proposal nor will the cost of destroying great SD scenic beauty equal what small gain there may

This winding road was meant to be driven slowly so as to enjoy the natural spaces along the road. More enforcement of speed and traffic laws would be more effective and would definitely cost less. If people from out of state want to test the limits of themselves and their motorcycles, then they will and some will die because of their stupidity.

I spent years driving the lovely two lane roads in the Hills, driving at a reasonably slow speed to not only enjoy the woods, but to be prepared to quickly slow and stop for deer, cows, and buffalo. It is not hard to do.

I do not want to lose the character of the Black Hills because of these terraforming highway projects that are not needed.

Sat 05/30/2026 8:28 PM

Mr. Malone –

I would like to express my unequivocal opposition to the proposed highway project modifying U.S. Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. That section of highway traversed one of the most scenic drives in the Black Hills. The proposed widening/straightening would destroy its unique character, with possible damage to the riparian systems.

Yes, a slower speed through that section is prudent; there is no need to desecrate one of the few remaining picturesque drives in the Hills to accommodate those motorists who want to drive at a speed that prevents them from observing and appreciating the beauty of the area in the first place.

Sat 05/30/2026 8:47 PM

Hello,

As a lifelong resident, born and raised in the Black Hills, I would like to firmly and respectfully express my opposition to any major reconstruction of Highway 85 between Lead and the Wyoming border.

Sat 05/30/2026 9:02 PM

Please no more destruction of the natural beauty of the Black Hills to accommodate thrill riders. The Pactola Highway project is horrifying and now you are considering another destructive project on Highway 85. Please stop!!!

Sat 05/30/2026 9:10 PM

How'd Mark, Just dropping a line to say my Family are against the project to widen highway 85 . Please dont take away the beauty of the area .

Sat 05/30/2026 9:24 PM

Please do not turn Highway 85 into another generic, boring, state highway. This area is a beautiful, fun and interesting ride that we have enjoyed every time we travel to the Black Hills. Very few roads have the beauty that is found on this highway. It is a wonderful ride and should be retained as is.

Sat 05/30/2026 9:47 PM

I grew up in the Black Hills and this project is totally without merit. People should be made to drive slower thru the hills so as to enjoy the beauty and the great smell the pines give off early in the morning.

Please consider canceling this project.

FYI , I thought the project around Pactola was totally senseless also.

Just leave the Black Hills alone so people can slow down and enjoy nature.

Sat 05/30/2026 10:11 PM

Hello Mark,

This afternoon I saw a Facebook post discussing a public meeting on a reconstruction project on Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

I am a Basic Rider Training instructor, subcontracted by the South Dakota Safety Council to instruct riders of all ages and various experience levels with an emphasis on skills that are found lacking in fatal motorcycle accidents. Upon full passing both a riding test and a written examination, these students are given a permit to bypass DMV testing requirements to add a motorcycle endorsement to their driver's license. Just like on the road, we have people in our classes that I would have no problem riding next to on a trip across the state, and others that I would be very hesitant on staying around driving around town.

I fully understand the desire to lower crash numbers on all roads year-round across the state -- less deaths in general is always a good thing to strive for. However, I want to make an argument that widening roadways and clearing area in highway runoff areas is not necessarily the answer to lowering accident rates. Various European countries have done studies on designing a roadway for a speed limit, and different techniques that can be used to artificially lower speeds by drivers by making the roadway more 'busy' instead of putting an arbitrary number on a sign and say that it's safe. See more about "roadway diets" here: <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/other/road-diets> I would highly prefer a look into changing the design of the roadway and changing speed limits to better suit the actual road conditions rather than strip away more of the natural beauty of the Black Hills area, especially at a projected cost of ~\$56 million.

More oriented towards the Sturgis Rally usage, as that is the primary way I have been experiencing the Black Hills over the past 12 years, I would imagine that the current Highway 385 project that is also straightening out curves and clearing massive areas in the ditches may also lead to more people traveling at higher speeds through these areas as they feel safer. Why not speed down the freshly paved

4 lane wide road, as opposed to going the posted limit that feels very slow compared to what you 'feel' you can go on the road. I could see the proposed Highway 85 project leading to similar conditions, despite being a lesser traveled road during the Rally.

Additionally, I think there may be something to be said about the phenomena of induced demand -- why not speed down the brand new freshly paved road that's been made safer than all the other roads in the area?

As a final note, I would ask that these points are considered and heard during the public meeting scheduled for Thursday June 4 in Deadwood, SD, as well as during further project meetings. Thank you for your time reading this email.

Sat 05/30/2026 10:32 PM

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Highway 85 reconstruction project in the Black Hills.

The Black Hills are one of South Dakota's most treasured landscapes. Their natural beauty, scenic character, and small-town atmosphere are what make this region so special to residents and visitors alike. Expanding highways into larger, high-speed corridors risks changing the unique character of the area and diminishing the qualities that draw people here in the first place.

While I understand the importance of maintaining safe and reliable transportation infrastructure, I believe projects of this scale should carefully consider their long-term impact on the environment, scenic views, wildlife, and the overall character of the Black Hills. Mega-highway developments can create a more urbanized feel that is out of place in a region known for its natural beauty and charm.

I encourage decision-makers to pursue alternatives that prioritize safety and maintenance while preserving the landscape and atmosphere that make the Black Hills such a remarkable place. Once these natural and scenic qualities are lost, they cannot easily be restored.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sat 05/30/2026 11:33 PM

I've seen this project go "locally viral" on social media, so I wanted to provide a positive comment here. As someone who was born and raised in Lawrence County, this redesign has been sorely needed for years, and this project looks like a good way forward. I don't understand the visceral public opposition to any of this, looking at the changes since the last public meeting it seems like DOT took people's concerns into account as best you all could. People don't understand that a straight resurfacing of the road would violate most design standards. Please proceed with some version of this project despite what everyone else says.

Sat 05/30/2026 11:41 PM

LEAVE IT ALONE LEAVE IT ALONE LEAVE IT ALONE

Sun 05/31/2026 1:41 AM

Hi there,

I'm writing in regards to a proposed expansion of Highway 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming border. A friend of mine wrote about this on Facebook, and so if I've been misinformed by social media, please disregard this email. I could not find any other information about it on the DOT website.

I oppose reconstruction of this section of highway. The creek runs very close to the highway and is home to delicate biodiversity unique to the Black Hills. Unnecessary commotion and development should be absolutely avoided by a state department that is paid for by taxpayers that hold this area close to their heart. An area that, I believe, does not have nearly enough traffic on it to justify consideration of this project.

I do highly respect your department's dedication to decreasing traffic collisions and fatalities. I'm finding it hard to understand how this project would directly decrease collisions, however.

Sun 05/31/2026 3:01 AM

Hello! I am writing to express concern regarding the proposed plan to widen highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. Not all highways need to be 65 mph zones. People need to slow down, the "need" for this kind of destruction to the environment and scenery is unnecessary. One by one, the scenic drives in the Black Hills are being destroyed. Please reconsider moving forward with this plan before it is too late.

Sun 05/31/2026 6:16 AM

Dear Mark,

From one Mark to another, here is my input on the proposed widening of US 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to Spearfish Canyon: just leave it alone. The drive is beautiful and safe when driven at the posted speed limit. We do not need another disaster like the nightmare of 385.

Sun 05/31/2026 7:33 AM

Good day sir.

I am writing you to OPPOSE your down time plans to reconstruct highway 85. Safer? How about you lower the speed limit instead of tearing up the beautiful black hills. If it's not broke don't fix it.

Sun 05/31/2026 7:48 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I'm a previous resident of Newell and Spearfish and now a tourist to South Dakota.

From my perspective I see the Black Hills as a beautiful jewel. A place to go to relax and step back in time. A wonderful work of gentle curvy roads, of Sunday drives to Custer for pie, to Deadwood to play and Custer State Park to spy mountain goats, elk, buffalo and begging burrows. I don't expect super highways.

No, I'm not a biker.

I'm a mom that took her son on drives through and around the Black Hills to learn and slow down.

He went to the Boy Scout Camp, loved our drives. He's also better at spotting natural wildlife than I.

Please do not ruin the past and future memories. I have grandchildren we want to take there ... and hopefully, they will take their children.

Preserve the beauty.

Sun 05/31/2026 8:56 AM

Come on, I'm a local biker, and this is one of many iconic beautiful winding roads of the Black Hills. Leave things in that area the way it is. It is a beautiful ride that is enjoyed by many rally riders (the ones who can corner) and scenic drivers. Why screw up the hills! We are not a metro area and don't need it to look like one!

Me and my fellow bikers from the area love to ride it, but if you come here for the rally and don't know how to corner, learn how to do that before you get here, or stay on the straight roads...we got plenty of those around here...lol.

Sun 05/31/2026 9:04 AM

Mr. Malone,

I am respectfully asking that you and SDDOT please NOT go through with the Highway 85 Project. This is a true scenic byway. I drive this route twice a month on my way to and from Colorado, it is the highlight of my trip.

I would support resurfacing the road. But it does not need to be widened or drastically changed. It could use the presence of law enforcement every once in a while. I have never ever seen a police officer past Cheyenne Crossing on this route.

Changing this route to appease trucking or tourists would only increase risk on this road. Especially at night with the wildlife in the area. This is now truly one of the last untouched areas of the Hills.

Last month I had the privilege of being behind a cattle drive down this stretch of highway. How is that going to be possible if you widened the road and increase speed? Imagine a tourist or a motorcycle rider hitting an elk at a higher rate of speed. They already disregard signs.

What exactly is the motivation behind this project? It doesn't appear to be public safety.

I sadly can't attend the meeting on the 4th. But I assure you I am not alone in my thoughts.

Sun 05/31/2026 9:56 AM

I was born and raised in South Dakota. I grew up in Palmer Gulch and still own property there. I can remember when the Horsethief Lake Road was two lanes, gravel, and split in places to get the best view. It was "reconstructed" in the sixties to bring people to Rushmore just as fast as possible. Perhaps the old road was a bit narrow for today's larger vehicles. No doubt it's a bit safer, but certainly less scenic.

Old Highway 40 got straightened out. 385 is currently being extensively destroyed to make it "safer". Increasing these roads essentially enables faster traffic, and more of it. That's not such a good thing. The Hills are meant to be savored. Slow down. Enjoy the ride.

As XXXXXXXXX put it in a recent post, "We all want safe roads, but reduced speed and other less destructive safety measures could be an alternative to the difficult-to-define-but-we-know-it-when-we-see-it degradation of the character of these Black Hills. (Again, I say "the character" of the Black Hills.) We're losing that character with every one of these terraforming highway projects."

Ain't that the truth?

Does Highway 85 really get so much traffic that the landscape needs to be ripped apart so that folks can travel at 60 miles per hour through what is now a beautiful, picturesque canyon? I don't believe so. Perhaps during the two weeks of the rally, a few motorcycles speed through there and slide off the road. But other than that, the nature of the landscape should dictate the course of the road, not the other way around.

XXXXXXX had a few thoughtful suggestions as well, most of which I agree with.

1. Retaining walls instead of blasting away canyon walls to create a road ditch. You don't have to have a standard-sized road ditch. You can have a 3' or higher retaining wall and still get the lane and shoulder width you want. Look at Boulder Canyon. Those high walls are gigantic, and the ditch is wide enough to add a lane to that highway. Yes, ditches are safer for drivers sliding off the roadway when it's icy, and they give you a place to throw snow when you plow. But the cost in scenery and dollars is too high.
2. Retaining walls and guardrails on the side closest to the creek. They're trying to avoid these things, and the result is that the highway has to set further back from the creek, and you have to blast away more canyon wall. Guardrails take more maintenance, but it's worth it.
3. "Road Narrows" signs. You don't have to have the same road width everywhere. It's ok to have less shoulder in spots. Drivers instinctively slow down when the roadway narrows. You would only need to do this in a few places.

4. More scenic pullouts. Some drivers freak out a little if the road is curvy and narrow and they see guardrails and retaining walls instead of a wide ditch or gentle slope down to the creek. Build more pullouts so faster drivers can pass. Maybe take some photos or let the dog have a pee. Put up signs advising a pullout is ahead, so they can get ready for it. Put up signs commanding them to use pullouts so faster drivers can get around them.

Please, please, reconsider this awful plan to make Highway 85 “better”.

Sun 05/31/2026 10:14 AM

Dear Sir,

I sincerely hope you reconsider the project on Hiway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line. That is one of the most pristine and beautiful drives in the Black Hills and is very safe for those who obey the speed limits. I drive that section of road frequently and consider it very safe and light traffic. Also, that beautiful stream runs right next to the roadway and will be irreparably damaged by rerouting. Thank you for considering my comments on this proposed project.

Sun 05/31/2026 10:29 AM

I'd like a design which minimizes blasting limestone canyon walls and has pullouts for slower drivers to let faster drivers pass them and provides opportunities to enjoy the creek.

Sun 05/31/2026 10:30 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Highway 85 reconstruction project between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming state line.

Like many residents and visitors, I value the Black Hills not because they resemble a major metropolitan area, but because they remain a unique, scenic, and natural place. The winding roads, forests, rock formations, and natural character of the Hills are a major reason people choose to live here and visit from around the country.

While safety is important, I do not believe every road needs to be transformed into a wider, straighter highway. Highway 85 is a mountain road through a beautiful landscape. Drivers should expect a roadway that follows the terrain rather than one that requires the terrain to be reshaped to fit modern highway standards.

I am concerned about the potential impacts of this project, including extensive tree removal, widening of the right-of-way, and alteration of the natural landscape. Once these features are removed, they cannot easily be restored. The Black Hills are a limited resource, and every major reconstruction project chips away at the character that makes this area special.

Tourism is one of the region's most important industries, and people come here specifically because the Black Hills are different from the rest of the country. They come to drive scenic roads, experience forests and wildlife, and enjoy the natural beauty of the area. If every highway is widened, straightened, and engineered to resemble a major transportation corridor, we risk losing the very qualities that attract visitors in the first place.

Where does that approach end? Are we eventually going to widen and straighten Iron Mountain Road or the Needles Highway? Most people would immediately recognize that doing so would destroy much of what makes those roads iconic. Highway 85 may not be as famous, but the principle is the same.

I encourage SDDOT to seriously consider alternatives that improve safety while preserving the natural character of the Black Hills. Measures such as targeted improvements, better signage, lower speed limits where appropriate, and focused safety enhancements should be explored before undertaking a project that could permanently alter this landscape.

Please consider the long-term impact this project will have on the beauty, character, and identity of the Black Hills. Once these changes are made, there is no going back.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sun 05/31/2026 10:42 AM

Mark,

If my choice of wording for the subject didn't give it away, I am opposed to the project to reconstruct highway 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming state line.

I am a Deadwood resident and commuted to Newcastle for over a year using that route, through all conditions: rain, snow, ice, sunshine, construction, caught behind a slow truck or tourist.... I've used that road for cross country/backcountry ski and snowshoe access, mountain biking, hiking, and climbing. I drive a Subaru Outback, and have a Class A CDL and have driven truck over the road and locally.

I'll admit, traveling to Newcastle, one feels a bit of relief nearing the state line. The road opens up prior, and the speed limit increases (eventually), and the pavement is better in Wyoming (those cracks across the road in SD are unpleasant). Also admittedly, parking for recreational access can be challenging, especially for climbing and backcountry skiing.

I'm not arguing against my stance; I'm providing you with evidence of my objectivity. Above are reasons I might support this project, yet I still don't. You can bore me with statistics on accidents and the physics of cornering and recovery times, but in the end, simple reasoning wins out for me.

Especially through Icebox Canyon, that area is pristine, beautiful, with the feel of old growth nearly extinct in the Black Hills. It is precisely why tourists would want to drive through there, and why commuters think their commute is special, amazing. In kind with the adjacent Spearfish Canyon, that drive is one of few remaining gems here in the Hills. It would be a shame to desecrate it.

I've encountered areas here in the Hills of such beauty, only to see them ravaged by logging. (AND, I used to drive a log truck in Colorado.) The project to pave South Rochford Road has changed the feel of

the area, not for the better, and the atrocity of 385 speaks for itself. Both areas have lost their soul, and the Black Hills are lesser amazing for it. (I'll throw 16 near Jewel Cave into this bag too.)

Not every road needs to be an 80 mph interstate. Nor straight. Nor paved. It is the diversity of conditions that make the Hills interesting, and is why the flatlanders from all around come here to visit. The section of 85 once Spearfish Creek joins is particularly special. It's a fragile wetland that will never be the same. I can't fathom how anyone with an ounce of sense could want to destroy it. Let's all be honest here: this project WILL destroy it, and little by little, the Black Hills loses its soul.

Thank you for your time.

Sun 05/31/2026 11:02 AM

Please stop hwy. 85 RECONSTRUCTION in Spearfish canyon. We, as a public, have enjoyed the canyon and the winding roads summer, spring, winter, and especially fall viewing the wonder of our hills. The road is safe at the posted speed limits. By using reconstruction, the traffic will be encouraged to drive faster endangering automobile, motorcycles, bicycles, and the viewing public. There is a charm and beauty in OUR canyon that belongs not only to the people of SD but the visiting public. We need to stop the reconstruction. I cannot make the June 4 meeting but wanted my thoughts heard.

Sun 05/31/2026 11:17 AM

I was born in Deadwood and grew up in Lead, SD. I now live in Rapid City. Hwy 85 is a historical Black Hills highway that should be kept in good repair, but NOT transformed into a super highway. My family has many precious memories of picnics at spots along this road. I've driven it many times and never had an accident. Having spent 12 years as a driving instructor, safety is the duty and responsibility of the driver. Try as you might, you can't fix stupid. If someone is going for a drive in the Hills, what's the rush? Time to put the brakes on this trend before we are left with just a remnant of our beautiful Black Hills. MAINTAIN this Black Hills Highway, but don't change it. P.S. - if the SDDOT has money they just HAVE to spend, I can make a few suggestions.

Sun 05/31/2026 11:37 AM

Dear Mark-

We have just become aware of another demolition of beauty project othat is in the works for Hwy 85. Please don't!! We are citizens of Lawrence County and are against any such thing.

Please limit your project to actually fixing the current issues; pot holes, need for pullouts, and speed patrolling.

It is a beautiful byway and should be left as is. If one wants speed, they can travel on the interstate.

Please help maintain the beauty of the Hills. Do not bend to the mining industry.

Sun 05/31/2026 11:38 AM

We are writing to voice our opposition to the plans for Hwy 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming line. It is a scenic road. The destruction from this project would ruin the area. Please do not go through this project. Slower speed limits are okay in areas like this!

Sun 05/31/2026 11:34 AM

Mr. Malone, I am emailing in regard to the scenic drive from Cheyenne Crossing toward New Castle on 85. I recently heard of reconstruction plans to straighten and flatten the road. Coming out of Spearfish Canyon, having pie at Cheyenne Crossing and continuing a lazy Sunday afternoon drive down Highway 85 is a highlight of our beautiful Black Hills. My family also rides motorcycles, hikes and rock climbs along that road. Plans such as this are life altering for future generations of people who call this their home or simply haven't experienced this region yet. If these plans continue throughout the National Forest out Hills will never look the same.

I understand safety is of concern. There must be ways to make the road safer for drivers: lower speed limits as in the Canyon, guard rails, and other things that I am not aware of. I beg of you and your colleagues to reconsider this project.

Sun 05/31/2026 1:17 PM

Mr. Malone,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the Highway 85 road project. The scenic beauty of the Black Hills is being systematically destroyed by these road "enhancements." It's appalling what's been done to the once beautiful natural landscapes along Sheridan Lake Road and Highway 385. If these projects continue, there will be nothing left for future generations to enjoy. Please put an end to this pointless destruction.

Sun 05/31/2026 1:54 PM

Hello Mark,

I am out of town and unable to attend the meeting this week about project Highway 85. However, I did want to let you know my thoughts about this project.

I think that it will destroy a lot of the ambience in that area and the tranquil drive for the locals and for the tourist. I do not think the highway project on 385 has been successful. It is taken a beautiful scenic road and turned it into a highway. From a local point of view, I do not consider the Rochford pavement to be an improvement. I live on Deerfield Road and the increase in traffic and speeding motorcycles has been overwhelming.

I do not think the number of accidents is a valid reason for destroying the environment and the scenic ambience of that road. If need be, lower the speed limit.

Thank you for taking this into consideration.

Sun 05/31/2026 2:00 PM

I strongly oppose the proposed changes to Highway 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming border.

Sun 05/31/2026 2:05 PM

Mr. Malone,

I have been made aware of a proposal to redesign US Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon entrance all the way to the Wyoming border. I can't make the meeting on June 4th, so am sending you this email, expressing my ABSOLUTE OPPOSITION to the idea.

We ride that highway frequently because of its meandering beauty. The expansion, as proposed on screenshots I've seen on Facebook, would completely ruin the terrain and surrounding flow of the creek. It is not meant to be a freeway... it is a scenic highway. Please keep it that way.

Sun 05/31/2026 5:02 PM

Mark Malone,

Please do not straighten or widen Hwy 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the WY border. We do not need to welcome truckers or speeders to use this very scenic route. The beauty along this route is unmatched. It's best traveled at lower speeds. It would be a shame to rape this land as what has happened on 385. Leave it a scenic byway saving \$\$\$\$ as well.

Very concerned traveler of this route,

Sun 05/31/2026 6:19 PM

Hello Mark,

It's with great concern that I write to implore that the highway widening and straightening DOES NOT take place from Cheyenne Crossing to WY.

It's a ridiculous expenditure considering the low volume of traffic on it and the long distance to Newcastle. I'd like to see car counts for every month of the year and going back a few decades.

In case you haven't noticed, America is horribly split right now. Many many people are struggling to make ends meet. The folks making these decisions need to step back and take care of citizens for a change. This expenditure is unneeded.

Another thing that will be looked into is to see what big developers are doing behind the scenes to make big bucks. Or mining companies?

The temperature for such projects is very unfavorable right now. I hope you will provide some good transparency at the meeting.

All the folks in my circles are furious.

Sun 05/31/2026 6:27 PM

Dear Mr Malone

I am writing in hopes that you will reconsider the project on Highway 85. People need to slow down and enjoy the scenery. The charm of the needles is displayed in many advertising materials in South Dakota. it's beautiful and need not be changed.

Sun 05/31/2026 6:53 PM

I am writing to submit public comment in opposition to the current scope of the US Highway 85 redesign project (NH 0085(106)0 PCN06J8), spanning from the Wyoming border to Cheyenne Crossing. I have reviewed the stakeholder meeting materials posted on the SDDOT project page and have serious concerns across three areas: the character and tourism value of the corridor, the ecological impacts of the proposed design, and wildlife safety.

ON THE VALUE OF A SLOW, SCENIC DRIVE

I come from a mountain town in Colorado, where two-lane winding roads through forests, along creek sides, and beneath cliffs are not inconveniences — they are part of what makes a place worth visiting. I spent years working in hospitality, both at a local coffee shop and a hotel, and I heard it constantly from visitors: the drive was one of their favorite parts. They would pull over to take photos, slow down around curves, and arrive already in love with the place. That unhurried introduction matters enormously to the tourism economy.

The Black Hills corridor along US-85 offers the same kind of experience. When I visit the Rapid City area, I think about how much more memorable the drive from the Wyoming border through the Black Hills could feel if it were designed around arrival (around settling into a place) rather than moving as many vehicles as fast as possible. The proposed 55 mph design speed and widened lanes on the northern segment will erode that experience. A road built for speed will feel like a road built for speed, and that changes everything about how visitors relate to what they're driving through.

I would urge the project team to weigh the tourism and experiential value of this corridor alongside its traffic engineering metrics. The SD Department of Tourism is a listed stakeholder, I hope their voice carries real weight in the final design.

ON ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Forest and Grassland Ecology, and I am deeply concerned about the environmental footprint of this project. The proposed typical section for the northern segment calls for 12-foot lanes, 6-foot shoulders, and a 30-foot clear zone on each side, meaning upwards of 60 feet of total corridor clearing through what is currently forested terrain. This is not a minor trim. This is significant habitat removal.

Forest clearing of this scale causes habitat fragmentation, increases edge effects, degrades forest interior conditions, and disrupts wildlife movement corridors. These are well-documented consequences of road corridor expansion in forested landscapes.

I am also alarmed by the proximity of the road to Spearfish Creek, which your own stakeholder materials acknowledge as a major design challenge. Building and grading near the creek will cause soil compaction, reduce water infiltration, and increase surface runoff. The risk of downstream flooding and sedimentation will increase. Past conversations with someone at the parks department have told me that protecting the natural creek systems in this area is one of his primary goals. I share that concern deeply, and I believe the current design poses a serious and potentially irreversible threat to Spearfish Creek's health.

Specific questions I would like answered before this project moves to final design:

- Has a full hydrological impact assessment been completed for the creek-adjacent sections?
- What stormwater and runoff mitigation measures are planned?
- What soil stabilization protocols will be required during and after construction?
- Has the project team consulted with the U.S. Forest Service (a listed stakeholder) on forest fragmentation impacts?

ON WILDLIFE COLLISIONS

Your own crash data from 2020–2024 records 21 animal hits on this corridor. That number will increase if the road is widened and design speeds are raised. Research consistently shows that narrower lanes cause drivers to reduce their speed due to increased perceived risk, while wider lanes correlate with faster driving and reduced attentiveness (ScienceDirect, 2017: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001457517301562>). The current winding, two-lane character of this road naturally encourages caution. A wider, faster corridor will not.

If this project moves forward at the proposed scale, I strongly urge the inclusion of wildlife crossing structures (underpasses or overpasses) paired with exclusionary fencing. Research published in Conservation Biology Practice confirms that separated crossings with fencing are the only proven method for preventing road-related large mammal mortality and obstruction of wildlife movement on higher-traffic roads (<https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/csp2.618>). This road literally winds through a rural forest. Wildlife crossings are not an optional enhancement, they are a necessity.

I recognize that this road has real safety problems. The crash rate exceeding the statewide average is a legitimate concern, and I am not asking for those problems to be ignored. But many of those crashes involve motorcycles and lane departures on curves. These problems that could potentially be addressed through targeted curve improvements, rumble strips, better signage, and guardrails, rather than a full-corridor reconstruction at \$57.6 million that fundamentally changes the character and ecology of the Black Hills.

I urge the project team to pursue the minimum effective intervention, to conduct thorough environmental review of creek and forest impacts, and to mandate wildlife crossing infrastructure if the road is widened. The Black Hills are a place people travel to experience. The drive should be part of that experience, not something to be engineered away.

Thank you for accepting public comment on this project.

Sun 05/31/2026 7:09 PM

I'm a lifelong resident of Lawrence County SD, born in Deadwood raised in Lead and currently reside in Spearfish. With the exception of my 4 year tour of duty in the United States Marine Corps, Lawrence County has been my home.

My concerns as a taxpayer and an outdoor enthusiast are as follows.

The project could undermine the scenic value that makes the route special

US 85 through the Black Hills is already widely recognized as a scenic drive. Travelers often cite the route's forested landscapes, mountain terrain, and recreational access as major attractions. Expanding the highway could replace a scenic mountain-road experience with a more urbanized transportation corridor.

Public funds could be spent elsewhere

Our transportation dollars should focus on:

- * Maintaining existing roads and bridges.
- * Improving local roads in Lead and Deadwood.
- * Forest management and wildfire mitigation.
- * Recreation infrastructure.

Rather than expanding a highway that already functions adequately for most of the year.

US 85 is more than a transportation corridor. It is one of the gateways to the northern Black Hills. Expanding the highway risks increasing traffic, reducing scenic quality, fragmenting wildlife habitat, and encouraging development that changes the character of this area forever. If safety improvements are needed, they should be targeted and limited. Once forests are cleared and the landscape is altered, those impacts cannot easily be reversed. The Black Hills are one of South Dakota's most valuable natural assets, and preserving them should take precedence over highway expansion.

Sun 05/31/2026 7:24 PM

Please forego "improving" Highway 85. The beauty of that road is similar to Iron Mountain Road and the Needles Road. We need to continue to have narrow, winding roads through our beautiful Black Hills. I drove that road on a regular basis going to work at Deer Mountain Ski Area while living at Four Corners, WY. Please do not widen it!

Sun 05/31/2026 7:40 PM

Please don't change the Needles Hiway road! That's a Black Hills classic that should never go away!!! We're from Philip and go through the Hills a lot, either in a vehicle or on our Harley and love the roads up there!!

Sun 05/31/2026 7:55 PM

Dear sir:

I am emailing to voice my displeasure and opposition to the proposed Highway 85 project. The project is a ridiculous waste of taxpayers money, similar to what the Highway 385 project is. Straightening and widening 385 is going to lead to more traffic accidents and fatalities in the future. Just wait until Highway 385 is fully paved next year and it becomes an autobahn, especially during the Rally! The Highway 85 drive currently is a beautiful scenic drive and safe if the current speed limit is observed. Please respect and consider the opposition of this project from the taxpayers that pay your salary!

Sun 05/31/2026 8:39 PM

I live in Rapid City and oppose the proposed reconstruction of highway 85. We don't need a super high speed highway along that stretch of highway to Wyoming that contributes to the degradation of the natural beauty of the Black Hills.

Please halt the planning for this project.

Sun 05/31/2026 11:57 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Just wanted to chime in - as a life-time resident of the Black Hills - on the proposed HWY 85 project, and simply say, "Please leave it alone." My livelihood is dependent on people wanting to visit our beautiful area, and I feel strongly that this project would make the Hills less - not more - of a desirable destination. I care very much about the safety of drivers, so if that is the primary reason for this project, wouldn't a simple speed limit reduction be more affordable? And if the concern is congestion during the rally, well...seems silly to spend \$57 million on something that's only an issue for a

ten days out of the year. Lastly - and maybe this is selfish, but, - I just love it here, and I think the simple privilege of a quiet drive in a beautiful place is something of a rare treat these days...a treat that is at the heart of the character of the Black Hills. Let's not remove yet another one of those places where such a drive can be enjoyed.

Mon 06/01/2026 6:05 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I hope this finds you well. I have read the state's proposal on this. I think it is in grave interest that the State would look into expanding this roadway. It should be a Scenic Biway, nothing more. Maybe more accidents happen, but I guarantee there are 2 factors if I researched that part. Sturgis Rally and distracted driving. The state keeps expanding our beautiful bi-ways and completely ruins them. Keep it a scenic byways.

As a former U.S. Army Engineer specializing in Surveying/Civil Engineering and Architecture I look at projects in development and already constructed and cringe. The possible signalization of old hi-way 85 road and U.S. 85 on Exit 14 is a good example. Those light will only backup traffic over the overpass if you do not also put a signal on the west bound traffic.

I propose you examine what the people want. Leave the roads in the Blackhills as they are. People are always going to act stupid. You can't regulate stupidity. Period. We both know that. If people want to get to New Castle faster that can take the interstate west and go South. I have never seen traffic backed up on this section except during the rally. Please reconsider this.

Mon 06/01/2026 6:11 AM....correction to previous email....

Old hi-way 14 road and 85.

Mon 06/01/2026 7:05 AM

Our beautiful state depends on tourism and scenic highways, not faster wider highways.

Leave Highway 85 alone and let people enjoy what few scenic highways we have left.

Friday, May 29, 2026 2:14 PM

Opposed to this project. The Black Hills don't need super highways.

Mon 06/01/2026 7:51 AM

As a lifelong resident of the Black Hills, I am firmly against making the stretch of highway from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border with fewer curves. I am vehemently opposed to making it wider.

Driving through the Black Hills on a roadway that is just wide enough is ideal. Enjoying the trees, the creek, and the mountains as I wind my way through the forest is a great way to spend the day. And the current road works. People need to drive the speed limit. We don't need to make super highways out of our beautiful mountain roads.

Mon 06/01/2026 7:54 AM

Keeping my message simple...for the tourists, for the locals, for those paying the taxes year round..Leave the Hills alone and fix the potholes!

Friday, May 29, 2026 5:41 PM

This project is absolutely insane. Highway 85 has been redone several times, and not once has it been improved. It was always my favorite part of the drive in a tractor-trailer from Deadwood to Denver. What is disgusting is that highways in the hills are always widened for safety, yet always wind up being more unsafe! It would be such an unforgivable tragedy to damage that canyon bottom because of utter stupidity. Leave it alone!

Saturday, May 30, 2026 7:43 PM

This road is one of the most beautiful drives I've ever been on. Please don't widen the road more than it is, you will destroy the trees and streams surrounding it that make it so picturesque.

Mon 06/01/2026 10:35 AM

Dear Mr. Malone:

I am requesting some clarification on the information we recently received about a proposed project involving the road through Spearfish Canyon.

We knew what to expect with the highway from Sheridan Lake past Pactola—long delays, total destruction of the mountainsides, loss of trees from construction and interminable diesel fumes for two years. The outcome is less than attractive and the bikers using the highway can now go faster.

Citizens of the Hills and beyond all voiced objections to the proposal, the immense cost, and the ugliness it has created in a once beautiful highway. It was deemed “necessary” but what oversight is provided? If speed is the issue, it must be less costly to patrol and ticket offenders, especially during tourist season.

Spearfish Canyon is an iconic and historic location. We may be pretty basic in our view, but modern highways are not part of it. Roosevelt found it one of the best trails in America. So now we are supposed to “fix it”

And with teachers underpaid and our property taxes skyrocketing, we have nearly \$60 million to tear up a roadway, remove beautiful curves, destroy trees, parts of mountains and spread diesel in the environment for months?

What state authority is elected that makes this decision? Or is it an arbitrary ruling by a committee?

We fought Gov.Daugard making the canyon his "legacy" and we disapprove of creating a busy highway in the solitude of Spearfish Canyon. The voices of us who pay for these ventures need consideration before these decisions are forced on us and our tax burden.

Mon 06/01/2026 11:15 AM

Please don't ruin Highway 385 by disturbing the South Dakota landscape.

We all want safe roads but reduced speed and other less destructive safety measures could be an alternative to the difficult-to-define-but-we-know-it-when-we-see-it degradation of the character of these Black Hills.

Please preserve the integrity and beauty of South Dakota.

Mon 06/01/2026 11:23 AM

Dear Sir,

As a fellow engineer, I ask the SDDOT to not make changes to Highway 85. It is currently a beautiful, scenic Highway and there is nothing unsafe about it. It is not necessary to have an expressway through that pass, there is not enough traffic demand to warrant it. Highway 385 has a much higher traffic demand, so changes were probably warranted there. Highway 85 needs to stay scenic as is. It is part of the charm that attracts tourists that the State so desperately desires.

Mon 06/01/2026 11:56 AM

Mark

I'm putting in my 2 cents on the Hwy 85 project. I don't see the need to destroy a beautiful drive by making it a super hiway. Please keep this and other scenic roads as they are. Hwy 85 is not a dangerous road to drive. At most it could use some minor improvements like more pull off areas.

\$57.6M would go a long ways to paving the New Underwood to Union Center road that was recently turned back to gravel(or whatever it is) due to lack of maintenance funding. That road gets a lot of heavy traffic. It is only a Master of time before someone...or some family...does on that road in its present form.

Hwy 79 north of Newell is another example that could use a major rebuild. What a buck board that is.

I'm sure there are others like them that would make a lot more sense than the Hwy 85 project.

Mon 06/01/2026 12:42 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I would like to voice my strong opposition to the proposed Highway 85 project from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. In my opinion, that type of project is completely over-the-top and unnecessary for that area. The area is so beautiful, and really doesn't have that much traffic to warrant such drastic measures. Keeping the current roadway in good repair would be a far better use of funds. Mr. Malone, please do not allow this proposed project to proceed. Thank you for your time.

Mon 06/01/2026 3:18 PM

Please do not turn US85 into I-90 Light! This is happening now to US385 and it's a shame that the state feels the need to make Black Hills roads into east river flat, straight roadways. A large part of Black Hills charm is the winding, climbing, and descending mountain drives. Mountain roads are the draw because they force one to slow down and enjoy the scenery. What's next: Are you going to flatten, straighten, and widen Iron Mtn Rd and 14A through Spearfish Canyon?

By making these roads "safe for all" you are taking away the reasons they exist at all! US385 was a great drive before and when finished, I'm quite sure, it will be as exciting as US14 in Hand, Hyde, and Hughes Counties. This is wrong and a misuse of our tax dollars!

Mon 06/01/2026 3:46 PM

I would like to inform you that every single person that I have spoken to about the road construction from Cheyenne, Crossing to the Wyoming state line are PISSED OFF about it! To be clear, we are AGAINST IT! ABSOLUTELY NO ONE SUPPORTS DUMPING MILLIONS UPON MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO DESTROY THE BEAUTIFUL AND SCENIC DRIVE.!!!!

How about add a couple more Highway Patrol officers to control the speeding?! There, problem solved!!!!.....AND we won't Destroy what makes SD beautiful, and we won't Throw Away MILLIONS of Dollars going into Debt, and that Need to be spent Elsewhere.

HARD NO on your project of destruction 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔

Mon 06/01/2026 3:56 PM

Dear Mark,

I am a resident of the Paradise Acres subdivision in unincorporated Lead, South Dakota.

My wife and I relocated to South Dakota several years ago because of its natural beauty, scenic landscapes, and the unique experience of traveling the winding roads throughout the Black Hills. These qualities are a significant part of what attracts visitors to our state and, in many cases, encourages individuals and families to relocate here.

When I learned of the proposed plans for Highway 85 between the Lead area and Wyoming, I was deeply disappointed. I cannot understand why we would consider altering one of the most beautiful gateways into South Dakota. The route offers magnificent views of streams, towering rock formations, abundant wildlife, and rolling open landscapes that showcase the very best of the Black Hills.

As a retired police chief, I certainly understand the importance of roadway safety. However, I do not believe this roadway is inherently dangerous. In fact, many of its natural characteristics—curves, hills, and the absence of long straight stretches—serve as effective traffic-calming measures that encourage attentive driving.

Rather than investing millions of taxpayer dollars into major engineering modifications, I believe safety concerns could be addressed through more practical and cost-effective measures, such as reduced speed limits, improved signage, and targeted traffic enforcement. From my experience living in the area, the traffic issues I observe are generally related to driver behavior rather than roadway design.

As a resident and taxpayer, I am firmly opposed to significant engineering changes to Highway 85 and do not want to see taxpayer funds spent to “fix” a roadway that, in my opinion, does not require such extensive modifications.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my views.

Mon 06/01/2026 4:43 PM

Good afternoon,

We are emailing to protest against the Hwy 85 project. We feel there are other measures that can be taken to make the road safer, if, that is the case with this road. Danger signage, barriers, or other means that possibly other states with similar roads have used. Tourists come to this unique area of South Dakota to travel down roads such as these for the beauty and experience. Places like the Black Hills, Rocky Mountains, Smokey Mountains, Yellowstone, and many National parks, etc. with similar or even more dangerous roads will never be able to prevent people from hurting themselves and destroying the reason they come there is not the answer. The Hwy 385 project by Pactola is a prime example. It has changed the landscape and lost the beauty and character it once had.

Please reconsider this project. Surely there are other places to spend this money.

Thank you for your time.

Mon 06/01/2026 5:25 PM

I would like to message you and tell you to please not go through with the plans to redo the roads in Spearfish Canyon. I understand that these are heavy traffic areas especially during tourist season but the reason these areas are high in traffic is because people are going through specifically to see the nature in the scenic areas. Widening the road will not only make it impossible to enjoy it for however long it takes the project to finish but it will make the end result and uglier less appealing version of the canyon. We all know this there's no hiding that this would not bring anything positive to the area. What's the

need for increased traffic space if you're killing the reason for people going out there in the first place. I mean this in the most respectful way do not let this happen. The Spearfish Canyon is a geologic wonder and tearing into that and ruining it just to increase driving traffic is pointless if you're killing the beauty causing people to be there in the first place.

Mon 06/01/2026 5:34 PM

Good afternoon Mark,

I just wanted to take a minute and drop a note about the improvements being considered for the stretch of hwy 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and the border of Wyoming. I also want to preface my opinion by stating I'm not against road improvements or against business development in the Black Hills. I own two vacation rental properties near Lead that would most likely benefit from the Highway 85 plan that is being proposed.

I hope at some point the the SD DOT will realize that not all of these roads through the Black Hills need to be straightened and flattened. That is one of the joys of driving these roads, to be able to experience the natural topography of the area. I asking that you reconsider more construction to that area.

Mon 06/01/2026 7:29 PM

Dear Mark,

I am writing about the proposed changes to Highway 385. The changes near Pactola closer to Hill city have dramatically changed the beauty of the area. I know that the intent of these widening is to add safety, but this is a fundamentally flaw approach.

I am an avid cyclist and have an interest in urban Doing design. I frequently bike to work. One of the best ways to change behavior is through design. Widening a road encourages faster, driving regardless of what the speed limits are. It's one of the reasons I'm perfectly comfortable biking in downtown Rapid City but you won't catch me on Omaha on The bike Lane. Canopy, narrow lanes, And yes, even curves are design features that help keep traffic slower.

One of the arguments for the expansion is adding a shoulder for cyclist. Not many cyclist here road ride because drivers aren't exactly friendly to us. Riding on a wider 385 would make it even less likely that most of the people I know would want to ride there.

I am writing to you as a citizen, but I am also on the board of the Black Hills Bike Hub. I would be happy to talk as an advocate for cyclist and representative for this in future projects that impact our riders.

Mon 06/01/2026 9:16 PM

Mark,

I am unable to attend the 4 June public meeting on the proposed US Hwy 85 project so I wanted to write and voice my opposition to the project.

I am a lifelong resident of SD and have lived in the Black Hills since I was a teen in 1989.

The planned development is not warranted and will remove one of the few charming and scenic areas on the Black Hills. I have attached a picture of just one part of this scenic creekside that will be in the proposed 150 foot right of way. If the magnitude of the Hwy 385 is any measure, this type of natural beauty cannot be retained during this construction.

In addition, I travel this section of road often and have seen deer, elk, turkey, eagles, osprey, spruce grouse, and countless other bird and butterfly species which will be impacted by the construction. The noise and habitat disturbance could drive some of these species to new areas and once they move they are gone and they don't return.

The Wyoming section of the highway has been updated and the animal sightings in no way compare to what you see in SD.

I anticipate this type of construction update is undertaken under the guise of public/traffic safety but it is my personal opinion that the construction will lead to faster speeds and more distracted driving because of it. I think the exact reason to drive this type of scenic road is to take in the scenery and therefore a slower speed is required to take it in. There are other routes, such as I-90, that should be used if your intent is to drive quickly through the Hills.

Finally, I have literally never talked to someone that actually said this section of road should be updated to the specifications of this project. I anticipate every South Dakotan would oppose this project as well and I hope my note helps keep this project from happening.

Mon 06/01/2026 10:00 PM

Hi Mark,

I am an engineering student at the South Dakota School of Mines, as well as South Dakota citizen. To give you a small background of myself: I like hunting, fishing, and exploring the Black Hills. I am going to be a senior in school, and am a part of the SDSMT Cross Country and Track Program. I have cc'd my teammate, who shares similar views and interests.

I am writing you to voice my opinion on the Highway 85 construction project. I am strongly against this for a few reasons: conservation, highway safety, and the way our tax dollars will be spent.

First, I believe that this is a massive blow to the habitat in the Black Hills. I have seen firsthand the quality of work being done on Highway 385. There is lots of pollution from runoff water into nearby water sources. I have been on a co-op(8 month internship) for a company that was building a dam, so I have experience mentoring a project manager. There had to be access roads made and topsoil cleared to build the dam, and there is simply no way to avoid runoff. No matter what you do to try to catch runoff, it still seeps through. It contains dirt and chemicals that have leached from paving and newly exposed bedrock. Highway 385 has also, quite literally, blasted apart mountains. I know they will do the same for Highway 85. There is absolutely no need to destroy the Black Hills to build a highway.

Second, I don't believe this is worth the spending to to "increase" safety on the road. Safety on the road comes from obeying the speed limit and driving carefully, not building a huge highway. Part of what draws people to the Black Hills is the small winding roads. Highway 85 only sees large amounts of traffic during the rally anyway. Making the highway larger and straighter only invites motorcyclists to drive at even higher speeds than they usually do. They already drive like crazy people, let's not invite them to. Rock fall on the road is also a concern of mine. I have seen this at the dam after blasting, as well as along 385 where they have demolished mountains.

Finally, I do not believe that millions of South Dakotan's tax dollars should be spent on a huge highway through the Black Hills. As a resident and athlete, I believe these dollars can be much better spent. The road to my house in Kimball, SD, is deteriorating and needs new pavement badly. The SDSMT Athletic Department is desperately low on money (we have had to chip in our personal money to pay entry fees for last chance meets because the team is so poor). Or it could be spent on conservation - like studying why the walleye fishing in the Missouri continues to get poorer.

If you want to repave highway 85, go for it. But please leave our Black Hills alone by only repaving, not redesigning the road and roadbed or making the shoulder bigger.

Mon 06/01/2026 11:09 PM

Hello,

I am a Minnesota resident who grew up in the Black Hills. I am emailing to express my opposition to the plan to "improve" Highway 85. As planned, this project would have a lasting negative impact on a unique and scenic area of the Black Hills. Turning Highway 85 into a "could be found anywhere" massive highway directly negates the very things that make the Black Hills special.

I understand there is an argument for making the road safer, but that could be achieved through less destructive methods (such as lowering the speed limit, adding additional signage or guard rails etc) that don't involve decimating the landscape. It is deeply disappointing to see the indiscriminating destruction that is already happening along Highway 385 near Pactola, and that kind of work does not belong anywhere near Highway 85.

It appears that such a massive highway is really only called for during the influx of traffic we receive during the motorcycle rally. I sincerely hope that isn't the true motivation behind this project, as that would imply the state was pursuing this project based on the whims of tourists instead of the needs of locals who live here year round (and who hold voting power).

I am also seriously concerned about such an "improvement project" happening right along Spearfish Creek. Due to the proximity of the creek, changes will not only affect the immediate area, but also the people, animals and towns downstream.

I hope you will consider my concerns, especially since I know I am not alone in opposing this plan. Please do your part to protect the integrity of the Black Hills by canceling the Highway 85 plan.

Mon 06/01/2026 11:21 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

If you are the person of influence who can change the trajectory regarding changes to Highway 85, from the Wyoming border to Cheyenne Crossing/Spearfish Canyon, I kindly ask that you would stop the forward progress to widening the highway.

People have the ability to understand dangers and risk, speed limits, and precautions needed on a scenic highway. It would be sad to see the land ripped up and the lay-of-the-land changed in the ways proposed.

Tue 06/02/2026 8:24 AM

This is in regards to U.S. Highway 85 From Wyoming to Cheyenne Crossing Project. Please, dont do this just to accommodate tourists. WE LIVE HERE. The roads are fine how they are baring general maintenance. No need to widen roads unless it's a public safety EMS transport problem. Tourists can just learn to be patient and enjoy the drive. Thank you

Tue 06/02/2026 8:28 AM

Why do we need to cater to unappreciative and bad drivers by ruining a beautiful , serene , and incredibly scenic highway ?

Perhaps some safety features and a few more signs to slow the hell

down on this stretch of highway would be beneficial. More LEO to check speeders and drinkers. 🤔 the many travels on this road , not sure I have ever seen any LOE now that I think about it.

Please leave this area of highway 85 alone!

Tue 06/02/2026 9:38 AM

Good morning! I am writing to advise you that we do not need to take out any trees and we do not need to straighten our roadways. There is nothing wrong with our roadways. Our South Dakota tax dollars can be used in a number of different ways than catering to tourist that do not know how to drive on them.

Tue 06/02/2026 10:55 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Notwithstanding my signature block below, I am a resident of Spearfish and very frequent driver and rider of Spearfish Canyon. Not only do all my children ride motorcycles, but I frequently entertain out-of-state guests in SD and treat them to riding this beautiful and scenic road. In fact, the forthcoming

August issue of the American Motorcyclist Magazine's cover/feature article is about my family's motorcycle adventures, including specifically riding this route out of Sturgis down to Wyoming.

For these reasons I email to vehemently oppose the planned renovations to 85. Unfortunately I am unable to make the June 4 meeting in person in Deadwood this week, but ask that this email be included in the record opposing the expansion of 85.

In related fashion, the expansion and road changes from the Pactola project have unfortunately changed for the worse, taking from that road the scenic charm and views that brings many people to The Black Hills and is reason why many of us have chose to make this area our home.

Tue 06/02/2026 1:04 PM

Hello Mr. Malone,

I am a resident of Minnesota who has really enjoyed visiting the unique and beautiful Black Hills over the years. I am writing to express my opposition to the Highway 85 plan, as I feel it is unnecessary and will ultimately cause far more harm than good to the area.

I understand that safety is a concern, but drastically widening and straighting an iconic Black Hills road is not the only (nor best) way to improve its safety. Adding additional guard rails or increasing police patrols during heavy traffic are both alternative ways to increase the safety of the road without destroying the surrounding landscape and changing the entire character of the road.

I know the needs of tourists are heavily weighed given how much SD relies on tourism income, but I am telling you as a tourist that I come to the Black Hills to get away from things like massive highways. I don't mind having to slow down to navigate a more windy road. I don't want to see the same highways and "modernization projects" that I could see anywhere here in MN. Projects such as the Highway 85 plan destroy the character and uniqueness that draws me to the Black Hills in the first place.

Please consider the drawbacks of this project, not just for locals, but for tourists who come to the Black Hills for something different. It's easy to make big changes and "improvements" but almost impossible to revert things back to the way they were. Please leave highway 85 as it is.

Tue 06/02/2026 1:08 PM

As a former resident of Newcastle, WY, current resident of Rapid City, I want to suggest that the road be left as is. It is a good road. People come here for roads like that. The work around Pactola is ugly in my opinion. People can slow down. Shoulders or turn outs can be added, but the destruction needs to stop. Thank you for considering my opinion.

Tue 06/02/2026 1:24 PM

Greetings Mark

Let us reconsider destroying the scenic canyon from Cheyenne Crossing to Trails Head Lodge. This is about all we have left in the Black Hills for scenic roads that should be traveled casually in order to appreciate the beauty of creation.

Consider this my personal request. I have children in Denver, live near Brownsville and use this road 6 or more times per year. Lets have folks slow down rather than speeding up.

Tue 06/02/2026 8:00 AM

Mark, please see the following consideration from a dear friend and former director. The work on 85 is unnecessary and would only make the road less enjoyable and damage the forest.

"Please do not alter the physical section of Highway 85 south of Cheyenne Crossing in any way, except to perhaps lower the speed limits during the Sturgis Rally.

There is a summer camp located two miles north of O'Neill pass that has property on both sides of Highway 85. In addition, we biker groups have stayed at the camp during the Rally and they love the peace and quiet and beauty of the area. They have never had an accident as they travel this section of Highway 85, nor have I in the many years I have been traveling between Lead and the camp and Newcastle and back. I have driven these roads in all kinds of weather and have also not encountered accidents.

The reason this part of the Hills is special is because one can enjoy it as one drives. It's bad enough that some of the roadside stops have been removed. Please leave Highway 85 alone!"

Tue 06/02/2026 3:20 PM

Please do not do this. I grew up running around Spearfish Canyon and Highway 85. The beauty and pristine atmosphere are amazing. We do not need to widen all the roads in the Black Hills. Put up a sign at the entrance like we do for the Needles here in Custer! Saying whats coming and advise of the delays and winding roads!

They absolutely ruined RoughLock Falls with the walking stairs and blocking the beauty of playing in it, like i did when i was a kid. Dont ruin the road too! Please dont!

Tue 06/02/2026 4:50 PM

Dear Mr. Malone and Members of the South Dakota Department of Transportation,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed \$57.6 million reconstruction of U.S. Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. While I understand the intent to improve safety, this plan would irreversibly damage the scenic and ecological character of the northern Black Hills.

Doubling the right-of-way from 66 feet to 150 feet would require extensive tree removal and slope cutting along Spearfish Creek and its surrounding cliffs. These changes would destroy the natural beauty that defines this region and replace it with a wide, urbanized corridor that looks more like an interstate than a Black Hills byway.

Safety improvements can be achieved through less destructive measures—such as reduced speed limits, better signage, and targeted guardrails—without erasing the landscape’s character. The Black Hills are not just a transportation route; they are a living environment that deserves protection.

Please reconsider this project and explore alternatives that preserve the integrity of the Black Hills while addressing safety concerns.

Tue 06/02/2026 5:00 PM

Mr. Malone,

Please find my below as official, written public comment regarding the US HWY 85 SD DOT reconstruction project from Cheyenne Crossing to the WY boarder.

I have reviewed all online documents on the SD DOT’s website regarding this.

I cannot voice my opposition to this project strongly enough. I am concerned that while the SD DOT has public meetings and accepts public comment about this project, you will proceed with the project in the way you intend regardless of the countless comments literally begging you not to. I have attached a 56-page document containing public comments that were accepted in 2023; the majority of which are in opposition to this project. Most state the reconstruction (aside from repaving) is not needed and plead with SD DOT not to proceed with the reconstruction plan, voicing concern the aftermath will destroy the beauty of this scenic road. I am agreement with this as well. I’ve already seen it happen to US HWY 385 from Pennington County line to Sheridan Lake.

Please do not cut 30 foot clear zones on both sides of this HWY 85. It will destroy the natural beauty of this road. I understand you are only proposing 5-10 clear zones on the east side of the project due to the creek. As a compromise can you please only do the same for the west side, instead of 30 clear zones?

I am a Lawrence County, SD resident and have seen the outcome of your 30 clear zones on US HWY 385. What use to be a beautiful, scenic drive is now wide open and hideous. The more open a roadway is the faster a driver will drive.

I feel like nothing I or the vast majority of local residents say in opposition to this project matter; you will proceed and do what you want anyway.

I moved to the Black Hills 13 years ago because of the beauty, scenic roadways, motorcycle riding, and outdoor activities this area affords. I take it very seriously and am so very upset that in the name of safety these beautiful roadways are being turned into something that looks like the interstate. You are turning a roadway that is pleasurable to drive due to the scenery, into just a route of transportation. Tourists and motorcyclists come to the black hills from all over the world to enjoy the curvy scenic roads. How many people enjoy driving or go to the middle of SD where it is flat prairie to enjoy the driving and scenery? Please stop turning the Black Hills into that.

By blasting 30 foot clear zones out of the hills and trees on the side of the roadway you are doing just that, turning a beautiful, scenic drive into a hideous roadway no one travels for enjoyment any longer. All this aside from how long the road will be closed to travel, like 385 was. The last 3 years of it being

closed as impacted travel from Deadwood to Hill City. I haven't even been to Hill City in years because the 17 mile detour doesn't even make logical sense.

I understand the need for safety and trying to reduce vehicle wrecks. However, it is to be expected that there will be more wrecks on a curvy mountainous road than on a straight, flat one. Does that mean we just make all those roads straight and cut down all trees?! It is a driver's ability, experience, focus, and vehicle maintenance that prevents them from wrecking on a curvy road (aside from wildlife). You can't put foam padding on every sharp object because people don't have the competency not to touch it.

Aside from repaving, this road construction project is unwarranted, not needed, and waste of taxpayer's dollars, like mine. Unless there is a hidden agenda here, like making 85 a haul road for tractor trailers for the gold mining proposal in Spearfish Canyon. Which if it is, just say so.

SD DOT made a mess of US HWY 385, took away all its scenic value, and it is no longer enjoyable to drive, all under the guise of safety. I submitted written comments, voiced concerns, and even corresponded with the SD Secretary of Transportation begging the DOT not to do what they ultimately done. It didn't matter or change a thing. That is the sad part, especially when you have so many people doing that now for this HWY 85 project. The road belongs to the taxpayers. I don't understand how and why if so many oppose this you can just do it anyway.

Please leave 85 alone so we still have a beautiful road to take a scenic drive on and enjoy.

Tue 06/02/2026 5:29 PM

Mr. Malone,

This project is absolutely insane. Highway 85 has been redone several times, and not once has it been improved. It was always my favorite part of the drive in a tractor-trailer from Deadwood to Denver. What is disgusting is that highways in the hills are always widened for safety, yet always wind up being more unsafe! It would be such an unforgivable tragedy to damage that canyon bottom because of utter stupidity. Please leave it alone! Thank you.

Tue 06/02/2026 7:17 PM

Dear Mark,

It recently became known to me of the plan for the Highway 85 Construction Project. The fact that this would even be considered is unfathomable.

We have the great fortune of living in one of the most precious gems in the world - the Black Hills. I for one have lived here my entire life and have raised my family here. The natural beauty of the Hills, and the canyon itself have been a great part of the reason I have never left the area. It is simply one of the most appealing places on earth.

Since the highway was first constructed, there have been few improvements to the road, at least in terms of straightening curves and flattening hills. The natural flow of the road through the canyon is very much appealing and attracts people from all over, just to see and drive through it.

I for one am very upset that there is a proposed reconstruction of the road. The evidence of what happens when a project of this magnitude is taken on is apparent in that of 385 from Deadwood to Hills City. It simply removes the actual beauty and replaces it with something entirely different. To do that to the pristine canyon would be a travesty.

There have been numerous accidents on the road, I understand. But the fact of the matter is, people need not be careless on unfamiliar roads. This would reduce the number of accidents, obviously. Unfortunately we cannot save everyone no matter what we are dealing with.

I hope there is an option to not move forward with this project. It would be nothing short of a crime to destroy the natural beauty only to replace it with unimaginable ugliness.

Thank you for the opportunity to email you.

Wed 06/03/2026 7:21 AM

So, because a bunch of bikers that don't know how to drive here, don't try to learn, and won't follow speed limit signs, when visiting here... we are going to demolish a gorgeous part of OUR HOME for them? Outrageous. Another example of 1 ruining it for all. Why can't accidents just be accidents anymore. Don't get me wrong, I am sorry for their families, pray for their safety daily, everytime I see a bike. But for 77 crashes to ruin an area that people come from All over the world to see in its beauty with thousands of dollars in income aside from that 77...come on.

Just like hwy 385 and the road through boulder canyon. Who's ideas are these anyway? If people don't want accidents, don't drive like an idiot. But now they drive FASTER. Now it's just a place to go fast and see grass. No beauty, nothing special, just a place to funnel traffic through. Why can't we let people take responsibility for THEIR own actions anymore?

Resident that pays taxes, commutes everyday, moved here BECAUSE of the beauty,

Wed 06/03/2026 7:28 AM

I'm sending this email for myself and several of my friends and neighbors and how we strongly oppose this project. There are so many better ways to utilize the funds. Why on God's green earth would you want to destroy such a beautiful part of the State. I have traveled this road more than anyone working for the SDDOT and have never cursed about being stuck behind someone. There are more fatalities where they put the 4 lane from Cheyenne Crossing to Lead than Cheyenne Crossing to WY stateline. Why does the government even think this is a good idea? Come on people it doesn't have to be done. Fix bridges and railroad crossing not the scenic trek to WY. Please we are begging you.

Wed 06/03/2026 2:18 PM

Mr. Malone,

I am **DEFINITELY NOT, NOR WILL I EVER BE** in favor of the plan to update Highway 85.!

My reasons are many but am sure U are already receiving them from everyone who cares about the beautiful scenic drives in the beautiful Black Hills.

PLEASE leave Highway 85 as the scenic drive it already is – its why tourists & locals

love to drive it. There is NO need to expand it at this time. PLEASE VOTE AGAINST EXPANDING IT.!

Sincerely a resident of the Black Hills for over 26 years,

Wed 06/03/2026 3:54 PM

I'm emailing you in regards of the planned construction on highway 85. I can't even begin to express in words how important it is to me and my family that the road stays the way that it is. It is one the only untouched areas of our lush and beautiful black hills. I know I'm a small voice, but the construction takes away that untouched beautiful black hills the only custer state park holds and protects so dearly. Let us protect this beautiful drive from the incoming society that is taking so much from the black hills already.

Wed 06/03/2026 4:16 PM

Dear Mark Malone and SD DOT

My wife and I respectfully and firmly oppose any State proposal to widen and/or straighten Highway 85 from the Wyoming border to Cheyenne Crossing.

My wife and I were born and raised in the beautiful Black Hills. After I retired from 30 years in the USAF, we were blessed to buy our retirement home in Spearfish Canyon near Savoy in 2013. This special area is our home, and we regularly drive that section of Highway 85.

Now, we are greatly concerned to learn the State has a destructive plan to widen and/or strengthen Highway 85 from the Wyoming border to Cheyenne Crossing much like state has done and continues to do to Highway 385. We strongly oppose the State's Highway 85 proposal.

There is no doubt the road surface on Highway 85 has deteriorated. But the State should simply resurface the existing roadway on the existing footprint and not destroy that beautiful drive by widening and straightening it. We have witnessed the destruction of Highway 385, and can't sit quietly by when there is a similar plan for Highway 85 so close to our home. That section of Highway 85 is very beautiful and spectacular and should be preserved and protected, not destroyed.

It appears the State plan may be based on a faulty premise, namely that widening and straightening highways will ensure a decrease in accidents and fatalities. We do not accept such justification for destruction of Highways 85. If you drive Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Lead city limits

today, where the roads are wider, straighter, and with large shoulders, you will find 11 signs marking highway traffic deaths. The State cannot simply pave over inevitable bad judgment by drivers.

Just look at the highway in Spearfish Canyon from the Spearfish Canyon Lodge to the city limits of Spearfish where the road is wider, straighter, and with wide shoulders like you are planning for 85. Those improvements didn't create safer driving conditions. Fatalities continue in Spearfish Canyon, and drivers simply drive faster. I regularly run on the shoulders in Spearfish Canyon and witness up close and personal speeding logging trucks, semis, and cars. Build a wider and straighter road and drivers will simply drive faster and more unsafely. Sadly, this week we have witnessed a significant increase in SD DOT trucks apparently hauling road materials up and down Spearfish Canyon and most of them have NOT been obeying the posted speed limit of 35 MPH. If your plan for Highway 85 is to increase highway traffic safety, it will not succeed. Please do not destroy a beautiful roadway for an objective you will not achieve.

We regularly drive Highway 85 and have done so since August 2013 when we bought our home in the Canyon, and we can honestly say we have never seen a patrol car from the SD Highway Patrol or the Lawrence County Sheriff's Office on the stretch of road this plan seeks to change. Instead of destroying this beautiful drive, the state should increase law enforcement funding and patrol. That is a common sense way to make this beautiful drive even more safe.

Please stop any step to widen, straighten, or destroy the special part of Highway 85. Instead, we urge you to preserve and protect the ever diminishing beauty of our Black Hills.

Wed 06/03/2026 4:19 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

We are writing as Black Hills residents — not visitors, not a tourists, but 3 generations of family who have had a cabin home in Rochford for over 50 years. We have driven Highway 85 more times than we can count. We know these roads the way you know your own neighborhood, and we are watching their character be erased, project by project, year by year.

Highway 85, from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line, is one of the last scenic roads in the Black Hills that still feels like the Black Hills. It winds through canyon walls, traces Spearfish Creek, and passes beneath a canopy of tall spruce. It has a soul. And that soul cannot be restored once it is gone.

We understand the stated safety rationale. But we also understand what we witness every year: scenic roads widened, straightened, and flattened — ostensibly for safety, but timed and scaled to accommodate ten days of Sturgis Rally traffic — and then left that way permanently, at lasting cost to the landscape and to those of us who live here year-round.

Peter Norbeck did not plan his roads with a straight-edge and a bulldozer. He walked and rode horseback through these hills to find routes that worked with the land — that revealed its beauty rather than overriding it. Engineers told him his roads couldn't be built. He built them anyway, because he understood that how you build a road through a place like this is a statement about how much you value it. That philosophy should be the standard for every Black Hills highway, not just the ones that bear his name.

Clearing a 150-foot wide right-of-way on this gorgeous scenic road through Spearfish Canyon is not a safety improvement. It is a desecration — and one that cannot be undone.

We respectfully urge the SDDOT to pursue targeted, proportionate safety measures — reduced speed limits, guardrails where genuinely needed, improved signage — rather than a reconstruction that will permanently destroy the character of one of South Dakota's most treasured corridors.

Our family has cherished this corner of the Black Hills for over half a century. We are asking you to help us preserve it.

Please. Please. Leave it alone.

Wed 06/03/2026 4:27 PM

Hello,

I am writing to express my opposition to rebuilding highway 85 in the manner that 385 is currently being done.

This type of project greatly negates the beauty of the rural Black Hills of SD.

Black Hills citizens do not want a super highway. They want a SCENIC highway.

Most tourists enjoy the same.

385 is now ruined.

Please find another way to spend the federal dollars.

Or...one COULD simply refuse the bribe from the feds...

Wed 06/03/2026 4:41 PM

Hi Mark,

I'm writing to you to please reconsider this destruction of the Black Hills highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming. The Black Hills need to be preserved. We need our special roads to continue providing the joy and delight of what makes the area so unique and special. We don't need another massive highway to destroy the sacredness of the Black Hills.

Trying to make the highway "safer" because of lack of driving ability is not the responsibility of the state. That's up to the driver. Period. Perhaps a better solution would be to revoke license and crack down on unsafe drivers.

Thank you for taking the time to read and reconsider

Wed 06/03/2026 5:04 PM

Dear Mark,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes for Highway 85.

This route provides such a beautiful, peaceful drive, and the surrounding scenery is truly majestic. I firmly believe that not everything needs to be "improved" through development. I hope and pray that you will listen to the voices of the people who love and appreciate the Black Hills area in its current state.

Please do not go forward with these changes.

Wed 06/03/2026 6:08 PM

Please leave Highway 85 alone. The Black Hills highways have been "raped" by the so called progress. Why must a few people ruin all the scenic drives in the Black Hills? I grew up in the Northern Hills and have been appalled at the so called progress. Are the powers that be looking to pad a few construction companies? Or is this an effort to save a few idiots riding the roads at unsafe speeds. Can't fix stupid. What about the ecological damage done to the area? Time for people to be responsible and the government to quit being a nanny state, trying to "save stupidity" and ruining scenic roads. Concerned citizens and tax payers.

Wed 06/03/2026 8:16 PM

I live near Lead, I've been logging for 50 years, for 35 of those years I've been hauling logs with a truck and trailer down Hwy. 85. For the past 12 years I've driven that canyon every week day in either my truck or a pickup, the only problem I see with that road is it needs a 2 foot shoulder on both sides of the road. There should also be a truck pull out spot below the water intake, and make the other pull outs a little bigger so a truck can get in them. It's really not necessary to reconstruct that whole road, a few more/ bigger signs would help to warn people of the curves. This road is just as scenic as Spearfish Canyon, it would be a shame to ruin it.

Wed 06/03/2026 8:30 PM

Good evening, in regards to the SDDOT construction project of US Highway 85 from Lead, SD to the Wyoming state line.

Please don't do it! It is currently the most beautiful road to cruise via car or motorcycle in all of these beautiful Black Hills.

I am an avid and respectful motorcyclist, and proud member of the American Motorcyclist Association. I ride that route every chance I get, and in my opinion it is perfect the way it is.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Wed 06/03/2026 8:51 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

As I am unable to attend the public meeting on the matter in Deadwood occurring June 4, 2026, please accept this as record for my opposition to the proposed SDOT reconstruction project for Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

"Just leave it alone." is the most direct statement. While I understand concerns for safety, I would hate for this section of highway to undergo a major reconstruction such as what is currently being done on Highway 385. This portion of Highway 85 is a rural, beautiful, scenic corridor and it should remain mostly unchanged. It embodies what is special about travelling in the Black Hills. It is what brings motorcyclists to events at Sturgis. It is what keeps us locals happy and connected to our corner of nature.

I would be supportive of additional safety measures in the most troublesome areas that don't go so far as major reconstruction for the entire portion. Examples would be:

- additional warning signage for curves
- additional warning signage for wildlife crossings
- installation of solar powered blinking curve warning arrow signs
- adding surface reflective "turtles", striping, luminous/reflective/glowing paint
- installation of additional guardrails or other barriers with reflectors
- installation of additional carsonite stakes with reflectors
- installation of convex mirrors at troublesome driveways or intersecting cross roads
- installation of flashing warning lighted signs triggered by inductive loops from vehicles approaching
- installation of additional vehicle turnout areas
- designation of the section being a "Safety Corridor" with signage for recommendation of "Headlights On" within the corridor
- installation of overhead lighting

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Wed 06/03/2026 11:35 PM

I was recommended this email on a Facebook post regarding the plan to widen highway 85 between 4 corners and Cheyenne crossing. I am far from an environmentalist and have always been a jokester when talking about tree huggers, however, 85 has no need for any work to be done to it. It's a nice, smooth road with very little traffic and very scenic views. More roads need paved to disperse bikers during the rally, but 85 is a wonderful road and does not need anything more than a bar on the side of it for rally tourists. Pave a connection from Rochford to Deerfield, leave 85 to its serenity. Just my 2 cents!

Thu 06/04/2026 12:25 AM

Mark,

I strongly oppose any state intervention regarding Highway 85. This particular stretch of road, from Deadwood to Buckhorn, is widely regarded as the premier riding experience in the hills, and I have personally traversed it for two decades. I find the state's claims regarding safety improvements to be unsubstantiated. In my extensive experience riding this route for 20 years, and driving it three times a month for six years for work. I have never witnessed an accident. This includes regular use on my motorcycle during late spring, summer, fall, and even occasional December trips.

The origin of the state's information is unclear. I have consulted with at least seven individuals who frequently utilize this road, and none are aware of any significant accident history. We implore you to leave this road undisturbed. I am prepared to actively oppose this project, as my commitment to preserving this road is profound. We cherish this road and do not wish for the state to alter it.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this correspondence. I anticipate that following today's meeting, it will become evident that the community does not support the straightening of this road. Please, let it remain as it is. I challenge anyone to experience this road and still advocate for its modification; to do so would be disingenuous. Its inherent beauty, encompassing the rivers, rolling hills, and abundant wildlife, is precisely why we oppose any straightening.

It appears that individuals involved in this project may not be familiar with the local sentiment, as anyone residing here and utilizing this road would understand the strong desire for the state to refrain from intervention. Had you lived here, you would undoubtedly recognize this and would have prevented such a project from progressing. We suggest focusing on East River matters, as West River residents are capable of managing their own affairs and will solicit support when deemed necessary, which is not the case here.

Have a productive day.

Thu 06/04/2026 7:35 AM

Good evening,

I am unable to attend the meeting tomorrow night so I am writing to you. I am opposed to the highway 85 plans.

I am a local to the Lead-Deadwood area and I don't appreciate how we are accommodating to more people in our area. Hwy 385 and the South Rochford Road are devastating. People will drive fast regardless; a nice road just encourages it.

I appreciate your time and attention to this matter. Thank you for all you do and I hope you take all opinions into consideration.

Thu 06/04/2026 10:46 AM

I am writing you as local law enforcement, certified crash reconstructionist, car enthusiast and member of our community. I moved to the hills 16 years ago because it was beautiful. It seemed traffic engineering was no nonsense, when a problem was identified we just put up slower speed limits. If the problem was the driver, we didn't change anything. People could still enjoy the hills. Windy roads through the natural landscape have been a thing since the beginning of wheeled transport. Are there some "dangerous" portions, absolutely. Have people died on that section of road, absolutely. Look at the root cause, alcohol, distracted driving, over driving road conditions. It's the same thing in Rapid City, so why ruin the experience for the rest of us. All the redesign is going to change is the impact speed. The hills are a tourist attraction, I hate to bring that up, but it's true. Sturgis doesn't thrive because of I-90, it thrives because of the windy roads in the hills, same as the Mustang rally, Corvette rally, classic car rally, adv fest, etc. Please don't ruin beautiful asphalt ribbons that define the hills.

Thu 06/04/2026 11:50 AM

Dear Mark Malone,

RE: Highway 85

Thank you very much for taking the time to listen to public input regarding the proposed changes on Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border.

I have great respect for those who build those highways and maintain them. My Grandfather, was a highway engineer for the State of North Dakota for many years, and I worked for SDDOT for four consecutive summers from 1982-85 on bridge and sign crews out of the Rapid City office.

Those years working for SDDOT helped shape my early career. I very much enjoyed the outdoor work, and the salary funded my bachelor's degree in Zoology at South Dakota State University. I also found purpose in keeping our highways safe for myself, family, friends and everyone else using the roads in South Dakota.

I have now enjoyed a long career as a wildlife biologist and frequently stay in my cabin in Ice Box Canyon right next to Spearfish Creek. I have driven Highway 85 from Newcastle to Cheyenne Crossing over a hundred times and have thoroughly enjoyed the drive and especially the portion along the origins of Spearfish Creek in Ice Box Canyon. Those 6 or 7 miles right along the creek are indescribably beautiful and there is nothing else like it in the Black Hills (or anywhere else for that matter). The habitat represented and the hundreds of species present like American Martin, rare plants, and ancient old growth trees are unique to the section of the Black Hills.

Many others and I would not want any disruption or harm to come to this idyllic riparian sanctuary. I hope you will agree. Basic road maintenance is a must but please let's not cut down any more trees or clear more space for that first 6 miles of road going West from Cheyenne Crossing. We already lost a lot of big trees in the recent clearing last summer and many of us enjoy the slower speeds (40 mph) and divine scenery through that section. The curves in that section match the terrain and are part of what makes it special. Many of my motorcycle riding friends love this section specifically for the curves as well

as the scenery. Slower speeds keep both people and wildlife safe and retain the character of the Black Hills.

Once again, I very much appreciate you listening to our concerns and wanting to conserve this unique and special place far into the future.

Thu 06/04/2026 1:10 PM

Mark:

I'm a resident of SD and the Black Hills. I oppose the reconstruction of Highway 85 to lose all charm and personality. I don't feel we need another superhighway through the heart of the Black Hills.

Thu 06/04/2026 2:31 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am contacting you today regarding the SD DOT's proposed reconstruction of Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. This is not needed, and in addition to being a waste of tax dollars that could be better spent on other roads, it will ruin this scenic route.

Frankly, I was appalled at the Highway 385 project. What was a beautiful scenic route is now a blah route that people absolutely fly down. DOT claimed that 385 will be safer now, but research shows that slower is safer, faster is not. Plus, are we just going to straighten out every scenic road in the Black Hills? People come here for the beauty, not just to drive fast.

Let's not make this same mistake again.

Thu 06/04/2026 2:51 PM

Greetings,

I write to voice my objection to the Highway 85 expansion project.

While I have retired in Pennsylvania to be close to grandchildren, I lived most of my adult life in South Dakota. I spent lots of time in the Hills and enjoyed leisurely traveling about the many scenic roads found there.

In addition, for several years earlier in this century I served on SD DOT's highway safety committee. One of the issues addressed by this committee was the number of crashes during the rally resulting in injuries and death. The main reason such crashes occurred was the limited skills riders from urban areas with straight roads who now overdrive conditions on the curvy and hilly roads found in the Black Hills. Of course alcohol was a factor in some of those crashes as well. Never was it suggested that millions of dollars be spent to widen roads, establishing clear zones, and trying to compensate for motorcyclists' lack of skills.

Such as expansion will induce demand leading to more traffic. In addition, the visual of a wide expanse of road will serve to promote speed and not solve the problem of crashes and personal injuries. In fact, it just may promote it.

Using federal highway money will also require that the redesigned Highway 85 adhere to federal standards which include a 'clear zone'. Such zones would require the removal of trees which are the essence of the Black Hills. All one needs to do and look across the state to Veterans Parkway in Sioux Falls. This quasi-interstate has a bike path alongside it. Because of the clear zone requirements trees for shade, benches for rest, and things like water fountains cannot be alongside the trail. All of these are facilities found on good bike trails, but are prohibited in this case. It is a sterile environment and nothing but a speedway.

Keep the Black Hills a sacred place for all to enjoy what it has to offer. Do not urbanize it with multi lane roads. Do not expand Highway 85. Use federal highway funds for the basic maintenance that federal highways need.

Public Meeting 06/04/26 at 5:30PM

Thu 06/04/2026 9:07 PM

Sir,

I would like to say that I don't think SD should proceed with the Highway 85 project. As a Black Hills and South Dakota resident I believe we should quit changing the look of the Black Hills highways. The twisting turning roads through the beautiful hills is one of the reasons so many of us, residents and tourists alike love the Hills! These roads can be safely transversed by driving at the posted speed limits! All people have to do is slow down!

I also think it is a tremendous waste of money. Money that comes from our taxes.

The Hwy 385 is a current example of a road that was made much less enjoyable and at a very high cost. Please don't do this to any other roads in the Black Hills.

Fri 06/05/2026 7:11 AM

I am completely opposed to the proposed highway 85 project. I live in Keystone and motorcycle this road repeatedly.

It is a beautiful road as is. It is safe. I have never felt otherwise on it.

We cannot build roads simply for Sturgis riders. Locals enjoy these roads year round. This one is scenic and special. Please do not destroy it.

Fri 06/05/2026 8:12 AM

Hi Mark,

My husband and I had the opportunity to travel this road way by bicycle several years ago during the annual RASDAK ride. I can't begin to tell you how beautiful it was. The scenery, the creek, the rocks, the silence of the road, all the smells. I will treasure these memories forever. Another beautiful gem we have here in Western South Dakota.

I am writing to you today to strongly urge you and the state to NOT widen this beautiful stretch of highway. It would be such a shame to see this road ruined like others in the hills. Progress is not always deemed progress, it that makes any sense.

Thank you for listening. Take care.

Fri 06/05/2026 9:22 AM

Mark,

I wish to submit my opposition to the Reconstruction of Hwy 85. Like many others in the meeting in Deadwood on June 4th, feel that the reconstruction will seriously detract from the beauty of the area. I had overheard you telling a person before the meeting that the total of material to be moved was very comparable to the amount removed from the Hwy 385 project, but spread out over a 16 mile length, therefore the impact is less overall, and would not look like the eyesore on 385. During the meeting, I learned that the majority of the material to be moved would be a couple of miles on either side of O'niel Pass. It would seem to me that would mean that particular area will look similar to 385 and it's ridiculous right of ways and clear areas. Please let me know if I am incorrect on this. I feel that if South Dakota can afford to provide the required funds to qualify for the federal funds, then then they should be able to fully fund repaving the road, therefore preserving the existing road, without triggering the requirement for the standards that accompanies the federal funding.

I have talked with many people about this project, and to date have not heard a single person that was in favor of this proposal. I will be encouraging everyone to voice their opinion in an email to add to the comments.

Fri 06/05/2026 12:47 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Highway 85 improvement project in Spearfish Canyon.

While I appreciate SDDOT's commitment to roadway safety, I am not convinced that the scope of the proposed improvements justifies the permanent impact they would have on one of the Black Hills' most scenic and unique corridors. The canyon's natural beauty, rock formations, creek views, and overall character are significant public assets that deserve careful protection.

My concern is not only with the specific design elements being proposed, including roadway widening, shoulders, rumble strips, retaining walls, and potential blasting, but also with the long-term cumulative effect these changes could have on the canyon environment and visitor experience. Once these changes are made, they cannot easily be reversed.

I am also concerned that many members of the public remain unconvinced that the project is necessary at the scale proposed. Based on comments shared during the public meeting, there appears to be substantial opposition and a lack of confidence that the benefits outweigh the impacts. I encourage SDDOT to carefully consider whether less intrusive alternatives could address any legitimate safety concerns while preserving the scenic and historic character of the corridor.

Spearfish Canyon is more than a transportation route. It is a treasured recreational destination, scenic byway, and natural resource enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Preserving its character should be given the highest priority.

Thank you for considering my comments. I respectfully request that SDDOT reconsider the proposed project and pursue the least intrusive approach possible.

Fri 06/05/2026 12:51 PM

To whom it may concern;

I'm not happy with the construction along Highway 385 as it's taken so much of the beauty away from this area. Now you want to ruin the roadway near and around Spearfish Canyon. I believe instead of spending millions of dollars on a perfectly good road as it is, maybe you should make more money available for better law enforcement along these roads especially during tourist and rally season. Raise the fines for those breaking the law to pay for the extra enforcement if needed.

It seems most of us that grew up and live in the beautiful Black Hills are careful when driving those areas.

Please don't ruin what's already a beautiful, good thing by remodeling the road.

Fri 06/05/2026 12:55 PM

Please reconsider the plans for the Hwy 85, Spearfish Canyon project.

This is a Scenic highway and never intended for fast traffic. When traveling a lower speed limit the road is perfectly safe the way its designed now.

PLEASE SAVE the gorgeous, casual, relaxed route that is Hwy 85, Spearfish Canyon.

Fri 06/05/2026 1:05 PM

Hello -- I was unable to attend the meeting in Deadwood last nite but understand from a summary posted on social media that you are the person to whom we can send comments.

I'm a Lawrence County resident and have been since the mid-90s. One of my great grandfathers came here in the 1870s and the house he built in Lead is on the National Historic Register.

I travel a lot and lived and worked overseas quite a bit. So, I didn't see what was being done to 385 until returning from a few months away. Sir, I wept when I saw it. The destruction was shocking and since seeing it I've avoided the road because it makes me so angry and sad.

That the state is going to do something similar to 85 running from Cheyenne Crossing to the WY border breaks my heart. I've often told people that the most scenic road in the Northern Hills is that stretch of road. Destroying that beauty is shameful. To my mind, the improved safety of the road could never, ever compensate for the destruction.

It feels to me as though decisions to undertake these projects are influenced by commercial concerns more than anything. That said I understand that your offices may not have much say as these are probably political decisions. So, I am not casting aspersions on the motivations of your offices. I'd like to think that public service folks try to reflect the views of the public in their work. I think if you do that you will be certain to pass on to the political folks that people like me are very upset and saddened by this proposed project.

Fri 06/05/2026 1:28 PM

I am firmly against the proposed plans to highway 85. After observing the 385 reconstruction I've lost trust in the SD DOT preserving the natural beauty in the Hills. Driving that road now feels like I'm on an airport runway, not a beautiful cruise through the Hills. I believe highway 85 would lose it's characteristic beauty and scenic nature if the proposed plan were to be implemented, and I stand firmly against the destruction of such a beautiful drive that brings visitors and tax dollars to our state.

Please reconsider the proposal and listen to the public on this matter,

Fri 06/05/2026 1:42 PM

Please do not proceed with the Hwy 85 project as it is currently planned. The Black Hills are a special place for connecting with nature, and they are absolutely not necessary for heavy vehicle traffic of any sort. Those visiting the Hills for recreation aren't in a hurry -- if they are in a hurry to get past the Hills, they should be on the Interstate. Our narrow roads with tight curves and switchbacks are exactly what appeals to many of us. Driving through narrow, winding roads creates a sense of adventure and exploration that has been lost though nearly all of our nation's roadways.

Safety concerns can be addressed without widening the road. Lower speed limits, weight limits to reduce heavy vehicle traffic, and seasonal speed limits to prevent motorcycle accidents are all more appealing options that could have the same impact on safety.

Please don't turn more of the Black Hills into a superhighway. We want to see trees and grass, not concrete and blacktop.

Fri 06/05/2026 1:44 PM

I am writing to ask SDDOT not to widen HWY 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. In today's rush society, I think we owe both our ancestors and the generations to come to try to leave our state in the condition that we have enjoyed it. The beauty of the Black Hills is best taken in at a slower speed, reminding, maybe even forcing us to slow down, take the view, enjoy life, and fill our souls.

Not to mention the destruction that widening this highway would do to God's creation on either side. It can never ever be put back the way it was. If more pullouts are needed for safer travel then that's a different situation. I would hope that state officials have the common sense to realize this difference.

Please don't change God's creation. I'd like to show it to my grandchildren.

Fri 06/05/2026 1:46 PM

Mark,

I wasn't able to attend the meeting last night but wanted to officially record my concerns about the proposed Hwy 85 reconstruction from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming border.

As was mentioned apparently last night, people have lost trust in the DOT's judgement about what is enough and what is way over the top, myself included.

The massive raping of the land along 385 is what people are worried about. So, so far over the top. It also recently happened along 14a near the Camp 5 road with the cutback of that mountain.

These are mountain roads and need to be treated as such. All of that work will never guarantee that no more accidents will occur. I would argue that it will get worse as speeds increase. You can't protect stupid people from themselves, at any cost.

I agree that there is room for some improvement of this stretch of highway, but you guys need to present a much more detailed and conservative plan. Show people EXACTLY what the plan is with renderings, models, etc.

I have heard that there is an opposition group forming that intends to get Legislators involved, so it would behoove you to get ahead of this and I would suggest more public meetings.

It sounded like the take away from last night's meeting was that what is proposed is pretty much a done deal. Whether or not that is the case, that's what people feel like, so you may need more communication.

Fri 06/05/2026 2:00 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I have lived in the Black Hills my entire life of seventy four years. Watching the Hill's highways change has been interesting and sometimes needed but this project is not. Visitors and residents love the scenery and some areas deserve to be traveled at a slower pace. We're losing that character. When my

girls were little, we drove Highway 85 and stopped along the creek so the girls could wade and look at flowers. We had my husband's parents with us and we all enjoyed the drive and scenery.

Accidents can happen with deer, bad roads and distracted drivers on any highway. Please do not alter this section of highway. Please preserve the beauty of the area.

Fri 06/05/2026 2:13 PM

Hi Mark,

I want to go on record saying I am opposed to the reconstruction of Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the WY border. We own a cabin on the corner of 85 and Hanna Rd. I love the scenic drive 85 offers with the cliffs and the stream close to the road. I feel this drive is nicer than Spearfish Canyon. I also like the fact that a slower speed is necessary to drive this road. It gives drivers a chance to take in the scenery and be aware of wildlife crossing the road. Don't take away the scenic drives. This is the main reason tourist's come to this part of SD. I understand the improving safety part of the plan, but let's face it, there will still be accidents with people not following the speed limit or not paying attention as what happens on the Interstate with very straight, wide roads.

Please read Paul Horstad's postings on Facebook. He has put a lot of time researching this matter and states many concerned citizen's views very well.

Fri 06/05/2026 2:28 PM

Although I am a Minnesota resident (more on that later), I feel qualified to speak for tourism and quality of life affected by the Highway 85 project.

I was a tour guide for Black Hills Education Travel/Road Scholars for 18 years, introducing Black Hills landscapes and history to hundreds and hundreds of out-of-state tourists. My Road Scholar tourists often remarked that the bus trip from Cheyenne Crossing to Custer was among the most iconic stretches of US Highway between the Smoky Mountains and the Rockies. They often reminded me of what a treasure this relatively unspoiled part of the USA is. The billions of dollars those tourists bring to the Black Hills is its present-day "gold."

My husband and I owned property just off US 385 from 1985 to 2022. We built a home in 1994-95 and lived there until fall of 2022, driving to Deadwood, Hills City-Custer on US 385 and to Rapid city on US 44 many times a week. We drove those roads in all weather and all times of day. Like so many retirees and young families who can work from home, the Black Hills became a premier place to live. When transportation changes to Black Hills highways are proposed, shouldn't the opinions and the experience of local residents be considered?

When construction on #385 was proposed, we and our neighbors attended hearings like the one at Deadwood, protesting that the destruction of a easily-driveable, gently-curving highway though expanses of pine forest and meadows would be irreparably altered by straightening and widening. We proposed some turnouts. Our letters were ignored. SDDOT did whatever you had planned to do from

the beginning. What SDDOT did and is doing on US 385 can never be undone. The iconic highway was changed forever.

SDDOT's insistence on a wider and straighter road west of Cheyenne Crossing in this scenic and ecologically sensitive area is YOUR value judgement—faster must be better. No! Residents and tourists value the Spearfish watershed, wildlife and the plant diversity protected by a slower, gentler highway. Do SDDOT employees who make these decisions and designs take time to look, listen and ponder consequences of their planning?

Preservation and protection of landscape and quality of life seem to be forgotten priorities. We left a beautiful home because we were tired of watching what was happening in the Black Hills—straighten highways, allow UTVs everywhere, encourage “freedom” over responsibility. We chose not to watch its destruction.

What do I wish?

- Quit this "straighten and widen" obsession in the Black Hills.
- Let people who drive the road every day tell you what would make them safer and happier.
- Turn listening sessions into real collaboration between citizens and highway designers.
- Read a biography of Peter Norbeck and learn about his road building passions in the Black Hills. Norbeck's legacy is beauty. Your legacy could be protection of an iconic stretch of highway.
- Stop and reconsider!

Fri 06/05/2026 2:32 PM

Good afternoon-

I am a lifelong resident of Deadwood and Lead. I currently live in Deadwood and work at our high school in Lead. My husband is the event coordinator for the Deadwood Chamber of Commerce. I wanted to voice my opposition to the highway 85 project. I have driven that road for 30 years, as it is the route we take to Colorado. I understand that it is a windy two lane road, not ideal for large vehicles or for anyone concerned with speed. So be it. When the highway 385 project was being considered, there were a lot of people upset about what that might do to the landscape, I for one felt that it would not be a major change to the landscape and it would be beneficial, I was for it. I am also pleased with the minimal amount of change that occurred there and I think it was necessary. However, for this project in Icebox Canyon, I do NOT agree with moving forward. There are some places that are going to be tight and two lanes, that is the way it goes. Drive slower, take a different route, or whatever you need to do to be safe. Icebox Canyon and Spearfish Canyon are two of the best scenic routes in the Black Hills and are destinations unto themselves BECAUSE of the landscape, and because of the windy and slow drive. It will hurt tourism, it will hurt the businesses out there and it will be something that can not be undone. Please DO NOT move forward with the hwy 85 project, it is not worth it and it is not necessary.

Fri 06/05/2026 2:43 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I'm writing to submit an official public comment regarding the proposed roadway design project for US Highway 85 from the Wyoming state line to Cheyenne Crossing (Project Number: NH 0085(106)0, PCN 06J8).

As an avid pedestrian and a big supporter of our professional civil service, I want to first thank you and the project team for your extensive work on this corridor. I suspect most (if not all!) in the community favor well-designed projects that reduce collisions, protect property, and save lives. However, I have significant concerns about the scale of the proposed widening on the western portion of the corridor and urge the DOT to reconsider the scope of that segment to prevent long-term safety issues and environmental degradation.

I ask the DOT to consider the following points based on the data and design parameters presented in the public meeting slide deck:

1. Holding the Project to the Context-Sensitive Precedent of the East Segment

The slide deck outlines a highly appropriate design philosophy for the segment from Sunny Meadows Trailhead to Cheyenne Crossing, utilizing a 40 mph design speed, 11-foot lanes, and a narrow 2-to-4-foot shoulder footprint. Your documentation explicitly notes that this smaller footprint successfully "reduces impact to surrounding environment, including Spearfish Creek."

I strongly applaud this approach. The segment of Highway 85 through the Black Hills encompasses remarkably beautiful and fragile microclimates, including the deeply shaded, spruce-lined canyons where Spearfish Creek runs immediately adjacent to the road. However, I am deeply concerned about the sharp contrast in design for the western segment (Wyoming border to Sunny Meadows Trailhead), which follows a 55 mph design speed, 12-foot lanes, and a massive 30-foot clear zone. Imposing such an expansive footprint will require heavy blasting, rock-coring, and clear-cutting that will permanently scar the viewshed and disrupt delicate aquatic and forest habitats. I urge you to scale back the western segment to match the lower-impact footprint of the eastern segment.

2. Utilizing Traffic Calming Principles Over Road Widening

According to the crash data trends presented by the DOT, more than two-thirds of the reported crashes between 2020 and 2024 occurred during dry, daylight conditions, with 55% taking place during peak summer months and over a third involving motorcycles. *This indicates that the primary safety challenge is seasonal driver behavior and excessive speed rather than geometric road constraints or winter weather.*

Wider, straighter roads psychologically incentivize people to drive faster. Decades of transportation research from agencies like NACTO, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute consistently demonstrate that wider lane widths (such as 12 feet) and expansive clear zones strip away visual speed cues. This induces higher operating speeds by making drivers feel comfortable traveling faster than local topography safely allows. While a 30-foot clear zone and 12-foot lanes provide a temporary physical recovery buffer, they ultimately encourage higher speeds before drivers enter the highly sensitive, narrow canyon segment. Keeping the road footprint reasonably narrow and naturally curved across the **entire** corridor is a proven method of traffic calming that forces drivers to slow down, protecting both travelers and the landscape.

3. Replicating the Surgical Success of US 14A

The data-backed success of the US Highway 14A Curve Reconstruction (2019–2020) demonstrates that annual crash rates can be dramatically reduced (from 2.6 to 0.5 per year) through localized, targeted

curve reconstruction rather than a broad widening of the corridor. I ask that the DOT apply this exact philosophy to US 85: isolate the specific high-crash clusters, such as the steep grade transitions approaching O'Neil Pass, and maximize safety within the existing localized footprint rather than over-engineering the open stretches.

4. Building Public Trust Through Transparency

As you're aware if you've been monitoring social media posts about the project, there is a palpable concern in our community that the public comment period is merely performative and that the project will move forward unaltered, regardless of community feelings and feedback. To build meaningful public trust as this design progresses, I request that the DOT compile and publish a formal Comment & Response Matrix prior to the final design inspection in 2027. This matrix should explicitly demonstrate how community feedback regarding traffic calming, footprint reduction, and viewshed preservation has factored into the engineering revisions.

Thank you for your time, your expertise, and your willingness to consider alternative, context-sensitive solutions that balance long-term public safety with the preservation of the Black Hills.

Fri 06/05/2026 2:56 PM

Please leave 85 alone. A 30 foot clear is ridiculous. I really hope that the committee will listen to the public. Please understand that the public is against this, and much of that road is on forest service land (PUBLIC DOMAIN). We don't want another 385 mess. Thanks for your attention.

Fri 06/05/2026 3:03 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I'm writing to ask the state to reconsider the proposed construction (DEstruction) of Highway 85. I have to admit, I didn't pay a lot of attention when the State was gearing up to make changes to 385. Boy do I regret that choice. What was done to our beautiful Black Hills during this project is unforgiveable. There seemed to be no regard for our beautiful land and its legacy. Just absolute and total destruction. And for what? Minor improvements that will allow people to drive even faster than before, and likely cause even more accidents and destruction to our land and wildlife. Please put me on record as opposing the road construction of Highway 85. People need to slow down, stop drinking and driving, and enjoy our beautiful land.

Fri 06/05/2026 3:09 PM

Mr. Malone, please add my name to the growing list of opponents to this project. I do not feel Highway 85 needs an upgrade.

Fri 06/05/2026 3:15 PM

Mark,

I live on Highway 85 3 miles east of O'Neill Pass and submitted comments to the SDDOT last fall. I travel this route almost daily because of my real estate and construction business as well as for personal use. Anyone who travels the stretch of highway at night, knows that 40 mph is the speed to be safe because of the wildlife on or near the highway. Learned this the hard way after hitting a deer near the Raddick Gulch confluence. My son hit one as well. Both incidents were of the deer hitting us as they leaped from the sideway.

The bigger concern, however, is the pristine Little Spearfish Creek. Crystal clear and pure, as it surfaces from Raddick Gulch and the secondary tributary that confluences from Canyon springs. What guarantees can SDDOT make that will insure the whole riparian environment, including the native brown and brook trout population, in the Canyon can be protected from sediments and destabilizing stream side embankments and gravel creek beds. The entire waterway is at risk for environmental damage that would result from such a project. You know, I do not trust the engineers or the SDDOT, who are interested in just highway safety to justify contaminating and destabilizing a pristine estuary such as we have in this part of Spearfish Canyon. I am advocating for this stream and its natural fauna and historic environment. Leave it be!

After the debacle of the Highway 385 reconstruction, I can only trust that the Highway 85 project would turn into a fiasco as well.

Fri 06/05/2026 3:19 PM

Hi Mark,

I just want to voice my opinion on the proposed road improvement project on Hwy 85 past Cheyenne Crossing.

I've lived here my whole life, I was born and raised in Deadwood/Lead. Thought inevitable I am sad to see all the new development in and around the hills including transforming beautiful drives in the hills into modern highways that have carved and/or leveled the scenic attributes completely!

I am aware there are more people than there were in my past but many of those people came here BECAUSE of the scenery and the beautiful drives! Tourists come here specifically to take those scenic drives!

I've driven that road hundreds of times even sometimes pulling a horse trailer, never had a problem. The safety relies on the drivers not the road. There is no reason to make it a highway that people can go faster on.

I, and as you know, MANY other people are opposed to this project. Once it's done we can never get back what we lost! We must put value on things that are important and irreplaceable, that creek and those cliffs are priceless! Do you live here? If so you would know. I think the locals should have priority say, in what happens here.

There ARE other options for people to get to Newcastle that are straighter and faster. Let them choose their route for their own reasons. A great number of us like the slower paced more enjoyable route.

Hwy 85 through Ice Box canyon is one of the most scenic and literally cool drives in the hills, we want it to remain the way it is,

Fri 06/05/2026 4:07 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed widening and straightening of the Highway 85.

The very qualities that make this roadway special—its winding character, rock formations, tree-lined views, and close relationship with the surrounding landscape—are exactly what attract visitors and make the drive memorable. Blasting through cliff faces, removing mature trees, and impacting the creek corridor would permanently alter the character of this scenic byway while providing questionable benefits to the traveling public.

If the goal is to improve safety, there are numerous alternatives that would be far less destructive and far more cost-effective. These include:

- Installing rumble strips to reduce lane-departure accidents.
- Lowering speed limits in areas with documented safety concerns.
- Increasing enforcement of existing speed limits.
- Adding additional pull-outs for slower traffic and sightseeing.
- Signage telling drivers of an alternate route if they feel the need for speed.
- Improving signage and curve warnings.
- Enhancing pavement markings and reflective striping.
- Repairing and maintaining existing pavement conditions.
- Improving drainage and shoulder recovery areas where appropriate.

Road design directly influences driver behavior. Wider, straighter roads encourage higher speeds. Is that your intention? Numerous transportation studies have demonstrated that when drivers perceive a roadway as wider and more forgiving, average travel speeds increase regardless of the posted speed limit. In contrast, the existing roadway naturally encourages drivers to slow down and appreciate the scenery. Transforming Highway 85 into a wider, straighter corridor risks creating the very speeding problems that safety improvements are intended to address.

I am also concerned about the significant expense associated with blasting rock formations, removing trees, relocating utilities, modifying drainage systems, and impacting the creek environment. At a time when transportation dollars are limited, it seems irresponsible to spend millions fundamentally reshaping Highway 85 (what could be a scenic byway) when those funds could instead be invested in repairing, maintaining, and preserving the road that already exists.

Unfortunately, many residents have watched other projects gradually erode the scenic character of roads that people once enjoyed driving. Too often, promises are made that a roadway's unique character will be preserved, only for widening, clearing, and development pressures to leave it looking

like any other highway. Once mature trees are removed, cliffs are blasted away, and natural landscapes are altered, those features cannot be replaced!

Many citizens have also lost confidence in the Department's stewardship of our scenic roadways due to the ongoing work along Highway 385 near Pactola. (Not to mention the other scenic roadways in the Black Hills that have already been ruined by modernization all in a feigned attempt to make them "safer.") Rather than rebuilding trust, this proposal appears to continue a pattern of prioritizing expansion over preservation. From the public's perspective, it raises legitimate questions about whose interests are being served and whether the true purpose of the project is to accommodate future growth and development rather than address genuine safety concerns. (A wider straighter road would surely allow commercial development along Highway 85, wouldn't it?)

The fact that you have revised your plans many times indicates that while you "listen" to opposing voices, it feels as though you intend to push through with your "widening" plans anyway—regardless of what the opposition wants. Leave it alone!

Highway 85 is not merely a transportation corridor. It is a destination in itself and should be designated as a scenic byway. Visitors travel here specifically because it is different from ordinary highways. Preserving its character should be the highest priority. It is not heavily trafficked all year long. People love to drive it on their motorcycles during the rally and locals love to drive it when the leaves are changing colors in the fall. What about all the animals you will be displacing with this construction? Have you done the environmental impact studies? Certainly there has to be an endangered species that is under threat... What about Native American artifacts, unmarked graves, sacred or ceremonial sites are under threat?

I urge you to reject any and all plans that would widen and straighten the roadway, blast through rock formations, remove mature trees, and impact the creek corridor. Instead, please focus on targeted safety improvements, proper maintenance, and preservation of the scenic qualities that make this road worth protecting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Fri 06/05/2026 4:32 PM

Please, NO reconstruction of highway 85!

Fri 06/05/2026 4:38 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to oppose the plan to widen and straighten Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to Newcastle.

I have always felt that this road is fine the way it is. The curves, trees, rock cliffs, and creek are part of what make it a scenic byway instead of just another highway. People drive it because it is beautiful and

different. If you start blasting cliffs, cutting down trees, and changing the creek area, you cannot put those things back.

I understand that safety is important, but I do not think widening the road is the only solution. There are plenty of things that could be done first, such as rumble strips, lower speed limits, better signs, more pull-outs, and repairs to the existing road. Those improvements would cost less and would not destroy the scenery.

It also seems obvious that making the road wider and straighter will cause people to drive faster. When drivers see a wide-open road, they naturally speed up. The current road encourages people to slow down and pay attention.

I am also concerned about the cost. It seems like a waste of taxpayer money to spend millions blasting rock, removing trees, and changing the landscape when that same money could be used to repair and maintain the road that is already there.

I have seen other road projects where the result was the loss of the very scenery that people came to enjoy. (Highway 385 by Pactola is an example of what we, the people, don't want to have done.) Once the natural character is gone, it is gone forever. A scenic road should stay scenic, not "commercial."

I also think many people have lost trust because of what is happening on Highway 385. A lot of promises get made, but what people see happening on the ground often looks very different. It feels like you're trying to push through the project anyway. Because of that, it is hard not to wonder whether projects like this are really being done for the people who enjoy these roads or for other interests that stand to benefit from a larger roadway.

Not every road needs to be wider, straighter, and faster. Some roads are worth preserving the way they are.

I urge you to reject this proposal and focus instead on maintaining the existing road and making targeted safety improvements that do not damage the scenery that makes this scenic highway special.

Thank you for your time.

Fri 06/05/2026 5:06 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to oppose the proposed widening and realignment of the Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing in South Dakota to Newcastle, Wyoming.

Based on the available project information, the proposed improvements appear to prioritize roadway expansion rather than context-sensitive safety enhancements appropriate for a designated scenic/tourist corridor. The project, as proposed, would require significant rock excavation, removal of mature vegetation, alteration of existing landforms, and impacts to the adjacent creek corridor. These actions would permanently degrade the scenic, environmental, and recreational qualities that define the highway.

From an engineering perspective, roadway geometry strongly influences driver behavior. Increasing lane widths, flattening horizontal curves, and improving alignment consistency generally result in higher operating speeds regardless of posted speed limits. Drivers naturally adjust their speed based on perceived roadway risk and available recovery area. As a result, widening and straightening the roadway may inadvertently encourage higher travel speeds, reducing the effectiveness of the project as a safety improvement. Long, straight, visually monotonous roads can also contribute to driver fatigue, reduced alertness, and "highway hypnosis" (also called white-line fever or road hypnosis).

Highway hypnosis is a recognized phenomenon where a driver continues operating a vehicle but becomes less consciously aware of the driving task because the roadway environment provides very little stimulation.

I am also concerned that roadway design should not be altered to accommodate future self-driving vehicle technology. Scenic and mountainous highways with natural curves require active driver engagement and should remain designed for human drivers, not autonomous systems. If self-driving vehicles are unable to safely navigate curved roadways, the solution is to improve the technology—not to reshape scenic landscapes, remove natural features, and widen roads. Transportation infrastructure should serve the character and purpose of the corridor, rather than be redesigned around the limitations of emerging vehicle technologies.

If safety is the primary objective, numerous lower-impact alternatives should be evaluated before undertaking extensive reconstruction. These measures may include:

- Centerline and edge-line rumble strips.
- Enhanced pavement markings and retroreflective delineation.
- Additional curve warning signage and speed advisories.
- Strategic speed limit reductions.
- Expanded pull-outs for slower-moving vehicles.
- Targeted shoulder improvements at documented crash locations.
- Improved drainage and pavement rehabilitation.
- Installation of guardrail or other roadside safety hardware where warranted.

These measures can improve safety performance while preserving the character of the roadway and minimizing environmental disturbance.

The economic justification for the proposed reconstruction is also questionable. Significant expenditures would be required for rock blasting, slope stabilization, vegetation removal, drainage modifications, utility relocation, creek impacts, and associated environmental mitigation. Given current transportation funding constraints, it is difficult to justify such extensive reconstruction when those same resources could be directed toward deferred maintenance, pavement preservation, bridge improvements, and targeted safety projects along the existing alignment.

Additionally, experience has shown that roadway expansion projects frequently result in the incremental loss of scenic resources that can never be fully restored. Once mature forest cover is removed, natural rock formations are excavated, and historic roadway character is altered, those features are permanently lost. Scenic highways are intended to provide a transportation experience that

is distinct from conventional highways. Engineering solutions should be developed to preserve those characteristics rather than eliminate them.

I am also concerned about public confidence in the Department's stewardship of scenic transportation corridors. Many citizens have expressed concerns regarding ongoing work along Highway 385 and the degree to which project outcomes have aligned with original public expectations. I found myself shocked driving by Pactola. As a result, there is understandable skepticism regarding proposals that require substantial landscape alteration while providing uncertain public benefits.

The scale of the proposed improvements raises legitimate questions regarding whether the project is being driven by the long-term transportation needs of the scenic highway itself or by anticipated future demands associated with broader development objectives. Regardless of the underlying rationale, the burden remains on the Department to demonstrate that the benefits of such extensive reconstruction outweigh the environmental, scenic, and financial costs.

For these reasons, I urge the Department to reject the proposed widening and realignment and instead pursue context-sensitive safety improvements, maintenance, and preservation measures that protect the scenic, environmental, and recreational value of this corridor.

Thank you for your consideration.

Fri 06/05/2026 5:06 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to oppose the proposal to widen and straighten Highway 85.

People drive this road because it is scenic, unique, and different from a regular highway. The trees, rock cliffs, curves, and creek are part of what makes it special. Blasting through cliffs, cutting down trees, and impacting the creek would permanently change the character of the road and destroy many of the things people come here to see.

I also do not believe widening the road is the best way to improve safety. There are many other options that would cost less and cause far less damage. The DOT could add rumble strips, lower speed limits, improve warning signs, create more pull-outs for slower traffic, improve pavement markings, and repair problem areas along the existing roadway. These are practical solutions that would make the road safer without destroying what makes it worth driving in the first place.

In fact, making the road wider and straighter will likely encourage people to drive faster. Drivers naturally speed up when roads are wider and have fewer curves. That seems like the opposite of what should happen on a scenic byway where people are supposed to slow down and enjoy the scenery.

I am also concerned about the amount of money this project would require. Blasting rock formations, removing trees, changing drainage, and altering the creek environment will cost a tremendous amount of money. Why spend millions changing the entire road when that money could be used to repair and maintain the scenic byway we already have?

Many people have watched other DOT projects slowly take away the character of scenic roads that tourists once enjoyed driving. Once the trees are gone and the cliffs are blasted away, they are gone forever. You cannot put them back.

The public has also lost trust because of what is currently happening on Highway 385. Many residents feel that promises about preserving the Black Hills are not matching what they are seeing on the ground. Because of that, this project raises concerns that the road is being changed to serve outside interests rather than the people who actually enjoy and use the scenic byway.

This road does not need to become another wide highway. It needs maintenance, repairs, and targeted safety improvements. The scenic beauty of this byway is one of its greatest assets, and once it is damaged, it cannot be restored.

I urge you to reject the proposal to widen and straighten the road and instead focus on preserving the scenic character of the byway while making reasonable safety improvements.

Fri 06/05/2026 5:15 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed widening and straightening of the Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to Newcastle, Wyoming.

As a pharmacist who has driven this route frequently for work, I understand the importance of transportation safety. I have traveled this road in all seasons and weather conditions, including winter storms, icy conditions, and periods of reduced visibility. While there are certainly opportunities to improve safety, I am not convinced that widening and straightening the roadway is the most effective or responsible solution.

From my perspective, targeted improvements such as better winter maintenance, more timely de-icing, improved pavement conditions, enhanced signage, rumble strips, and additional pull-outs would provide meaningful safety benefits while preserving the unique character of the roadway. These measures would address specific safety concerns without requiring large-scale alteration of the landscape.

What concerns me most is the permanent nature of the proposed changes. Blasting through rock formations, removing mature trees, and altering areas adjacent to the creek would fundamentally transform a road that many residents and visitors value precisely because of its natural setting. Once these features are removed, they cannot realistically be restored.

I also question whether sufficient consideration has been given to the environmental impacts of the project. What wildlife surveys have been conducted? Which bird species currently utilize the trees slated for removal? How will nesting areas be affected? What impacts will construction have on deer, wild turkeys, songbirds, small mammals, pollinators, and other species that rely on the existing habitat? What effect will modifications near the creek have on aquatic ecosystems, water quality, erosion, and riparian vegetation?

These questions deserve thorough answers before irreversible changes are made.

There is also an aspect of this roadway that is difficult to quantify but nevertheless important. Many people use scenic roads not simply to travel from one point to another, but to experience the landscape. After a long workday, this drive offers a sense of calm and connection to the natural environment. The trees, rock formations, curves, and creek create an experience that encourages people to slow down, pay attention, and appreciate where they are. Converting the corridor into a wider and straighter roadway risks sacrificing those qualities.

In addition, roadway design influences driver behavior. Wider, straighter roads often result in higher operating speeds. They also don't offer variation and subject a drowsy person to boredom, which could result in falling asleep at the wheel. If safety is truly the objective, it seems reasonable to ask whether encouraging faster travel while reducing driver participation is consistent with the purpose of a scenic byway.

I am also concerned about the financial priorities represented by this project. The costs associated with rock excavation, tree removal, creek impacts, drainage modifications, and other reconstruction activities are likely substantial. At a time when maintenance needs exist throughout the transportation system, I believe taxpayers deserve a clear explanation of why such extensive reconstruction is preferable to preserving and improving the roadway that already exists.

Finally, many members of the public have become skeptical due to ongoing work along Highway 385 especially around Lake Pactola. Whether justified or not, there is a growing perception that scenic preservation is often promised but not always delivered. As a result, projects involving major landscape alteration face understandable scrutiny.

I encourage the Department to reconsider this proposal and focus instead on practical safety improvements, roadway maintenance, winter operations, and preservation of the scenic and environmental resources that make this byway unique.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Fri 06/05/2026 5:18 PM

Dear Mark,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Highway 85 improvement project through Ice Box Canyon near Cheyenne Crossing.

As a lifelong resident of the Lead and Deadwood area, I have watched the Black Hills change significantly over the years. While some growth and development are inevitable, it is disappointing to see more of our natural landscapes altered in ways that permanently diminish their unique character. Once scenic roads are widened, straightened, and transformed into modern highways, the natural beauty that made them special can never be restored.

Many people choose to live in the Black Hills—and countless visitors travel here each year—because of the scenery, the winding roads, and the opportunity to experience the landscape as it exists today. Highway 85 through Ice Box Canyon is one of the most beautiful and distinctive drives in the region. The

canyon, creek, rock formations, and surrounding environment are irreplaceable assets that deserve protection.

I have driven this road hundreds of times, including and have never found it unsafe when driven responsibly. Safe travel depends largely on driver behavior, attentiveness, and appropriate speeds. Expanding or redesigning the road in ways that encourage faster travel risks sacrificing the very qualities that make this route valuable.

There are already alternative routes available for travelers seeking a faster or more direct trip to Newcastle. Highway 85 through Ice Box Canyon serves a different purpose. It offers residents and visitors a slower, scenic experience that reflects the character of the Black Hills. Preserving that experience should be considered an important priority.

I know I am not alone in this position. Many local residents have expressed concerns about this project and the permanent impact it would have on one of the Hills' most treasured landscapes. Local voices should carry significant weight when decisions are made about the future of places that we know, use, and cherish.

Once these changes are made, there will be no way to recover what is lost. I respectfully urge you to consider the long-term value of preserving Ice Box Canyon and to oppose any unnecessary alterations that would compromise its scenic and natural character.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Fri 06/05/2026 5:39 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to submit my comments regardingM the proposed Highway 85 project.

I respectfully urge the South Dakota Department of Transportation not to proceed with this project. I believe the proposed reconstruction and widening are unnecessary and would permanently alter the character and natural beauty of this important corridor in the Black Hills.

I have lived in the Black Hills for nearly 30 years and have driven Highway 85 extensively during all seasons, both for personal travel and as a commercial driver. Throughout those years, I have experienced winter weather, heavy traffic periods, and a wide variety of road conditions without encountering issues that would justify a project of this magnitude.

Highway 85 is more than a transportation route. It is part of the scenic landscape that residents and visitors value. Road widening, blasting, retaining walls, expanded shoulders, and other significant modifications would change the character of the area in ways that cannot be reversed once completed.

I am also concerned about the loss of public trust resulting from previous highway projects in the Black Hills. Many residents have seen firsthand how roadway improvements can dramatically alter the landscape. As a result, there is understandable concern that this project could have greater impacts than currently anticipated.

Given the estimated cost of approximately \$58 million, I believe taxpayer dollars would be better spent maintaining existing roads and addressing higher-priority transportation needs rather than undertaking a major reconstruction project on a roadway that has served residents and visitors well for decades.

Based on my personal experience using Highway 85 over nearly three decades, I do not believe this project is necessary and respectfully request that SDDOT reconsider and discontinue plans for the proposed reconstruction.

Please include my comments in the official project record.

Fri 06/05/2026 5:44 PM

I would like to go on record as opposing the plan to reconstruct Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

Fri 06/05/2026 6:43 PM

Mr. Malone,

I felt the need to write to voice my opposition to any "reconstruction" on Hwy 85 - it is such a beautiful drive and it would be sad to see it become what Hwy 385 is now. My husband and I retired out here in the Hills and love taking drives along our scenic roads - it's sad to think that road would be changed in anyway to accommodate vehicles that overdrive the conditions. Please try lowering the speed limits before drastic measures are taken. Thank you in advance for allowing me to voice my opinion.

Fri 06/05/2026 7:12 PM

Please leave the road in Spearfish Canyon alone. It will ruin the charm of the canyon if you make changes to the winding beautiful road.

Too many accidents? Get a highway patrolman to hand out a few tickets.

Fri 06/05/2026 7:32 PM

We travel that road all the time on trips to Denver and up to our daughters land off Cold Creek. Theresa absence is shoulders and then possibility of slipping off the road is awful. I hope you do what you need to do to make it safer. A death is far worse than the loss of a rock wall.

Fri 06/05/2026 8:19 PM

I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed reconstruction of Hwy 85. It is such a beautiful drive as is. If you widen it and cut out the curves, people will just drive faster. Maybe the speed limit needs to be lowered instead. I would agree with select areas of reconstruction, but not in places where

it took away the scenic beauty - ie blasting cliffs in order to widen it, etc., and definitely not the entire stretch of road - only very limited small areas. It's a waste of taxpayer money that could be more wisely spent elsewhere- or just not spent at all so the taxpayers could get a break. (As a side note, I have lived in South Dakota my entire life and have lived in Spearfish for 55 years, so have driven the road many times.)

Thank You

Fri 06/05/2026 8:36 PM

Please leave the road in Spearfish Canyon alone. It will ruin the charm of the canyon if you make changes to the winding beautiful road.

Too many accidents? Get a highway patrolman to hand out a few tickets.

Sat 06/06/2026 5:51 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am a resident of Keystone, SD, grew up in Rapid City, and have driven Highway 85 between Deadwood and Spearfish innumerable times over my lifetime. Although I am all for traffic safety, I am firmly opposed to the planned improvements to Highway 85, which I believe will negatively impact what is one of the most scenic drives in the Black Hills as well as the sensitive ecology along Spearfish Creek. Please do not widen or straighten this road where it will impact Spearfish Creek or the surrounding canyon walls. I expect that similar improvements to safety can instead be made through signage, reducing speed (including through strict law enforcement), and other improvements to the roadway (rumble strips, etc).

Sat 06/06/2026 9:12 AM

Mr. Malone,

With regard to the potential Hwy 85 project, I'd like to voice my opinion.

The beauty of the Black Hills is slowly being chipped away typically to put more money in one person's or many people's pockets. At some point we must say NO. We need to preserve this area.

I didn't agree with the Hwy 385 expansion and I don't agree with this. Please keep the Black Hills as is. The state does a wonderful job of maintaining roads out here and I greatly appreciate it. Please don't continue to chip away its beauty.

Sat 06/06/2026 9:14 AM

Dear Sir,

I have become aware of the study to reconstruct parts of highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

Please limit the project to the absolute minimum to improve safety, THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM.

I realize safety is a concern but highway projects in SD are getting stupid ridiculous. There is currently a huge project in progress north of Corson on highway 11 to raise the road bed something like 6 to 12 FEET to prevent flooding. In the 30+ years that I have lived near there, I have never seen the road being even close to flooding at the existing grade level! Was raising it 12 FEET really necessary? That project seems like an incredible waste of taxpayer dollars, incredible.

Please, in the future, and especially where highway 85 is concerned, consider limiting your scope to the absolute minimums, which seems to be not the case now. It feels as if you are determined to spend federal highway dollars in their entirety regardless of the benefit. The chief motivating factor seems to be to get those federal dollars out the door. ENOUGH!!!

P.S. How about a simple bicycle trail from Garretson to the Palisades State Park, utilizing the back way in through the old park entrance area? If we have federal dollars to waste, how about actually doing some good with it? As it stands now, one has to ride bicycle on the narrow shoulder of State Highway 11 to get there.

Sat 06/06/2026 9:57 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am a resident of Keystone, SD, and have driven on the beautiful Highway 85 between Deadwood and Spearfish many times. Although I am all for traffic safety, I am firmly opposed to the planned improvements to Highway 85, which I believe will negatively impact what is one of the most scenic drives in the Black Hills as well as the sensitive ecology along Spearfish Creek. Please do not widen or straighten this road where it will impact Spearfish Creek or the surrounding canyon walls. I expect that similar improvements to safety can instead be made through signage, reducing speed (including through strict law enforcement), and other improvements to the roadway (rumble strips, etc).

Sat 06/06/2026 1:01 PM

Dear Mr. Malone:

I am writing to express my total opposition to this project.

People come to visit our Black Hills just for the type of road that US Highway 85 is now.

There is no more beautiful stretch of road in the hills.

Making Highway 85 a duplicate of what is being done to US 385 at present is a travesty.

The role of government is not to make everything idiotproof. There is still the concept of personal responsibility involved; if you do something reckless, you will face negative consequences.

Please repave US 85 as needed, but do not delete the present character of this unique road. If traffic is an issue, work with the state of Wyoming to reroute US 85 through Sundance, then down WY 585 to 4-Corners and thence on to Newcastle. WY-585 is a much less scenic and much straighter road.

Sat 06/06/2026 9:04 PM

If the road needs repaving, do that. But, please do not destroy the beauty of that road but cutting trees and hillsides.

Sun 06/07/2026 7:26 AM

The Spearfish Canyon road is so beautiful. Please do not change it! We so enjoy going through it exactly how it is.

Sun 06/07/2026 9:47 AM

Just rode 85 from CC to Buckhorn, one of the most beautiful roads in the Hills yesterday(Sat 10-11AM). At 50 mph it is a wonderful scenic road. Saw 3 SD fatality signs on the WIDEST/STRAIGHTEST part of the road! Only traffic was 3 cars, 2 bikes and a logging truck-NO ONE behind us even when going 40 mph!

85 does not need to be made into a Superhighway like u are doing to 385 over 5 years! 385 is being ruined and will have more fatalities do to the increased speed! We rode the section "completed" from 44 north towards Deadwood with a group of 40 motorcycles 2 weeks ago. Everyone was going 70+ mph where we used to go 55!

The roads in the Hills are what limit the deaths, making them faster will only increase the deaths. No amount of speed limit enforcement will change that fact!

Sun 06/07/2026 10:24 AM

Hello Mr. Malone,

Leave Highway 85 alone.

Given the mess your department has made of Highway 385, the taxpayers of this state have no reason to trust your department to do anything but rip up and destroy more of the scenic Black Hills with little benefit.

It seems to be a boondoggle, at best.

Your department has lost public trust.

Sun 06/07/2026 11:47 AM

Mr. Malone, I am writing this email to express my opposition to the Hwy 85 project between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming boarder. These types of projects are unnecessary and a waste of taxpayer's money. This highway is fine just the way it is with maybe yhe exception of normal maintenance. Please do not proceed with this project. You can never undo the damage caused to our beautiful Black Hills by construction of this nature. I feel money would be better spent on educating drivers.

Sun 06/07/2026 4:05 PM

I attended the June 4th Meeting in Deadwood regarding the above DOT project.

I am against your overall plan. Here are my suggested alternatives.

Repave the highway, install guard rails and reflectors along the troublesome curves and save millions. Then please leave our hills.

Also please mark the crosswalks on the highways running through Deadwood. You are so interested in human life, and yet we have had two fatalities within the last couple of years at intersections and pedestrian crossings.

The state is constantly complaining about budgets and yet have no problem spending millions on this unnecessary project.

And Last,

Regardless of what the Black Hills Pioneer said, 95% of the people at that meeting are against this project and **FEAR THAT IT WILL END UP LIKE THE HWY 385 PROJECT.**

Mon 06/08/2026 7:08 AM

The highway 85 "improvement" proposal should be scrapped. Tourism is, by far, our state's biggest money maker and this proposal would take one of our biggest tourist draws and shoot it between the eyes. The existing natural beauty of that road in particular cannot be improved by widening and straightening. If anything, perhaps some pull-out updates and signage for slower traffic to pull off would help mitigate and prevent unwise attempts at passing. The cost of this project will be staggering, but the cost to our tourism revenue will dwarf the upfront cost.

Mon 06/08/2026 8:21 AM

Good Morning

I want to commend you and your associates for your presentation last week in Deadwood. It was very clear and informative.

I also want to commend you and your group for being able to keep a straight face when faced with some of the most stupid questions I have heard: climate change, wild life bridges and the transplanting of trees.

We have driven that road several times pulling either a large trailer with snowmobiles or camper, something not mentioned, I am always concerned about the lack of shoulders, thank you for taking this on.

We have lived IN THIS COUNTY for 50 years, so I appreciate your efforts and honesty.

Mon 06/08/2026 11:01 AM

I am writing in opposition to the straightening and widening of highway 85. I believe there will be significant damage to the beauty and pristine essence that is available in this beautiful roadway.

We shouldn't take federal money for roadways just to make it cheaper for us. It should be a necessity. People will still speed and be reckless on this stretch of the road regardless of if it is widened and some curves are taken out. People have alternative routes if they are truly in such a hurry to get somewhere and don't want to enjoy the beauty of that area. This beauty is what makes the black hills unique once we change it we can not reverse our actions.

Please take the public's opinions into consideration.

Mon 06/08/2026 12:30 PM

Dear Mark,

It was a pleasure meeting you and the other DOT staff and design team members last week. I appreciated the opportunity to host the public meeting and learn more about the proposed Highway 85 project.

That said, I remain surprised that the project is being considered in its current form. Based on the comments shared during the meeting, it seemed that an **overwhelming majority** of attendees expressed concerns about the proposed changes. From my perspective, well over 95% of those present did not support the project as presented.

I can certainly understand the need for roadway improvements such as repaving, and I can also see merit in limited adjustments that may improve access or safety near Trailhead Lodge. Likewise, adding guardrails in key locations and reviewing speed limits on certain curves could be reasonable measures to enhance safety.

However, I believe that the winding character and scenic beauty of this stretch of Highway 85 are among its most valued attributes. Significant realignment of the roadway would fundamentally alter the experience of traveling through this area and, in my opinion, would be a loss for both residents and visitors.

I hope the SDDOT carefully considers the thoughtful and respectful feedback provided by the approximately over 125 people who attended the meeting. Those in attendance took the time to share their opinions, and I believe their comments reflected a strong desire to preserve the unique character of this roadway while addressing legitimate safety concerns.

Thank you for your time, your willingness to listen, and your consideration of the public's input.

Mon 06/08/2026 1:23 PM

Thank you for holding the public comment meeting in Deadwood 5/4/26. It is hard to stand up and present to an angry mob. You were professional and respectful.

I am against the improvements. I would like to see this stretch of hwy to be designated as 2 and 4 wheeled traffic and a reduced speed limit. Trucks directed to use Wyoming 585.

Even if we have to revisit this issue again in the future, it seems to be the best option right now. Once this is blasted and retaining walls put in the stream, it is gone forever. And that is sad.

I know you have been working on this for years. No doubt the deadline to spend the money is approaching. I honestly understand your assignment and dilemma.

This is one of the last roads of its kind in the Black Hills. It is also an economic boost. People come to ride that experience. Boulder Canyon, Hwy 385, and exit 17 to Deadwood are all people movers. We need to keep some of the wild road experience beauty and not source it out.

Mon 06/08/2026 2:42 PM

Mark, I want to thank you for meeting me at the meeting on Thursday. I found your presentation very helpful and reassuring. I admit to a certain level of scepticism about how projects like this evolve but found what was given was thoughtful and studied. I hope as it moves forward, the doubts can be allayed. One suggestion I would make is that the speed limits be lowered in advance of the actual project start, at least in the East 9 miles. I think it would start addressing some safety issues. Again, thanks for the good presentation and your work on this project.

Mon 06/08/2026 3:47 PM

Dear sir, i am writing this as a lifelong resident who is tired of seeing the scenery in the hills being destroyed by pandering to the lowest IQ ,and least qualified drivers with these "rebuids". I have seen 385. this is all in the chase for almighty tourist dollars.

Tourists come here FOR the scenery. not to wait in endless construction zones.

If the claim is safety, well, if you cant drive the road, stay off it. If you crash,well,so be it.

What's next?Needles hiway? Iron Mtn Road?

PLEASE STOP THIS FOOLISHNESS

Tue 06/09/2026 7:15 AM

Please leave the road in Spearfish Canyon alone. It will ruin the charm of the canyon if you make changes to the winding beautiful road.

Tue 06/09/2026 11:12 AM

No. I do not want this project as presented by DOT at this time (June 2026). My reasons are varied, but key among them is DOT's unwillingness to involve Black Hills people in *Hills wide discussions about, and ways of resolving, the issues triggered by this project*. Granted, that reaching people Hills wide is a rough assignment, but it is as important as the project itself. Why? Because this is NOT a stand alone issue and DOT knows it. This project involves impacts on upper Spearfish Canyon and the Limestone Plateau, but another such project, *the reconstruction of U.S. 14 A, Cheyenne Crossing to Savoy (c. 2032) will arrive right on its heels*. In other words we are looking at landscape impacts that go beyond the Crossing to Wyo. line project, at projects in greater Spearfish Canyon, a stretch of Black Hills landscape that has drawing power of Mt. Rushmore significance. And there will be no going back. The short of this is that the 4 June public meeting, the meeting that we were given such short notice on, the meeting that the time allowed for public comment was pathetically short, and the meeting for which your agency failed to provide a transcript (minutes are no substitute)—that meeting is now taking shape as the beginning, not the end of this issue.

Tue 06/09/2026 11:39 AM

Mr. Malone, I implore you to please reevaluate the proposed plan to widen Highway 85 from Highway 14A to the Wyoming border. This is truly one of the most scenic drives in the Black Hills and more destruction of the beautiful limestone and granite cliffs is just such a waste. Perhaps more speed limit signage or possibly a few pull offs for slower traffic.

Please please do not make this drive look like the hideous mess that the State has caused on highway 385. If the visitor wants straight roads, then they should travel the Interstate.

Tue 06/09/2026 12:21 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed construction project between Cheyenne Crossing and Newcastle.

As a lifelong and generational South Dakotan and someone who deeply values the Black Hills, I believe this proposal represents a troubling willingness to permanently alter one of the most beautiful and unique landscapes in our state in the name of convenience and liability reduction.

The canyon, the creeks, the wildlife habitat, the towering rock formations, and the scenic character of this route are not simply obstacles to engineering. They are part of the very identity of the Black Hills. Once blasted, excavated, and reshaped, they can never truly be restored. Future generations will never

have the opportunity to experience this landscape as we know it today.

What troubles me most is the reasoning behind such drastic alterations. South Dakota has always required personal responsibility from those who travel our roads. We expect drivers to obey speed limits, pay attention to weather conditions, adjust for mountain roads, and exercise common sense. We do not widen every curve, flatten every hill, or blast through every canyon simply because some drivers fail to operate their vehicles safely.

If safety is the concern, then accountability should be the focus. Better signage, lower speed limits, increased enforcement, public education, and targeted improvements should be explored before considering irreversible destruction of a natural corridor.

The Black Hills are not merely transportation routes. They are a national treasure and a sacred responsibility. We are stewards of this land, not owners with the right to reshape it at will. Every generation inherits the duty to preserve these places for the next. Once a canyon is blasted away, once a stream is rerouted, once a mountainside is removed, there is no putting it back.

Many of us are increasingly concerned about the continued pressure to develop, expand, and modify the Black Hills to accommodate growth and tourism. At some point, we must ask, what are we preserving? If every beautiful place is altered to meet the demands of increasing traffic and development, we risk losing the very thing that draws people here in the first place.

South Dakota does not need to become everywhere else. The Black Hills do not need to be engineered into submission. We need leaders willing to protect what remains, exercise restraint, and recognize that some places are worth preserving exactly as they are.

I urge you to reject this proposal and instead pursue solutions that prioritize driver responsibility, reasonable safety measures, and preservation of the natural character of the Black Hills.

The landscape between Cheyenne Crossing and Newcastle belongs not only to us, but to future generations of South Dakotans. We have a responsibility to leave it better than we found it, not blasted apart and forever changed.

Tue 06/09/2026 12:22 PM

Dear Sir,

I would like to have on record my opposition to the proposed changes to Highway 85. I reside in southeast Wyoming and have a cabin near Lead, SD. I travel this highway at least once a month and my favorite part of the drive is from Newcastle, WY to Lead, SD. As a driver I can't see the scenery as much as my passengers can because, yes, the road requires careful attention. But if a driver follows the speed limit and pays attention to the posted speed for the curves then the drive is delightful.

There is no where else I have traveled that matches the feeling of passing along the rock walls, seeing the forest and watching Spearfish creek as it rushes along. If the road is widened as proposed the

traveler will lose this amazing experience. I would agree that the road needs milled and regraded as the shoulders are crumbling. Adding even 12 inches to each shoulder would be nice but PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE do NOT destroy this beautiful drive by widening it as proposed.

Passing lanes are not needed especially if there were signs alerting slower traffic about pull out areas approaching. I have traveled this highway for 30 years and have never encountered an accident, but I do have a friend who lost a daughter in an accident south of the Hardy Guard station. But my friend will agree that the road now has a larger shoulder area and less of a drop off from the pavement than what it was like when her daughter had her accident.

In my opinion if the reconstruction takes place as proposed it will destroy the scenic value of that part of the Black Hills. Traffic will be faster, but at what cost? As a society it is good for us to slow down and appreciate the beauty of nature. After all, it is only a 30 minute slow down in one's trip since one can travel faster in Wyoming and then take advantage of the passing lane once they are north of Cheyenne Crossing. It would be a travesty for the state of South Dakota to spend a large amount of money changing the road when it only needs milling and resurfacing.

The state of South Dakota would be well advised to listen to the public input and realize how treasured and unique the Black Hills experience is as one travels U.S. Highway 85. Please do not destroy it.

Tue 06/09/2026 1:15 PM

Mr. Malone,

I will keep this brief. As a frequent commuter from Newcastle to Lead/Deadwood I am strongly against the highway 85 widening project. Although it does need resurfaced in many spots, I believe widening is a waste of time and money. The twisting curves along creeks and other features is what makes the stretch unique. It's also my strong belief that widening /straightening the road will just allow people to drive faster creating zero improvement for safety.

Tue 06/09/2026 2:48 PM

Hi Mark, please don't widen and straighten US 85. We like it the way it is.

Wed 06/10/2026 10:37 AM

Not a South Dakota resident but still am concerned about highway 85 project. I think do minimal upgrades as needed. Nothing more.

Wed 06/10/2026 1:28 PM

Mark,

Along with many other locals, I strongly oppose the proposed project. To widen lanes, straighten curves, blast rock, affect the drainage, and all this project entails will not improve safety. Making the road

wider and straighter will only encourage people to drive faster. This is unnecessary spending and ecosystem disturbances along the canyon that will not resolve the issue.

SDDOT has my opposition to this project.

Wed 06/10/2026 8:06 PM

Mr. Malone,

I was driving Hwy 385 today and I was again struck by how much has changed now on that drive, and not for the better. It has drastically changed how the Hills look but I would also argue the DOT has made it much less safe. It is going to be a speedway now with cars going 70+ mph...they certainly will not be going slower than they did when it was actually a scenic highway. Now, it seems DOT wants to do the same thing to Hwy 85 and I join with the rest of the citizens in asking you to please, just leave it alone. I know you have federal dollars to spend, but they don't always have to be spent just to be spent. Now granted, I did not hear your presentation last week and I'm sure you are able to fully justify this, but I'm guessing safety is your top reason and it seems like everyone just claims safety though to justify everything these days (we could have a deep dive here into COVID as a prime example of the abuse of that). I've heard from many, many citizens who are opposed to this (not that that stopped 385 or the coming project on 44)...when will DOT take THEIR wishes into account? Could you please this time?

Thu 06/11/2026 3:46 PM

The Black Hills have long been a landscape that has inspired a special feeling amongst visitors, nearby city neighbors, and residents, a sense of place that is set apart from the rest of the world. Enveloped by a canopy of vegetation over the highways, new vistas once opened up with each turn along the mountain roads, contributing to the unique experience of our one-of-a-kind countryside. This special character of our Hills has been under attack for many years with the straightening and widening of many of our favorite byways, including Norris Peak Road, Sheridan Lake Road, US 14A, US 16, and US 385.

I have been a personal victim to the so-called improvements when Victoria Lake Road's imprint changed from a tree canopied 14 foot gravel surface with six foot bank cuts as needed to a whopping gash of a 32 foot roadway with 200 foot bank cut. I don't recognize the turn to my own "home road". I have lost a part of my personal landscape, and it is a constant irritation that daily affronts my senses. If I were younger, I would move.

Now there is a new project proposed to rewrite the character of U.S. 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border, using the same arguments based on safety, accident history, and amount of traffic on the route. If needed, let us ameliorate roadway deficiencies, but take into consideration the desire to maintain the character of the area by making improvements with modified plans that accommodate the unique beauty we all wish to conserve. Let us not dismantle another landscape in the Black Hills with undiscerning, cookbook highway specifications. Not every road needs to be built to major arterial standards. Your own design manual states "There is a great deal of latitude in the design of a roadway relative to its functional classification." Do not homogenize our landscape to be like "everywhere else USA".

Friday, June 12, 2026 9:15 AM

I am writing to express my full support for the proposed reconstruction of the highway from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border.

I have owned a cabin a few miles southeast of O'Neil for around thirty years. Because I travel this road frequently during summer and winter, I have a clear understanding of its current condition. It is evident that the time for a full reconstruction has come.

While I have seen various comments on social media suggesting this project is unnecessary, many of those views do not seem to come from individuals who use this route regularly. I believe the South Dakota Department of Transportation should remain proactive in maintaining and rebuilding our infrastructure. Simply patching deteriorating roads is not a sustainable solution and will not meet modern standards.

Please accept this as my formal public comment in favor of the project. We must do what is necessary to bring this portion of the highway up to today's standards.

Fri 06/12/2026 9:37 AM

Hey, sorry about the wise crack at the last meeting in Deadwood about you having a meeting with the deer and elk. The negativity was getting so bad, that I thought a little humor would release a little tension.

My question is, about something that should have been done years ago.

Would it be possible to have caution lights on both sides of Trailhead to inform traffic to slow down and be aware of activity in the area. For years it has been like a drag strip and I believe that after the road is changed in the future, it will only get worse.

I would appreciate hearing your thoughts on this matter.

Sat 06/13/2026 2:38 PM

Hello Mark,

I have a great idea for saving taxpayers money on the proposed and very expensive changes to Hwy 85.

There are very few signs on the many miles of the road that indicate speed should be reduced or that there are curves coming up.

If the state were to invest in perhaps 25 signs, I'm sure that post on your public handout showing the 2.8 mile per hour figure would change significantly.. not only the speed for those two months but also the jags indicating "people were using their brakes" as was spoken by one of the moderators from DOT present.

Small change. Big improvement on speed, brake use, and SAFETY.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Please consider investing in adequate signage.

Sun 06/14/2026 2:24 AM

Dear Mark Malone,

Please cancel the Highway 85 reconstruction project. The Black Hills are sacred to the Lakota and special to local residents and people worldwide. The Black Hills must be protected for future generations.

Sun 06/14/2026 5:13 PM

I am writing to you to oppose the Highway 85 Cheyenne Crossing Project. I feel this project should not go forward for several reasons.

My family homesteaded in the Dumont area in 1884. Through almost a century and a half we have witnessed changes in the Black Hills.

One of those changes has been the rebuilding of many scenic highways and the destruction of historic roads and the natural beauty of the Black Hills. Our scenic highways became wide, often 4-lane highways so people, especially tourists and Rally visitors, could drive 65 everywhere. You destroy scenic roads just so people can drive fast.

I have heard reasoning from SDDOT employees that roads had to be rebuilt due to high traffic counts, an objective/numeric reason. I have questioned them if they considered subjective reasons for high traffic counts, such as people love to travel on scenic roadways, and that drives up the count. I never got a definitive answer.

The Black Hills used to have many scenic highways, such as 14A, Boulder Canyon from Sturgis to Deadwood, 85 I-90 to Deadwood, 385 Deadwood to Hill City, 16 Rapid City to Mt. Rushmore, and more. What once were slow, winding, scenic roads are now concrete freeways through the Hills.

Our beautiful Spearfish Creek runs alongside Highway 85. Doing the extensive rebuilding you propose would affect the Creek and the native animals and plants that are found along its banks; just so people can go faster.

I am asking you to save one of the last scenic state highways we have left. Stop this project and do only the minimal repairs to the road that are necessary.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

June 9, 2026

You are no doubt aware of the fact that the U.S. Highway 85 Project, in Upper Spearfish Canyon and near the Wyoming border, is extremely controversial. This is a highly scenic highway which offers South Dakota residents and tourists a highly positive experience in every season of the year. The Eagle Cliff Trails, which offer a fantastic experience to cross-country skiers, have become extremely popular in recent years. Any highway project on this stretch of road which widens the highway, changes its alignment, or disturbs the adjacent forest, particularly in the O'Neill Pass area, is going to be highly unpopular with people who love the area and benefit from recreation there. This is truly a stretch of road which should be left alone, as much as possible.

With that in mind, any meeting, hearing or discussion concerning the U.S. Highway 85 Project should be well-publicized and open to the public. Indeed, public participation should be positively encouraged. With such a controversial issue, transparency is crucial. The nearby residents, and people from around the Black Hills region who love that stretch of road, need ample opportunity to participate in the discussions and to be heard.

I write to you as a long-time resident of the Black Hills and a retired attorney. I currently serve as the Chair of the South Dakota Chapter of the Sierra Club. I love and appreciate the Black Hills region for its scenic beauty, recreational potential, clean water and other environmental assets. My hope is that U.S. Highway 85 will not be widened or transformed beyond its current impact on the terrain, Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Mon 06/15/2026 11:05 AM

Hello Mark,

I recently heard of a project intended to widen highway 85, along with a few other unnecessary changes to the beautiful environment that we have here in the Black Hills.

I just wanted to write you and express my concern regarding this.

I understand that roads are an essential aspect of infrastructure and are necessary for the society that we as humans have built. But at some point, I think we all just need to take a look at what is around us. The Black Hills have something special. I look at a map of the Black Hills and I see green. The last thing we need is to replace that with more gray.

I would love to know more about this project and why it's happening. Maybe I'm missing something.

Mon 06/15/2026 11:31 AM

Mr. Malone,

We are writing to provide written comment on the proposed U.S. Highway 85 From Wyoming to Cheyenne Crossing road improvement project and to express our full and strong support of the project. As South Dakota landowners near the Wyoming border, we routinely drive this stretch of highway. While we recognize that infrastructure projects of this scale naturally generate community

debate regarding property, aesthetic, and environmental impacts, we believe it is imperative that the fundamental mission of the South Dakota Department of Transportation: designing and maintaining roadways that ensure the traveling public gets home safely are prioritized. The current configuration of this roadway poses clear safety risks that cannot be ignored.

Roads built to outdated engineering standards without adequate clear zones or physical shoulders leave zero margin for error. If a motorist experiences a mechanical issue, has a medical emergency, can't see the edge of the road due to snow or other weather conditions, or simply swerves to avoid wildlife, the lack of any shoulder whatsoever in many sections, coupled with the steep slope from the road to the ditch, can turn a minor driving error into a severe roadway departure crash. Even with no driving error we say a prayer when the on-coming traffic is logging truck, and a prayer and a swear word when the oncoming traffic is a logging truck on a curve. It is disturbing to us that opponents of the project seem to minimize the danger of having a six inch shoulder adjacent to steep drop off. Do we support the proposed shoulders and clear zones? Yes!

Do we value the beauty and quality of Spearfish Creek. Yes, it is magical! Spearfish Creek is part of over 100 years of our family's history in the Black Hills. Do we support environmentally sound solutions and best management practices when working in an environmentally sensitive area? Absolutely! However, having worked in environmental engineering and geology fields for a combined total of over 80 years, we understand that these projects are highly regulated by state and federal law and SDDOT must comply best management practices to protect the creek. We see nothing in the plan that would lead to environmental impacts that are any different than what the current roadway poses to the creek and the environment.

To those who might oppose the project based on scenic concerns, please remember that for those that live and work in the Hills, we don't need to travel the roadway to see the beauty of this place. We value the safety of our family and neighbors over the aesthetic of the road corridor for those that are just passing through. We always tell friends and family that come to visit us to be very, very careful on the last 15 miles of their drive - it is likely the most dangerous stretch of their journey. We look forward to the day that we don't have to hold our breath waiting for them to arrive safely. Our only suggestion to the project is that the schedule gets moved up. The road is currently in such bad condition and although the recent patches help, it is hard to imagine what the condition will be like in 2030.

Thank you for the extensive outreach you have done on this project with the stakeholders and for listening and making this project be the least impactful while still providing a safe travelling experience for all.

Mon 06/15/2026 6:12 PM

please don't do it, pollution and unnatural environmental shifts from construction are not healthy for the ecosystem. higher speeds are not necessary either. this is one of the most beautiful areas in the hills and does not need to be tampered with further.

Mon 06/15/2026 10:46 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I read where the state of South Dakota is planning to rebuild Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the South Dakota/Wyoming line. I am opposed to this plan. Why does the state have to destroy scenic byways for mining and/or speeding up traffic. Tourism is one of the leading industries in South Dakota and brings in millions of dollars in revenue to the state and to individuals. The state seems intent on building Interstate-type roads through the Black Hills. People who live here and those who come to visit would rather enjoy the scenic byways at a slower pace. By destroying the Hills, the state will lose those visitors who come here for the beauty and uniqueness of this great part of South Dakota. What is next? Widening Iron Mountain Road or putting a three- or four-lane highway through Custer State Park? Please don't destroy the Black Hills by building superhighways everywhere. Let people slow down and enjoy our serene beauty.

Please count me and my wife as two people who oppose these insane construction projects.

Tue 06/16/2026 6:46 AM

Mark,

After seeing the opposition to the Highway 85 project at the June 4th meeting in Deadwood, at a minimum there needs to be additional public meetings and input regarding this project. The highway 385 project is a debacle with mountains blasted away and destruction of a large swath of the sacred Black Hills.

How many "ordinary citizens" were part of the "stakeholder group"? How many opposed the project? This project needs to be revisited with a revised stakeholder group that reflects the percentage of local citizens – who are certainly stakeholders in preserving the beauty of the Black Hills – and not invested in bringing every highway here up to federal standards.

Tue 06/16/2026 8:09 AM

Dear Sir

Please do not make this highway into an interstate speedway. The Black Hills is designed to be enjoyed and appreciated for the beauty and peace of the area. We have too many people building large summer homes in the area due to the mix of federal and private lands but you have no control over that issue. You do have the ability to leave the roads alone. I have driven that road a great deal in the 82 years I have lived in South Dakota - most of the time in the Black Hills. The concept of changing roads so there is more ability to go fast or not have accidents or large RV's can travel the road is not a good reason to change a highway. Follow what Co has done and provide pullovers for slow vehicles to move over to allow traffic to move. We have the I 90 for all those purposes. Leave our scenic highways alone. Do not do to this road as you are doing to 385. The changes in the hills for this thoroughfare through the hills is troubling, expensive and very time consuming.

Thank you for your attention to this matter

Tue 06/16/2026 5:34 PM

I am against the highway 85. Do not damage the area with unwanted projects. Focus on protecting our environment not destroying it please.

Tue 06/16/2026 9:40 PM

Mark Malone, I am protesting the current plan for Hwy 85, Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming.

A road plan for resurfacing and modified speed limits, without the straightening and damage to the canyon could be funded by SD. If the federal government is not involved, the criteria to widen the road to the extent that would harm the scenery would not need to be followed.

Tue 06/16/2026 9:56 PM

Hello Mark,

I am a resident of Lawrence County and I am reaching out in opposition of the current proposal of widening Highway 85. The current proposal is too wide and would negatively impact the area and the wildlife that fills it.

Greetings,

I am a Lawrence County resident. I am emailing to state my opposition to the current proposal to widen highway 85 between the Wyoming border and Cheyenne Crossing. I think the currently proposed widening would have irreversible harm to much of the landscape surrounding the highway.

Tue 06/16/2026 10:20 PM

I would like to have south dakota pay for the whole thing and keep the government out of the funding for highway 285 and I dont want them to change the canyon please help us out here I missed the meeting but I heard the details and now have conveyed my thoughts on the situation thank you I appreciate your time

Wed 06/17/2026 12:26 AM

Hi. Please leave Hwy 85 alone - Cheyenne Crossing to WY state line - don't widen it. Y'all have destroyed enough of the beauty of that area as it is. It doesn't need any more "modernization."

Wed 06/17/2026 8:49 AM

I am a resident of Lawrence County and I am reaching out in opposition of the current proposal of widening Highway 85. The current proposal is too wide and would negatively impact the area and the wildlife that fills it.

Wed 06/17/2026 10:29 AM

Good morning Mr Malone,

I am reaching out as a Lawrence County resident to express my opposition to the proposed widening of Hwy 85. The current proposal will negatively impact the area wildlife and natural beauty for local residence while unnecessarily costing tax payers money better spent elsewhere.

Wed 06/17/2026 10:42 AM

I am writing to provide my opposition voice to the proposed widening of Highway 85. The canyon drive in that location is one of the most beautiful in the area. I have seen the impact that the widening of 385 has had on that section of the forest. The proposed width, with the safety barriers, will severely impact Spearfish Creek and all of the wildlife that currently reside in that area. There are also several location to access rock climbing routes. Widening the proposed widths will make it nearly impossible to access many of these recreational areas. Please do not continue with this proposal.

Wed 06/17/2026 12:03 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I'm writing to register my opposition to the proposed reconstruction of US Highway 85 from the Wyoming border to Cheyenne Crossing (Project Number NH 0085(106)0, PCN06J8) as currently planned.

I live and work in the Black Hills, and I've watched this same playbook run on Highway 385. That project promised improvement and delivered a wider, faster road that stripped away the quiet, winding character that made it feel like the Black Hills instead of an interstate bypass. The trees, the curves, the sense of peace that is the Hills, is gone.

This stretch of Highway 85 runs through some of the most intact, least commercialized scenery left in the northern Hills. Straightening curves, widening shoulders, and raising design speeds in the name of "improvement" will do the same thing here: more pavement and faster traffic at the direct expense of the stream corridor, the forest canopy, and the wildlife that depends on the relatively undisturbed habitat along this route. SDDOT's own project goals list protecting the corridor's integrity and the beauty of the Black Hills alongside reducing crash rates, but I'd ask the department to take that first goal as seriously as the second, because the Highway 385 outcome suggests it usually loses.

I'm asking SDDOT to:

- Minimize the construction footprint and avoid unnecessary widening or realignment that isn't required for documented safety or structural needs (pavement and drainage replacement don't require turning this into a high-speed corridor).
- Keep design speeds and curve geometry close to existing conditions rather than optimizing for higher speeds, which increases both habitat disruption and the loss of the road's character.
- Commission a serious wildlife and habitat impact assessment for the stream corridor and forest this route passes through, not just a standard environmental checklist.
- Give residents real time to review and respond to design plans, rather than a narrow comment window most people won't hear about until after decisions are effectively made.

The people who live here, drive this road, and build businesses around the character of this region are the ones who will live with the result long after the contractors leave. I'd ask SDDOT to treat that as a real cost in this project, not an afterthought.

Mark Malone: June 9, 2026
 I am writing in regard to the reconstruction of Highway 85 from Chapparral Crossing to the Wyoming line. As a 73 old Native of the Black Hills, I find myself opposed to this project. A lot of the tourists to this area will tell you they enjoy driving on our smaller roads, as opposed to the 4 and 5 lane roads they have to drive on when they're home. Let them enjoy the hills rather than send them fleeing thru them. I believe that most of our "Locals" will tell you that there is nothing wrong with this road now. Please put our money to better use.

Wed 06/17/2026 6:03 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway 85 from the Wyoming state line to Highway 14A near Cheyenne Crossing.

While I understand the importance of maintaining safe and reliable transportation infrastructure, I am deeply concerned about the potential impacts this project could have on the unique natural beauty, environmental integrity, and recreational value of Spearfish Canyon and the surrounding northern Black Hills.

Spearfish Canyon is one of South Dakota's most treasured scenic areas. Residents and visitors alike value the canyon for its remarkable landscapes, wildlife habitat, hiking opportunities, and peaceful character. Large-scale highway reconstruction risks permanently altering the area's natural features, increasing traffic volumes, disrupting wildlife, and diminishing the scenic experience that draws people to the region.

I appreciate SDDOT's decision to extend the public comment period and encourage the department to carefully consider the concerns raised by community members, conservation advocates, business owners, and visitors who value the long-term preservation of the Black Hills.

I respectfully urge SDDOT to reconsider the current proposal and pursue alternatives that prioritize environmental stewardship, scenic preservation, and the protection of one of South Dakota's most iconic landscapes.

Thu 06/18/2026 7:00 AM

Why is the State of South Dakota insistent on destroying the beauty of Ice Box Canyon because people chose to drive without regard to speed limits and the road conditions. The State and the Federal government has already destroyed the beauty of Hwy 85. If the existing highway needs to be replaced then do so but DO NOT make it wider or straighten out the curves.

Thu 06/18/2026 9:15 AM

Morning, Mark I was not aware of this proposed road project when I purchased the residence and property. So I extremely disappointed to learn part of my land is going to be stolen. Additionally, there was no mention of it from the county or seller of the purposed project during the purchase. I overpaid for the property because of the location, set back from the road, and the scenic drive to and from work. Your project will move the clear zone and road closer to my residence by stealing some of my property in the name of protecting peoples bad decisions to speed or overdriving the road conditions. Also your proposal for the new corner near my residence is actually creating a tighter corner, which will cause more slide offs during winter when they come down the grade from Hardy Station. Additionally, you will be removing some of the natural barriers that protect my residence from the weather. I have worked my whole life, 20 years in the military and a currently a public servant just to be able to purchase the land I have now and the scenic drive. So let me start with this. I drive that road 4 round trips a week at all hours of the day because of my job. Anywhere from early morning, evening, and 3am. I have driven though deep snow, rolling white outs, rain, and ect. You name it and I have probably driven it. Here is my experience from driving the road and my current job. During that time, I have had zero wrecks. The

wrecks I have seen or the vehicles have seen out of control have all been because of speed or over driving the conditions. According to your prestation there has been a lot of accidents on that road of all types. It would probably be safe to say the cause of most of those accidents have been speed, over driving the conditions, careless driving, or DUI. Why is this happening, because there is a severe lack of traffic enforcement from the county and state. The only time, I have seen or heard LE in that area is because of a call for service. Additionally, during winter there is a severe lack of road maintenance (snow removal) The only time I have seen snow removal was early morning or evening. Straiting and increasing the road width and the lack of traffic enforcement will increase speeders and and speed related accidents while stealing my property and several others land. Could the road surface use some maintenance yes, but it does not need widen. Stop destroying the scenic areas people chose to live in and visit. Not every road needs to be an interstate. Lastly, like me I am sure there has been several other new residence that where not told of the project because they are new to the area. I will be contacting an attorney in regards to this matter and providing them your contact information as a point of contact.

Thu 06/18/2026 2:49 PM

Thank you for hosting the public information meeting in Deadwood on Thursday, June 4. On behalf of the Diocese, I joined T.E.C. Director, and her entire staff to attend this meeting to review the proposed major revisions to US Highway 85. During our interactions, we were greatly encouraged by your staff's expressed willingness to work with the diocese to modify the highway design. As requested by your team, we are submitting these formal written comments to ensure our critical concerns are logged into the system to support the necessary design adjustments.

As currently designed, the project shifts the roadbed a significant distance closer to the heart of the T.E.C. campus. While the current roadway is already close, the existing trees and natural hillside serve as a vital buffer that suppresses road noise and keeps our campus private. Our internal estimates show that the new roadbed would sit approximately 100 feet from our nearest cabin, and the cleared right-of-way would end just 50 feet from our chapel.

The reduction in distance, the clearing of trees, and the changes to the slope of the land contained within the right-of-way will create three critical issues for our campus:

- **Loss of Wilderness Character:** The current quiet, wilderness feel of our campus would be deeply compromised by constant road noise and the heavy visual proximity of passing vehicles.
- **Compromised Physical Safety:** Currently, the terrain makes it nearly impossible for a vehicle to intentionally or accidentally run off the road at highway speed and reach our campus. The existing trees, ditches, and bluffs act as a natural stopping mechanism. The proposed proximity removes this safety buffer entirely.
- **Child Safety and Security Risks:** The nightmare scenario for our staff and families is the threat of child abduction. Our current campus is sufficiently hidden from the general public, making it a secure environment for the youth ministries we host. By opening a direct line of sight and placing a high-speed roadway just yards from our facilities, the campus becomes highly visible and easily accessible to passing traffic, drastically increasing our security vulnerabilities.

Proposed Alternative Alignment Option:

To resolve these issues while still allowing the SDDOT to achieve its transit and safety goals, we propose an alternative alignment: shifting the roadbed in the opposite direction. The land on the opposite side of the highway is part of our campus that is not currently in use. (It was the location for the old camp that was abandoned many decades ago.) Because we have no immediate or long-term development plans for that specific tract of land, the diocese is fully prepared to discuss using that property for the highway expansion. This solution would allow the DOT to complete the necessary highway revisions without encroaching upon or compromising the active T.E.C. youth campus. One of your staff that I spoke with that evening commented that making this shift could work better for the revision. As he explained it to me, under the current design, Eastbound traffic will have a long, straight, downhill section of highway where speed would naturally build before hitting the left-hand curve just beyond our campus. Shifting the highway to the north side of the current roadbed would necessitate the addition of a soft curve in the middle of that downhill run which would help smooth out the speed through that entire section.

We look forward to working collaboratively with your design and right-of-way teams to review this proposal.

Thu 06/18/2026 4:00 PM

Hi Mark,

I am just requesting when the construction of the Hwy 85 project happens, that you make sure and take into consideration the wildlife by O'neil Pass. I live in the area, and the elk have a herd in that valley from the existing road and where the proposed road is to go. I hope you are keeping the GFP department involved in this project and hope there is something that can be done to not disturb their habitat and also plan some type of crossing for them under the road maybe???

I just wanted you to be aware of our elk in the area and keep that in mind as you continue your plans for the construction of the road that will impact the wildlife in the area.

Thu 06/18/2026 9:31 PM

Dear Mark,

I am writing to share my concerns regarding the proposed improvements to U.S. Highway 85 from the Wyoming State Line to U.S. Highway 14A.

My biggest concern is the impact on the viewshed and the character of the Black Hills. I love the intimacy of this road and how closely it connects travelers to the surrounding nature. Preserving that feeling is important, as it is a big part of what makes the Black Hills special for both residents and visitors. After seeing what HWY 385 turned into vs. what it once was is a shock. I do not want to see more land and trees be destroyed and it sounds like what you are proposing will do just that.

Of course I want everyone to be safe and no accidents, just like you guys, but I don't think our hills should have to pay for the inevitable. Repavement would suffice.

Thank you for taking the time to come to Deadwood for the recent meeting and for providing information and data about the project. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts and I look forward to seeing how you proceed.

Fri 06/19/2026 8:56 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I often drive up highway 85 and hike in nearby NFS lands to escape into the beauty of the amazing Black Hills.

I believe the alterations proposed would severely degrade the serenity of this beautiful and quaint byway.

Sat 06/20/2026 12:41 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Thank you for extending the public comment period.

I would like to add that a huge part of the tourism draw to our area is the uniqueness of having an undisturbed natural area with the winding curves. Close to trees, mountains, creeks and animals. They, as well as us, appreciate the opportunity to slow down and enjoy the ride. They specifically plan to include these drives in their trip here.

What if in the name of improvements we take away what makes this a destination people seek out? What if fewer come, or they stay for shorter periods of time because we look "just like" everywhere else? Because they aren't forced to slow down and enjoy the scenery, but are able to blaze by on their way somewhere else?

We want our area, including our unique drives, to be a destination, not a means of passing through quickly and efficiently. Maybe you could think of ways to slow people down even more? Turnouts or areas to stop and take pictures would be one example. The goal should not be to quickly pass by.

Sat 06/20/2026 2:56 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I'm writing to register my opposition to the proposed reconstruction of US Highway 85 from the Wyoming border to Cheyenne Crossing (Project Number NH 0085(106)0, PCN06J8) as currently planned.

I live and work in the Black Hills, and I've watched this same playbook run on Highway 385. That project promised improvement and delivered a wider, faster road that stripped away the quiet, winding

character that made it feel like the Black Hills instead of an interstate bypass. The trees, the curves, the sense of peace that is the Hills, is gone.

This stretch of Highway 85 runs through some of the most intact, least commercialized scenery left in the northern Hills. Straightening curves, widening shoulders, and raising design speeds in the name of "improvement" will do the same thing here: more pavement and faster traffic at the direct expense of the stream corridor, the forest canopy, and the wildlife that depends on the relatively undisturbed habitat along this route. SDDOT's own project goals list protecting the corridor's integrity and the beauty of the Black Hills alongside reducing crash rates, but I'd ask the department to take that first goal as seriously as the second, because the Highway 385 outcome suggests it usually loses.

I'm asking SDDOT to:

- Minimize the construction footprint and avoid unnecessary widening or realignment that isn't required for documented safety or structural needs (pavement and drainage replacement don't require turning this into a high-speed corridor).
- Keep design speeds and curve geometry close to existing conditions rather than optimizing for higher speeds, which increases both habitat disruption and the loss of the road's character.
- Commission a serious wildlife and habitat impact assessment for the stream corridor and forest this route passes through, not just a standard environmental checklist.
- Give residents real time to review and respond to design plans, rather than a narrow comment window most people won't hear about until after decisions are effectively made.

The people who live here, drive this road, and build businesses around the character of this region are the ones who will live with the result long after the contractors leave. I'd ask SDDOT to treat that as a real cost in this project, not an afterthought.

Thank you for considering this input.

Sat 06/20/2026 8:33 PM

Mark,

A big No on changing 385. The water shed in on that road. Any damages could greatly affect water quality.

The road needs to be protected not changed.

Sun 06/21/2026 9:08 PM

I am asking that you give this project careful consideration and keep any improvements to a minimum, only what is needed for basic safety improvements. We don't want anything close to another 385 project here.

Wed 06/24/2026 1:53 AM

I'm am writing in opposition to the proposed changes in the highway from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. I do not support the proposed changes. Please listen to the people. This is not good for this beautiful area.

Wed 06/24/2026 6:38 PM

Please leave our hwys the way they are

Wed 06/24/2026 9:24 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to oppose the proposed changes to US Highway 85 through upper Spearfish Canyon and the Limestone Plateau.

This 16-mile stretch is one of the most scenic areas in the Black Hills and the Northern Plains. Its forests, canyon views, and natural roadside setting are part of what makes the region so special.

I am especially concerned about the proposed 3- to 6-foot shoulders and any change to the road's centerline. Moving the centerline would permanently alter the landscape and damage the natural character of the area.

These places are valued because they remain largely unchanged. Once forests are removed or views are altered, they cannot be restored. The proposed changes risk irreversible harm to a treasured scenic corridor.

I hate the changes that have been made to Hwy 385 and respectfully urge the South Dakota Department of Transportation to reconsider these current plans for Hwy 85. Please preserve the existing character of this scenic drive through Spearfish Canyon and the Limestone Plateau.

Thank you for your consideration.

Thu 06/25/2026 10:45 AM

We live off of S Rapid Creek.

My comment on this project is to reduce the speed, add more signage for animals like elk and deer, and do not straighten or ruin the beauty of the road like the DOT ruined the pleasure of driving on 385 to

Pactola. It is now a super highway. Too fast to stop for deer, too fast for motorcycles, and too fast to come up on looky loos driving the old nice slow paced speed.

Direct semi or hauling trucks not through this stretch of road. Take them 4 corners to Sundance.

I understand safety, adding shoulders etc. Most people who are in accidents on this road drive the road too fast because they have never been on it when it was 70 in Rapid, 50 at Lead, and Snowing up here and they don't know the road gets icy or wet even in June up here. We had snow June 11 this year. You cannot stop all stupid from over driving the road.

I am not against the road changes you have proposed in front of Trailhead or the pass. The corner at S Rapid and 85 is crazy sharp.

Just don't ruin the experience and beauty of the road.

Mon 06/29/2026 7:55 AM

Dear Mr. Malone:

Being a resident of the Black Hills and a motorcycle rider, I have concerns for the proposed project. I don't want this project to be years long, costing our environment and time and tax dollars like the Hwy 385 project.

That project took so much of our beautiful scenery. It also caused many accidents. Cost too much taxpayer money. And cost us so much time. Living in Custer that project doubled our miles and time to ride to Sturgis. In 2024 it was barely passable by motorcycle and caused many accidents.

Please consider the cost of this project to our environment, scenery, and tax dollars. Let us be good stewards of what we have here.

Mon 06/29/2026 9:58 AM

I was born in Hotsprings and grew up in Pierre and now have a retirement home south of Deadwood. So we spend a lot of time exploring the Hills. That section of 85 is maybe one of the most beautiful stretches of road that I've traveled and I've traveled a lot.

I am all for having safe roads but certainly they can be made safe without destroying the natural beauty. From my experience driving in the Black hills it seems that there are tourists driving slower to take in the scenery, and there are Lawrence co. or other locals that have seen it all and are in a hurry to get somewhere.

A northern California highway with winding roads had signage instructing you to use a pull out when there was enough traffic behind you. Tourists can take their time and locals can get to the next job.

Please be careful with this most beautiful area.

Mon 06/29/2026 11:32 AM

Hello, writing this email to express our love for Spearfish canyon as it is. I strongly opposed the plan to widen to a double lane. The creek is right there next to it. If we are worried about the accidents, please consider lowering the speed limit and adding stop signs and speed bumps. This is an amazing place that needs to be slow and easy and about enjoying the natural beauty of the Black Hills. This road is not about getting there quickly and being able to pass cars easily.

Mon 06/29/2026 11:46 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am against major changes to the highway. Please just do repairs and maintenance on the current road it will be just fine. Maybe if you're still worried about people dying up there lower the speed limit and have some patrol on it I've never seen anybody patrol it.

The Black Hills scenery on 385 has been destroyed, so people can drive faster. Forget that we enjoy the mountains, valleys, trees, rocks and wildlife, so we can save a few idiots from killing themselves. Why do we keep ripping up our world to save people who choose to act stupid and not take care when driving the scenic roads.

If DOT insists on keeping these people alive, I see the Black Hills having nothing but wide, straight highways like Iowa, Nebraska and any other boring flat no scenery land.

Go ahead a keep ruining my beautiful Black Hills for your idiots that you need to keep babying.

Waste of money and time.

You might as well kill all the wildlife while you are at it. They will be getting hit by the speeding cars anyway.

So what are you increasing the speed limits to???

How about the unnecessary road work planned to rip up the camp ground coming into Custer to make a four lane????? So we can jam more cars into Custer faster.

DOT can't take care of the current road, how the hell do you plan on taking care of this?

Murders, going to kill off the wildlife in these areas. Oh well there will most likely be people in foot getting hit by the future speeders too.

Maybe Trump should get rid of the DOT since in South Dakota it seems all they do is build new crap and never can do any repairs or maintenance to the roads.

Mon 06/29/2026 1:09 PM

As a northern hills resident I want to join others in encouraging the State to take whatever necessary steps to maintain the beauty of this iconic highway. Reducing the speed limit is one method I think would greatly reduce fatalities

Mon 06/29/2026 1:16 PM

Thank you for allowing citizen comment on the planned update project for highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. I have resided in Sturgis since 1977 and enjoy and very much appreciate the beauty of our Black Hills and the access the roads provide for residents and visitors alike.

I agree with the intent of state highway planners to make improvements to the section of highway 85, HOWEVER please limit the improvements to minimally widening the shoulders where possible and especially eliminating the drop off at the edge of the road which is dangerous to motorists, especially motorcyclists and bicyclists. Although the "improvements" to highway 385 have resulted in a beautiful road, the character of the area through which it travels has been degraded in my opinion. I have ridden motorcycles for over 50 years with most of my miles logged in the Black Hills. Our roads require respect and undivided attention while riding them. I see riders especially during the Sturgis Rally who may not be used to riding curving roads - this factor along with peer pressure and riding under the influence in some cases will guarantee a bad outcome for which any road design cannot eliminate risk of an accident. In spite of the changes to highway 385, I expect it will see its share of accidents if drivers and riders tempt fate by adding self-induced risks when traveling.

All of this to say, I don't think you can engineer all of the risks out of a road by "improving" it with excessive widening of the canyon and roadway. Some roads in our Black Hills are made to be enjoyed, perhaps at a slower speed. Please consider limiting the improvements to highway 85 to minor widening of the shoulder and eliminating any abrupt drop offs from the edge of the highway.

Mon 06/29/2026 1:55 PM

To whom it may concern, First I would like to thank you for this opportunity to air my thoughts. After purchasing a property in Deadwood in 2018 my husband and I began traveling all the roads we could find to see all that we could see in the area. The hwy 85 corridor from Cheyenne Crossings into Wyoming has become our favorite drive. The idea of changing that road and removing its twists and turns doesn't sit well. The sights and sounds of that stretch of road are unmatched in my opinion and should not be disturbed. As close to nature as you can get in that area without having to leave the road. Please try to keep the corners and the state of the area as pristine as possible. It truly is a gem. I challenge you to take a ride down this section of road with the windows down in the early morning hours before the sun breaches the canyon walls or in the late evening as the sun drops behind the canyon walls and tell me you can't feel how truly special this place is.

Mon 06/29/2026 2:28 PM

Dear Mark,

I am writing to voice my concern over the resurfacing project that is scheduled for 2029-2030 on US Hwy 85 from Oneill Pass to Cheyenne crossing. As a lifelong resident of the Black Hills, a past county commissioner, a motorcyclist as well as a bicyclist and avid outdoorsman, I am imploring you to

reconsider anything other than a resurfacing of the roadway, no additional widening nor guardrails or barrier walls are necessary. While this road is indeed narrow, there are plenty of pullouts for slower moving vehicles and most of the users I encounter are patient and allow for plenty of room to pass or pull over to let faster vehicles proceed.

This particular roadway in the Black Hills is one of the most beautiful we have to offer and the majority of people who drive it are going slow to enjoy the scenery, there are however, some that travel too fast for the roadway, I am not arguing that fact. Those who choose to behave irresponsibly face consequences and some of those consequences are severe, but it's impossible to create an environment that ends stupidity or irresponsible behavior, especially at a huge cost to taxpayers and to the beauty of that amazing scenic roadway. Like the project on Hwy 385 the environment is very fragile, even more so in this case, and any small mistake in engineering could result in damaging Spearfish Creek and have an impact that will take decades to restore if ever!

In closing, I have been travelling that roadway since I was sixteen years old, both in four- and two-wheel vehicles including my bicycle, and I have never been put in a dangerous situation because of the structure of the roadway, only because of animals or other ignorant vehicle operators. Please reconsider your current plan and leave one of our last incredible scenic roadways alone, except for resurfacing when needed.

Mon 06/29/2026 3:09 PM

Hi Mark,

I believe that the improvements to 385 must be safe and up to the reasonable standards set by the DOT. Human life is more important than esthetics.

Mon 06/29/2026 7:47 PM

I am writing to state my concern with the plan to rebuild highway 85. This stretch of highway that is set to be rebuilt is a scenic icon of the Black Hills, a novelty drive of sorts. Widening the road, blasting the hills, creating retaining walls, and making a wide shoulder will deter from the aesthetic of this beautiful stretch of highway. Highway 385 runs the same direction and enables one to get to the same destinations, or relatively close, with the superhighway feel. Travelers that are uncomfortable with using highway 85 can opt for 385 if they so choose. I am saddened to see 385 lose its charm with the rebuild and I am disheartened to see plans to do the same to highway 85.

I drive highway 85 frequently, at reasonable speed, and I have never found difficulty navigating the curves, or the road. I have found adequate turnouts to stop at if needed and have been able to travel easily and stress free.

The mental health of our country is very poor and having little areas of peace like this scenic highway can help calm one's nervous system and renew a sense of belonging and calm. This stretch of highway is a literal small piece of paradise.

With our increasing population there are getting to be fewer natural areas of beauty. This road is one of the top scenic drives in our beautiful state. Please consider this highway a scenic area and limit your roadwork to maintaining/ repairing the current roadway without creating major changes to the aesthetic or the area.

Tue 06/30/2026 1:34 AM

Mark I have lived in the Black Hills area for 72 years and have seen many changes over the years. The most recent changes have been the rebuilding of our scenic hwys making them major high speed through affairs. Like why 385, this new road is built for speed not to enjoy the scenery but to get from point a to point b, and Sheridan Lake Road the same thing. Granted we do need to move traffic on our heavily traveled roads to the cities in the southern and northern hills. These roads are built for speed and the speed limits need to be raised to move the traffic.

Mark hwy 85 is not a road that connects any larger cities!! It is a very scenic highway basically an extension of Spearfish canyon and was built to enjoy that beautiful canyon it goes through. It would be an atrocity to turn it into major through affairs like hwy 358 and spend hands full of million dollar bills and destroy the beauty of our Black Hills that draws our tourist trade.

Mark please have Hwy 85 resurfaced and add a sensible shoulder to make it safer. Please maintain the beauty of our Black Hills touring roads that we all enjoy and for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.

Tue 06/30/2026 8:44 AM

I wish to express my OPPOSITION to the proposed changes to highway 85. Please work to revamp planning to salvage the beauty and character of the drive.

Tue 06/30/2026 9:32 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

After reading the dissent in the media regarding reconstruction of US 85, I wanted to reach out and extend my support for the project and the SD DOT. In particular I appreciate the added safety that proper road shoulders add for bicycle users. It's notable how many bicycle users regularly ride Spearfish Canyon from Spearfish to Savoy and turn around due to the lack of shoulders south of Savoy. Thanks for everything the SD DOT does to increase public safety, for using data driven decision making, and considering multi-modal transportation.

Tue 06/30/2026 12:07 PM

I live and work in Spearfish area. I also own a small cabin and property a couple of miles north of 85 on Riflepit road. My wife and I plan to move up to the property in five years or so after we retire. The commute from our home in Spearfish to the property is, and always has been a wonderful part of the whole experience in all seasons, (except rally week).

I agree that there should be wider shoulders in some of the areas for emergencies but the clear zone and straightening of some curves are my concern. The clear zone during the drive down the hill from Rec Springs to Cheyenne serves a purpose for trucks with soft brakes. It also destroys the aesthetics of the road. I also am of the opinion that if you create the ability to increase speed, wrecks will still happen. I have rarely passed a sheriff in the 20 years that I have been driving the highway, log trucks and semis are looking for the fastest route. There are a couple of curves that do not get direct sunlight during the cold months that could use signage to warn drivers.

Ultimately this stretch of highway is a beautiful place to travel and I would hope that it remains that way. I didn't see specific crash stats during the Sturgis rally but suspect that a number of these accidents stem from that time (plus beverage stops at Buckhorn and Sundance or Deadwood from the other way). I think creating an apron or clear zone will destroy the beauty of the road. Tourists drive a long way through prairie to see this mountain country, please don't change that. Thanks

Tue 06/30/2026 12:40 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

May we add our comments about Hwy 85 construction?

We travel that road on average about once a month because we have granddaughters in Colorado. We love the scenery on that highway. It's a beauty that's hard to describe. I have hundreds of pictures I have taken in all sorts of weather. None do the beauty justice.

However, over the years we have watched the road deteriorate to what we deem as dangerous in spots. At first the road was just broken on the side of the road. Now it is breaking off and taking the white stripe with it. Sometimes drivers in the opposite direction don't stay in their lane and force us over to the crumbled part of the road. It is alarming to say the least. You may add to this the number of lumber trucks and rock hauling trucks that exceed the speed limit while fully loaded and the road becomes very narrow.

Please count us both in favor of road improvements on Hwy 85. We'd love to continue to make safe trips to our granddaughters home for as long as we can.

Wed 07/01/2026 8:33 AM

As a local resident of Lawrence County I do not support widening the highway as it will come at the cost of access to rock climbing, hiking, and mountain biking trail access and parking that exist off the highway. Additionally, this project will destroy scenery and ecological diversity that the area is known for. Again, I do not support the current plan to widen that stretch of road. That is not a wise use of my tax dollars.

Wed 07/01/2026 9:04 AM

Dear Mark Malone,

I am writing to formally express my strong opposition to the proposed changes to the roadway between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming border.

The scenic beauty of this route is a significant asset to the Black Hills community. For generations, residents and visitors alike have valued this stretch of road specifically for its natural landscape. This project, in my view, represents an unnecessary disruption of that environment rather than a beneficial upgrade.

On behalf of my late husband, a native of Lead, and many others who share this sentiment, I urge you to reconsider these plans. We believe it is essential to preserve the integrity of the natural scenery and halt any further development that would compromise the aesthetic value of the area.

Wed 07/01/2026 9:05 AM

I am definitely NOT in favor of the proposed work on US 85. That stretch of highway is one of the most peaceful and scenic drives in the state. Please leave it alone. It is curvy and narrow and not designed for high speed travel. I would liken it to making the Wildlife Loop in Custer State Park a divided four lane highway. Makes no sense. Huge waste of DOT money and diminishes the aesthetics of US 85. Some things are better left as is.

Wed 07/01/2026 9:05 AM

Mark Malone,

I am writing to formally express my strong opposition to the proposed developments regarding Highway 85.

I believe the project is unnecessary and will cause irreparable damage to the natural landscape. The removal of trees and the disruption of the scenic beauty along this route would be a significant loss for both local residents and the tourists who visit the area specifically to enjoy the Black Hills.

I urge you to reconsider these plans and prioritize the preservation of our environment over this proposed progress. It is essential that we maintain the integrity of our natural landmarks for future generations.

Wed 07/01/2026 9:37 AM

I applaud the attempt by SD DOT to improve the safety and status of US Highway 85. The current state of the road offers no shoulders for emergencies.

As a road cyclist, the best roads to bike are the scenic ones through the forest. These routes give you a sense of solitude on the road with beautiful views. Currently from Savoy on Highway 14 (Spearfish Canyon) to the Wyoming-South Dakota state line on Highway 85, riding a bike is almost impossible and definitely not safe. Many times cyclists have to veer off road for motorists cutting corners. Traffic use in Highway 85 currently is tight, especially with no shoulders. And extremely tight when logging activity are

using the routes. Cycling, as another mode of transportation along highways, the added widths and shoulders will provide an immense improvement to users by providing a safe space to ride with improved sight lines for all users, motorized and mechanized.

After viewing the change in the nearby Highway 385 realignment and reconstruction, SD DOT has proven they can improve safety along highways while maintaining aesthetics in scenic areas or along scenic corridors. This improvement is amazing for motorist safety and use of vehicles with trailers, such as camper trailers and UTV/ATV trailers, which are increasing throughout the Black Hills.

Wed 07/01/2026 9:43 AM

Mark Malone,

As a resident of Lawrence county, I am writing to formally express my strong opposition to the proposed developments regarding Highway 85.

My family and friends treasure this scenic drive and do not wish to see it disturbed. We believe the project is unnecessary and will cause irreparable damage to the natural landscape. The removal of trees and the disruption of the scenic beauty along this route would be a significant loss for both local residents and the tourists who visit the area specifically to enjoy the Black Hills.

I urge you to reconsider these plans and prioritize the preservation of our environment over this proposed progress. It is essential that we maintain the integrity of our natural landmarks for future generations.

Wed 07/01/2026 9:44 AM

Greetings,

I work for SD Game, Fish, and Parks, and have a degree in Natural Resources Management. I have some concerns about the proposed changes to US 85:

1. Ecological impact

The riparian ecosystems along US 85 are delicate, and highly sought after for recreation and observation. Large scale road construction is not feasible for that area, with the risk of irreversible damage to habitats, and recreation areas. Even with environmental approvals, and "being careful" there will still be negative impacts.

2. Local Impact

US 85 is one of the last roads in the hills that has not been modernized. It is one of the last roads with the beautiful scenery and curves. You can argue that any road in the hills is dangerous and needs to be changed due to curvature, but that is how mountain roads are. Education is important, and people (especially tourists) will always drive carelessly and unpredictably, so the state should work on better

enforcement and education. As a local, US 85 is a change from all the modernization, expansion, and development that is taking over our beautiful home.

I urge SD DOT to consider other options than straightening and widening the road. If it becomes straighter and wider, people are just going to go faster. Tourists are not prepared for the type of driving required and that is a problem. A solution could be to reduce the speed limit to 40 or 45. I drive that road everyday and have my entire life and even I think 55 is a little fast. In addition, more signage such as "dangerous curves" or "drive at own risk" would help give an idea to tourists that they need to pay attention. The road should be resurfaced and more signage should be put up around Cheyenne Crossing and O'Neil Pass. Locals should not have to give up that road because tourists aren't prepared. There are other options other than destruction to make it safer. Locals, including me will fight this, so I urge the state to try a different approach.

Wed 07/01/2026 10:11 AM

Dear South Dakota Department of Transportation,

I would like to share my thoughts regarding the ongoing improvements to US Highway 385 through the Black Hills.

First, I appreciate the work that has already been completed. The reconstruction has improved the roadway, and I support the investment being made. However, I believe the current project falls short in planning for the future.

In my opinion, Highway 385 should be expanded to four lanes wherever it is practical to do so. Traffic volumes continue to increase as both the local population and tourism grow each year. During the spring, summer, and fall, the highway experiences heavy traffic consisting of campers, boats, motorcycles, commercial vehicles, and visitors who are unfamiliar with the road's curves and grades. These conditions often create long backups, risky passing maneuvers, and situations where vehicles drift across the centerline. As someone who regularly travels this corridor, I have witnessed these issues firsthand.

While the current improvements make the highway better than it was, I encourage the Department to look beyond today's traffic demands and consider what the region will require 10 to 20 years from now. Designing the corridor with long-term growth in mind would improve safety, reduce congestion, and lessen delays for both residents and the millions of visitors who travel through the Black Hills each year. I respectfully ask that the Department consider expanding Highway 385 to four lanes, where feasible, as part of its long-term vision for this important transportation corridor.

Thank you for your time and for your continued work to improve South Dakota's transportation system.

Wed 07/01/2026 10:17 AM

Please do not destroy the gorgeous scenic route of Hwy 85. Re-pave it; smooth the shoulders; lower the speed limit as necessary, but do not destroy the beauty of it like you have with Hwy 385. People have other options if they want to drive fast or carelessly.

Wed 07/01/2026 10:25 AM

Dear Mark Malone,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to any changes that would alter the scenic character of the roadway between Four Corners and Cheyenne Crossing in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

This route is one of the most beautiful drives in the Black Hills. It winds through towering stands of ancient, native trees that are part of the original Black Hills forest. The narrow, winding road is not a flaw—it is part of what makes this area so special. It encourages drivers to slow down, pay attention, and appreciate the incredible natural beauty that surrounds them.

This roadway was never intended to be a high-speed corridor. Its purpose is to provide a scenic experience while protecting the unique landscape, wildlife, and historic character of the area. Widening the road, straightening curves, or making other changes that encourage faster travel would diminish the very qualities that make this drive so treasured by residents and visitors alike.

The Black Hills are an irreplaceable natural treasure. Once these old-growth trees, rock formations, and the peaceful character of this route are altered, they cannot be restored. I respectfully urge you to preserve this scenic roadway as it is and seek solutions that protect both public safety and the natural beauty of this remarkable area.

Please help ensure that future generations can experience the drive from Four Corners to Cheyenne Crossing just as so many of us have—with its breathtaking scenery, peaceful atmosphere, and timeless beauty.

Wed 07/01/2026 10:40 AM

I'm in agreement with the majority of the people who want to leave the road as is. I can tell you that the work on highway 385 only increased the speed of motorists traveling on that stretch of road from Pactola to Sheridan Lake even with just chip seal they exceed 50 mph. It will only get worse, as I live in that route, tailgaters are bad.

Wed 07/01/2026 3:50 PM

I wanted to write to give my opinion on the HWY 85 project from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming.

My family has property near O'neil pass. We travel from Spearfish to O'neil pass frequently.

In general I am not in favor of the work being proposed.

I am not in favor of the rerouting of corners simply to increase speed. It doesn't need to be faster. I think part of that feeling is based on the fact it is not very many miles. 10mph faster is only about three minutes. We enjoy the surroundings and have a nice trip.

I would like to acknowledge not everything the project proposes is bad. Clearly the road surface is in bad shape. The 2' proposed shoulder certainly seems reasonable. Possibly wider in areas that don't require major road work. I think I saw a note of some pull outs to let people pass. I try to use those regularly if someone is behind me.

Wed 07/01/2026 5:58 PM

We understand – and appreciate - that the SDDOT has been given a sizable wad of money in federal funds to repave SD highways. And we understand that under insane 'reasoning', you must spend it all, or lose it. What deeply concerns those of us, mostly born and raised in the Black Hills area, is the SDDOT's sense of priorities and values in using that money wisely. Caveat, this is the first of more than one email you will receive from me so as not to fatigue you. After a quick read of the first paragraph and quicker scan of the rest, most of us hit delete or move on when we see lengthy emails on our screens. I live in the southern Hills. I only recently learned of the 85 reconstruction and its connection with the horrendous destruction of 385 which is under 'reconstruction', along with SDDOT future plans. I have taken the time to drive Hwy 85 following the June 6, 2026 meeting at Adam's Museum to get familiar with the northern Hills road. Twice: alone; and with others.

Why BHBAR (BH Born and Raised) tend to have a different perspective is that we have spent decades watching the changes and many destructions of what we experienced here in our youth. Many of us had the good fortune to learn from our parents by imitation how to 'walk' the land. Not necessarily all of us. I know people who are BHBAR, and they run ATV rentals, aside from mining probably the most destructive business currently burdening the environment and wild life. ATV's are noisy, going en masse down residential roads and thru the homes of wild life and flowers. They spread family or group members over more vehicles, rather than all in one, much quieter vehicle. ATV's are driven off-road packing soil and destroying vegetation; and drivers are given instructions by rentals where to find the bogs and creeks. Have you not gotten how precious water is becoming? Drinkable, non-toxic - and shorter in supply? Shorter in supply due to our making it toxic; shorter in supply to our ever increasing population with its whims. Because - of all life on this planet, the human species is the most dangerous. We constantly 'control' other life – animal, vegetable and mineral – because it/they 'get in our way'. We are the only species that Ma Nature struggles, really struggles, to keep the population down. Have I gone off on a tangent? No, I have not. Because these are all parts of a large picture. I am all the more vocal and concerned as, despite what I consider a wiser upbringing, I still have learned over my life that I have not always traveled with a small enough footprint. But I have learned over the years; and that gives me hope and drives me to communicate my concerns hoping that others will learn.

The CCC built wonderful scenic roads, carefully crafted by engineers who carved them into the lay of the land, with a sense of, and respect for the magic in one small area on this magical planet. What the Native Americans call Sacred. One of these roads is the zigzag drive built by CCC from the west going east up to Sylvan Lake. My parents honeymooned on Sylvan. Our family, 5 kids in a station wagon, were the campers at Sylvan for photos for a tourist brochure for the Black Hills. On Sunday drives in the 1950's and 60's, we had the exquisite pleasure of stopping on the zigzag road where there was a stone wall with a pipe fountain from a spring where we refreshed ourselves with ice cold, clear, clean water. In the 1980's this fountain was removed. Because ranchers are permitted to graze cattle throughout the forest. Gaillardia from the cattle have rendered the ground waters feeding this spring

contaminated and toxic. The fountain has been gone for some 40 years. Gone. This is surface water and spring. Not a deep aquifer.

Have you stopped on 85, within the eastern 7-mile stretch paralleling Spearfish Creek, at the preserve managed by some 3 organizations where there is an info sign on the north side of the road? You get a good view of some lovely lush water foliage on each side of the culvert. You can see similar sights along Little Spearfish Creek paralleling Roughlock Falls Rd. This is unique vegetation – you will not see the same in creeks in the southern Hills. Is this due to northern habitat? Is this due to much heavier cattle grazing and human usage in the southern Hills? As a BHBAR, I can assure you that the climate throughout the Hills varies from elevation; from south to north in longitude; from southern versus northern slope of hill or mountain; from areas with body of water versus no water, etc. I understand that federally-funded projects require to have an archeologist on hand for analysis and preservation of ancient sites and relics. Due to our money-driven heedlessness and voraciousness, shouldn't there also be botanists, wildlife experts and hydrologists on team, with authority? The almighty dollar should not be the beginning, middle and end of all plans, decisions and projects. Or it will be the end of the human species on this planet, which would be a boon - if we don't take out the rest of this planet as well.

Wed 07/01/2026 11:33 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to formally express my opposition to the proposed US85 project from Wyoming to Cheyenne Crossing.

I oppose this project because I believe the long-term damage to the Black Hills and surrounding landscape outweighs any proposed benefits. The beauty of this route is not just scenery on the side of a road, it is part of what makes the area special for the people who live here and for the visitors who travel here every year. Many people come specifically to experience the natural views, winding roads, trees, wildlife, and the character that makes this area unique.

The removal of trees and alteration of the landscape would create permanent changes that cannot simply be replaced once they are gone. I am concerned about the environmental impact, the effect on wildlife habitats, and the loss of the natural beauty that defines this area. Once these changes are made, there is no going back.

I also question whether this project is truly necessary and whether alternatives with less impact have been fully considered. Progress should not come at the expense of preserving the very things that make our area worth visiting and worth protecting.

I strongly urge the Department of Transportation to reconsider these plans and take into account the concerns of residents and community members who do not want to see irreversible damage done to our landscape. The Black Hills should be protected for future generations, not permanently altered when there are other options that may exist.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

This is our home. Protect the Paha Sapa.

Thu 07/02/2026 8:46 AM

While safe roads are an important element to enjoying the Black Hills, not every road needs to be widened to be safe. Hwy 85 to the WY line is a scenic byway that is meant to be travelled at a slow rate of speed. It is not a freeway. Please reconsider widening this road and instead repairing/resurfacing what is necessary and instead encourage travelers to drive the posted speed limit of 35-40 mph.

Thu 07/02/2026 10:06 AM

Good morning!

I have received word that a planned Construction project in 2030 is expected to make highway 85 a true highway and take out the curves that make that road as beautiful as it is now.

I can not say enough how much of the community especially myself are disgusted by the thought of that stretch of highway being destroyed and the beauty taken away all for some wider shoulders and less curves? The curves and narrow roads are what makes it beautiful and unique. It is what brings people here to our state! Please do not take away this beauty.

For example, the Construction project on highway 385 has forever changed the landscape and not for the better. Much of the hillsides that were filled with beautiful pine trees and rock formations that were NATURAL are completely gone! It is sickening how our government thinks they need to butt in and make everything catered to the rich and make the Black Hills into the next Denver. It is gross and not welcome here.

If this highway 85 Construction project does happen in 2030, it will have minimal positive impact. It will have more negative impacts not only immediately but also in the long term.

If the speed limit were to also raise, the number of accidents involving the wildlife will increase dramatically! We already have numerous wildlife hit by vehicles because they are abundant, especially elk. In the long run, there are no benefits to the people or the wildlife in the surrounding areas.

What should happen is repaving/ blacktop the road rather than ripping anything up of the surrounding wilderness. Keep wilderness wild. Not into a superhighway.

The creek flows right next to the highway along with steep cliffs and canyons that are beautiful and should remain untouched. Much of this would have to be blasted away to make room for a road with such a width.

The community and myself are BEGGING you and the government PLEASE DO NOT LET THIS PROJECT CONTINUE!

Thu 07/02/2026 2:37 PM

Dear Mr Malone,

We are residents of Rapid City for the past 42 years. It has come to our attention Highway 85 has a proposed reconstruction from Cheyenne Crossing to the WY border.

This is a scenic highway that we oppose changing.

It is meant to be a slower scenic drive. Changing the road and landscape would be devastating to the route we so enjoy.

We implore you to not proceed!

Thu 07/02/2026 7:42 PM

I am writing to oppose the proposed Highway 85 project. This unnecessary and unneeded project has an estimated cost of \$58 million. This money could be better spent on Federal projects such as upkeep of parks and reclaiming damaged land and water. This will cause the removal of precious resources such as trees, natural plant life and will disrupt wildlife and pollute Spearfish Creek. Spearfish Creek has all ready experienced pollution by mining companies. Now Solitario wants to contribute to the damage. The people of Spearfish and surrounding communities love this area and don't want it to be destroyed by the greed of gold mining companies.

Please respect the wishes of the people over the malice of greedy corporations. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thu 07/02/2026 9:52 PM

Dear Mr. Malone:

I was raised in Custer, lived in Pierre for 28 years and am back home since 2001. Todd Seaman and I are well acquainted as I was Custer County Highway Superintendent for 8 years in the early 2000's and was tasked by the County Commission to make sure a project for guardrail repair around the Mt. Coolidge access did not proceed as planned. Todd and I wrestled over that issue for some time and, thankfully, the million dollar project was scaled back to simply cutting back a rock wall to provide room for a guardrail that was failing. If the project had prevailed the scar on Mt. Coolidge would be visible today, 20 years later.

Todd had always assured me that roads in the Park will always be treated differently. That project missed the mark and we had to raise the issue. Frankly, I think that should apply to the Hills in general. We can and should not continue to take design concepts for the flatland and put them in the Black Hills. The Hills need to be treated differently. That guardrail issue should have never come up. It was an easy fix without disturbing the landscape to any great extent.

The point of that story is I am an advocate of context sensitive design. It seems to me that DOT has good intentions along those lines for a while and then goes back to designing roads in the Hills like they do on the prairie. Some time ago Todd and I discussed 385. It was long before the project was let. My point to Todd was that there was already a fast way to get to Deadwood and 385 needed to be

preserved not butchered. I guess that message did not take. I think 385 could have been done much less intrusively with more concern for the area. It was not and now we are headed in the same direction with 85. Please don't.

My concern for the accident record justification is that you use raw data that does not exclude alcohol use or extreme overdriving. It overstates the danger as alcohol and speed involve an assumption of the risk which is a legal term that should apply to the driving public.

I agree 85 needs some work but I drove 16A through the Park the other day and am convinced you can do the same with 85. When the striping is completed there will be nice wide lanes with some shoulder. It will be a safe road that will not increase the "perception speed" which, to me, ends up being counter productive to what you are trying to improve. DOT builds these new roads that are "safer" but the perception speed for the driver increases. You put a 65 mph speed limit on it and people will be driving it at 75 plus. Resulting wrecks will be more serious. There may be fewer accidents but they will be more serious.

My bottom line is I hate to see these big scars that come from your design people building a "safer" road. The Hills are different. Please think of that. It needs a context sensitive design. When you take a broad stroke to the design then the result of the construction dominates the view.

Use natural materials if you build a wall next to the creek. Nothing made me cringe more than the use of manufactured stone around the Cathedral Spires parking area. I went to DOT complaining that we had abundant natural stone and they were using manufactured river rock. Where was the sense in that? Fortunately, natural stone came into use. It was needed in the Park. It is needed elsewhere in the Hills. We need designs that complement the Hills.

We cannot continue to ignore the wonderful thing we have here in the Hills. Your design needs to accomplish your goal but take that into consideration. We keep losing sight of that. This keeps happening at DOT and it should not. I remember a time in the 1970's when the Pigtail Bridges needed replacing and there was a body of thought at DOT to eliminate them. Imagine if that had happened! Several years ago Federal Highway proposed eliminating the beautiful one lane bridge in Wind Cave National Park on Highway 87. They were concerned the single lane had to go even though the traffic count on that road was minimal. Fortunately, the Wind Cave Superintendent at the time put her foot down and they backed off. A beautiful bridge was saved.

Please put DOT in the vanguard of being sensitive to the beauty we have here and work to preserve it while also making the drive safer. It can be done but it seems as if we have a tendency to forget that.

By the way I use the collective "we" as I still consider myself a road guy. I am a social scientist and looked at my projects in that context. Do not get me wrong I like and admire engineers. My brain does not work like yours. You guys look at things differently. You need some social scientist input to help you see the other side and the human impacts.

Fri 07/03/2026 10:14 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Please consider the tragedy it would be to destroy the beautiful corridor of Highway 85 as it is now. It's a tiny peace of South Dakota heaven.

I'm a fifth generation South Dakotan. I can hear my father's ghost and his father's ghost reminding us they built a highway but maintained the nature and magic of the canyon. My Grandfather was a member of the CCC.

Please do not disrespect our ancestors! Please don't destroy an irreplaceable piece of the Black Hills because people don't take responsibility for their own actions.

Maybe during the motorcycle season more signage could be placed to warn riders to slow down and pay attention? There are several places in the United States where the roads are curved and nature is preserved. The Dragons Tail for instance and Bear Tooth highway. Motor vehicle operators need to do better! The people that disregard their own safety are to blame for the results of their actions, not the highway.

I hope and pray for a sane and nature positive outcome to the proposed project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sat 07/04/2026 11:19 AM

We read with disbelief the article about the plans and associated costs to rebuild straighten and widen sections of two highways in the Black Hills by 2028. We have lived in South Dakota for nearly 6 decades and have traveled these roads for business and pleasure (on four- and two-wheeled vehicles) in all seasons and conditions. We do not believe the destruction of the natural beauty and habitat that these projects require will accomplish the objectives or significantly resolve the issues cited to justify the projects and expenses.

Furthermore, we do not believe that the safety justifications for these projects will be accomplished. We understand the root cause of over half of the traffic incidents, and most of the fatalities, in the last several years were wildlife encounters and the speed of inexperienced/over-confident motorcycle riders. Unless you eradicate wildlife, require cycle driver training/education for mountain riding, and create stronger impaired driver checkpoints; rebuilding roads and destruction of wildlands will not resolve these safety problems.

We believe these largely unneeded and hugely expensive projects are an insult to the purpose of the original design and construction of both treasured scenic routes. The most cost effective and least destruction solutions seem simple:

1. Repair and maintain the existing road surface and shoulders to a higher quality standard,
2. Reduce the default speed limits for all vehicles,
3. Post width, length, and weight limits to divert trailer and truck traffic to specific routes.

4. Reduce and post speed limits sooner and longer for the curves and wildlife crossings, (and other locations with historically high accident rates),
5. Erect better and more visible signs for intersections, and create more scenic turnouts and breakdown spaces only in strategic locations,
6. Post signs "All speed limits reduced 10(or 15) mph dusk to dawn" along the entire route,
7. Create and post wildlife barriers and crossing corridors to divert wildlife above and under the roads in high activity areas,
8. Make these highways "Helmet Required" for motorcycle riders.

We suspect all these ideas have been submitted by others, and we also suspect that the cost to adopt all the above options will be a small fraction of the current budget of the proposed project. There is an adage that says, "common sense has no place in government" and this may be a perfect example. We don't claim to understand the states and federal capital and maintenance budget processes and rules, but perhaps the savings resulting from these less drastic changes could be reappropriated and specifically reserved for the improved maintenance and future upkeep costs of the highways for which they were approved.

If the strategy is to degrade and destroy the natural beauty of the roads so people won't want to drive them, these projects will largely accomplish the goal. If not, we respectfully suggest that our state officials and legislators rethink the options and build a better and less costly plan.

Thank you for your service to our beautiful state, please record our strong opposition to the planned replacement projects to highway 385 and highway 85 in the black hills for 2026-2028.

Sat 07/04/2026 7:01 PM

I have lived in the beautiful Black Hills most of my life and have traveled all over. I am strongly opposed to the Highway 85 project as it will ruin the wonderful views on this highway. After the completion of the Highway 385 project which destroyed many views of the area, everyone will drive faster on the straighter road. So the reconstruction will defeat the purpose of being a safer road. Please listen to all those that are opposed to the major changes planned for Highway 85. Thank you.

Sun 07/05/2026 11:49 AM

I am contacting you about Highway 85. I am not in support of completely ripping it apart and raising it all the way up. I do agree a little work could be done. In my opinion, the road should be ground and use the asphalt grindings to widen the road mixed with gravel. I could be in support of a few retainer walls next to the creek. But the following away edges is caused by so many years of resurfacing. For one fraction of what you're looking spending, you could end up with a better road and retain all of the beauty.

I have a cabin right on Highway 85 towards the Wyoming border I travel that road a lot and the biggest danger I see on that road is the mismanagement of the deer. First thing the deer population on that

stretcher highway is way too high and they need to bring in more hunters and more hunting permits to thin the population. Next thing is the deer on the road trying to look up the salt. The salt trucks put down. Deer don't need salt, but they crave salt. The deer should be offered free choice salt by their water source back off the highway as far as they possibly can. Between that and thinning out would make a huge difference on that road. They don't seem to be a problem cause there's only a few spots and it's always a big group of them so they're easy to see.

I can't support a bulldozer or a scraper on that road at all I could support a few retainer walls, and a grinder may be hauling away half of the grindings and putting a new surface down if the road needs new culverts this would be the perfect time to install them before they put a new surface please don't follow through with the plans that I've seen that you guys have put together please listen to the people that drive that road every day and live on that road thank you

Mon 07/06/2026 10:09 AM

Dear Mark,

I was wanting to express my concern about the project on US 85 that is planned. I've lived all my life in the Black Hills this is one of the most beautiful drives. It's famous for motorcycles riding. It does NOT need to be straightened. I've seen what you've done to the beautiful drive from Cheyenne Crossing to Lead with straightening it and it's so sad what was done to the views. The most that needs to be done is resurfacing. Please don't take the beauty of the hills away from me and others to enjoy. Take the leftover money from resurfacing and put it towards drives education classes for students.

Mon 07/06/2026 10:40 AM

Good morning Mark, I write to express my concerns about the proposed scope of work outlined for the western portion of SD Hwy 385. I've ridden and driven thousands of miles on this stretch of road during all seasons in the last 48 years of my life. I've been taken aback at the recent road work in Custer State Park as well as the work on 385 between Hill City and Deadwood. Some of what makes the Black Hills special has been lost as a result of this work and a much lighter hand should be taken to this stretch of road now in question. I write this note in support of a clearly needed road re-surfacing as 16 years is too long. That said, a 40 mph speed limit from the WY border to the Sunny Meadows TH would reduce the need for 30' clear zones (which is crazy) and major realignment at Trailhead, O'Neil Pass, and Sunny Meadows. The 40 mph speed limit with 5-10' clear zones between Sunny Meadows and Cheyenne Crossing make sense if done with the natural setting in mind. Keeping 40 mph as the speed limit eliminates confusion and creates consistency throughout. There are improvements that can be made to increase motorist safety without sacrificing what makes these drives special in the first place. Thanks for your time

Mon 07/06/2026 2:31 PM

Mr. Murray,

As someone who occasionally travels US 85, and for someone whose daughter, a Rapid City businesswoman, frequently travels US 85, I support the goals of the highway rebuild project and appreciate your efforts to make South Dakota roads safer. Thank you.

Mon 07/13/2026 3:10 PM

Hello Mike

RE: Proposed Hwy 85 remodel

I attend 3 Focus Groups (actually coffee time) in Spearfish

We seldom agree on any topic UNTIL recently with the proposed Hwy 85 remodel
TOTAL Agreement is that No One wants the DOT to modify much of Hwy 85 like they
did to 385 south of Pactola "Blew out the majestic Beauty" for "stupid drivers"
We understand DOT is trying to reduce accidents and deaths, however, you understand
you can not control stupidity "drivers Not driving to conditions" so everyone pays for their
unsafe driving. Non of us wants accidents or deaths, but you will not stop poor driving at
the expense of our beautiful Black Hills. Maybe lower speed limit, but Don't destroy our
Beautiful Black Hills for the safety director statistics. Yes a small shoulder would be nice
or maybe add railings ?

We are next worried about Spearfish Canyon getting blown out.

Thanks for hearing from our groups.

Tue 07/14/2026 3:23 PM

I just wanted to let you know my thoughts on the plan to redo Hwy 85. I've driven that road to work for 26 years now. Most of those drives have been early morning, 430 am or late nights after midnight. With the amount of wildlife on that road if you make it to where you can drive the road faster, in my opinion there will be more wrecks. People like to drive as fast as they can and don't think about the elk, deer or cows that get out all the time now. I've had plenty of close calls and I'm watching for them. Maybe they could just fix the road, not redo it. It has been a few years, think at least 12 years. Thank you

Tue 07/14/2026 5:01 PM

Dear Mr. Malone:

I am a retired Architect with 40+ years experience including Urban Planning Collaboration. I have worked with the US Army Corps of Engineers, not on a highway project but on a super large Hospital and

a U.S. Air Force Academy project. I also worked as a College Summer Intern on the Illinois DOT, by running the routes and inspecting for wildlife debris and other hazards, and other typical tasks. I hope you will consider and value our out of state opinion as we love visiting South Dakota and hope to see it not lose its charm.

My wife and I brought our two young children to The Black Hills in about 2000. We fell in love with the Native Spirit of the Place and the People on that very first trip. I then rode my motorbike with friends up there about 6 times during the Rally and once in June off-Rally. For some of us, the rally is more fun, but any time is still a whole lot of fun, and we don't mean hell raising fun. I am certain it is much because of the beautiful landscapes and non-modernized super wide and or multi-lane traffic ways that would remind us of a stressful metropolitan locale, as opposed to the bucolic countryside. Never did I feel the driving was dangerous. The first Rally I went to was in 2010, and I was astonished at the 100 bikes to 1 car ratio that I personally counted on that first day. That in itself did not feel unsafe, but rather euphoric.

I realize safety is always number one priority. But I also believe comparing the old highway designs against current modern codes and standards for "New" highway design is in my humble opinion not rational. The curvy, hilly roads through the trees actually causes most people to drive slower, so as to safely navigate such. The trees, hills and curves are a big part of that psychology, while they greatly affect the ambiance of the place. In their natural setting near the roads the trees are part of the Black Hills allure, as you feel you are in the forest....and not the CITY or The BLASTED STRESSFUL Freeways near the CITY where speedsters prevail.

Please, please, please, and thank you if you can reconsider the design so as to improve safety by simply repaving where needed, adding some pullouts, widening the lane by a foot with rumble strips perhaps, adding law enforcement that will help people slow down by their presence, and perhaps adding some lower speed limit caution flashing lights to warn one of an upcoming curve. But please preserve that God Given Man Preserved to date, unique charm by scaling the macro projects back and not removing curves, hills and trees. I would expect you could also save the tax payers a lot of money which is beyond noble in this day and time.

Thank you for your consideration, and please let me know you received this. If there is anything else we out of state Citizens / Visitors to South Dakota can do to advocate the above, please let us know.

Thank You

Wed 07/15/2026 10:39 PM

I am against this \$58M project. I see no reason to spend money to widen the road and interfere with the existing stream based on the low number of road users. This is not a priority for the Black Hills.

Wednesday, July 15, 2026 9:58 PM

I am against this project for so many reasons. The \$58 million price tag, the damage to Spearfish Creek and surrounding ecosystems, and permanent destruction of some of the most beautiful landscapes in

the Black Hills are just a few of the reasons. If motorists need to touch their brakes off and on, put more signs indicating a curve ahead. There obviously are mining companies that want to do drilling explorations and eventually mine this area and it's a lame attempt to say this Hwy 85 project is for safety and not for the mining companies. South Dakotans living in the Black Hills are against this and have learned a valuable lesson from the Hwy 385 project. Remove this project from the to-do list please!

Thu 07/16/2026 8:59 PM

We are concerned about the following, at least

- 1) Protection of water quality for surface waters, but especially for Spearfish Canyon, due to the American dipper. Our local dipper has distinct genetics from other dipper populations in the west and is a state listed threatened and endangered species. Water quality is very important to it. The population is small located in Spearfish Creek, some of its tributaries and Whitewood Creek. A huge accidental wash of sediment into Spearfish Creek could be devastating. Noise and vibrations could be a concern if you are working near any dipper nests during breeding season. If you build bridges, please install dipper nests on them, if stream habitat is appropriate.
- 2) Increase to driving speeds could result in more collisions of cars with wildlife. Please consider past history of wildlife collisions on this and other roads. Have wildlife collisions increased on the refabricated Highway 385? How do wildlife collisions compare to collisions due to poor road design? Please evaluate the need for wildlife crossings, such as bridges over or under the highway and consider building such. As population increases in the Black Hills the traffic on these roads will increase, it might be easier to install slightly larger culverts now.
- 3) Impacts to scenery - don't copy Highway 385 overly aggressive redesign of the Hill's landscape, with huge incisions in topography. We believe this to be a very scenic area of the Black Hills.

4) Culverts present a weird & complex concern. Culverts can be poorly designed to inhibit fish traveling upstream. However most fish in the Black Hills are invasive, introduced species, as the native fish species are too small to engage fishermen. Thus SD has been stocking our streams with invasive fish for years & years (such as trout). The places where some native fish flourish or remain, are small flow stream places above dams, where the invasive species can't reach.

You should thus consult with SDGFP to see if there are some isolated lower flow stream segments, that are currently protected from invasive fish species by culverts inhibiting upstream travel. You should consult the Natural Heritage staff to see if any low-flow isolated streams in the area are protecting state listed species or "species of greatest conservation need". You should consult with the Heritage Staff to see if any intentional blocking of upstream flow would help protect special native fish species and aquatic habitat from invasive fish. **ALL POPULAR FISH (such as trout) in the Black Hills ARE INVASIVE. They put some native species at risk.**

5) Please protect habitat for rare land snails. SD has various rare land snails. The Forest Service knows the species and watches over them. I think they like talus slopes, shade and wetland areas or springs/seeps. Please communicate with the Forest Service about rare snails of concern. We are especially concerned about frigid amber snail, that maybe should be federally listed, except snail biologists can't agree on the taxonomy. At least one other snail is developing unique genetics that might qualify as a sub species.

6) Please watch inventory, out for and protect any rare plants.

Fri 07/17/2026 10:38 AM

Here's one of the problems with our species. So many of us live in large towns and big cities. Our feet never 'touch' the earth; because we don't 'walk' the land. We walk on concrete and other paving. For those of us in cities and towns, survival is dollars. Money. In a way, this is true. But not absolutely true - for when you get down to brass tacks, that survival money still comes down to consumption of animals, vegetables and minerals. So for those who make their livings managing money in order to manufacture and to transport, it behooves them to recognize; and to respect; and to guard against the destruction of all the rest of the planet that their employment – in order to gain the money - so directly relies on.

The Tuesday, June 30, 2026, Rapid City Journal carries a front page article, from South Dakota News Watch, about the reconstruction of Hwy 85. An interview of a visiting out-of-state couple who happened to drive Hwy 85 while coming here to visit, taking this specific northern route, adding miles to their approach to visit in Rapid City. They were dismayed to learn Hwy 85 could soon look like Hwy 385: the destruction of the topography, the intimacy which is so lovely to drive thru, including all flora and fauna along the way. This is one of the things for which people/tourists come to visit the

Hills. Tourism is a large industry in the Black Hills. If SDDOT mis-manages what tourists come here for, SDDOT is then responsible for the loss of visitors and dollars.

Sat 07/18/2026 6:04 PM

To whom it may concern,

I grew up in southwest North Dakota. I have traveled to the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota countless times. My father began a tradition in my family of driving down to the hills in the early morning hours of July 4th to hike Bear Butte, early enough to watch the sunrise from the summit. Upon graduating high school I moved to Spearfish to attend college at BHSU. During my time there I spent hours and hours in the winding road that we know and love as Spearfish Canyon. I also made several friends from Wyoming, and traveled with them to visit their homes. This nature is wondrous, and cannot be replaced. This area holds a greatly profound and special place in my heart and my memories. I have since moved from Spearfish, and my father has passed away. The Black Hills are the home of some of my most precious memories, and memories are all that I have left of my father. I cannot bear the thought of this landscape also becoming a memory due to unjustified data centers and road projects. I know these lands hold great power and meaning to many, many folks. I speak for myself, and on behalf of my late father when I say, these lands must be cultivated, they must be preserved, and they must be protected. I strongly oppose the highway 85 project, and I hope you take these words to heart.

Mon 07/20/2026 4:48 PM

Mark,

I am writing as a sojourner long parted from my life long home the Black Hills. I grew up in Rapid City, ranched as a boy and young man north of Belle Fourche, returned to finish a degree at Black Hills State University after serving during Viet Nam, and lived and worked in Deadwood for more than a decade.

My reverence for the Hills is as real as my heart beat as I write to you. Similar to the spiritual ties of first nation people and the adoration of creation in their ties to Paha Sappa. I am saddened by the blatant commercialization of the Hills today, and the glaring loss of the spiritual honor and respect the Black Hills deserve as a nation treasure.

I weekly traveled the stretch of highway from Deadwood to Newcastle for many years through every condition imaginable with no mishaps, and never witnessed any accidents or remnants of such. It is an iconic stretch of road that awakens one's senses in the joy and beauty nature offers us and driven night or day, in pouring rain, or howling blizzards the senses of God's beauty in all creation was beautifully evident.

I'm certain the 385 is in need of improvement. I've many times witnessed the scenic destruction of beautiful peaceful drives given over to high speed multiple lane crash courses of "safety and convenience." I would ask that prioritized respect for nature and safety can be creatively accommodated. Preserve the integrity of the Black Hills beauty, honor God's creation, and minimize the

destructive hand of man with this project. All of us, as well the future and our history, will thank you for approaching this project with the motto of less highway is more Black Hills.

Mon 07/20/2026 10:13 PM

Hwy 85 is one of few truly scenic roads left in the Black Hills. I live on Sheridan Lake Road south of Rapid and I see cars going by much faster than before the "improvement", there are alternatives.

Tue 08/04/2026 4:56 PM

I am totally against rebuilding HW 85 there's no need for it. And it's a waste of tax payers money.

Tue 08/04/2026 8:17 PM

Do not do anything to change any of the terrain or landscape in Spearfish canyon.

Repair the road as needed and let it go at that.

People need to pay more attention while driving.

This area should remain as pristine as it can.

Tue 08/04/2026 10:08 PM

Sir,

I am opposed to the expansion of highway 85 especially for a constant rate of speed. People are on this road for the scenic beauty and not to get from point A to point B at a higher rate of speed. A much quicker route is from four corners to Sundance which is a 70 mile per hour speed limit.

Do some maintenance, repaint the lines, and leave the curves alone please.

Tue 08/04/2026 11:31 PM

As a resident of western SD it worries me to see so much construction on the scenic highways and roads. Sacrificing the beauty and charm of the hills isn't always the answer when addressing safety concerns. I've driven the Hills for decades and see the changes. Never have gotten into an accident nor do I think it's worth the effort and money to ruin such beauty in the interest of safety especially when the numbers don't seem to warrant the change. This is like putting a deep, ugly scar in the hills. I am against these changes. Perhaps education and stronger enforcement where able would be a part of a better solution.

Wed 08/05/2026 8:48 AM

Mr. Malone, as a long-term Black Hills resident and retired U.S. Forest Service Contracting Officer, I have concerns regarding this proposed project. Over the years I've been a witness to the impacts that have been placed upon our environment within the Black Hills and it's a loss that we'll never recover. I understand that there are defined public needs, however at what cost are we willing to experience in the loss of the beauty and local habitat?

As I've expressed, I have great concerns about the negative aspects of this project, and my hope is that this project does not go forward.

Wed 08/05/2026 9:33 AM

Dear Sir:

I think trying to widen the Spearfish Canyon road is an alarming idea! First off, the Canyon is beautiful and pristine the way it is. Trying to widen the road will cause irreversible damage. Cutting into those rock faces will create instability throughout the cliffs.

If you need to improve the road, there's the option to completely level and resurface the current road. Expand turn-offs where it's feasible.

Expanding Hwy. 385 was bad enough with all the trees that were killed, along with encroaching on animals' habitat.

I realize safety is a concern, but considering the preservation of the landscape and its residents outweighs the need of the few. Add dips in the new road with signage...guaranteed to slow people down. People are idiots anyway, so there will be accidents regardless of what you do or don't do.

Think for once about other indigenous inhabitants that need protecting more than humans need a new road. Thank you for allowing me to voice my concerns.

Wed 08/05/2026 1:34 PM

Please do NOT widen this road. I live in Sioux Falls but travel to the Black Hills 6-8 times a year to enjoy the beautiful scenery. This scenery is enhanced by the widening roads through the mountains & trees. Taking this away will change this amazing place to just another highway.

Thank you for your consideration.

Wed 08/05/2026 6:28 PM

Peter Norbeck once said:

"20 miles per hour does the scenery half-justice, and to do it full justice, you should get out and walk. These routes are meant for leisure, not fast commuting"

It seems like the current trend in the Black Hills is to increase speed limits, even if it means destroying what people come to visit for in the first place.

Please, don't cave to the fast paced society the world has tumbled into. Keep Highway 85, slow, curvy, and scenic. It's what makes our great state so much fun to drive through.

Wed 08/05/2026 6:37 PM

this is one of most scenic roadways... LEAVE IT ALONE.... There surely are other options... reduce speed , more law enforcement, fix the issue right the first time and you don't need to redo it 10 more times.... Making it a faster and easier way to drive this stretch just encourages more accidents... LEAVE IT ALONE!!!!!!!

Wed 08/05/2026 6:52 PM

Mark and all of the SDDOT, please do not bend to the comments of the minority. Please follow the highway design guidelines and build shoulders as much as reasonably possible.

Wed 08/05/2026 6:59 PM

I respectfully ask that you leave hwy 85 alone please I drive it a lot and haven't had any problems Thank you...

Wed 08/05/2026 7:36 PM

Please don't change that beautiful stretch of highway. It is safe for safe drivers who respect speed limits and consider road conditions. And it is an awesome road, one I've driven and loved for 70 years.

Wed 08/05/2026 7:34 PM

Mr. Malone

My wife and I live in SW Missouri. We recently visited South Dakota and stayed for a week in Custer. We've been to Colorado numerous times and wanted to see how the Black Hills compared. I'm not exaggerating when I say that we were awestruck.

The Black Hills are different. It's difficult to describe. The region is so picturesque and somewhat magical, for lack of a better word. My wife and I both agreed the morning we were leaving Custer that it would definitely not be our only visit to South Dakota, and more so, we'll definitely come back to the Black Hills.

That's why when I read an article saying there was a plan to turn part of Hwy 85 into more of a super highway, I was somewhat saddened. Of course, I understand progress and the need for safety. But

why ruin the charm and ambience of such a beautiful area by tearing up the scenery just to straighten a few curves and flatten a few hills? This will probably only lead to drivers going faster which in the end wouldn't lessen the number of vehicle accidents significantly. We found that having to slow down while driving around in the Black Hills only made us appreciate more what the region has to offer. America travels too fast already. 385 has been "improved" already. Leave 85 alone.

Thu 08/06/2026 12:08 AM

Good evening, to whom it may concern. I will keep this short and sweet. I'm a 60 year old, born and raised native South Dakotan who moved back home over 20 years ago to enjoy our Black Hills. Please keep Spearfish Canyon Road as it is. No widening, no straightening, no changes. Let's use the funds in better ways and keep our sacred and beloved canyon as is. Please feel free to share my request with others. Thank you.

Thu 08/06/2026 8:25 AM

Dear Mark,

I am in complete agreement with Paul Horsted.

When people drive through scenic areas like our precious, beautiful Black Hills they should not be driving as fast as they can.

My son has property with a cabin near O'Neill Pass. It is always a pleasure to drive that strip of road.

Regarding the number of accidents on that road, faster speeds would kill more wildlife. People would still shoot off the corners driving too fast.

Please, leave it as it is. Spend those millions elsewhere.

Thu 08/06/2026 10:42 AM

To whom it may concern. I've been a life long resident of South Dakota and a resident of Spearfish since 2009. I have been involved with the South Dakota Snowmobile Association since 1996. In good snow years, this stretch of highway without a doubt is the most traveled road for people from all over pulling snowmobile trailers, with the exception of I-90. As you are probably aware, the lanes are extremely narrow with no shoulder and in some spots the road is eroded within the white lines. I'm beyond shocked that someone hasn't had vehicle issues in the dark and not gotten killed because their vehicle has to remain in the driving lane. I can tell you from personal experience pulling and following people with trailers that it's impossible to keep it between the lines through that whole stretch. I understand there will be areas that will require the road to stay narrow for short stretches, but then have pullouts at each end so people have an area to get off the roadway to change a tire or stop.

I'm 1000% for this project as my family and friends travel this road alot in the winter pulling trailers, and if it saves even one life, it's worth it.

Thank you!

Thu 08/06/2026 12:41 PM

Hello Mark,

As a life long resident of Rapid City and Spearfish our family has been able to enjoy the many beautiful places the Black Hills have to offer. This is just a short note to request that the Highway 85 construction project be limited to very little change. The proposed area for construction is still one of the most beautiful and enjoyable drives in the hills, as residents of the area we believe signage and the use of rumble strips would help drivers to pay closer attention to the road. If we continue to make the road wider and more open the speed will increase and increase the possibility of more serious accidents.

Please leave the highway the way it is, expect more from the traveling public and use the highway funds for a more traveled area that needs improvement. We would suggest Exit 10 on I-90.

Thu 08/06/2026 1:47 PM

The Black Hills have a unique scenic beauty that draws visitors from all over the US as well as Internationally. Our state economy relies on this.

The project described will destroy one of the most beautiful drives of the Black Hills. It is not only a waste of \$47 million but it is shortsighted while not seeking other solutions. Reducing the speed limit would go long ways to the safety as well as enforcement of the traffic laws by our state troopers.

Please reconsider this abomination and help maintain the Black Hills beauty rather than being a factor in its destruction .

Sat 08/08/2026 8:44 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the proposal to straighten and widen Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border.

This stretch of highway doesn't need to be widened — it needs repairs, and that's it. Straightening and widening it will only encourage higher speeds, which means more accidents, not fewer. Our rural emergency responders are already understaffed and underfunded, and this project would put even more strain on them. I speak from experience as a Rochford VFD firefighter and first responder.

Beyond the safety concerns, this project would permanently damage the landscape and disrupt fragile ecosystems that support local flora and fauna. This road runs through some genuinely beautiful, still-wild country, and once that's paved over and straightened out, that beauty is gone for good.

Locals love this highway the way it is. Tourists come here specifically to slow down and take in the scenery — a wider, faster road works against that experience, not for it. If anything, we should be preserving the character of this route, not turning it into a speedway.

I'd also point out that only a couple of commercial businesses along this stretch stand to benefit from the change. That's a small upside weighed against a large and lasting cost to the community, the environment, and public safety. Tractor trailers and heavy commercial traffic have the interstate for a reason — this highway shouldn't be reshaped to accommodate them.

I urge you to reject this proposal and instead direct funding toward basic repairs and maintenance of Highway 85 as it currently exists.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sun 08/09/2026 8:15 AM

Please try Harder to minimize the impact of the project if Sholders can be avoided by a lower consistant speed limit then dont add them.

Sun 08/09/2026 10:24 AM

Mr Malone

I am writing to adamantly oppose the reconstruction of Hwy 85 west of Cheyenne Crossing. This road bisects some of the most pristine high country in the Black Hills. Please do not tear this beautiful forest up for pavement! After reviewing the stats I see no reason for this project.

Sun 08/09/2026 10:30 AM

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed reconstruction of Highway 85 through the Black Hills.

The Black Hills are a beautiful and special part of South Dakota, and I believe their quaint, natural character should be protected. Expanding or substantially rebuilding the highway would permanently change the landscape, diminish the scenic beauty of the area, and threaten the wildlife and natural habitats that make the Black Hills so unique.

I urge you to carefully consider the environmental and scenic impacts of this project before moving forward. Once these natural landscapes are altered or destroyed, they cannot easily be restored. The wildlife, forests, open spaces, and quiet character of the Black Hills deserve to be preserved for future generations.

Please reconsider the scope of the Highway 85 reconstruction and prioritize protecting the natural beauty, wildlife, and character of the Black Hills.

Thank you for taking my concerns seriously and for considering the voices of those who want to preserve this remarkable part of South Dakota.

Sun 08/09/2026 10:34 AM

I love the scenic drive. The road needs work , but please do not ruin the quaintness of the drive.

Sun 08/09/2026 11:03 AM

Mr. Malone,

I saw the plans for the reconstruction from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. I am appalled at the scope of the project. The project would ruin the experience of the highway. We don't need such a large swath of land scarred. The 385 project from Three Forks to Deadwood should have taught us all the lesson that bigger is better. It is not. By the way the road surface in there is so much worse than it ever has been, I hope you are not done with that project yet. If it was to make the road safer for motorcycles, it did not work!

Please quit ruining the Black Hills with the road projects. We do not need roads built for massive amounts of traffic and people who do not know how to drive on curves. These roads help make the Black Hills experience unique.

Replace the road surface and install some pullouts but please do not make this super highway.

Sun 08/09/2026 11:14 AM

Hello, I am a fairly new resident in Rapid City. My husband and I moved here to retire and enjoy the slower pace, simpler lifestyle and bask in the beauty of the Black Hills. We had our first road trip to the Black Hills. He proposed in the Black Hills. We moved to the Black Hills. Because it has beauty that cannot be found elsewhere!!! Hwy 85 is a lovely example of the captivating landscape and nature that is so special to this area.

I understand that motor vehicle accidents and issues occur in the Hills. I understand that the MAJORITY of people driving these gorgeous highways and roads actually follow the speed limit and drive with caution during bad weather.

I simply cannot fathom that the stupidity of a few has to take away the enjoyment from so many. Not to mention the impact on the wildlife and ecosystem that SD is so proud of. I cannot imagine that the minority of stupid decision makers have the ability to steal the lifestyle, freedom and peace that SO MANY of your taxpayers are here to support!!!! Let's not forget the impact on the flora and fauna that is special to this geographical area.

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE STOP THE DECISION TO STRAIGHTEN OUT US HIGHWAY 85!!!!!!

Add more pull outs, add rumble strips and flashing speed limit signs, increase the fines of the traffic violations! Heck, put in cameras for all I care....just please don't ruin the Hills because a minority of people cannot act right and follow common sense rules.

Sun 08/09/2026 12:19 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing this to express my opposition to the proposed changes to Highway 85.

At what point did the lifestyles of citizens living in the Black Hills become unimportant and second to those of travelers passing through our beautiful home?

Piece by piece we are being stripped of glorious scenery, peaceful drives and the ability to enjoy what life-long residents have called "home". And to what end? Faster speed limits on straight roads?

Please do not destroy this beautiful stretch of road.

Sun 08/09/2026 10:29 AM

Hello Mark!

I am sending in another email to voice against the highway 85 project. Much like the 385 project, and Sheridan Lake road project. These detract from what makes these drives so special

Understanding the safety aspect, this enters the problem of speed limits. Why cave to those who are constantly in a hurry. These roads are adequately signed with their speed limits. Slowing down and enjoying whats around you is something quickly getting removed from our daily lives. I have been riding all the mentioned roads for years. From on my motorcycles, in my Jeeps, and in my sports cars. Never have I had issues, and each time I go. I enjoy every moment.

The construction of this project will forever change the landscape of the road way. Destroying what made it so unique, and beautiful. This will be the legacy left behind, one of caving to a fast paced society that no longer appreciates the world around it. Not the adventure, or the way there, just the destination.

Thank you for your time in reading these comments, and for getting back.

Sun 08/09/2026 1:00 PM

Hi, Mark,

I support alternative planning for safety and improvements of Highway 85.

Some pullouts, speed reduction signage, guardrails, and road improvements.

Thanks for your attention.

Sun 08/09/2026 1:15 PM

Hello,

As a lifelong resident, born and raised in the Black Hills, I would like to firmly and respectfully express my opposition to any major reconstruction of Highway 85 between Lead and the Wyoming border.

Sun 08/09/2026 1:26 PM

I live off Hwy 85 in the Deer Mountain area and often travel to Newcastle and parts south on the road and have done so for over 30 years. I am adamantly opposed to the proposed construction project. It is unnecessary in the extreme and appears to be just a reason to expend highway funds. You can find another project to retain those funds if necessary. The safety argument is very weak here - the sole fatality being a very drunk driver who I know personally - and just serves as a distraction. This seems to be a continuation of the Hwy 385 project which has been horrifying to those of us who actually live here and pay taxes. Please do not do this.

Sun 08/09/2026 2:13 PM

Hello - I am a citizen, homeowner, and business owner in the Black Hills, Custer County. I would like my concerns about the reconstruction of Hwy 85, from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming, to be known to you.

While I understand the importance of maintaining and improving our transportation infrastructure, I am deeply concerned that the current scope of the project appears to prioritize urbanization over the stated goal of improving road safety. I believe many citizens agree that preservation of the natural integrity of the area should be of equal priority to safety, and at a minimum several steps higher in priority than expanding traffic volume.

If a road is redesigned to take on more high-speed, high-volume traffic, it will happen, which in turn influences increased urbanization in areas through which it traverses. If a road is not convenient for high-speed, high-volume traffic, many people will choose alternative routes.

Safety can be improved with resurfacing, and perhaps some pullouts or other minimal safety-technology changes (such as signage, radar lights, rumble strips, etc.) that significantly reduce financial and environmental costs.

The intrusive nature of the current SD DOT plans appears to me to prioritize dramatic increases in traffic volume, under the guise of safety. A logical supposition then, is that "big money" development and urbanization lobbyists may be influencing the changes proposed.

From the publicly available plans, it seems that the proposed changes will significantly alter the surrounding natural environment, including the removal of native vegetation and disruption to local wildlife migration and habitats. These areas are not only home to diverse flora and fauna but also contribute to the ecological balance and natural beauty of our Black Hills community.

I believe comprehensive safety data and analysis that justifies the expansive nature of the project should be published with widespread access for citizens. This data should analyze not only the number accidents in a comparable pre- and post- sample, but also offer impact data on the quality of life of local flora/fauna as well as local citizens. Data presented in the DOT website (at the June 4th meeting) did not offer well-rounded analysis and seems insufficient to argue for the expense of the proposed project, and its invasive impact on the natural environment. I also believe public awareness has increased in recent weeks - since the June 4 meeting - and respectfully request another public meeting be scheduled, and highly publicized, for citizen input.

Our community values both safe transportation and the preservation of our natural heritage. I believe it is possible to achieve both goals through thoughtful planning and transparent dialogue with residents.

I believe our citizens deserve an opportunity to be informed, to be heard, and to participate in public discussions on this matter.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns and for your commitment to serving our community's best interests.

Sun 08/09/2026 3:05 PM

Mr Malone,

I have been following the information that has been put forth regarding the very expensive and extensive plan to revamp the highway from Cheyenne Crossing to the state line. I feel that I must share my strong concern about this project.

After being affected by the Hwy 385 project for the past 3 (which seems more like 5) years, I was quite taken aback at the extensive landscape work that was done. While I admit that 385 is a major thoroughfare through the central Black Hills, I do NOT believe that Hwy 85 from Cheyenne Crossing is a major thoroughfare. I have driven that road as a byway as other byways that allow visitors and residents alike to enjoy the scenic Black Hills.

I do not believe this project, as planned, is 1. a necessary change to this road, 2. a good change to these Black Hills that we all work to protect, and 3. a wise use of taxpayer money.

There are many existing roads and bridges in this state that could use this huge piece of taxpayer money which would be far more beneficial. This road needs maintenance as it is which can be done as has recently been done through Custer State Park. Please give serious consideration revamping this plan and NOT do this kind of damage to this portion of our beautiful Black Hills!

Sun 08/09/2026 3:18 PM

I strongly oppose the proposal to modify US85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the WY state line. The proposal simply is the worst of US civil highway engineering - as is/was done to US385 from the Lawrence County line to Pactola. Widening and straightening a roadway INCREASES the actual speeds driven on that road segment. The US385 raceway is built for sustained speeds of at least 70 mph. I was

easily passed by vehicles likely going 75mph. Some cars were driving on the wide shoulder allowing passing vehicles to pass on the driving lane. DOT created a 3 to 4 lane raceway. This driver behavior is very predictable. (Do a quick study this August - what is the average actual speed driven on US385 (using unmarked, unobtrusive means).) We learn from traveling and reading that European traffic engineers slow speeds by making roads narrower, windier, and putting apparent obstructions near or even in the roadway, using roundabouts, or combinations thereof. It was surprising that the bases for the US385 work was "safety" - but that was an apparent subterfuge for the road has no rumble strips on the shoulder or on the center line. Certainly US85 needs routine maintenance. There are a few places suitable for pullouts (though many exist), left turn lanes to a housing area or Tinton Road or the GFP snowmobile shop may be added -- but in no case should US85 take out hills, forest, boulders, impinge on Spearfish Creek, or redesign O'Neill Pass, or create wide, straight vehicle-sized shoulder that becomes a defacto driving lane. Please don't play us for fools by comparing the accident rate on US85 to the US average (which is reduced by the inclusion of millions of interstate miles) -- instead contrast it to similar mountain highway segments.

Sun 08/09/2026 3:52 PM

Hello,

I am writing this email in opposition to the Highway 85 project from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming State Line.

As someone who grew up in the Black Hills and has seen all the changes in my 42 years of life, there are only a handful of places that haven't changed. This highway is one of them.

Please preserve one of the roads that has remained virtually untouched in my lifetime.

Sun 08/09/2026 4:47 PM

Why are we using massive amounts of tax dollars to decrease an infinitesimal number of deaths on a short stretch of highway that offers the kind of scenery that draws tourists (and their dollars) into our state? Changing the built environment to save a handful of people from their own careless decisions and behaviors is not a wise use of resources. Money scheduled to be spent on the Hwy 85 project would be better spent on improving the safety of highways and streets around schools and hospitals and repairing deteriorating bridges.

Sun 08/09/2026 7:47 PM

Hi Mark!

I'm sure you're getting lots of Hwy 85 emails, just wanted to voice my opinion.

In short:

1) as a personal seeker of older historic highways I look for the unique driving experience they offer and the slower speed.

2) this highway has other options to go around- when we go to CO we take 90 to Sundance to 585/Four corners and dodge these slow portions. It adds maybe 4 minutes but cuts the swerve roads down and deer risk. My point is there's other options for drivers

3) old narrow highways have history, character and charm and add to a tourism experience. Signage helps with getting people onto the correct section of highway

4) more pullouts and widen shoulders would be much more welcome than an expensive and destructive highway project

That's all! Thanks

Sun 08/09/2026 8:11 PM

The Black Hills needs to be maintained not destroyed. Tax dollars should be used to upkeep the road, not destroy the landscape. We already have enough developers destroying the landscape. Using taxpayer dollars on a project that will definitely be grossly inefficiently does nothing to maintain the beauty of the Black Hills. Why not use that money to maintain the roads that are already there? Novel concept.

Sun 08/09/2026 9:28 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to submit a public comment regarding the proposed reconstruction of Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

While I understand the importance of roadway safety and maintenance, I strongly oppose the current proposal as presented. The planned widening of the roadway, addition of shoulders, and potential realignment of the centerline would significantly impact the natural landscape of Spearfish Canyon and the surrounding Limestone Plateau.

This area is one of the most unique and scenic corridors in the Black Hills, valued not only by residents but by visitors from across the region. The character of this canyon—its narrow roadway, forested edges, and undisturbed views—is part of what makes it special. Expanding the highway in the proposed manner risks permanently altering that experience and diminishing the very qualities that make this area worth preserving.

I encourage the Department of Transportation to consider less invasive alternatives that improve safety without fundamentally changing the footprint of the roadway. Options such as targeted safety improvements (signage, speed management, rumble strips, and localized enhancements) should be prioritized over large-scale widening and realignment.

Once these landscapes are altered, they cannot be restored. I urge you to take a balanced approach that protects both public safety and the long-term integrity of this irreplaceable natural corridor.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your consideration.

Sun 08/09/2026 11:47 PM

I am strongly against the proposed changes to this scenic highway. Please consider less brutal changes and consider just making necessary repairs without ruining the beauty as it is now.

Mon 08/10/2026 7:46 AM

Hello sir. Hey I just wanted to let you know that I'm not in favor of the new Hwy 85 reconstruction plan. I would much prefer to have a scenic route, rather than a high speed highway.

Thanks for all your work sir.

Mon 08/10/2026 8:06 AM

I VEHEMENTLY OPPOSE this project! I grew up in Deadwood and currently reside in Spearfish and have driven this BEAUTIFUL, SERENE road COUNTLESS times in my 64 years. There are MANY other less invasive options for making this highway safer WITHOUT destroying it's majesty. Ans as far as "Robin the (Karen) crybaby" goes, SHE CHOSE to either buy a residence or employment that REQUIRES driving this road in a regular basis. So SHE should either make accommodations that allow her to arrive on time, such as LEAVING EARLY, or SHE CAN MOVE CLOSER TO HER JOB, or find a job that DOESN'T require her to drive this road regularly. Our majestic Black Hills should not suffer because of careless crybabies and millionaires who strive to be RICHER.

Mon 08/10/2026 8:20 AM

Leave our beautiful scenic highway alone! The tourists can drive slower and appreciate the beautiful views! No reason to "fix" such a wonderful drive!

Mon 08/10/2026 8:53 AM

US Highway 85 (Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line) construction is going to drastically change the beauty of the area. It appears that a great deal of clear cutting and fill will be done to the area in question. Once the landscape and trees are gone it will never be the same. Please reconsider such a devastating plan and consider the natural beauty of the area surrounding the road construction. I have traveled to 40 different states and the beauty of the Black Hills area is a unique and wonderful treasure.

Mon 08/10/2026 9:00 AM

Hello Mr. Malone,

I oppose the proposed centerline as the solution to the crash rate in spearfish canyon. I believe reducing the speed limit would be a better solution. If the turns are made less sharp, drivers will be encouraged to maintain high speeds going through them. Slowing down for the turns appears to be the issue in my opinion, not the turns themselves.

Other proposed solutions to reduce accidents from my colleagues include rumble strips, radar feedback signs, improved warning signs, dynamic message signs, targeted law enforcement, and public education.

This highway is exceptionally scenic, and preserving the beauty of the Black his is important to most of us who live here. In the fall, I often wish that the speed on this highway was lower, so I can enjoy more of the scenery without other vehicles tailgating me. I believe many residents agree with my point of view, and I pray that you take our voices into consideration.

Mon 08/10/2026 9:08 AM

This will inevitably decimate one of the few thoroughly natural areas in the hills, and easily one of the most beautiful. I understand the concerns for safety although straighter roads doesn't mean safer roads anyway. We don't have to live in a sterile grid in order to be safe.

Nonetheless, this "safety issue" is certainly a guise to get this road widened and stabilized for large mining equipment to enter the area more easily. I wholeheartedly disagree with this proposal. We are running out of natural spaces in the black hills, we need to protect these areas and keep them pristine. The development needs to stop.

Mon 08/10/2026 9:37 AM

HWY 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming does not need to be widened and straightened. People need to slow down and appreciate the beauty. The Black hills is a natural beauty retreat. If you have to drive like a maniac, don't drive out here. You have ruined parts of 385, and now people are just driving faster on that road, and having accidents. Problem solved, or just made worse???? Don't destroy natural beauty for the sake of idiot drivers. Please.

Mon 08/10/2026 2:13 AM

Hello Mr. Malone,

I am reaching out to speak in opposition of the proposed project on Highway 85 in Spearfish Canyon. I recently learned of these proposed changes and would like to express my opinion. I am a climber with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition. I spend a fair amount of time in Spearfish Canyon both climbing and

hiking. I think that the enlargement of the Highway does not serve any purpose other than simply biggier. I think better maintenance and upkeep should be a priority, while not damaging or eliminating habitat and beautiful terrain. Please do not take away any more of the beauty that is Spearfish Canyon.

Mon 08/10/2026 10:59 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to submit a public comment regarding the proposed reconstruction of Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

While I understand the importance of roadway safety and maintenance, I strongly oppose the current proposal as presented. The planned widening of the roadway, addition of shoulders, and potential realignment of the centerline would significantly impact the natural landscape of Spearfish Canyon and the surrounding Limestone Plateau.

This area is one of the most unique and scenic corridors in the Black Hills, valued not only by residents but by visitors from across the region. The character of this canyon—its narrow roadway, forested edges, and undisturbed views—is part of what makes it special. Expanding the highway in the proposed manner risks permanently altering that experience and diminishing the very qualities that make this area worth preserving.

I encourage the Department of Transportation to consider less invasive alternatives that improve safety without fundamentally changing the footprint of the roadway. Options such as targeted safety improvements (signage, speed management, rumble strips, and localized enhancements) should be prioritized over large-scale widening and realignment.

Once these landscapes are altered, they cannot be restored. I urge you to take a balanced approach that protects both public safety and the long-term integrity of this irreplaceable natural corridor.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your consideration.

Mon 08/10/2026 11:06 AM

Dear Department of Transportation,

I am writing to formally request that you halt plans for the proposed highway reconstruction project from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

This route is a designated scenic byway, and it is vital that we preserve its natural character. The current design is sufficient, as there is no necessity for a higher-speed corridor through this area.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Mon 08/10/2026 11:28 AM

Mark,

I have never made reviews, sent anyone my concerns, etc., but I have recently followed a bit of the information on the Highway 85 rebuild. I am totally for progress and safety, but as a 12-year-old boy in the winter of 1998, this stretch of road is what made me fall in love with the Black Hills and want to come back. I really think everyone involved should look at the common sense of this project and maybe look at just bettering the current road versus a total blast and rebuild. Thank you for your time.

Mon 08/10/2026 1:15 PM

This letter is to voice my support of the planned reconstruction of Hwy 85 from Cheyenne crossing to the Wyoming state line. I feel this project has been needed for quite some time.

Mon 08/10/2026 1:46 PM

Hello. I spend a lot of time hiking and recreating in the Black Hills and don't want to see the beauty of the landscapes in upper Spearfish Canyon and the Limestone Plateau compromised. Present plans threaten scenic forest roadside areas. I know this work is being proposed to improve safety, but there are many alternatives that would work such as radar feedback signs, rumble strips, enhanced speed limit signs, improved warning signs, more targeted patrols and law enforcement, and public education. People who prefer to drive fast can always use the highway. Scenic highways should not be straightened so people can drive faster. The road does need to be resurfaced, but I would like for the rebuilt road follow the old one, please don't change the centerline. DOT's plans threaten to permanently damage the strikingly scenic country that we value so highly.

Mon 08/10/2026 1:51 PM

Dear Mr Malone, I have lived in the Black Hills for 30 years and never had an accident. I am drove log truck in the Hills also not to mention I am a female along with my husband who drove. We have never had an accident why because we slow down we did drive on these roads but didn't see a problem. I understand roads need updating but I do not like all the straightening of the roads. Taking the trees out. Making it safe for people who can't slow down. Please don't make all our Black Hills roads like the freeway. People still have accidents on the freeway and it's one of the straightest roads there is. Please leave some of our roads alone including this one. I'm not alone in this idea.

Mon 08/10/2026 1:53 PM

Dear Mr. Malone:

The scale of the proposed reconstruction is far too destructive. Widening and substantially altering this route would cause extreme and irreversible damage to the existing canyon, trees, rock formations, and scenic character that make this stretch of the Black Hills so special. Not only to the locals, but the

millions of people that travel this way each year *specifically to visit these canyons*.

These hills do not need to be reshaped to accommodate a larger, faster highway. Please pursue a less invasive approach - resurfacing the existing roadway and making targeted safety improvements while preserving the natural landscape and character of the canyon.

Once this landscape is blasted, bulldozed, and cleared, ***it cannot simply be put back. Please leave the hills intact and reconsider the current reconstruction plan.***

Thank you for your time.

Mon 08/10/2026 3:14 PM

I am writing to formally submit my comments and express serious concerns regarding the proposed \$47 million reconstruction project for U.S. Highway 85.

While I recognize and support the Department's mandate to improve traveler safety and address crash rates along this corridor, I am deeply concerned about the permanent, negative impacts the current design will have on the natural landscape adjacent to Spearfish Canyon.

Specifically, the plans to widen travel lanes, add extensive 6-foot paved shoulders, and flatten curves will require significant excavation of historic rock formations and the removal of mature trees. This corridor serves as a vital ecological buffer and a scenic gateway to one of South Dakota's most treasured natural landmarks. Prioritizing standard highway dimensions over the unique topography of the canyon risks permanently degrading the very environment that residents and visitors value and enjoy.

I urge the SDDOT to consider a more flexible, context-sensitive design approach that minimizes the project's physical footprint. Safety improvements should be achieved through targeted measures—such as lower speed limits, enhanced warning signage, high-friction surface treatments, and localized guardrails—rather than widespread widening and clear-cutting.

Thank you for extending the public comment period and for considering the long-term environmental heritage of Lawrence County in your final design decisions.

Mon 08/10/2026 4:30 PM

Dear Mr. Malone;

Count me in with the huge number of complaints about this project. I have written before. My husband and I have owned the historic Hell's Gate Lodge property on what used to be called the

Dead Horse Gulch and another Hell's Gate. The roadsigns there and down the road "Dead Ox" always confused people. Now I see the reference to Hell's Gate (you all call it "Hellgate") on your video

is even in error and confuses everything even more. SO wouldn't it be better if you publish the map with all of the markers, reference points, landmarks, the creek and maybe even the landowners'

properties. Then we could better understand, process and comment.

It is a historic road and should not be dramatically changed as is apparently being proposed.

Mon 08/10/2026 4:44 PM

I do not support the highway 85 reconstruction project. I wouldn't call it that- it would be the desecration of a beautiful road that winds through our beautiful black hills. I can see the need for resurfacing, repairs, turn offs etc. But seriously not the entire road!

Not the extreme cut backs!

What are the reasons the road is planned THIS way?

Who has complained? Do tourists complain that it is hard to drive?

Large trucks?

Logging companies?

At what cost to the environment, Mr. Malone, at what cost?

Mon 08/10/2026 5:17 PM

Sir,

I am writing to you to express my opinion on the proposed changes/upgrades to Highway 85.

We lived in the Hills in the seventies largely before many of the upgrades were made to Rimrock, Boulder Canyon and Hwy 85. In a word they all needed upgrades. Some thought was put into some of the upgrades over the years for example (Boulder Canyon between Sturgis and Deadwood and Rimrock between Rapid City and 385 at Pactola.) Other changes created four lane cement Interstate like roads that impacted the traffic flow at the expense of the scenery that many of our visitors come to experience. The plan as proposed overdoes the four lane feature and needs a second look and modification. I have family in The Black Hills and our daughter and husband go there frequently because of the scenery. We have enough four lane Interstates in South Dakota. We do not need one in the Black Hills.

Adapt the plan to make it more people friendly without completely destroying it's reason for folks going there.

Thanks for listening.

Mon 08/10/2026 8:39 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I understand wanting to keep drivers safe, but something feels off about this. Can't you start with lowering the speed limit to 40?

There are many more roads in the Black Hills that are more unsafe. Why here, why now? 140 crashes, three deaths and 56 injuries.

I'd prefer this money go to so many other things. How about the homeless population of 340-420, 67% native. How about helping the alcoholic population, finding ways to stop drunk drivers?

Is the real goal to save lives? If so, that \$72 million could go towards saving many more lives without blasting into canyons and all of the parts that make the black hills so beautiful. We would hate to scare the tourists away.

Mon 08/10/2026 8:58 PM

Sir,

I am writing you to state the reconstruction stated for US Highway 85 from Wyoming to Cheyenne Crossing is god awful. All you're doing is straightening the road so idiots can speed and increasing the number of semis and large Rvs clogging up the road and bikers smearing themselves and their bikes across the road. Not to mention the destruction of scenery and various historical sites.

What has been done to Highway 385 is bad enough but you also want to do that nonsense to Hwy 85? No. I can't even tell you how pissed off I am about the destruction to Hwy 385. That road went from a nice drive to boring and featureless and now the State wants to do the same thing to Hwy 85.

What makes Hwy 85 a nice drive will be removed and in it's place another boring stretch of road that could be Anywhere USA.

Mon 08/10/2026 11:09 PM

I'm writing to let you know that I am against any changes on Highway 85 near Cheyenne Crossing! Leave our Black Hills alone!

Tue 08/11/2026 8:49 AM

Mark,

I am writing in opposition to the proposed changes for USHwy 85 from Cheyenne Crossyto the Wyoming Border.

This part of the road is a beautiful road and very scenic.

After seeing the destruction on 385 and the unnecessary removal of trees and what was a beautiful scenic drive, I do not want to see this happen again, especially since the water way along the road would also be impacted.

Please leave the roadway the way it is

Tue 08/11/2026 11:26 AM

Hello Mark,

I am writing regarding the proposed plans the DOT has for reconstructing Hwy 85 between Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming Line.

I understand there needs to be some repairs to the road, but the plans you have presented are not something I can agree with. I want to go on the record as opposing the DOT's current plans.

To me, as well as many others, Spearfish Canyon is a main artery in the heart of the Black Hills. Damaging or restructuring any of that road will destroy the scenic beauty that we all enjoy, not to mention the effect on the fragile ecosystem. Scenic roads are meant to allow us to slow down and enjoy the natural beauty. With all the destruction these days, I would hope we could maintain the beauty and value of the Black Hills.

Thank you for your time in considering my email.

Tue 08/11/2026 12:35 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Please reconsider the US Hwy 85 changes. Some pull outs need to be added and the road resurfaced but not rerouted and widened. Custer State Park recently resurfaced the part of 16A from Custer. It is delightful and didn't destroy scenery. We don't need a road that was meant to be scenic to be made into something where people can just go faster.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tue 08/11/2026 1:08 PM

Dear Mark,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to reconstructing Spearfish Canyon in a way that further alters the scenic road and surrounding wildlife habitat.

Spearfish Canyon is special because of what it is naturally. It is not something that needs to be made better or more convenient for humans. The canyon, its wildlife, vegetation, waterways, rock formations, and quiet character are what make it worth protecting in the first place.

When we continue to rebuild, widen, straighten, or otherwise change these areas to accommodate people, we are taking away from the very thing people come to experience. Wildlife does not need another improved roadway. It needs habitat, space, and as little disruption as possible.

I understand that roads need to be safe and maintained, but there is a difference between repairing what is necessary and using reconstruction as an opportunity to significantly change the character of Spearfish Canyon.

Please consider the long-term impact of these decisions on the canyon and the wildlife that depends on it. Once natural habitat and the character of a place are changed, we cannot simply put them back the way they were.

Spearfish Canyon belongs to all of us, but it also belongs to the wildlife that has called it home long before we came along. I hope the State will choose protection and preservation over making the canyon more developed for human use.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Tue 08/11/2026 1:14 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Thank you for taking the time to read my message. I am concerned about the radical change to the highway in question US 85 Cheyenne crossing to WY border. Such a broad reconstruction will severely affect the beauty and nature of the area. I agree some revision needs to be made such as pullouts and some widening in certain areas. The complete restructuring seems overkill to satisfy the wants of the few versus the concerns of the many.

Please reconsider this project and scaling it down to preserve what natural beauty is left. .

Wed 08/12/2026 9:10 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to share my concerns about the proposed reconstruction of Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

I absolutely understand the need to maintain our roads and address legitimate safety concerns. However, I am very concerned that the proposed widening, addition of shoulders, and potential realignment of the roadway will come at a tremendous cost to the natural character of Spearfish Canyon and the surrounding Limestone Plateau.

Spearfish Canyon is not just another stretch of highway. It is one of the most beautiful and distinctive areas in the Black Hills, and the road itself is part of what makes the experience so special. The narrow roadway, forested edges, rock formations, and relatively untouched surroundings create a sense of place that simply cannot be recreated once the landscape is significantly altered. People travel from all over to experience this area precisely because it has retained that character.

I am also concerned that we may be repeating a mistake that has already been made elsewhere in the Black Hills. A similar approach was taken with Highway 385, where widening and modifying the roadway significantly changed the character of the corridor and the surrounding landscape. In my opinion, the result was catastrophic. Not necessarily because the road itself became less functional, but because so much of the charm and beauty of the highway and its environment was lost. I would hate to see Highway 85 follow the same path.

It is also important to recognize that accidents are going to occur in areas that attract large numbers of tourists. Many of these incidents are not caused by the design of the roadway. Tourists stop or slow down to take photographs, become distracted by the scenery, make sudden or illegal U-turns when they become lost, cross the centerline while looking at the landscape, or otherwise drive unpredictably because they are unfamiliar with the area. Making the road wider and removing more of the surrounding environment will not eliminate those behaviors. In fact, it could change the very character of the area that draws those visitors here in the first place.

I believe there are better ways to address legitimate safety concerns without fundamentally changing the footprint and character of this irreplaceable corridor. Targeted improvements such as better signage, speed management, rumble strips, improved sight-distance measures where appropriate, additional warnings for tourists, and localized safety enhancements should be carefully considered before resorting to large-scale widening and realignment.

There is a point at which improving a road can actually diminish the place the road was built to serve. Spearfish Canyon is one of those places. Once trees are removed, rock formations are altered, and the landscape is reshaped to accommodate a much larger roadway, we cannot simply put it back the way it was.

I strongly encourage the Department of Transportation to look beyond simply making the roadway bigger and instead consider how safety can be improved while preserving the natural beauty and character that make this corridor so valuable. We have an opportunity to protect something that is truly unique to the Black Hills, and I hope that opportunity is not lost in the name of a one-size-fits-all approach to highway safety.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns and for allowing the public to have a voice in the future of this important and beautiful part of the Black Hills.

Wed 08/12/2026 12:48 PM

Mark,

This project is unnecessary and could damage the watershed and natural flora. If it is anything like 385 to Pactola, I hope you change your mind. Just resurface the road

Wed 08/12/2026 1:34 PM

Hello Mr. Malone,

I am reaching out to speak in opposition of the proposed project on Highway 85 in Spearfish Canyon. I recently learned of these proposed changes and would like to express my opinion. I am a climber with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition. I spend a lot of time hiking and climbing in Spearfish Canyon. The impact of this reconstruction would be devastating to the landscape and the biodiversity of the ecosystems in Spearfish Canyon as well as in Spearfish Creek. There is no good reason for this expansion other than just making a road bigger that does not need to be. It is a waste of time and money. I vote no on the proposed Highway 85 reconstruction.

Wed 08/12/2026 2:39 PM

Greetings,

I am a Lawrence county resident and oppose the current proposal for the highway 85 project from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. I think that the proposal should be updated to include low impact corridor designs, sediment protection for Spearfish Creek, and to preserve roadside climbing and trail access.

Thank you for your time and work on this project.

Wed 08/12/2026 6:55 PM

This project could could negatively impact Icebox Canyon and surrounding climbing access, and parking pullouts. We ask for no build/redesign, low-impact corridor designs, sediment protection for Spearfish Creek, and preservation of roadside climbing access.

Wed 08/12/2026 10:31 PM

Good evening all,

I am in favor of replacing pavement that is damaged or in poor condition and drainage as needed but I am adamantly against any expansion, redesign, or other roadway improvements to this stretch of road. The 385 project completely destroyed the scenic aspects of the road that made it amazing not to mention the cost. Not interested or supporting any aspect of that for the remaining senic and amazing roadways we have left in the hills. Now it's just another boring piece of pavement.

Thu 08/13/2026 8:06 AM

Good morning, Mr Malone. I've been a SD resident for all of my life (64 years) and I rarely voice my opinion concerning road 'improvements' but I must voice my objection to the proposed project in the Cheyenne Crossing area. I believe Paul Horsted made some valid points on Facebook. We may need some resurfacing or even some pullouts added but one only has to look at the results of the last project around Pactola and Sheridan lakes to realize just how destructive to our beautiful scenery along the hills highways these projects can be! No one needs to travel faster than what been posted for decades and I'd argue pulling out of the north ramp at Pactola is more dangerous now than before the project there. Please consider me firmly opposed to this latest idea to tear away at more of our beautiful Black Hills!

Thu 08/13/2026 8:51 AM

Dear Sir,

As a long time cross county ski enthusiast and hiker, I am concerned about the proposed project to rebuild highway 85. Particularly from Cheyenne Crossing to O'neil Pass. The creek in their has a fragile ecosystem and unique beauty. There are gorgeous hikes within that area. The orchids that bloom in mid June are stunning!

Please do not do the same kind of rebuild as highway 385. We need to have this area continue to be the scenic highway it is. Maybe don't allow giant semi trucks on it! Progress isn't everything!!!

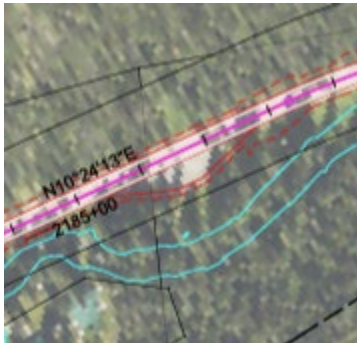
Please!!!! Don't ruin the ecosystems!!

Thu 08/13/2026 10:20 AM

Hello Mark, I'm a local climber and climbing related business owner. I wanted to comment on parking areas for climbing along the Highway 85 project:



This lot is primarily used by climbers accessing an area called Sunshine. I feel the change is large an unnecessary - The current lot works great for us. This would cut into existing green space and congest traffic entering and leaving.



This lot gives access to an area we call the Danks. Looks great.

Please don't ruin another beautiful historical drive. Please install turn outs and rebuild the existing road. I always feel that I am finally home when I arrive at the state line of South Dakota from the west!

Thu 08/13/2026 11:27 AM

Dear Mr. Malone and South Dakota Department of Transportation:

I am writing to formally oppose the current proposed design for the reconstruction of U.S. Highway 85 between the Wyoming state line and Cheyenne Crossing.

I want to be clear that I am not opposed to improving Highway 85. I recognize that the roadway needs attention, including pavement replacement, correction of deteriorated roadway edges, drainage improvements, and targeted safety improvements. I also recognize the crash history along this corridor and agree that improving safety should be a priority.

My objection is to the scale and character of the reconstruction currently proposed and whether such extensive alteration of this unique Black Hills corridor is necessary to accomplish those goals.

Safety does not require us to disregard the landscape

SDDOT identifies the needs of this project as reducing crash rates, replacing pavement, and replacing drainage structures. It also identifies project goals that include protecting the integrity of the corridor, protecting the beauty of the Black Hills, and reducing impacts to the natural environment.

I strongly support all of those goals.

However, after reviewing the proposed alignment and right-of-way plans and seeing the extent of the anticipated cut-and-fill areas, I am deeply concerned that the current design places too much emphasis on rebuilding the highway to modern geometric standards and not enough emphasis on preserving the extraordinary landscape through which it passes.

Highway 85 is not simply a transportation corridor. This stretch of road is part of the character of the northern Black Hills. Its curves, rock formations, forest, proximity to Spearfish Creek, and relatively narrow footprint are precisely what make traveling it different from driving a conventional modern highway.

Once those features are blasted, graded, cleared, or permanently altered, they cannot simply be replaced.

Please pursue the least-destructive alternative

I urge SDDOT to reconsider whether every proposed widening, curve modification, expanded clear zone, cut, fill, and major alteration is truly necessary.

Instead, I ask the Department to develop and seriously evaluate a context-sensitive, minimum-impact alternative that prioritizes improvements such as:

- Resurfacing and reconstruction within or as close as practicable to the existing roadway footprint;
- Repairing deteriorated pavement edges and dangerous drop-offs;

- Improving drainage structures where necessary;
- Adding shoulders only where demonstrated safety needs justify them and where they can be constructed without disproportionate environmental damage;
- Using retaining walls or similar engineering solutions where appropriate to reduce extensive cuts and fills;
- Preserving existing curves wherever reasonably possible rather than redesigning the road primarily to accommodate higher travel speeds;
- Evaluating reduced speed limits in particularly constrained or environmentally sensitive sections;
- Installing enhanced warning signage, curve-warning systems, radar-feedback signs, rumble strips, pavement markings, delineators, guardrails, or other modern safety technologies where appropriate;
- Improving existing scenic pullouts and strategically adding safe pullouts where needed; and
- Minimizing tree removal, rock blasting, disturbance to Spearfish Creek and its riparian corridor, and unnecessary alteration of natural landforms.

The question should not simply be, “How would we design this highway if we were building it today?”

The question should be, “How can we make this historic Black Hills highway meaningfully safer while preserving as much of what already exists as possible?”

Those are two very different approaches.

The Black Hills should not become a collection of standardized highways

The recent reconstruction of U.S. Highway 385 demonstrates why many residents are concerned. Large-scale highway reconstruction can permanently change the visual character of a Black Hills corridor through tree removal, rock cuts, grading, widened shoulders, expanded clear zones, and altered terrain.

Highway 85 deserves a different approach.

A useful comparison is Highway 16A through Custer State Park. It demonstrates that a narrow, winding Black Hills highway can remain a functional transportation corridor without eliminating the very characteristics that make traveling through the Black Hills special.

Drivers can slow down.

Not every highway must be transformed to allow motorists to travel through the landscape faster or with the geometry of a modern high-speed corridor. In some places, the appropriate engineering solution should be to design around the landscape rather than redesign the landscape around the automobile.

Environmental impacts deserve substantial consideration

My concerns extend beyond aesthetics.

I have a background in wildlife biology and natural-resource management, and I believe the ecological consequences of a project of this scale deserve serious consideration. Large cut-and-fill areas,

vegetation removal, fragmentation of roadside habitat, disturbance adjacent to waterways, changes in drainage, erosion and sedimentation, and permanent alteration of rock and forest communities all have consequences.

Spearfish Creek and the surrounding forested corridor are natural resources, not simply obstacles within a highway right-of-way.

The Department should identify and publicly explain the anticipated acreage of disturbance, number or acreage of trees and forest cover expected to be removed, extent of rock excavation and blasting, impacts to wetlands and riparian areas, proximity of construction to Spearfish Creek, expected permanent habitat conversion, and measures considered to avoid those impacts — not merely mitigate them after they occur.

Avoidance should come before mitigation.

Preserve the experience people come to the Black Hills to find

Tourism is an important part of South Dakota's economy, but people do not travel to the Black Hills because our highways resemble highways everywhere else.

They come here because this place is different.

The winding roads, towering pines, exposed rock, streams, wildlife, and unexpected views are part of the experience. We should be extremely cautious about permanently sacrificing those qualities in the name of modernization when less-destructive safety alternatives may exist.

There is also an important distinction between making a road safer and designing a road that simply allows people to comfortably travel faster.

A scenic mountain highway requiring drivers to slow down, pay attention, and navigate curves is not inherently a design failure.

I respectfully ask SDDOT to not advance the current design without substantial modification.

Please develop and publicly present a lower-impact alternative that prioritizes resurfacing, pavement-edge repair, drainage improvements, targeted shoulder improvements, lower speeds where appropriate, modern warning and safety technology, selective engineering interventions, and preservation of the existing alignment wherever reasonably possible.

For each major section where widening, straightening, blasting, extensive grading, tree removal, or significant cut-and-fill work is proposed, I ask SDDOT to clearly demonstrate:

1. What specific safety problem exists at that location;
2. What specific crash data support the proposed intervention;
3. What less-destructive alternatives were considered;
4. Why those alternatives were rejected;
5. What environmental and scenic resources will be permanently affected; and

6. Whether a lower design speed or other context-sensitive approach could achieve an acceptable safety improvement with substantially less disturbance.

I appreciate SDDOT extending the public-comment period and providing the community an opportunity to participate. I also appreciate the difficult responsibility engineers face in balancing safety, infrastructure needs, cost, environmental impacts, and public expectations.

But some decisions cannot be undone.

Pavement can be replaced again. Guardrails can be changed. Signs and safety technology can be upgraded as technology evolves.

A blasted rock formation cannot be put back. A mature forest cannot be replaced within our lifetimes. A creek corridor altered by major construction cannot simply be restored to exactly what existed before it. And once the character of a scenic Black Hills highway is lost, we cannot manufacture it again.

Please improve Highway 85.

Please make it safer.

But please do so in a way that recognizes that preserving the Black Hills is itself an important public interest — and that the safest engineering solution is not automatically the best solution when a less-destructive alternative can reasonably accomplish the same goal.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Thu 08/13/2026 1:54 PM

Mr. Malone,

I am writing to you regarding the proposed US Highway project. I would urge you to not pursue this project. I grew up in the Black Hills & have driven the beautiful Highway 85 many times over the years. This should remain the scenic highway that it has always been, not turned into a super highway for tourists. I believe the proposed project would just cause people to drive faster, causing more accidents & causing harm to the people who have residences/businesses along this highway. Also, would put the multitude of wild life at risk. Please consider these factors when making this decision.

Thank you for your time & consideration of this important matter.

Thu 08/13/2026 7:57 PM

I grew up in Rapid City, and I love the Black Hills. I was heartbroken to see the devastating work done to Highway 385. The permanent destruction of the scenic beauty of the Black Hills is a travesty! Now I hear there is a similar project planned for Highway 85. I love driving that road and feel people need to slow down and enjoy the journey, rather than widening the roads and destroying that very reason we come to see the Black Hills. Please STOP and rethink this project and preserve the scenic wonder of the Black Hills. Thanks for your consideration.

Thu 08/13/2026 8:49 PM

I'm emailing in the deepest hopes that you guys re actually taking this into more than consideration and moving into repair not destruction of hwy 85. As a native growing up I. The black hills I've seen every scenic route we HAD be destroyed, for what you call safety. At the town meeting you made it clear that you wanted to fall back on safety for this project. This year alone has been a great example of how widening our highways has not made than safer, as a matter of fact possibly the most fatalities yet in a year on 14A(and you just widened the portion by camp 5 even more), not to mention ton fatalities on 385 this year without even completion.

This will destroy one of the only beautiful scenic routes we have left, not to mention destroy the creek and inhabitants around.

Repairing yes, as it hasn't been in believe you said 15-20 years at least at the meeting. But it does not need redirected or widened.

I truly hope you listen to voices that absolutely matter too not just federal funding. There are many options beyond destroying 85.

Fri 08/14/2026 6:34 AM

To whom it may concern;

I am writing to you today to voice my opposing concern on the projected plan to work on highway 85 from cheyenne crossing to wyoming line in South Dakota.

I strongly feel that it does need work but the landscaping proposed does not need to be done.

This road is a scenic byway to wyoming and is one of the few left and that has few houses out that way. I feel that if this project goes through there will be more development and the wildlife are going to be pushed out even more. I also feel that if it goes through that the traveling public will go even faster and there will be even more accidents out that way, also the litter that will more than likely come along with the increased traffic.

I hope you at the DOT level will not let this project as described go through as in the plans and just let nature be as it is without changing it.

Fri 08/14/26

Atta Marie Malone

Please include me in those protesting the effect that "reconstructing" Highway 85 would cause: damage to Spearfish Creek and various scenic places, and ecologically sensitive environmental areas within 100 yards of the highway.

Instead, the department could lower the speed limit, which would encourage more people to truly enjoy what this beautiful environment has to offer.

And please, as Paul Horsted notes, many more comments against this project have been posted on Facebook. Please look at those comments before you make your decision. It's incomprehensible to me why folks will blather on Facebook but not write to state officials, but you know that's how it is.

I am a rancher south of Hermosa, and writer (24 or so books about South Dakota).

Fri 08/14/2026 12:47 PM

Dear Mr. Malone and SDDOT Project Team,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway 85 from the Wyoming state line to Cheyenne Crossing.

I understand the need to maintain our highways, replace aging pavement and drainage structures, and address legitimate safety concerns. However, I believe those needs must be balanced against something we cannot replace once it is lost: the natural beauty and character of the Black Hills.

The Black Hills occupy a relatively small and incredibly special area of South Dakota. The winding roads, mature forests, rock formations, streams, wildlife and scenic views are not obstacles that need to be engineered around. They are part of what makes this place extraordinary. Every time we widen another corridor, remove established trees, cut farther into hillsides and rock formations or replace a natural roadside with additional pavement and shoulders, we permanently change the very landscape people come here to experience.

SDDOT lists among the goals of this project protecting the integrity of the corridor, protecting the beauty of the Black Hills and reducing impacts on the natural environment. I strongly support those goals. However, I question whether a major reconstruction of this corridor, particularly one requiring substantial widening and alteration of the existing landscape, can truly accomplish them.

I am not opposed to necessary maintenance or carefully targeted safety improvements. I am asking SDDOT to pursue the least intrusive approach possible. Repair the pavement where necessary. Replace failing drainage structures. Address specific locations where documented safety problems exist. But please do not substantially widen and reshape this beautiful corridor simply to bring it closer to modern highway design standards when less destructive alternatives may be available.

There should be an extremely high threshold for removing mature trees, disturbing natural rock formations, altering waterways or wetlands and acquiring additional land along a scenic Black Hills roadway. Once those resources are removed, no amount of landscaping after construction can truly put them back.

We are fortunate to live in a place that people travel from across the country to see. With that privilege comes a responsibility to preserve it. Progress should not automatically mean wider roads, larger cuts and more pavement. Sometimes good stewardship means improving what we already have while disturbing as little as possible.

I respectfully ask SDDOT to reconsider the scale of the proposed U.S. Highway 85 reconstruction and develop a substantially less invasive alternative that prioritizes preservation of the existing corridor. Please maintain and improve Highway 85 where necessary, but preserve as much of its current footprint, forest, natural terrain and scenic character as possible.

The Black Hills are a finite resource. Once we change them, we cannot simply build them back.

Thank you for considering my comments and for allowing the public an opportunity to participate in this process.

Fri 08/14/2026 4:33 PM

My husband and I recently drove this beautiful drive on our way to Pinedale Wyoming. We discussed what a tragedy it would be to change another scenic drive. As we traveled on hwy 287,28, and 191 in Wyoming, we were impressed by the number of pull outs and passing lanes making it safer for all drivers, be it cars, campers,or motorcycles. Please consider this solution along with repairs and paving where needed. Thank you Mark.

Sat 08/15/2026 5:00 PM

Mark, I oppose DOT's present reconstruction plans for US 85 west of the crossings. They want to turn it into a super highway that allows faster speeds. It would ruin the beautiful landscapes. As you stated it is a legacy road that must be saved.

Sun 08/16/2026 11:21 AM

Mark,

We oppose DOT's present reconstruction plans vehemently. Thank you to David Miller for stating the reasons, in the Pioneer, much better than we can express, that unrestrained, the modern road builders will destroy U.S. 85 and the adjacent landscapes. The highway as we know it is part of those landscapes, and we love driving it, as is. Highway 85 "is a legacy road and present plans will demolish it."

Sun 08/16/2026 2:52 PM

Hello,

I'm writing to add my comment on the proposed plans for the new highway 85 roadway design. The widening of the road and extending a 30 ft "clear zone" on either side of the road would be an unsightly unnecessary redesign, and be a blight on the natural beauty of our Black Hills. I appreciate the desire to improve driver safety, however we have mountain roads, mountain roads are going to be inherently more risky than regular roads, not everything can be made perfectly. Because of a handful of people that cannot drive safely to conditions does not mean we should be clearing large swathes of forest to expand a road. It's a scenic route, it should not be made into a highway. If this pattern starts and continues in the Hills, then piece by piece our beautiful roadways will be leveled, trees cut down, rocks blasted, until every road is a bland highway to "improve safety". Don't widen highway 85, keep our nature wild.

Sun 08/16/2026 8:09 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am a Rapid City resident who travels Highway 85 several times each year for recreation, scenery, and photography. I recently learned about a proposed project for roadway changes on a section of that highway west of Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line. This road has a special character and represents quintessential Black Hills road travel and sightseeing. Please do not change it's character. If there is some minimal level of change, please do not disrupt the creeks, rocky outcrops, or forested setting. Old growth pine, spruce, and fir is a diminished resource in the Black Hills and we should not willfully destroy or lose any more of it. Also, please do not disrupt the beautiful stands of aspen and some birch in the area which add to the beauty of the forested setting. I would much rather see you lower the speed limits and increase enforcement if safety is a significant factor. I have watched the horrific changes to the character of Highway 385 through the central Black Hills and am very concerned about anything that approaches that level of disruption and change.

My first plea is to do only minimal changes that disrupt none of the natural features or special character of the road. If that is not possible, then please, please, minimize the destruction of resources to the greatest degree possible. That road is a gem and the character should not be changed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mon 08/17/2026 7:29 AM

Don't, just don't. Please. That's really all that needs to be said.

I don't know where you live. But, I would think that if you lived in the Black Hills you would be asking the same thing most of us are, "why do you people insist on ruining our beautiful Black Hills"? Hwy 385 didn't need to be straightened. All it needed was some passing lanes added in areas that would have easily accommodated them already. Instead you cut down the forest and blast out mountain sides just to create a lane for UTV's. Even the workers on these projects don't understand the logic

behind what was being done. And now you want to screw up 85. Why not straighten out the needles while you're at it? Wait, forget I said anything.

This area obviously thrives on tourism. And I would guess we see at least a million motorcycles each year. And it doesn't take a genius to understand that they don't come here to ride on straight roads.

Motorcycles aside, part of the appeal of the Black Hills is its rustic demeanor. Winding roads with cliffs and trees creating a canopy around you. Every so-called "improvement" you've made has had a negative impact on the beauty of the Black Hills. And looking at what is being proposed for 85 looks absolutely horrific. I think if you grew up driving and riding these roads you would feel the same way. What you are proposing just isn't a positive change.

So, please help me and others understand why this is being proposed in the first place. Because, it looks like just another waste of tax dollars to many of us. With a detriment to our landscape in the process. Projects like this just aren't wanted or needed. And after the negative feedback from so many people on the 385 project. I think I can in good conscience say that I'm speaking for a majority here.

Another consideration is that tourists drive bad enough without you widening the roads. Narrow winding roads encourage caution. Widening the roads just encourages them to go even faster. This leads to poor driving decisions. Again, a few passing lanes or pullouts in areas that will already accommodate them is all the improvement that should even be considered.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Mon 08/17/2026 2:55 PM

Mr Malone,

I do not support this expensive and unneeded project. It will ruin the ambiance of the drive, destroy natural resources and affect wildlife habitat.

Maybe repaving and adding more pull-outs would be a viable option.

Keep the Black Hills beautiful!

Mon 08/17/2026 4:00 PM

Mr. Malone,

First, I would like to thank you for keeping exceptional contact with the public and the extended comment period on the proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border.

My wife and I drive that stretch of roadway for its' scenic beauty so we have a concern about the huge extend of proposed work restructure. We feel it is important that the re-build secure the integrity of the beauty of this drive.

I feel certain that the main driving force for the DOT is safety and to reduce fatalities. Straightening the road will only encourage faster speeds. It is hard to justify the higher highway fatalities in our area

during the spell of the annual Sturgis motorcycle rally. Is slowing down motorists out of the question? Would signage to require or strongly urge them to slow down and enjoy the scenery safely be possible?

We travel U.S. Highway 385 between Pactola and Sheridan Lakes a lot and are deeply disappointed by the reconstruction there. The stretch is eyesore after eyesore with slopes comparable to high quarry cliffs. It would be an abomination to do anything similar to U.S. 85. We must remember our area's major industry is tourism due to the scenery.

Mon 08/17/2026 5:00 PM

Mr. Malone,

I appreciate the DOT's professional work and attention to keeping our roads here in South Dakota safe.

The proposed Hwy 85 reconstruction is a project that has many concerns and has me very worried about the dwindling scenic byways in the Black Hills. Your plan will destroy a beautiful landscape and habitat.

People can go slow for 16 miles. Please just repair the highway as highways are normally maintained and let Hwy 85 continue to be a scenic drive. There are not many left and it is one of the reasons so many tourists come here.

Hwy 385 has become one road cut after another and quite ugly. It will take decades for the scars to heal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and list concerns for this project.

Mon 08/17/2026 10:44 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing as a Spearfish resident and frequent user of Upper Spearfish Canyon to express my strong opposition to the proposed US-85 expansion.

Having spent extensive time in the canyon, I am deeply concerned about the permanent impacts this level of earthwork will cause. Heavy blasting and excavation pose an immediate risk of severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek, which would devastate local trout habitat and disrupt sensitive limestone spring channels. Additionally, cutting back these walls destabilizes existing rock faces, creating long-term rockfall hazards and destroying essential roadside pull-offs that local climbers, anglers, and hikers rely on to access the canyon.

Rather than a full reconstruction, I urge SDDOT to restrict scope to minor pavement maintenance and safety repairs within the existing footprint.

Thank you for considering the perspective of those who live here and use the canyon regularly.

Tue 08/18/2026 8:27 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

As a user of upper Spearfish Canyon, I oppose the proposed US-85 expansion. Blasting and excavation cause severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek's trout waters, risk disrupting limestone spring channels, and destabilize rock faces creating ongoing rockfall hazards while destroying critical roadside parking/access for recreation.

I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition and ask that you reject this expansion.

Tue 08/18/2026 9:02 AM

Mark,

I strongly oppose DOT's current reconstruction plans for US 85 west of Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line as a resident of Lawrence county. There are ways to fix the road, as it needs resurfaced, without disturbing the natural landscape and habitat.

Tue 08/18/2026 9:29 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

As a user of upper Spearfish Canyon, I oppose the proposed US-85 expansion. Blasting and excavation cause severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek's trout waters, risk disrupting limestone spring channels, and destabilize rock faces creating ongoing rockfall hazards while destroying critical roadside parking/access for recreation.

I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition and ask that you reject this expansion.

Tue 08/18/2026 11:19 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

As a user of upper Spearfish Canyon, I oppose the proposed US-85 expansion. Blasting and excavation cause severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek's trout waters, risk disrupting limestone spring channels, and destabilize rock faces creating ongoing rockfall hazards while destroying critical roadside parking/access for recreation. Disruption to the current natural setting would be lost forever.

I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition and ask that you reject this expansion.

Tue 08/18/2026 12:26 PM

As a user of upper Spearfish Canyon, I oppose the proposed US-85 expansion. Blasting and excavation cause severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek's trout waters, risk disrupting limestone spring channels, and destabilize rock faces creating ongoing rockfall hazards while destroying critical roadside parking/access for recreation.

I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition and ask that you reject this expansion.

Tue 08/18/2026 4:09 PM

Hello, I am a lifelong resident of Spearfish. I sure hope that you don't destroy the aesthetics of the Ice Box canyon road. Why is it that all people can think about is making it so people can drive faster on any given road? If you change and straighten the road people will just drive faster creating higher speed accidents. People need to be responsible for their own actions. I have driven that road for over 50 years both in winter and in summer and never have I had a problem with it. Speed limit signs are there for a reason and not just a suggestion as most people now days seem to think. I love the feel of driving that section of road as it exemplifies the natural beauty of the area in which we live. Please don't destroy that.

Tue 08/18/2026 5:48 PM

Hi Mark,

I'm writing to oppose the proposed reconstruction of US 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming border. This stretch functions much more as a scenic byway than a major highway, and I don't believe it needs anything beyond resurfacing and any necessary bridge or safety repairs.

As someone who road bikes this route, I especially value its current character, relatively low traffic, and natural setting. I'm concerned that moving the centerline, widening the roadway, removing trees, or undertaking rock excavation would permanently alter the landscape and could encourage higher speeds and increased traffic.

Please preserve the existing alignment and scenic character of US 85. Resurface it, repair what genuinely needs repair, and avoid unnecessary reconstruction.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Wed 08/19/2026 12:47 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

As a born and raised Nebraskan, SW South Dakota provided some of my most formative rock climbing experiences. It's the sort of adventure that's in short supply across much of the plains.

Even after relocating to the Rockies in MT, my wife and I organized annual trips out to the Black Hills with our friends. We made it out 5 years in a row to climb around Rushmore and Spearfish, always having a great time - and patronizing many local businesses.

Now I'm on the west coast, but still plotting my next return to the Black Hills and the climbing of SW South Dakota. It might be far away, but it's worth it.

It would be a shame to jeopardize the access, quality, and natural beauty of not only the climbing routes, but the wider environment of Spearfish Canyon. I know more than us climbers appreciate the clear water, clean air, and quiet moments.

I'm writing to express my opposition to the proposed expansion of US-85. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition, urging SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance.

Wed 08/19/2026 11:55 AM

Dear Mark,

I am writing to let you know that I oppose the DOT's plans for reconstructing Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line.

I am a lifelong resident of the Black Hills. I spent nearly every summer near this area. I realize the road needs to be wider, but the less disruption that can occur, the better. I hate to see the land disturbed in this beautiful area any more than necessary.

Thank you for your time.

Wed 08/19/2026 1:09 PM

Mr. Malone,

I have been following the proposal to "deconstruct" Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line.

I am a lifelong Black hills resident, grew up in Lead in the 60s-70s, learned to drive responsibly through that canyon and cherish it as my heritage. The ecosystem of the spruce forest, limestone walls, and pristine waters that support trout and forget-me-nots will not survive the "meddling of man", much like Boulder Canyon, Spearfish Canyon, Highway 385, Highway 16, Highway 44, and probably more examples. And, what is this for? Safety? In the statistics, how many locals have been lost to these roads? And, what factors led to these accidents? Throughout my 67 years in the area and even when I still lived in Lead, human error, mainly driving too damn fast for the conditions, were the cause of most fatalities. Overdriving conditions is on the driver, not on the road.

The other concern I have that makes me question this project is how it will affect the creek and watershed-once this fragile system becomes out of balance, it will never return

We, as a state, encourage people to come see our beautiful scenery. I can tell you that in my lifetime, beautiful scenery in the Black Hills is rare indeed! Once there were alpine meadow, primeval forests, and virgin prairies. Now, there is little left to give pause and awe.

Please give me and my grandkids a chance to continue to experience truly genuine place where we can still be amazed-a place that can make us care again for the planet and to want to preserve wildlands for the future instead of becoming another 65 mph thoroughfare 65. We have enough of those already.

Wed 08/19/2026 2:59 PM

Just want to say that I oppose the reconstruction plans for US 85 west of Cheyenne Crossing. It is a beautiful stretch of highway the way it is. Fix what needs fixing but don't destroy the scenery.

Wed 08/19/2026 3:41 PM

I am protesting your proposal for hwy 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line. It is a beautiful scenic highway and should not be destroyed as such. A FEW repairs as needed,YES, but cutting down many trees, NO! My late husband and I enjoyed driving there almost weekly and didn't find much traffic to warrant much of the change you seem to be proposing. PLEASE, do as little as possible so as not to destroy the peaceful beauty of the highway. There are not many scenic highways left anymore.

Thank you and God's blessings on your decision.

Wed 08/19/2026 3:48 PM

We are opposed to the present reconstruction plan to upgrade Hwy 85

This would be a big mistake.

It is a scenic drive and should be preserved.

There are alternative routes that allow faster traffic speeds to reach Wyoming line.

Slow down and enjoy the scenery.

Thu 08/20/2026 2:13 PM

Hello Mark,

I am opposed to the modernization of this Highway from Cheyenne Crossing to the State Line. It is magical and a wonderful road to drive. We need to preserve this. We often ride this road on our cycle for the pure joy of it. It is a treasure. Thanks for your consideration.

Thu 08/20/2026 3:52 PM

Highway 85 West from Cheyenne Crossing is one of the last paved scenic byways we have left in the Black hills area. I am aware that people have highway collisions and accidents on that stretch. The highway is not the problem though. The problem is a speed limit that is too high, curves that are not adequately marked, and expectations of drivers who are not capable of handling a curved road.

Please do NOT follow through with the planned reconstruction. Do not tear into the Hills beside that road! Doing that would contribute to destroying the primary reason visitors come to the Hills. They come to slow down. They come to unwind, they come to see the beauty the Black Hills offer. Highway 85 is one of the best environments for our South Dakota State Tree, the Black Hills Spruce!

The highway 385 project proved to those of us who are Black Hills residents that highway reconstruction is NOT a good thing in the Hills.

I understand the need for safety. Safety at the cost of destruction is meaningless. Lower the speed limit, put up curve warning arrows, designate it a "Scenic Byway," whatever it takes to leave it alone. Have the highway Patrol issue a bunch of tickets for a year or two!

All of these options combined would be cheaper, would not hinder traffic flow, AND would contribute to maintaining one of the last scenic roads in the Black Hills.

Fri 08/21/2026 9:25 PM

I personally think the highway from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming line needs to be left alone! All you are going to do is ruin a beautiful drive only to make it faster. Also then consider how many more trucks will be on it trying to avoid the POE at Sundance. What is next? Spearfish Canyon?? I would hope not! Thank you for listening.

Fri 08/21/2026 9:41 PM

The Black Hills are beautiful and should be appreciated by driving slowly around the lovely curves, the gentle hills and valleys. If someone is in a hurry and wants to travel faster then going around the Hills through Rapid City on the interstate is the way to go. Or if you are on the west side of the Hills, then taking the road to Sundance from four corners is the way to go. The Interstate to Spearfish and on to Deadwood allows for 75 mph if speed is your desire. It is also straight. The people who live on the road between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming border were aware of the curves before they bought property in that section of the Hills. They should not complain.

I have driven in the Black Hills for fifty years. And yes, in the winter it takes more caution and a longer time. It is worth it. If a person does not like the scenery— well then move somewhere else.

Fri 08/21/2026 10:48 PM

Dear Mark,

Please note I'm not in favor of the current reconstruction plans for US 85. Please fix the road without changing the longstanding legacy of the road.

Sat 08/22/2026 9:09 AM

Please reconsider the DOT's present plans for reconstruction of highway US 85. What will be done with the plan cannot be undone. Find a better way. The beauty of this highway is one of the things that make the black hills unique.

Sat 08/22/2026 10:13 AM

The recent project along HWY 385 created some great long distant perspectives. It opened the views all along the way to Pactola to Sheridan Lakes. The stretch of road being considered for an equally rigorous rebuild. This stretch of land is not open country. It is tight, close stretches. The view for drivers would be converted into a fast drive roller coaster. Not only would this work erase a drive of tender views, it would focus on the road safety itself.

My request is to improve the road but do not eliminate the passion of visiting drivers.

Sat 08/22/2026 11:33 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I write to provide you with my opinion regarding potential reconstructions plans for US 85 West of Cheyenne Crossing. I am against this plan.

I live in the Black Hills and have been so frustrated with the reconstruction on 385. For many visitors and residents, the drive during reconstruction has been a challenge for too many years. And I think of the loss of income to all the shop owners affected by this work.

This new plan for US 85 is not necessary. There may be more accidents on this road, but perhaps reducing the speed (and why do people need to drive so fast?) and hiring more highway patrol officers would be a better option. I cannot understand why anyone would want to ruin the beauty and legacy of this road.

Sat 08/22/2026 1:55 PM

Dear Mark Malone,

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed Highway 85 construction project and to ask that you reconsider the impact this project could have on Spearfish Creek, the surrounding land, and the character of this beautiful area.

Spearfish Creek is more than just a waterway. It is an important part of our community, our environment, and what makes this area so special. The thought of construction and development threatening the creek, disrupting the surrounding landscape, and permanently changing the beautiful land that so many people value is deeply concerning to me.

Once this land is altered, we cannot simply undo the damage. Development decisions like this have consequences that last for generations. We should be looking for solutions that protect Spearfish Creek, preserve the natural beauty of the Black Hills, and respect the people who live, work, and enjoy this area.

I understand that improvements to our transportation infrastructure may be necessary, but I believe there should be a much greater emphasis on alternatives that minimize environmental damage and preserve the land and waterways that make this region unique.

I respectfully ask you to oppose this project in its current form and to advocate for an alternative that protects Spearfish Creek and the surrounding land.

Please listen to the concerns of the community and consider what we stand to lose if this project moves forward. We have a responsibility to be good stewards of this land for the generations who will come after us.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns. I sincerely hope you will stand with those who want to protect Spearfish Creek and the natural beauty of this area.

Sat 08/22/2026 8:21 PM

I oppose the US 85 Project based on what was done on US 385. The beauty of driving in the Black Hills has been severely degraded by what was done to 385 and I do not want that done to 85.

Sun 08/23/2026 1:57 PM

Dear Mr. Malone:

Thank you for a very concise and constructive presentation on your department's plans for the reconstruction of Hwy 85 west of Cheyenne Crossing that we attended in Deadwood a few months ago.

We agree that the road needs to be replaced and some shoulder work needs to be done. But we are against the extensive plan of taking curves out and road changes at Trailhead Lodge. I don't recall who is funding the Trailhead part of the project, but if the taxpayers are, then we are against it. It's the owner's land on both sides; they should be funding that instead of us.

This section of Hwy 85 you want to change is absolutely beautiful. I commend your department's desire to maintain this part of the highway's aesthetic qualities, and we recognize the engineering challenges presented by the topography and geology of the Spearfish Creek area, but the extensive rework indicated by your plan with Clear Zones and shoulders is going to make it look sterile like the section from Cheyenne Crossing to Powder House Pass. That used to be really beautiful, but the clear zones on each side of that road are just too much. The credibility of DOT projects that profess to honor the Black Hills aura by minimizing damage and change is suspect due to what you are doing on Hwy 385 by Pactola Lake.

We are against your plan as stated above.

Mon 08/24/2026 7:42 AM

Our focus group (coffee guys) can't agree on anything EXCEPT, that we do NOT want to see the HWY 85 proposed DOT improvement project (Spearfish Canyon to WY) remove the beautiful hills like the recent 385 project. We prefer better guard rails, widen shoulder, slower speed IF necessary, but not the blasting to remove the natural curves.

Appreciate your consideration

Mon 08/24/2026 3:30 PM

I am very concerned about the plans I have heard of for refurbishing this highway. For 50 years I have traveled this route from my home in Spearfish to my parents' home in Lusk. WY. What makes the trip enjoyable is the drive through Spearfish Canyon and this section of highway into Wyoming because of the pristine natural beauty of the area. What a shame it would be to have this area infringed upon, altered, and possibly destroyed because of a reconstruction!

Surely there must be a reasonable alternative to upgrading the road without alteration of the natural environment that is such a special blessing to this area, and I strongly urge those responsible for making this decision to make the right decision to leave this area in its current pristine condition without alteration.

I'm sure I'm not the only person who would have so much gratitude and respect for intelligent decision-making if a more reasonable solution can be applied.

Tue 08/25/2026 11:04 AM

Mark,

Because you can, does not mean you should!

I have driven the highway section of 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the state line hundreds of times, in all seasons. It is almost always with thankfulness for the lack of modernization of the road. Entering and leaving the Black Hills on 85 is always a meaningful experience, mainly because of the road alignment that presently exists.

Wyoming "modernized" their section of 85 between the border and Four Corners a few decades ago and I regret it everytime I drive that part of the trip. The Wyoming section is still pleasant, however not nearly as engaging as it was before the "improvement". There are other highway alternatives available if one desires to avoid the "scenic" route. I have chosen an alternative a few times for various reasons and found the alternatives quite acceptable.

Taxpayer financed maintenance is welcome, but taxpayer financed reconstruction is not! The few scenic drives that are left must be preserved if for no other reason than their historic scenic value. As we rush to "improve" things we ignore the value of the few remaining "early" improvements. As highway sections such as this become more rare they increase in value to the public and should be preserved.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Wed 08/26/2026 8:55 AM

I wanted to be sure to reinforce our family's support for the Highway 85 Project. We know there have been multiple people attempting to derail this project by ginning up discontent based on false information to the public, specifically via social media. We witnessed many people attend the public meeting, many of whom do not live in the area full time and/or do not even drive the highway on a regular basis. Some seemed to be against the project for no other reason than to be against something. Some expressed concerns over costs, seemingly thinking the money could be used elsewhere and not realizing that much of the cost will be incurred to replace the 70+ year old highway, even without the safety improvements. We drive this road at a minimum of 3x per week, but often 5x per week. Some people complain about the landscape being destroyed, but they forget that at some point the landscape was disturbed in order to build this existing highway, and yet, by their own admission they seem to love that result, as they do not want it disturbed now. Of course, some trees will be lost, but there are miles of trees behind those. We trust everything will be done to protect the creek and hillsides that cannot be disturbed. As it currently stands, this highway is a hazard. There is almost zero shoulder for most of this corridor, which could be quite dangerous if someone's tire goes even slightly off the roadway. In many places, this would, and sometimes has, resulted in a vehicle going into the creek or a pretty steep ditch. This usually requires an industrial tow, which completely shuts down the highway for an hour or more. Our family 100% supports this plan and have and will continue to try to help others understand how important it is to make this road much safer. Big thanks to all of you for all you are doing to communicate the plan and for doing all you can to protect the beauty of the area.

Fri 08/28/2026 2:06 PM

I've lived in the Black Hills on and off for the last 50 years. During that time the state destroyed scenic Highway 244 into Keystone. Had to be widened and destroy the original tunnel. Thus ruining the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful hills due to speed!

Now Highway 385, which is a disaster, all in the name of moving tourists through the hills faster! If people need to use speed in the hills use more radar instead of destroying the scenery! Road improvements yes destroying ecosystems in the process no!

Finally Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing. Road improvements yes, repair road and add pull outs. Preserve the view and leisurely drive!

Before long the state will have so many concrete roads no one will want to visit. And how about the locals who live here year round that enjoy the scenic drives?

Thank you for your time. I pray this project is not a done deal.

Fri 08/28/2026 2:06 PM

Writing to you today to adamantly oppose and reconstruction project on hwy 85 or to any other scenic SD roads except the stretch of highway ironically near Scenic, SD. If the State officials and officials at the SD DOT actually cared about the safety and well being of the citizens of the state and it's travelers, which by the way are a staple of the state economy which the SD roads and views are a good portion of the draw for them, the state would repair the many connecting two lane roads connecting the communities that live here that are in far worse condition or outright neglected disrepair. Namely highway 44 near Scenic mentioned above where multiple fatal accident tragedies have occurred just this year. The state is using the safety factor as an excuse to waste tax payer money on one of the roads that quite frankly is the reason people love to travel the state. Lower the speed limit if the state must but for God sake don't screw up the natural beauty of the Black Hills like they've done to 385 between Pactola and Sheridan lake.

One only needs to travel Hwy 385 right now and look at past photos of it's previous glory to realize what a colossal mistake it was to tear up the nature around it. How long is that mistake going to continue with making more?

Fri 08/28/2026 2:23 PM

Absolutely STOP the highway construction project!!!!!! It will destroy so very much, cost triple what is projected, solve Nothing!!!! EVERYONE HATES IT! Add a couple more highway patrols and a few more speed limit signs.....problem solved.

STOP THIS PROJECT, THE PEOPLE ARE AGAINST IT!!! 

Fri 08/28/2026 2:49 PM

I am writing in opposition to the proposed changes to the path of Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border. The proposed changes will dramatically alter the pleasant look of that drive. I urge reconsideration of the proposed changes to the path.

Fri 08/28/2026 3:34 PM

Mr. Malone;

I personally think the proposed curve change to Hwy 85 is a giant waste of money and make work to spend funds. Widen the road, but why are you digging up the Hills in a new route to take the curve out?

Has there been an archeological study in the section you want to dig up? How do the Natives feel about digging up more of the Hills? I know they are required but I don't see any public documents.

Fri 08/28/2026 3:57 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Please tone down the project to repave it and add safety features, without straightening it by blasting rocks or removing trees. Spearfish Canyon and the rest of the highway are a special, beautiful drive that people should slow down and enjoy. There's no need to change it to enable more speeding. Thank you.

Fri 08/28/2026 4:19 PM

Good Afternoon, Mr. Malone:

My husband and I would like to see this project toned down, a lot. Repave it yes, but stay on the same route. Use safety signage and other technology, rumble strips, speed limit considerations, perhaps a small shoulder or a scenic pullout here and there. As we've seen so many times in the Black Hills, highway reconstruction CHANGES the entire vibe of the areas these major projects pass through... and not for the better. Suddenly we're in an urbanized environment which is no longer the "Black Hills Experience" we remember.

By reconstructing this road, you will be opening the door for drivers to proceed FASTER, thus making the road MORE dangerous... just like Hwy. 385. Speeders everywhere!!! STOP THE RECONSTRUCTION PLANS!!! Tone it down to just repaving.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Do the right thing.

Fri 08/28/2026 5:01 PM

Hello,

I am writing to express my support for the S.D. Department of Transportation's plans to reconstruct U.S. Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border.

I live at 431 S Main St, Lead SD. I have lived in Lead for most of my 71 years and the most special moment of driving to Wyoming on Highway 85 is reaching the welcome to Wyoming sign. The portion of 85 from Cheyenne crossing to Wyoming is in very poor condition, dangerous, and in need of improvement. In addition to the road condition, the increased amount of side-by-side/4-wheeler traffic without passing lanes or courtesy pullouts makes driving extremely hazardous. An unavoidable hazard is the possibility of encountering deer and elk crossing the road as well.

There are those who seldom drive Highway 85 mounting an effort to stop the reconstruction or curtail it dramatically complaining of the impact on the view. I think this is disingenuous as recent improvements to highways 385, 85, and 14 through the hills remain visually stunning and have improved safety and driving conditions.

Thank you for considering my opinion as the department moves forward with this overdue and appreciated improvement of Highway 85.

Fri 08/28/2026 4:37 PM

An email regarding Hwy 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the WY border was sent several weeks ago and I appreciate your reply. After watching the recent drone footage, as it follows the proposed plan of destruction along a tiny section of the \$47 million project, I feel the need to speak up again. Trees will be taken down, hills plowed and mountainsides blasted. Please consider the alternatives for improving safety that have been suggested by other concerned citizens. Please preserve this scenic stretch of road.

I live in the eastern end of SD, where you can drive forever on straight, boring highways at break-neck speeds. It doesn't stop accidents. It is a joy to drive the scenic roads in Spearfish Canyon and the surrounding area, to drive the Needles Highway and Iron Mountain Road. This is what attracts people to the Black Hills and this is why it is important to preserve that which makes it special.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to those of us who have a genuine concern for the Black Hills.

Fri 08/28/2026 10:18 PM

I'm writing to comment on the Proposed construction of Highway 85 from Spearfish to the Wyoming border. The proposed plans to widen. The roads will destroy a beautiful, scenic Drive in the Black Hills. I do support repaving the road, but The road should follow its current route without major widening. The Black Hills are a place of natural beauty. The amount budgeted for this project could be used for signage and Law-enforcement presence. We cannot construct more wild and natural space. If people want to go quickly, they can get to I 90. Please preserve this natural, scenic route and its current form.

Sat 08/29/2026 6:37 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to formally oppose the South Dakota Department of Transportation's proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon toward the Wyoming border.

I support maintaining Highway 85 and making reasonable improvements where there are demonstrated safety concerns. However, I strongly oppose reconstructing this highway in a way that substantially changes its existing route, removes large numbers of trees, cuts through hillsides, blasts rock, straightens scenic curves, and permanently alters the surrounding Black Hills landscape.

At approximately \$47 million for roughly 16 miles, this is an enormous project with consequences that extend far beyond simply repairing a highway. Much of the surrounding landscape is public land, and the public deserves to have its scenic and natural value given substantial weight in the decision-making process.

There is a reasonable alternative: repave and improve the existing highway while keeping it substantially within its current footprint.

Safety improvements can be accomplished through appropriate signage, rumble strips, carefully considered speed limits, targeted shoulder improvements, scenic pullouts, guardrails where necessary, and other modern safety measures without unnecessarily transforming the character of the entire corridor.

One of the things that makes the Northern Black Hills special is that our roads still feel like they belong within the landscape. The curves, trees, hills, rock formations, and natural surroundings are part of the Black Hills experience. Straightening roads and creating significantly wider construction corridors may make them resemble modern urban highways, but something irreplaceable is lost in the process.

Tourism is also a major part of the Black Hills economy. People travel here specifically because the Black Hills are different. We should be extremely cautious about permanently changing the very scenery and character that attract visitors in the first place.

I respectfully ask SDDOT to significantly scale back this project, preserve the existing Highway 85 alignment wherever reasonably possible, minimize tree and hillside removal, and pursue less destructive safety improvements before considering major realignment.

Once these hillsides are blasted, mature trees removed, and the roadway permanently realigned, we cannot simply put the landscape back.

Please include my comments in the official public record for this project prior to the September 4 deadline.

Thank you for considering the concerns of the residents, businesses, visitors, and taxpayers who value the natural and scenic character of the Black Hills.

Sat 08/29/2026 8:05 AM

When I look for ideas on where to travel, do you think I pick the drives that are straight and 'cut' through all the scenery?

Spearfish Canyon isn't just beloved for the canyon walls. It's like taking the little winding path, curious to see what is around the next corner.

Where they 'cleaned up' the corner by Camp 5, coming up Boulder Canyon from Sturgis to Deadwood, they did the Black Hills Terrain wrong again. You have beautiful hills and valleys, and now all that extra dirt from whatever they did - all put into a Machined Mountain. Ugly, manicured, graded eyesore that doesn't fit in.

Look at old gravel pits that were just left to Nature's devices. They grow trees and have varied terrain that is interesting and enticing, a place the kid in you just wishes you could explore. Then compare that to one that's all 'cleaned up'. Boring. Ugly.

Sioux Falls in all It's 'clean things up and be progressive' mentality tore a good share of all those cool, old historic buildings down in the downtown district in the huge Urban Renewal project phase.

Look at what they lost, 'cleaning up'!

Nostalgia, history, connection, beauty, unique buildings, presence, a place to explore that wasn't Sterilized.

Downtown Fort Collins kept their buildings. Just look at even all the revenue Sioux Falls lost from tourists wanting to walk through an old Downtown.

Covell Lake was a lake in Sioux Falls where you could drive up to the edge, all along the west side. Maybe you only just sat in your car. But it was always alive with people. Again, they 'cleaned it up', put in controlled parking areas away from the lake. No more meandering along the little lake shore. Not as many people go to their carefully manicured parking lots now. Now it is Sterilized.

Sterilized, Machine Mountains - not what I go to the Black Hills to experience.

Sat 08/29/2026 8:30 AM

Dear Mark Malone,

I am writing to oppose the proposed \$47 million dollar highway 85 project from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border. We realize that safety is the number one driver. However, are certain that there are other options to accomplish this. We don't believe you need to straighten the road, remove beautiful Ponderosa Pine and granite, and spend millions of taxpayer dollars. The Black Hills are extremely gorgeous and unique. People come here for the experience of driving on the curved roads and experiencing the beauty. I'm not an engineer, but can you change the plan to make the road safer and not remove the curves?

We are happy that Paul Horsted has taken the time to study this, take drone photos, and share his insight. Please take public input seriously, since it is our money that pays your salary and unnecessary road projects.

Always do the right thing! Thank you!

Sat 08/29/2026 8:32 AM

Dear Sir,

Please, please, please put the highway money for Hyw 85 project somewhere else!!

That is a scenic byway and needs to remain the way it currently stands.

Sat 08/29/2026 8:38 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to oppose the current scope of SDDOT's proposed reconstruction of US Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border.

I live in the Black Hills and have seen firsthand what the Highway 385 reconstruction did to the landscape it passed through. I do not want to see that repeated on Highway 85.

I support repaving and targeted safety improvements: rumble strips, better signage, sensible speed limit measures, limited shoulder widening, and scenic pullouts where appropriate. What I cannot support is a full-scale reconstruction that straightens curves, cuts through hills, and expands the construction footprint well beyond the existing roadbed onto national forest land that belongs to all of us.

Projects of this scale permanently change the character of the Black Hills, trading a scenic, winding highway for an urbanized corridor. I urge SDDOT to scale this project back to repaving and safety upgrades along the existing alignment, rather than a full reconstruction.

Sat 08/29/2026 8:51 AM

As a lifelong (77 years) resident of South Dakota, 48 of which are in the Black Hills: I oppose the plans to reconstruct U.S. Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border. Please reconsider the size of this project.

Sat 08/29/2026 11:34 AM

Hi Mark, I wanted to add my input into the project from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. I live off S. Rapid Creek Rd. so I'm highly familiar with the stretch the state is wanting to rework. I work in Spearfish so I drive the route almost every day. I might add, I drive it at 5 miles + above the speed limit and have never had an accident. It's going to be an absolute nightmare for me to try to get to work. But

more than that, other than shoulders and maybe clearing some trees for visibility., it's really unnecessary. Look at Boulder Canyon and 385, have those improvements lowered deaths/accidents, (note Sturgis this year)? It's absolutely beautiful up here. I would be okay with just slower speeds, maybe speed suggestion signs for curves. I'd still go 5 above, but maybe those who don't know the road would slow down? Take a drive from Wyoming border to Newcastle. It's a great road. I just wanted to voice my opposition to the change. We all know that it's not going to make a big difference but you gotta try!

Sat 08/29/2026 11:56 AM

We are opposed to the widening of the highway through Spearfish Canyon because it will ruin the beauty of the area. Now people can meander on the road and enjoy the beauty of the trees and canyon walls. A wider road would cause people to drive faster. It's ok to have bumper to bumper traffic. It's good to slow down once in a while.

Motorcyclists enjoy the curves of this highway as they are a challenge and exciting.

Sat 08/29/2026 12:59 PM

We are lifelong residents of the Black Hills, Pennington County, Harding County, Buffalo SD and Rapid City SD and we are opposed to this project. In our lifetime we both have witnessed the relentless urbanization of the Black Hills. We can, ought, and must leave a legacy for future generations to experience one of Nature's unique flora and fauna gifts that will be drastically altered at least and totally obliterated at most if this highway project is not stopped. These are our genuine original feelings and words and not generated or created by Ai or dictated by another spokesperson.

Sat 08/29/2026 1:39 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

My husband and I have been following the controversy concerning reworking Highway 85 and we are against this. Please leave the highway as it is and keep the speed limit low so that people can drive the road that currently exists there and enjoy this beautiful scenic roadway. Thank you.

Sun 08/30/2026 9:53 AM

I'd like to address the planned changes to the highway running from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming.

While I appreciate the desire to reduce crashes in this stretch of road, I suspect the proposed changes will simply encourage drivers and riders to drive faster, since the scenery will be less attractive. That faster pace will result in a similar rate of crashes, perhaps more deadly.

Your presentation notes that of the 77 crashes, 28 of them were on motorcycles. As a motorcyclist myself, I can say that we seek out scenic, curvy roads that offer the riding experience that only motorcycling can offer. Where else in South Dakota but the Black Hills can we find roads like this. The proposed changes will likely reduce crashes by simply making the road less attractive to riders and drivers alike.

It won't change the fact that the surge of careless bikers in August will seek out thrill rides in the hills. It will simply make this attractive route less attractive and perhaps a bit safer.

Repave the road, please, and leave it otherwise as it is.

Sun 08/30/2026 10:26 AM

Dear Sir,

Please consider scaling down the 85 project. It is a scenic highway, we don't need cliffs shaved and increased speed. We need a repaved road to the border, some police monitoring and maybe some signage for people from out of town.

This is a very beautiful road, with great views of the hills, lets keep it that way. The faster speeds will only cause more issues.

Sun 08/30/2026 11:15 AM

Dear Mr. Malone --

I join a lot of other people in the Black Hills in opposing this proposed project. As a long-time motorcyclist, I was stunned and saddened by the destruction of Sheridan Lake Road, which used to be a great road for riding motorcycles. It could have been made safer without straightening the whole thing! Now Highway 385 is getting the same treatment, with blasting removing scenic countryside in the name of "progress."

I do not want to see this type of destruction on a beautiful part of Highway 85. This is one of the few places in the Black Hills where I can still get up close and personal with a scenic stretch of highway and feel and smell and see the natural environment. The area is also an important watershed, and reworking the road would cause unnecessary pollution in the creek.

This proposed project is totally unnecessary. If there are safety concerns, there are much less destructive ways to solve them. Keeping the speed limit lower is an obvious solution, as are rumble strips, which could be added with minimal widening in key places -- and no need for blasting.

I encourage you to stop this project, and to reject the proposed road work in the main part of Spearfish Canyon. Many people value the Black Hills BECAUSE it is a pleasant place to drive winding roads. I realize that DOT engineers feel that they need to "stay busy" to stay employed and that engineers are always looking for solutions they can build -- whether there is a problem or not. In this case, I strongly prefer that my tax dollars are spent somehow else.

Sun 08/30/2026 12:08 PM

Mr Malone,

I'm writing you to strongly oppose the current plan for reconstruction of HWY 85 from Spearfish Canyon to Wyoming. The current plan is too expensive, too expansive, and too commercial. Let the road be repaired but not repositioned. Leave it as the beautiful Black Hills staple that it is. There are many other ways to make it safer without destroying it.

Sun 08/30/2026 1:01 PM

I oppose the current plan to expand (destroy) Spearfish Canyon. Destroying this road will result in the loss of tourism, financially crush local businesses. It will also negatively affect Sturgis Rally revenue. There is no positive to expanding the road.

Sun 08/30/2026 3:37 PM

Dear Mark Malone,

I can't tell you how much I oppose the reconstruction of highway 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and ONeil Pass. It's a matter of irreversibile quality of life, of trust in the DOT not telling lies about the real data of accidents and/or deaths on that stretch of road, it's about the love of residents for where we live, the completely unique biomes and rare plants and beautiful creeks. The arguments about the need for commuters to be able to speed along more quickly to get to remote jobs just seems lame. When people build a house next to an airport and then complain about the noise should an airport be moved? In this case the beautiful road, the irreplaceable beauty of a treasured route was there when people decided they would choose it as a route to a remote job. That does not mean that at the expense of all other South Dakotans or Americans for that matter should that road be dynamited. When a member of a family is alcoholic it is common knowledge, common sense that the other members of the family don't go purchase vodka for them. When people insist on speeding above designated speed limits should we all dynamite the road so they can continue to drive faster and faster? The Black Hills are not an in and out burger joint. They are a place of incomparable beauty not to be blasted and turned into chutes to shoot cars through. Please let it be registered that I join all the South Dakotans who believe our voices and lives matter enough to tell you these are our Black Hills not to be reconstruct.

Sun 08/30/2026 5:23 PM

To whom it may concern,

We are writing as concerned citizens apposing the proposed changes to Highway 85 in Spearfish Canyon.

We live in Rapid City and spend a great deal of our time enjoying the beautiful Black Hills. We have driven this scenic stretch of road many times and do not want to see these destructive plans take place. We have driven the road in every season and never felt unsafe. Other measures must be possible for the sake of safety.

Please please consider minor modifications in addition to re-paving such as pull-offs, wider shoulders in places, rumble strips and more signage, but we beg you not to go through with the current plans.

We drive Highway 385 often. We were sad to see so many trees and hills removed and the speed of traffic greatly increased with that project. We don't want the same for Highway 85. Also, Highway 385 is more of a thoroughfare for traffic with more safety concerns than Highway 85.

Please reconsider. We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sun 08/30/2026 6:00 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

As a user of upper Spearfish Canyon, I oppose the proposed US-85 expansion. Blasting and excavation cause severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek's trout waters, risk disrupting limestone spring channels, and destabilize rock faces creating ongoing rockfall hazards while destroying critical roadside parking/access for recreation.

I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition and ask that you reject this expansion.

Sun 08/30/2026 8:02 PM

Mr. Malone,

Please do not do construction on Highway 85 past Cheyenne Crossing.

So much of the Black Hills has been destroyed by construction of houses and roadways. Doing this construction project would destroy the natural habitats and landscape of the Black Hills.

Please consider stopping this project so more of the Black Hills landscape is not destroyed!!!!

Sun 08/30/2026 8:29 PM

Start of four point comment on U.S. Highway 85 from the Wyoming State Line to U.S. Highway 14A (Cheyenne Crossing) Project number: NH 0085(106)0; Lawrence County, PCN 06J8 :

1. I am most definitely opposed to the SDDOT proposed project to reconstruct Highway 85 in upper Spearfish Canyon and the Limestone Plateau of the Black Hills.
2. Did SDDOT go directly to a default straighten and widen approach rather than a design specific to this highway and appropriate for the Black Hills? The straighten and widen approach including moving the centerline and clear zones has already destroyed flora, ancient natural features and scenic landscapes on multiple Black Hills roads such as the Sheridan Lake road and the current horrific Highway 385 project.

3. I asked SDDOT what caused the crashes on this Highway 85 Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming Line and was referred to the South Dakota Department of Public Safety. That response raises questions: Did SDDOT present a road design intended to reduce crashes without knowing most of the CAUSES of crashes? Can safety features to address the CAUSES be added to the existing highway? For example, the animal data seems to be an exception to the lack of causational information. According to the SDDOT Presentation map page 11 the preponderance of presented animal crashes are on the southwest portion of the road:
<https://dot.sd.gov/media/25rd4igy/public-meeting-presentation-for-website-1-slide-per-page.pdf> Is the existing Highway 85 southwest portion a candidate for building wildlife crossings? FYI: <https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/how-to-make-roads-safer-for-drivers-and-animals-wildlife-crossings>
4. I believe that the existing Highway 85 Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming Line is a *Destination Corridor* which can be enhanced with safety features and be restored rather than rebuilt or reconstructed.

End of four point comment on U.S. Highway 85 from the Wyoming State Line to U.S. Highway 14A (Cheyenne Crossing) Project number: NH 0085(106)0; Lawrence County, PCN 06J8

Mon 08/31/2026 7:52 AM

To whom it may concern,

Please do not destroy the beautiful drive between Cheyenne Crossing SD and Newcastle WY. This is a gorgeous drive now and by blasting and moving roads you will forever change this peaceful, scenic route.

Mon 08/31/2026 8:14 AM

Good morning Mark, as a black hills born and raised local, we are continuously watching our hills get destroyed from offroad tourism, vacation rentals, and these highway reconstruction projects. Hwy 16a does not need to be reconstructed. With these new straightened highways across the hills, we have seen a drastic increase of people speeding already. Sturgis Rally deaths had located one on our new safer hwy 385, however no deaths were reported on hwy 16a from Cheyenne crossing to the Wyoming border. Safety is not the issue. As tax payers we have voiced ourselves loudly to you. Please take a moment to try and represent the majority of the people. Re-pave the road, please do not re-construct it. It will only cause faster traffic, in a highly wildlife populated area.

Mon 08/31/2026 10:07 AM

Hello

I'm probably one of a few voices that agree there need to be upgrades to the road from Cheyenne Crossing to the border. A wider road with slow vehicle passing or space for disabled vehicles is very much needed.

But it would be a big bummer to lose esthetic drive coming into Spearfish Canyon. I think that's a big driver for tourism in the Northern Hills.

We drive this road often going to Denver. Especially in winter, the drifting can make some spots really scary with ice, and snowmobiles crossing the road add to that.

Please consider the need for wildlife/ atv underpass in a couple of places. With the straighter road people are going to be driving a lot faster through there and hitting an elk or 4wheeler at higher speed would kill people.

As a resident of Lead, I can say that there is also a need for semi parking before trucks get into town! Space is limited.

Perhaps some of the old roadway can be repurposed for this or 'scenic bypass' with an out house!

Look forward to seeing the finished project

Mon 08/31/2026 2:23 PM

Dear Mr. Malone, please consider this email documentation of our opposition to SDDOT's plans to widen the subject stretch of highway. The Black Hills has been "modernized" enough without one of the remaining natural areas being added to the mix of over development. My wife and I frequent this highway with regularity and have no concerns about having to slow down through this stretch of scenic area. Thank you for your consideration.

Mon 08/31/2026 3:18 PM

I'm against the planned improvements on highway 85 from Cheyenne crossing to wy border. Resurface the road and leave it the way it is. Every road in the hills don't need to be a 65 straight road.

Mon 08/31/2026 3:20 PM

I've commented before. I am a resident of lead. And we travel that. Beautiful dangerous road often. I breathe a sigh of relief when we cross into Wyoming and have actual shoulders on the road. Please make the road safe. I love mine and anyone that travels that road life.

Mon 08/31/2026 3:23 PM

Add my name to the list of those opposed to redoing the road from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming line.

Mon 08/31/2026 4:12 PM

Dear SDDOT,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed work along Highway 85 and, more importantly, the potential impact that a major reconstruction project could have on the scenery and character of this incredible stretch of highway.

Highway 85 through the Black Hills is more than simply a road connecting communities. It is one of the most scenic drives in South Dakota and an important part of what makes this area special. The surrounding hills, rock formations, trees, and natural landscape are a major reason people travel this route in the first place. I strongly believe that any improvements to the highway should prioritize preserving that character rather than unnecessarily altering it.

If the primary issue is the condition of the pavement, I would strongly encourage SDDOT to consider whether a resurfacing project could accomplish what is actually needed. A quality mill-and-overlay or similar resurfacing treatment could improve the driving surface, extend the life of the roadway, and address safety concerns while minimizing disturbance to the surrounding landscape.

There is something to be said for recognizing when a road simply needs to be repaired rather than rebuilt. Widening, straightening, cutting into hillsides, removing trees, or otherwise substantially changing the existing corridor may make the construction project easier in some respects, but it can permanently change the very scenery that makes Highway 85 worth driving.

As someone who spends time in the Black Hills, I would ask SDDOT to carefully consider the long-term value of preserving this corridor as it exists today. Once trees are removed, hillsides are cut back, and the landscape is reshaped, that character cannot simply be put back.

Please consider a resurfacing-focused alternative that improves the highway while leaving the surrounding landscape and scenic character largely intact. We can have a safer, smoother highway without sacrificing what makes Highway 85 special.

Thank you for taking the concerns of local residents, visitors, and people who value the Black Hills landscape into consideration. I sincerely hope SDDOT will choose an approach that repairs the road without unnecessarily changing the scenery.

Mon 08/31/2026 4:39 PM

PLEASE do NOT approve the proposed construction to yet another beautiful scenic highway in the Black Hills!

Resurfacing and maybe pullouts would be LESS INVASIVE and cost a LOT less. To clarify, this is Hwy. 85 between Cheyenne Crossing, SD and Newcastle, WY.

The loss of beauty in the area and the damaging result of construction would be far more costly, don't you agree?

This is a scenic route and motorists need to slow down and enjoy. Why straighten it out to increase speed and consequently MORE accidents as a result.

There are plenty of interstates available for those who wish to travel faster.

Please vote to preserve the beauty of this highway!

Mon 08/31/2026 5:02 PM

We oppose the planned reconstruction of US 16 from Spearfish Canyon to Wyoming. We are ok with repaving and perhaps shoulders/pulloffs, but not large scale reworking of the route. That is not what we want for our Black Hills.

Mon 08/31/2026 5:08 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am NOT in agreement with the proposed design for the U.S. Highway 85 reconstruction project from the Wyoming state line to U.S Highway 14A (Cheyenne Crossing) in Lawrence County. The reason for many of us to come to the Black Hills is for the beauty. There are other alternatives for travel from Wyoming to the northern Black Hills besides that canyon. I have driven that road many times and it is lovely. Why would it be an improvement to have cars driving faster thru the canyon, just repave what is already there and do not reconfigure it!

Mon 08/31/2026 5:55 PM

I am writing to oppose the reconstruction plans for US 85 west from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line. This is a beautiful area which should not be damaged by road construction! The damage done to US 385 has a massive impact on that beautiful area. I do not want to see the same damage to US 85.

Please consider other alternatives such as reduced speed signs and curve indicators rather than destroying this beautiful area!

Mon 08/31/2026 6:09 PM

Mr. Malone,

Just another tax payer that is sick and tired of turning the Black Hills into a race track on our scenic Hwys. Please do not destroy one of the last scenic drives in the hills. Be nice if for once the SD DOT actually listened to their bosses We the People instead of just ramming these projects through where if the truth be told I am sure an audit would find more fraud than one can imagine. I cannot help it if people cannot read road signs and get killed. Call it for what it is a culling of the herd. People need to slow down and smell the roses.

Mon 08/31/2026 6:49 PM

I believe that the proposed improvements are not needed at this time

Mon 08/31/2026 7:07 PM

Mr Malone:

I would like to share my opinion on SDDOTs proposition.

As a Lawrence county resident living in Boulder Canyon, I vote No to SDDOT's Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming Line highway project.

I fear the project will destroy the natural beauty we love about the area.

Mon 08/31/2026 7:42 PM

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed highway construction project in the area from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border. This is one of the nicest, most beautiful drives in the area and does not need to be torn up and lose so much of what it offers now. From what I have observed, it is not a heavily trafficked road, when compared to others, such as 385. The cost of the project, the time, the destruction of natural resources, are all things to consider. We go to the Eagle Cliff area quite often in the winter and are always so appreciative of that stretch of highway-and have never felt it needed to be worked on in any way. Maybe there are a few small areas that are essential to work on, but I don't think a full makeover is in the best interests of anyone. Please leave it be as it is as much as possible. Thank you.

Mon 08/31/2026 8:20 PM

Dear sir:

Please stop the project of widening highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. It does not get as much traffic as you believe, not as many deaths as you believe and it is a beautiful drive that all of us in the hills love to take specially in the fall.

Changing the route around the church camp will put the children at risk, children do not always obey rules about staying out of the highway if their ball goes into it.

Fix the road where you can, but leave to route alone.

Tue 09/01/2026 7:01 AM

Please do NOT change this route. Repave yes, change route Vote "NO."

Tue 09/01/2026 8:06 AM

Hello Mark,

I am writing as a concerned citizen for the proposed "straightening" of the spearfish canyon route. I can understand that a knee perk response in justifying this is going to be safety. As a nurse, I have seen what vehicle accidents can do to a person. But I have also seen the difference between an accident that happens at a high rate of speed (that is achieved on a straighter, less curvy shall we say, road) vs one that is at a slower rate of speed. Unfortunately, both are horrific, but working in a hospital for over 15yrs has shown me that you cannot protect people from themselves and that by widening and straightening out a large piece of road in the beautiful Black Hills... it is just inviting people to make poor choices.

On a sepearte note, the Black Hills are beautiful, and where I live. Something that I look forward to and one of the main reasons I live here is for the slower pace, for the dirt roads and twists and turns and speed limits under 50mph. If I wanted big roads and lots of traffic, I would live somewhere else. The Hills are my home and I like them the way they are. Please don't change them for people who are going to make poor choices regardless.

Tue 09/01/2026 10:11 AM

Dear Mark Malone,

I feel this is unnecessary, especially since it should be harder for developers to destroy the hills with more elite housing. All that is needed is wider shoulders and maybe some turnouts. What remains of the Black Hills needs to be preserved, not destroyed. Scenic drives are just that, scenic drives.

Tue 09/01/2026 11:47 AM

Repave the roadway - that's fine but leave the rest alone!

Put up a LARGE sign that says, "This is a Scenic Highway. SLOW DOWN and enjoy it!"

Nothing else.

I travel this road frequently. The traffic drives too fast!

Put the money into more police and emergency services because of all the crazy drivers who don't know how to follow the speed limit!

Tue 09/01/2026 11:42 AM

Sir,

I attended your informational meeting held in Deadwood on June 4, 2026. While I appreciate that DOT representatives were patient and generous with their time, it was clear to me that I was not the only

attendee that evening that was frustrated, sad, apprehensive and, by the end of the meeting, outright opposed to the project. The meeting audience was broadly represented- residents along the construction route, fishing and nature enthusiasts, bikers, trail hikers and their stewards, commuters, and more.

We were presented with a great deal of rationale for why the project should be completed, public safety foremost among them. Also included were the statements “federal regulations require that unavoidable wetland impacts caused by highway construction be avoided, minimized or mitigated”, from Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Like myself, most opposed the project took exception to the terms “minimized” and “mitigated”. Because of the arbitrary nature of the terms, many in the public feel betrayed by the enormity of the impact of the recent construction on 385, and 14A in Boulder Canyon, South Rochford Rd., and others.

I have lived in the Black Hills since 1989, and my husband’s family has lived here for 4 generations. While I don’t speak for him, what I see along these roads is an accelerating increase in making the “Hills” more convenient for exploitation. The very things that are responsible for the beauty and charm of the Black Hills are being erased to increase access to those very assets. I live off of the Boulder Canyon road, and what I see as a result of the new changes on that part of 14A are increased speed and more dead wildlife. There is very little oversight and enforcement on this road and, when there is, it seems to be sporadic. Speed limits are a moot point if they are not enforced.

What I see on the S. Rochford Rd. as a result of that new construction, where I go to visit loved ones at the Bell Park Cemetery, where there was once a serene and beautiful country road with intermittent streams along the roadsides, now streams are gone, the rock walls with interesting trees and vegetation gone. And 385, anyone that has driven that road before the construction knows how completely altered that environment has become.

The changes proposed along the stretch from Cheyenne Crossing, Icebox Canyon, and Sunny Meadows Trailhead especially were emphasized at the June meeting for what was described as the most minimal impact possible, 11’ lane width, 2-4’ shoulder, and a 5-10’ clear zone would cause sediment and erosion into that crystal clear stream and alteration of the geology adjacent to the road. Can we imagine if that were done on the Iron Mountain Road, or Needles Highway?

I have been fortunate enough to be able to travel many of the great roads in our country in addition to the exceptional ones in our state- The Great River Road along the Mississippi, the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier NP, the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway on the Beartooth, the Shafer Trail in Canyonlands NP, the Mount Carmel Highway in Zion NP, the 101 on the Pacific Coast and others. None of those roads I have mentioned are “safe”, but they are valuable national treasures. Even if one could calculate the financial loss of those roads to tourism, there is no calculating the loss to God and Mother Nature. That unique piece of road from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line qualifies for Scenic Byway designation. Can we instead use that money to create WPA style conservation of those roads, increase law enforcement oversight, and signage and corridors for the protection of wildlife? Can we instead be a model of what can be accomplished to preserve the natural beauty of the Hills, rather than shortsightedly increasing their exploitation? I will always remember the words of one young man at that meeting, truly the future of our society, “can we just take a break, go for a hike and breathe”.

Tue 09/01/2026 12:12 PM

No no no. We do not need anymore highway expansion.

Tue 09/01/2026 12:21 PM

I would like to voice opposition to the proposed reconstruction of highway 85 in the Black Hills.

Please reconsider as this does not stay in the spirit of the area and will not in my opinion improve the drive on this road.

Please resurface and leave the existing road intact.

Tue 09/01/2026 1:11 PM

Sir

This letter regards the proposed construction on Hwy 85. PLEASE consider the legitimate written comments that I know you have received in opposition to this highway project. Ideas such as saving \$ to redo the existing roadway while not disturbing the existing natural beauty, increased attention to traffic speeds, etc. There has to be alternatives for the state to consider other than a large scale road construction project that would ruin what is a unique to that stretch of highway.

Tue 09/01/2026 1:15 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

Please do not go forth with the Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming Line highway plan that is currently proposed. I feel it will drastically change/destroy the gorgeous Canyon and Black Hills! It is an absolutely beautiful area that is loved and enjoyed by many locals as well as thousands of tourists/Rally visitors.

Please. It is a gorgeous area that my ancestors have enjoyed. My current extended family members believe it should remain unchanged so future generations can also enjoy the beauty that God created.

Tue 09/01/2026 5:38 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

As an avid rock climber and frequent user of upper Spearfish Canyon, I oppose the proposed US-85 expansion. Blasting and excavation cause severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek's trout waters, risk disrupting limestone spring channels, and destabilize rock faces creating ongoing rockfall hazards while destroying critical roadside parking/access for recreation.

I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition and ask that you reject this expansion.

Tue 09/01/2026 7:14 PM

Dear Sir-

I **oppose** the proposed \$47 million project to reconstruct Hwy 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border.

Scale back this project!

Save the same route, use safety signage, rumble strips, speed limit considerations, incorporate a scenic pullout.

Tue 09/01/2026 8:04 PM

I am not in favor of the Highway 85 reconstruction project from the WY boundary to Cheyenne Crossing. I know it's curvy, but realignment will destroy the beauty of traveling that road.

Tue 09/01/2026 9:14 PM

Dear Sir,

RT 85 is a scenic and road to drive. It attracts many tourists. Widening the road would ruin its beauty and lead to heavier traffic and trucks which are not wanted. I strongly object to this plan.

Wed 09/02/2026 7:49 AM

This is my comment on a rebuild of US 85 from Wyoming state line to Cheyenne Crossing. I'm originally from Sturgis and now live in Torrington. I travel that route about 3 to 4 times a year. I've seen more residential construction near the Wyoming state line. Since the growth in that area, I do believe some safety related construction would be needed such as a turning lane. I don't think or want to see a rebuild from Hardy Guard Station to Cheyenne Crossing is needed. A rebuild of the original roadway would be alright. Do not disturb Spearfish Creek. I am a retired Wyoming Highway Patrol Trooper. I can't speak for South Dakota Troopers. I rarely see a Trooper on that section of roadway. I can only surmise a couple of reasons for this. Lack of radio contact with dispatch and safety reasons to make traffic stops due to road width. Both have potential safety hazards for an officer. I don't know the traffic crash numbers on this section of road are, but I've never seen a crash on this section, so I don't think the numbers are high enough to warrant a complete rebuild.

Wed 09/02/2026 9:00 AM

I'm writing to give my opinion on the reconstruction of the highway between cheyenne crossing and the wyoming border, i am totally against any reconstruction to this area of that highway. This is one of the most beautiful drives in the black hills , and I don't want to lose that, because when it's gone it can't be replaced. I want my grandkids and great gang kids to be able to witness the beauty of this drive as I've enjoyed it since moving to the black hills in 1964. Anybody that goes to the top of Terry Peak can see the damage to our black hills that gold Mining has done in the last thirty years or so and this will only be the beginning with the price of gold stay in at between four thousand and five thousand dollars per ounce. I do not want to see this road updated and lose the beauty of it, thats my two cents worth.

Wed 09/02/2026 9:15 AM

I am opposed to this widening project. It would ruin this Black Hills scenic drive.

Please don't do this.

Wed 09/02/2026 9:37 AM

I strongly oppose extreme reconstruction of the highway from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming state line.

Wed 09/02/2026 12:37 PM

Please don't destroy icebox canyons beautiful scenic drive!

The road can be resurfaced without destroying the beauty. The wider the roads, the faster people go making it more unsafe. Slow down and enjoy the drive.

Please stop this project!!

Wed 09/02/2026 2:55 PM

After reviewing the proposed project to straighten Hwy 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming state line, I strongly request cancellation of the project.

I understand some drivers risk accidents and injury by overdriving road conditions. This lack of judgment will never change in people no matter how straight the road, how much signage, or any efforts to instill good driving habits. Straighter roads simply mean increased speeds by those unwilling to operate safely.

But what this project does guarantee is to further destroy the unique character of this iconic black hills pathway that offers insight in historical development of our area. The beauty and value of retaining the current road track keeps local residents and future visitors a window in this most special area. This project sanitizes the wonder of the black hills and turns it into just another raceway between the trees.

Those of us who drive to enjoy the hill's scenery and relax with seeing all the features of the area will be pressured to drive increasing speeds and to deal with faster, less courteous people.

Please do not waste the funds to try and solve what cannot be changed but will absolutely sacrifice a valuable and wonderful drive in the hills.

Wed 09/02/2026 3:11 PM

The highway from Cheyenne crossing to the Wyoming State Line is a beautiful scenic roadway. Whether it's summer or winter the creek flowing along the road with wildflowers or snow lining the banks is incredibly beautiful. People need to plan ahead, drive slowly and enjoy the view. It does need some care as it is getting worn out but straightening and blasting the rock and changing the flow of the creek is a bad idea.

Wed 09/02/2026 3:50 PM

Mr. Mark Malone,

I would like to express my concerns regarding the planned U.S. Highway 85 Roadway Design, Project Number NH 0085(106)0 PCN06J8.

I am opposed to this project for various reasons, including the following:

- I believe that a new surface on the roadway, improved shoulders, and a lower speed limit could make the highway safer without more drastic interventions. According to SDDOT data, more than 20% of wrecks have been caused by wildlife encounters, which would likely not be prevented by road redesign.

- On page 13 of the SDDOT Public Meeting handout from June 4th 2026, there is mention made of a Wetland Mitigation Registry form. According to this website (<https://swampschool.org/success-of-wetland-mitigation-projects/>), under Conclusion, you can find the following remarks: "Although wetland mitigation accounts for a significant annual investment in habitat restoration and protection, it has not, to date, proven to be a reliable conservation tool. Despite the nationwide "no net loss" goal, the federal compensatory mitigation program may currently lead to a net loss in wetlands acres and functions."

- I see a strong potential for inconvenience to both local drivers and tourists during construction, including probable income loss from tourism.

- I believe that this project will harm not only the scenic beauty of the Black Hills but will significantly impact the biodiversity of the area.
- I feel that making the minimal improvements for safety suggested above would not only be effective but also less costly, saving money for needed improvements elsewhere.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

Wed 09/02/2026 4:29 PM

Good afternoon,

I am writing to oppose the proposed plan to rework Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming.

I have lived in the Black Hills almost my entire life. And the changes for the purpose of tourism have not been positive.

I drove the route on my way to Denver last weekend. It is a fantastic drive. Beautiful. And forces people to slow down and enjoy the hills. To take more of our beautiful hills for the purpose of allowing people to go faster is a poor decision.

When I would drive home from college in the 90s the best part of the drive was rolling down my windows (regardless of the time of year) and breathing in the beautiful black hills air.

Please don't take that.

Wed 09/02/2026 4:38 PM

We oppose DOT's present reconstruction plans for US 85 west of Cheyenne Crossing. We do not want this highway's beauty destroyed like the changes made to US 385. Please fix the existing road without taking out the corners or the wonderful landscape that make it a beautiful drive.

Wed 09/02/2026 8:22 PM

Mr. Malone,

There are many South Dakotans who consider the Black Hills a special place. We know that this "Island on the Plains" is full of scenic wonders and wildlife. It is a gift when we can travel through these hills and actually experience the wonders from the road. I hope you will consider that a shoulder can be too wide, that the beauty destroyed by the perceived need for safety and speed will be gone for visitors and our children. I'm sure you can find a way to make changes for safety on the road from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming without making it a straight speedway and destroying what we all treasure.

Remember, "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should".

Wed 09/02/2026 9:28 PM

I strongly hope you guys reconsider that new highway 85 project. It would ruin a lot of that scenic country and take away some of that private ground that homes are on.

Please just leave it as it is . Thanks

Thu 09/03/2026 8:45 AM

To whom it may concern;

Please reconsider the states plans for rebuilding the Cheyenne Crossing sections of Hwy 85. This is a very scenic area, and if there are safety concerns, please rethink this, there are other ways to slow traffic rather than making it easier to go fast. If the road is wider and straight, the inevitable accidents may be worse.

Thank you for your consideration,

Thu 09/03/2026 10:22 AM

Mark,

I oppose the reconstruction of Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to WY state line.

I suggest it be designated a scenic byway, with only needed road repair, similar to Spearfish Canyon scenic byway.

Thu 09/03/2026 11:15 AM

I am writing to you today regarding the proposed construction on Hwy. 385 between Cheyenne Crossing and the WY state line. I feel this \$58 million dollar project would be a gross waste of taxpayer money. In addition, it would take away from the scenic beauty on that route. I do not have specific information on the current safety issues here, however, I do not hear about an abundance of issues in this stretch. No amount of money will stop all of the potential accidents and the stupidity of people that drive too fast on this type of road. Straightening the road seems to increase the speed of travel which results in less enjoyment of the scenery and still has the potential for accidents at a higher rate of speed. People come to our Black Hills to experience the beauty and I feel like this takes away from that. I feel the money could be better spent elsewhere to potentially pave or repair other roads in the Hills. If safety is a concern, could there not be alternatives such as additional pull outs or signage? I sincerely hope that alternatives to this project would be considered. Let's leave the beauty of this stretch of road intact. Thank you for your consideration.

Thu 09/03/2026 11:45 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to ask SDDOT to reconsider the proposed reconstruction of US-85 through Spearfish Canyon.

I have lived my entire life in South Dakota and have spent more than 20 years rock climbing in Spearfish Canyon. I understand the importance of maintaining a safe highway. But I worry that widening,

blasting, and excavating this corridor could permanently change something that is far more valuable than a roadway.

I am of Lakota heritage, and I have a deep respect for the connection between people and the land. The Paha Sapa has carried that significance for generations. Spearfish Creek itself bears the history of Native people who depended on these waters. For my family, Spearfish Canyon has become a place of our own memory, connection, and spirituality. It is where I spent years climbing and where part of my journey of falling in love with my husband unfolded. We brought our six-week-old son there. We've held memorials for our loved ones near the waters. So, when I look at the proposed blasting, excavation, widened roadway, and loss of roadside access, I don't see simply an engineering project. I see the potential loss of a place that cannot be recreated once it is altered.

I also question whether making this road wider and faster is necessarily the best way to make it safer. SDDOT's own research recognizes that this corridor is unusually constrained by steep grades, rock ridges, and water. Federal highway research also recognizes that wider lanes and shoulders tend to increase operating speeds. In a narrow mountain canyon shared by motorists, climbers, hikers, anglers, bicyclists, and wildlife, I believe there is real value in designing for attentiveness and appropriate speed rather than designing the canyon to accommodate faster travel.

Could Spearfish Canyon remain a slower, narrower road? A place where people are asked to slow down, pay attention, and move through a landscape that is spiritual, historic, and irreplaceable?

I am not opposed to making US-85 safer. I am asking that safety be achieved with the lightest possible touch. Please consider targeted pavement and drainage improvements, carefully designed safety measures at documented problem areas, preservation of existing recreational access, and alternatives that minimize blasting, excavation, and changes to the natural canyon walls.

There are many places in South Dakota where we can build or widen roads. There is only one Spearfish Canyon.

Please don't make the mistake of measuring its value only in dollars, engineering standards, or traffic safety metrics. Some places carry history, memory, family, and spirit. Spearfish Canyon is one of those places.

I respectfully ask SDDOT to reconsider the scale of this project and find a way to improve safety without permanently sacrificing the character and soul of the canyon.

Thu 09/03/2026 12:14 PM

Dear Mr. Malone:

I am a life long resident of the Northern Black Hills. I did not oppose the reconstruction of Highway 85/14 from Exit 17 to Deadwood. It was necessary and has been a big help. However, after review of DOT's plans to reconstruct the Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming Line stretch of highway, I am firmly opposed to DOT's present plans. The road is one of the last highways in the Black Hills where one can enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Spearfish Canyon area without concern of speeding through traffic. This stretch of highway is not now nor should it be a main connection to New Castle and

beyond. Please work with the Northern Hills concerned citizens for a rational yet scenic revision of your plans.

Thu 09/03/2026 12:39 PM

Dear Mark, I am writing to oppose the DOT plan to reconstruct US 85 between Cheyenne Crossing and the Wyoming line. I am a long term resident and retired business owner in the hills. I strongly feel this road should have some repairs but not the kind of total change that is in the current plans. I have seen and driven 385. That present road encourages even faster speeds so negates many of the original reasons for the changes. 85 is a historic and legacy pathway into the hills. It's charm is the twists, turns and views along the way. I can see the need for some repair and pull outs for cars to pass or to see the sights. But the wholesale change that your plans contemplate would destroy forever what is an integral Black Hills experience. I urge you to reconsider the current plans. Thank you and feel free to reach out if I can provide further comment.

Thu 09/03/2026 1:21 PM

Hi Mark:

I have given much thought and deliberation to draft this comment on this project. First I want SD DOT to know that I am totally against the redesign of this road. The scenery and beauty of this old road is becoming a rare commodity in the Black Hills. As we modernize our roads and redesign them the objectives of engineers are to make them safe to national standards and accepted view points of what they should like in modern society. This road deserves to be viewed as historic and scenic. Moving the road's center line and straightening out the curves meets your objective, but ruins the scenic beauty and the enjoyment of cruising down this road.

My suggestion would be to make this a scenic byway and preserve its character. The road should be resurfaced and safety measures like signage and rumble strips on the roads edge. In the SD DOT design there were side roads that intersect at angles that create unsafe intersections. Then change the side roads right aways and leave Hwy 85 as is. The objective needs to be leaving highway 85 intact and then finding other creative ways for safety.

Imagine taking iron mountain road and needles highway and redesigning, using your design of 85 as the example. The outcome would be disastrous. Let's leave this scenic Byway a country road as it was originally constructed as.

Another concern I have is speed. On highway 385 the new road increases the speed drivers drive. Since the road is wider and smoother some increase their speed way above the posted speed limits. This creates danger for other drivers and the potential for more catastrophic crashes. Increased speed and velocity create more damage in an accident. At the June 4th meeting in Deadwood I spoke to you that I ride a motorcycle and enjoy my rides on Hwy 85. I stated that the one thing that frightens me on my rides are cars driving beyond the limits of the road. The redesign of the road will allow drivers to take more risk and drive faster than they do today. The increased speed will create unsafe conditions for the sightseers and those just cruising on a country road.

There are also environmental concerns. During construction, regardless of how you try to mitigate erosion and runoff there will be increased sediment and pollutants flowing into the streams and drainages. If you adopt resurfacing and creative safety measures on the fixing of this road you can lessen the impact of construction and preserve the existing ecosystem. Tearing out the trees and vegetation to widen and realign the centerline as proposed will have a lasting effect on the ecosystem.

In conclusion: Please do not go forward with the proposed design. Stop: rethink your objectives, make a scenic byway your first priority. Preserving the ambiance of the road as it now exists. The Black Hills are not an area where we need super highways designed to make traffic flow faster. We need to make traffic flow slower and enjoy and take in the beauty that is here.

Thank You for considering my thoughts and ideas.

Thu 09/03/2026 3:37 PM

Mr Malone,

We are firmly and definitely AGAINST the proposed Highway 85 project. !!! The destruction of the scenic highway is NOT necessary, VERY expensive as proposed and NOT needed as proposed.!!!

The Black Hills are KNOWN for the scenic drives and if they are consistently changed, the entire feeling of the Black Hills is forever damaged.!

I propose and sincerely hope the engineers come to their senses and ONLY repave the original route, add some pull-offs, use speed limits wisely, add some rumble strips and add a shoulder here & there.

Add my name AND my husband's name to the growing list of residents who are **AGAINST the Hwy 85 Project.**

Thu 09/03/2026 3:41 PM

Please do not ruin another scenic highway in the Black Hills. I am a resident of Lead and drive that road many times a year. It is not a slow road. Google maps estimates 50 minutes to travel the 42 miles between Cheyenne

Crossing and Newcastle. That is absolutely not an unreasonable amount of time for the distance.

I have seen the scenic drive from Rapid City to Spearfish turn into a solid view of subdivisions, businesses, and campgrounds. Scenes of grasslands with the backdrop of the mountains no longer exist. 385 has been turned into a thoroughfare instead of a scenic route to enjoy the Black Hills.

It's rare to be able to find places anymore to meander back roads since they have been turned into trails for side by sides, or bypass routes such as the road now being paved from Hill City to Rochford to Lead making it a route in which to be aware of traffic rather than to relax and enjoy the scenery and historic areas.

The traffic isn't heavy between Cheyenne crossing in Wyoming. There is no justification for spending the millions making that road a thoroughfare, too, when there are much more needed areas for the money.

Please leave us with one unspoiled route in the Hills.

Thu 09/03/2026 4:08 PM

Dear Mr. Malone

I am writing in opposition to the proposed DOT Highway 85 project from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming border. This drive retains the beauty of the Black Hills that has been diminished through several other highway improvement projects of roads through the Black Hills. Traffic is light on this stretch of Highway 85 and does not warrant the taxpayer expense and destruction of scenery to assist drivers in driving at an accelerated speed. Instead of the proposed project, I suggest the path of the current highway be retained and the road surface be repaired and improved.

Thu 09/03/2026 4:21 PM

I am a third-generation Black Hills resident and business owner. I choose to live here for the beauty, the seasons, the various opportunities for outdoor activities, minimal population, and minimal traffic. It seems that there is a priority and acceleration in making the "Hills" more convenient, safe, and an invitation for exploitation. The very things that are responsible for the beauty and charm of the Black Hills are being erased to increase access to those very assets.

The changes proposed along the stretch from Cheyenne Crossing, Icebox Canyon, and Sunny Meadows Trailhead are described as the most minimal impact possible. However, an 11' lane width, 2-4' shoulder, and a 5-10' clear zone would cause sediment and erosion into that crystal clear stream and alteration of the geology adjacent to the road.

The unique piece of road from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line qualifies for Scenic Byway designation. The purpose of a scenic Byway is to slow down to enjoy the scenery. The major focus of SD Governor Norbeck when promoting tourism in the Black Hills was the scenery. He promoted narrow, curvy roads that would force drivers to slow down to enjoy the scenery. We, the current residents of the Black Hills must preserve it for future generations of residents and tourists. There are plenty of roads that provide faster access for those who want or need to travel faster. Fix the existing road, while preserving its beauty and nature. We need to focus on how to preserve the natural beauty of the Black Hills, rather than shortsightedly increasing their exploitation.

Thu 09/03/2026 4:42 PM

I oppose DOTs present reconstruction of US85 west of Cheyanne Crossing!

Thu 09/03/2026 7:14 PM

To the South Dakota Department of Transportation,

I am writing to express my opposition to the Highway 85 reconstruction (destruction) project as currently proposed.

There are less invasive ways to address safety concerns along this stretch, such as reduced speed limits, rumble strips, and wildlife underpasses.

I live two miles from the project area and regularly enjoy weekend drives along this route. It is one of the last truly beautiful and largely untouched roads in the Black Hills, and its scenic, natural character is something my family and I deeply value.

I ask that you reconsider the current plan and pursue alternatives that address safety without permanently altering one of the region's most treasured scenic drives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Thu 09/03/2026 8:17 PM

There is no need to get to New Castle any fast. Please don't ruin our beautiful scenic drives. This is one of the last ones left. No to SDDOT's Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming Line highway plans. Use our money for something we actually need please. Perhaps pedestrian bridges in deadwood to go over the highway?? Could reduce fatalities.

Thu 09/03/2026 9:51 PM

Dear Mark:

I am going to cut to the chase. I am opposed to the proposed project as presented including the lower speed alternatives. My overriding reason is simple. This isn't any old highway. This section of highway is one of or the most incredible sections of U.S Highway in South Dakota; in fact, I cannot think of another U.S. Highway in the West that equals its beauty and unique features. Not one. Why would we want to irretrievably lose this crown jewel of South Dakota and Americans for future generations?

For context, I am a Professional Forester of 48 years. I was the Forest Supervisor of the Black Hills National Forest for 11 years from 2005-2016 and have resided in the Black Hills for 21 years. I was ultimately responsible for a huge number of natural resource projects on the Black Hills and other projects under my jurisdiction here and in three western states. I have read several thousand comments in weighing my decisions. Nearly all projects went forward in some fashion, a few did not. This is one of those. I am not an activist; actually, this is the first time I have ever written comments on a State of South Dakota project. This one doesn't make sense. So as I drove on this highway many times this summer, I decided I had to speak out. The stakes are too high. The natural beauty of the meandering, clear runs of Spearfish Creek along this unique highway are simply too special not to protect.

I understand the stated Needs and Goals of the project. No disrespect, but who is going to argue with these? They read fine until I reviewed the actual route changes and translate what these mean on the ground: long segments of straightened roads, and the corresponding large-scale cut/fill/elevations, and irretrievable changes in character of unique setting. Let alone some of the impacts to private business owners, snowmobilers, and private residences. You may or may not reduce crash rates but sure will change the driving experience for residents and tourists forever.

Here are some further comments and suggestions based upon your stated Needs and Goals:

Reduce crash rates. Straightening out curves might save some unskilled drivers from crashing, maybe not. Straighter lines invite speed. They may still drive too fast for conditions. When I drive on Highway 85 at night, I often see more elk than oncoming vehicles. I drive well under the posted speed limits or know I am likely going to crash into an elk. Many close calls. More signage and keeping the speeds slow due to curves can help keep the driver attentive.

Replace pavement and Replace drainage structures These needs can be met by replacing pavement and drainage on the existing template or associated curve widening and turnouts that do not involve major realignment and cuts/fills. Adding turnouts away from the most unique features on gentle terrain may help impatient drivers from making poor decisions resulting in a crash.

Protect the integrity of the corridor, protect the beauty of the Black Hills, while enhancing the experience for all users. This can be accomplished by making few changes in alignment as suggested above. The beauty and integrity are protected by not altering it. I would place this type of standard alongside the iconic drives in the Black Hills such Spearfish Canyon below Cheyenne Crossing, Needles Highway, Iron Mountain Road, and Wildlife Loop. I cannot imagine South Dakotans allowing major changes to any of these to simply to “reduce crash rates”. While I know these others have limited commercial use, the scenic integrity is unparalleled along Spearfish Creek and should be preserved as an iconic feature of South Dakota.

Improve alignment and add shoulders where possible. This is where the goals get slippery. When it comes to engineering roads here, pretty much anything is possible once you start moving mountains and take measures to so-called mitigate the impacts. Again, impacts of the shown routes to improve alignment far exceed the ensuing and irreversible impacts to the rare setting along Spearfish Creek. It also appears to heavily alter snowmobile and winter sports tourism use.

Reduce impacts on the natural environment during construction. I have full confidence these measures can be designed and implemented.

In summary, I oppose the proposed alternatives because the proposed re-alignment or new segment locations do not protect the integrity of one of South Dakota, USA’s most unique and scenic U.S. Highways. A new alternative is suggested truly protects the integrity and that meets the needs to replace pavement and drainage structures and that includes minor curve widening, improving shoulders, constructing possible turnouts or short passing lanes, and signage to reduce accidents; and this new alternative should be issued for public review and comment.

Thank you for providing additional time for public comment. I am hopeful that you can take additional time to redesign this project that will truly preserve its unique setting.

Thu 09/03/2026 10:26 PM

Hello,

I oppose the proposed plan to reconstruct Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border. It should be repaved where needed, some pullovers added, but the same route left intact. The Hellsgate area should be left alone.

Thu 09/03/2026 10:33 PM

Dear Sir or to whom it may concern,

With all due respect, please be advised that I am deeply opposed to the above-named proposed project which includes taking down trees, plowing and blasting through the hills and mountains and is well away from the present highway.. While I respect the alleged purpose of making the highway safer, straightening the road will encourage motorists to accelerate speed and cause more accidents, which has been demonstrated with the other recent projects like Boulder Canyon and Highway 385. I know there were fatal accidents on both during the most recent Rally.

What does the SD DOT have against the scenic Black Hills? This stretch of roadway is a National Treasure and one of the remaining scenic routes untouched by the DOT. I agree that it needs repaved, but please stay on the same route. Safety signage, rumble strips, updated speed limits, and perhaps a small shoulder or scenic pullouts are all alternative ways to address the safety concerns. Please stop trying to make the Black Hills experience into an urbanized environment.

Fri 09/04/2026 8:59 AM

Just throwing in my two cents ...

This project serves primarily to make it easier and safer for people to drive faster. And it does so at a tremendous cost to the rustic, scenic character of the current road, to landowners, and to the anglers, climbers, hikers, etc. who recreate on the adjacent public lands. And, of course, to taxpayers.

How about we just lower the speed limit instead (comparable to the Scenic Byway on 14A)? US 85 south of Cheyenne Crossing is as unique and scenic as 14A north of the crossing and deserving of the same status.

Fri 09/04/2026 9:08 AM

Good morning, Mr. Malone:

I just wanted to let you know that I oppose DOT's current plan to reconstruct Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line. I'm 82, grew up in Lead, and all my life I've returned to that stretch of road, with its pristine, mostly untouched, clear-running stream, its splendid riparian zone and the marvelously varied terrain that stretches all the way from Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming line. It's a rare place of serene and primitive beauty that (ironically!) has a highway running through it.

Designed with a modicum of respect for the fragile environment it passes through, the highway, as it is, achieves a delicate symbiosis between the modern and the aboriginal—an odd entanglement that both sides have gotten used to. Straightening and broadening it will unfairly destabilize this delicate balance in favor of faster, but not necessarily safer, passage to more raucous places, like Roughlock Falls and Lead and Deadwood.

As currently planned, reconstruction will disrupt the basic ecology of a quieter and more subtle dimension of the Black Hills in favor of louder, and yes, let's say it, more profitable destinations. But, for so many, the true destination, the real beauty of the Black Hills, is in its tranquil interstices, like those found along Highway 85. These places of rejuvenation are dwindling now as human activity advances. Yet, as obscured as they've become, when we do find them, they offer the rich and elusive gifts of the geological ages, gifts that speak in whispers and in the figures of their own language. One slows down and grows quiet in order to apprehend them. They are of another order and need unique advocates, since those on the fast and noisy side have already captured more than their share of the Hills. My request to DOT is that it take time to attend to the voices on nature's side. Consider repairing the highway as it is, make some non-intrusive safety adjustments where needed, but take no more from the natural order than is warranted. Continue to protect and nurture the priceless side of the Highway 85 experience. Do that and you'll have the profound thanks of a multitude of people who live and work here or come to visit.

Fri 09/04/2026 9:08 AM

Good Morning,

I am writing to let you know that I am strongly against the planned reconstruction of Hwy 85 from Wyoming to Cheyenne Crossing. I agree that the road needs to be resurfaced but cannot agree with the mass destruction of that beautiful scenery that makes the road a pleasure to drive/ride on. I also question the future impact on the creek that runs close to the roadway.

I respectfully ask that this project be reconsidered.

Fri 09/04/2026 10:20 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

After driving the Hwy 385 construction I fail to see the point in what the state wants to do to US-85. If there were turn lanes or passing lanes installed I could perhaps start to support it. IF the state wants to make our roadways safer and let us all enjoy faster travel then outlaw the use of side by sides all over the black hills. Most of them dont go the speed limit and clog up the traffic flow.

Furthermore, as a user of upper Spearfish Canyon, I oppose the proposed US-85 expansion. Blasting and excavation cause severe sediment runoff into Spearfish Creek's trout waters, risk disrupting limestone spring channels, and destabilize rock faces creating ongoing rockfall hazards while destroying critical roadside parking/access for recreation.

I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and limit work strictly to minor pavement repairs and routine maintenance. I align with the Black Hills Climbers Coalition and ask that you reject this expansion.

Fri 09/04/2026 10:30 AM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I frequently travel through and enjoy the myriad of recreational opportunities along Spearfish Creek and the Hwy 85 corridor, including skiing and hiking at Eagle Cliff and other trails in the area, rock climbing the beautiful limestone walls, recreating in and around the lovely waters of Spearfish Creek, and simply enjoying the natural beauty of the area.

I **strongly** oppose the proposed US HWY 85 expansion for the following reasons:

I am concerned with safety and access along the HWY 85 corridor. Road straightening and blasting will lead to increased speed along the Hwy and decrease safety for recreational users. I also think it is important to maintain parking along the Hwy for recreational user access.

I am also concerned with maintaining the quality of the Spearfish Creek watershed and the scenic integrity of the entire area. Unnecessary road work and blasting will lead to harmful sediment increases in the creek and disturb the ecology of the area.

I see that stretch of HWY 85 as a scenic byway, and do not want to see it widened. I urge SDDOT to reject a full reconstruction and keep road work in that area to routine maintenance and keep the speed limit low rather than causing unnecessary destruction to our natural resources. Thanks, for your consideration!

Fri 09/04/2026 11:31 AM

Hello Mark

I attended an information session last evening by two of your colleagues at CFL. They did a great job explaining the project and why it was being considered. I understand about the safety issues and those seem like valid concerns. However I do not like the idea of rerouting the road in the 4.5 mile middle section—this will destroy the beautiful stretch of road that many of us enjoy and is part of the beauty and majesty of the Black Hills. As a SD citizen, my hope is that you will consider the wishes of the people who live here. It would seem that other approaches such as signage lowering the speed limit, flashing signs alerting curves ahead, greater law enforcement presence and just basic driver responsibility.

Please do not destroy this beautiful place.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns.

Fri 09/04/2026 11:59 AM

Mark Malone

PLEASE – NO to the changes to US Highway 85 from Cheyenne Crossing to SD/WY Line!!!!

I find this plan to alter “the last truly breathtaking entrance to the Black Hills of SD” a huge mistake!!!!

Born in Pierre, SD during a blizzard in January 1956.

My parents relocated in 1960 to Lead SD pursuing a living at the Homestake Mine due to family outgrowing the family farm/ranch south of Blunt SD.

For many years, I have proclaimed.....Born in Pierre, SD but got to Lead, SD, as quick as I could!

Having watched the growth of the Black Hills my entire life, working at the same Homestake Mine as my father and brothers having owning a business in Lead, SD for the last twenty years, I find that the planning of the routes in and out of the Black Hills has lost all concept of retaining Mother Natures “True Beauty”!

All roads leading to Deadwood must be 3 to four lanes for human traffic flow. Mother Nature has been **FORGOTTEN!**

Please, Mr. Malone, being a DOT employee and paid to act as a “Steward of South Dakota Lands”, please reconsider changing US Highway 85, south to the WY Line!

Please following in the footsteps of South Dakota’s 9th Governor Peter Norbeck and place Mother Nature and the Black Hills first over human “WANTS”!

While serving the people of SD as US Senator Norbeck developed and laid out Iron Mountain Road, which exists yet today as a scenic byway!

To quote Senator/Governor Norbeck.....

“You’re not supposed to drive here at 60 miles an hour. To do the scenery half justice, people should drive 20 or under; to do it full justice, they should get out and walk.”

Please use Norbeck’s wise eyes as your vision!

Please monitor speeds as the **“solution to driving safely through our last truly breathtaking entrance to the Black Hills of SD!”**

Fri 09/04/2026 12:11 PM

Dear Mr. Malone:

I submitted comments on this project on May 31, but I want to comment again.

Today is the final day for public comments on the Hwy 85 proposed project from Wyoming to Cheyenne Crossing. Last night Tom Horan and Todd Seaman presented the possible plan to SD Citizens for

Liberty. They did a good job of explaining the reasons for the proposed changes with a power point presentation and they also responded to many questions from attendees.

I have little objection to most of the project as it was presented, but the middle section just east of O'Neil Pass does concern me greatly. I believe the proposed deviation from the current path of the highway will do great harm to the scenic aspect of that portion of the road. I am probably in line with most of your commentors in urging you to minimize the redirection of that section of Hwy 85 to preserve the scenic profile of the drive.

I appreciate the DOT's effort to improve safety, but as I said in my previous comments, safety is primarily the responsibility of the vehicle operator. Try as you might to make a road 'foolproof', fools will continue to be born and be licensed to drive. Speed limit enforcement and warning signs could effectively mitigate the problem, Maybe BurmaShave style signage with messages like: "Remember to/ respect the road/ especially when/ it's rained or snowed." or "Whether or not/ you have a "close shave"/ depends upon/ the attention you gave."

Just a thought, but those attention-getting ads are legendary for their creativity and they were very successful! If you are selling safety, do it in an effective way. ;-)

Fri 09/04/2026 12:19 PM

Hello Mark!

I love what you're doing to fight against this horrible plan. My wife told me to email you, I wasn't quite sure what to say, but I am completely against that plan, I would love to see pedestrian bridges in deadwood, we have been talking about that for years.

Fri 09/04/2026 1:04 PM

Yes, I approve the US 85 project from Cheyenne crossing to Wyoming state line

Fri 09/04/2026 1:44 PM

Dear Mark,

I'm writing to let you know that, along with what appears to be a vast majority of people who commented at your Deadwood meeting, as well as on social media, I oppose the current plans to reconstruct US Highway 85 from Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border.

At the Deadwood meeting, we could see the hurt and dismay on the faces of those from the SDDOT as comments were made by the public about the lack of trust we now have in you following the reconstruction of 385 (and similar projects, but this one was a final straw). I believe SDDOT is out of touch with public sentiment. You work in a world where wide, flat and straight highways are considered beautiful things. We can imagine conferences and training where this is preached, where awards are given for overcoming (flattening and straightening) natural topography. You show these

“improvements” on your web site with pride. I think it’s difficult for you (SDDOT and the industries which collaborate with it) to understand how so many of us see these over-reaching projects as paths of destruction through formerly scenic areas of the Black Hills.

We certainly don’t want anyone hurt or killed either but as someone pointed out at the one Deadwood meeting, how far do you go to make a highway (or life in general) “safe”? Is there no personal responsibility in this? No matter how wide you make a road, someone will speed, have bald tires, overdrive the conditions, look over their shoulder too long, have bad luck with a deer running across the road, etc. and there is no doubt whatsoever that a wider, straighter highway increases the urge to speed even more thereby increasing the danger from these examples.

I could also go on at length about environmental damage, concerns about Spearfish Creek and lack of faith in your ability to “mitigate” damage to it, the scenic qualities of the existing roadway path, “dangerous” trees and natural vegetation (not the stuff that sprouts from green spray after construction) near the road being part of the charm of driving along it. Regarding your care for the environment, I noted a recent asphalt patching project on 85 where a quantity of diesel-like substance had been spilled (the equipment was gone by that time), with no apparent attempt to clean it up. It didn’t inspire faith in what will happen when this project spreads over many miles along the creek which flows all the way down to Spearfish and beyond.

To summarize, I urge you to leave the current route of the highway as it is (do not move the centerline), and to leave adjacent natural areas in their present state. Certainly repave and resurface, perhaps add pullouts where that fits with the current environment, widen IF YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST WHERE THIS IS REALLY NEEDED, and use all available non-destructive safety technologies (I’m sure these are discussed at your conferences as well) to assist drivers. But please do not lay waste (blast, knock down ancient canyon walls, remove large scenic boulders at Hell Gate documented in 1910 photography, impinge on the creek in any way, etc.) to this corridor the way you have on previous projects. This extension of Spearfish Canyon should be left as a historic remnant of what the Hills used to look like before highways started turning it into an urbanized zone.

Fri 09/04/2026 1:47 PM

Mr. Mike Malone,

Since attending the June 4th Public Meeting for the Hwy 85 reconstruction project, I have driven that beautiful 16 mile stretch of highway many times with available SDDOT design information in hand to better understand and visualize impacts of the current design. SDDOT has stated it is approaching the reconstruction of the first 9+/-miles from Cheyenne Crossing with the intent of minimal impacts to adjacent rock structures and creek bed and I trust that will be the case. However, plans for the next 7+/- miles to the Wyoming border have major negative impacts to the character and landscapes of Highway 85, especially pronounced in the iconic O’Neill Pass area.

I support the growing public voice to better preserve that unique and invaluable stretch of Black Hills roadway. I support maintaining Hwy 85’s current alignment while resurfacing the roadway and adding all available safety measures consistent with that goal (including as needed: lower speed limit, added

enforcement, increased signage, and others). I believe there is a redesign forthcoming and I hope SDDOT will take meaningful steps in that direction.

The implications of what we do now with this precious and irreplaceable resource directly affects future generations. And I hope someday I can sit in the passenger seat with my granddaughter at the wheel when she drives Hwy 85 for the first time . . . and that the experience will be as wonderful for her then as it is for me now.

Fri 09/04/2026 3:08 PM

Hello Mr. Malone,

Regarding the proposed highway work from Cheyenne to the Wyoming state line....I'm opposed to such a drastic project. Wouldn't it make more sense financially, safety wise, and beauty wise to use the funds for maintenance and some less invasive safety specs?

Fri 09/04/2026 3:52 PM

Mr. Malone,

I am writing to express my disagreement with the current plan to rebuild Highway 85 between Spearfish Canyon and the Wyoming state line!!

I do strongly support other mitigations, such as scenic pull-outs, rumble strips, signage, etc which would enhance safety. We have very few pristine places left in the Black Hills, and this is one we can't afford to lose!! People drive it so that they can experience the true Black Hills.

Interstate 90 runs, basically, parallel to this project. I would support signage which notifies drivers that Highway 85 is a scenic highway, and is not built for speed. Drivers with needs to get to locations in South Dakota quickly should be advised to travel on Interstate 90. For example, if they need to get to Deadwood, Lead, or Spearfish quickly, Interstate 90 is much safer and quicker.

Fri 09/04/2026 4:13 PM

Good Afternoon Mark,

I want to thank you again for listening to, recording, and considering all our comments. I thought of one more thing to add since I am a wildlife biologist and really appreciate the biodiversity of the Black Hills. This also relates to human safety and should likely be considered for the section of hwy 85 near the Wyoming border. I do not know if any wildlife research has been done in that area regarding hotspot wildlife crossing areas. If no research has been done, it could be conducted in the next few years. Once those areas are identified, wildlife underpasses or overpasses could be considered in the design of that highway section. These techniques are now used worldwide and have yielded remarkable results in both minimizing wildlife road kill events and making the roads safer for traveling humans.

Fri 09/04/2026 5:00 PM

This project should not proceed because it uses taxpayers money for habitat destruction in a sensitive wildlife area. I am a lifetime user of the road and like it the way of is.

Fri 09/04/2026 5:37 PM

Dear Mark,

I am writing with concerns on the plan to expand the road from Cheyenne Crossing to Wyoming. That road is one of the most beautiful drives in South Dakota. If the state is concerned about the safety, the road is perfectly safe if driven according to the speed limit.

The real problem is that the entire drive through Spearfish Canyon to the Wyoming border is never patrolled and therefore no one follows the speed limit. It would be much more beneficial to budget for more patrolling of the road on a regular basis than destroying this beautiful section of road. When they start enforcing the laws that already exist, people will slow down and the road maintains its beauty. Please reconsider this plan, it breaks my heart to see more beauty lost in this world.

Fri 09/04/2026 5:43 PM

Dear Mr. Malone, I am writing as a lifelong resident of the northern Black Hills to express my strong opposition to the proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway 85 between the Wyoming border and Cheyenne Crossing. This corridor is one of the most uniquely beautiful stretches of roadway in our region. Its curves, tree canopy, and intimate scale are part of the Black Hills' identity. Straightening, widening, and clearing this road would irreversibly damage that character. The justification offered for these changes centers on safety. Yet the primary safety issue on this corridor is not geometry — it is speed, especially in relation to wildlife. This area is a major movement zone for elk and deer, particularly in the summer. As someone who has lived here my entire life, I have seen countless collisions caused by drivers traveling too fast for conditions and striking animals. When SDDOT straightens roads, drivers simply go faster, and wildlife collisions increase. The scenery is lost, and the underlying problem remains. The crash data for this corridor reflects this reality. According to SDDOT's own 2020–2024 crash summary, run-off-road and animal-related crashes make up a substantial portion of incidents, and the weighted crash rate of 9.07 crashes per million vehicle miles traveled is higher than the statewide average for similar facilities. But national research shows that straightening rural roads does not reliably reduce crash rates. The Federal Highway Administration has found that while curve realignment can reduce certain crash types, the benefits depend heavily on context — and rural areas consistently see smaller or inconsistent safety improvements compared to urban areas. Rural fatality rates have remained stubbornly high nationwide, declining only about 2% year-over-year, while urban areas saw a 10% decline. This demonstrates that geometric changes alone do not solve rural safety problems. More importantly, FHWA research on “curve context” shows that crash risk is driven by the mismatch between operating speed and safe curve speed, not by curves themselves. When roads are widened and straightened, operating speeds increase. Higher speeds dramatically increase crash severity: a 10 mph increase in average speed raises fatal-crash risk by roughly 40%. In wildlife-heavy corridors like

Highway 85, higher speeds also reduce driver reaction time and increase the likelihood of severe animal strikes. If SDDOT's goal is truly safety, the most effective and least destructive solution is simple: lower the speed limit and enforce it, especially during peak wildlife movement seasons. Speed management is one of the most evidence-based tools available for reducing rural crash severity. It directly addresses the real cause of most collisions on this corridor without destroying the scenery that residents and visitors cherish. The Black Hills are not just a transportation link — they are a National Forest, a tourism destination, and a cultural landscape. The proposed design would remove mature trees, widen the visual footprint of the roadway, and erase curves that have shaped the experience of this drive for generations. Once this character is destroyed, it cannot be restored. I urge SDDOT to reconsider the scope of this project and pursue alternatives that preserve the natural beauty of the corridor while addressing safety concerns through targeted, context-sensitive measures. Lowering and enforcing speed limits, installing seasonal wildlife-crossing signage, adding rumble strips, and improving sight-distance at specific documented trouble spots would protect both safety and scenery without imposing irreversible landscape-scale changes. Thank you for considering my comments. I ask that SDDOT prioritize the unique character of the Black Hills and adopt an approach that respects both the land and the people who call it home.

Fri 09/04/2026 6:01 PM

I am writing to formally register my vehement opposition to the proposed \$57.6 million reconstruction of the 16-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 85 spanning from the Wyoming border to Cheyenne Crossing. This project is a heavy-handed, profoundly destructive solution in search of a problem. If allowed to proceed as designed, it will permanently scar one of the last genuinely undisturbed landscapes remaining in the northern Black Hills. The drive through Icebox Gulch alongside Spearfish Creek is iconic precisely because it demands a slower pace. The road is beautifully constrained, winding tightly and enveloped by towering rock faces and majestic pine forests. Your proposal to widen travel lanes to 12 feet, pave sprawling four-to-six-foot shoulders, and carve out massive "clear zones" will completely obliterate the aesthetic isolation that makes this route a treasure. Treating a scenic, context-sensitive mountain corridor like an interstate highway is nothing short of environmental vandalism. You have repeatedly cited safety data and crash rates to justify removing trees and blasting away natural rock walls, but a closer look at your own statistics reveals numbers that are remarkably insignificant for a mountain pass. According to DOT data, over the five-year period from 2020 to 2024, this stretch saw 77 crashes and exactly one fatality. Extending the timeline to the entire decade between 2013 and 2022 reveals a total of three fatalities. While any loss of life is undeniably tragic, a single fatal accident in five years—on a highway that sees up to 850 vehicles a day on summer weekends—does not represent a catastrophic public safety crisis. These figures absolutely do not warrant a \$57 million mandate to clear-cut our natural heritage. Furthermore, context matters. The data indicates that approximately a third of all accidents on this stretch involved motorcycles, and more than 20 percent were the direct result of wild animal encounters. Paving a wider shoulder and aggressively flattening the roadside topography will not stop deer from darting into traffic, nor will it inherently prevent rider error on sharp curves. If anything, widening the road and expanding the clear zones will only encourage drivers to travel at higher speeds, entirely defeating the purpose of the safety initiative. If driver safety is genuinely the DOT's priority, there are highly effective, vastly less invasive alternatives readily available. You can simply repave the badly deteriorating surface, fix the steep shoulder drop-offs that currently pose a

hazard to tires, and strictly lower the speed limit across the entire 16-mile corridor. We do not need heavy machinery tearing apart the canyon to make this roadway reasonably safe for the public. I urge you to abandon this aggressive reconstruction plan and prioritize the unmatched natural beauty of the Black Hills over unnecessary concrete.

Fri 09/04/2026 7:30 PM

I am completely opposed to spending almost 55 million dollars of our taxes to make this highway wider. This construction project will destroy hiking trails that rock climbers need to get to the climbing areas at the base of the cliffs. It will destroy habitat animals need to thrive. It will pollute the creek and kill fish. It will only cause more accidents because people driving automobiles will speed and drink and drive and crash. Please do not move forward with this construction project. We do not need it. People can just deal with the road as it is.

Fri 09/04/2026 7:52 PM

I say NO to this proposed project:

Highway 85 from the Wyoming State Line to U.S. Highway 14A Project: NH 0085(106)0; Lawr06J, Lawrence County, PCN 06J8.

Five points:

1. The proposed widening and roadbed shift almost certainly will damage natural environments, especially along Spearfish Creek where it will further encroach into and degrade wetlands. Also, I suspect that there will be a loss of beautiful stands of Black Hills Spruce which is of course detrimental to habitat and the scenic beauty of the Black Hills.
2. How is it appropriate to compare crash data to the statewide average? The remainder of the state is not the Black Hills region and I am not aware of another large motorcycle rally in the state.
3. What safety features can be added to the existing road? For example, have roadside crash barriers specifically designed for motorcycles been considered? You may want to see the Applications section here: <https://www.lindsay.com/usca/en/infrastructure/road-safety-products/specialty-products/dr-46-motorcycle-barrier>
4. Tourism is important to the Black Hills economy. The visitors I know do not come for wider, faster roads but rather in significant part for the experience of meandering roads through nature, forests and mountain town environs. See: <https://sdvisit.com/forever-605>
5. Highway 85 Cheyenne Crossing to the Wyoming Line is one of numerous projects in the Black Hills Context Sensitive Corridors Study and so the potential damage to the Black Hills is great. Another project in that study is from Cheyenne Crossing to Savoy which is also in Spearfish Canyon.

Fri 09/04/2026 8:18 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

So many times I have driven Highway 85 from Newcastle WY, having come from Denver or other places I lived west of SD, and always it felt magical - coming home. The changes you plan to implement would ruin the unblemished beauty that I and so many others have enjoyed. Please leave that highway alone. Please!

Fri 09/04/2026 10:56 PM

Mr. Malone,

Thank you for your time and the work you do. I am sure tackling a project like this comes with many difficulties. Balancing road needs, public safety and public concerns can be taxing. My input on the road is below.

I understand and support the identified needs for this project: reducing crash rates, replacing deteriorated pavement, and replacing drainage structures. These are legitimate needs that should be addressed. However, the manner in which those needs are addressed is just as important as the work itself.

The stated goals of this project are to protect the integrity of the corridor, protect the beauty of the Black Hills, enhance the experience for all users, improve alignment and add shoulders where possible, and reduce impacts on the natural environment during construction. I believe those goals should guide the project more strongly than simply making the road wider and straighter.

I believe there is an important distinction between improving a roadway and fundamentally changing it.

Once a roadway is widened, straightened, and significant portions of the surrounding landscape are cleared, those changes cannot easily be undone. This is a one-way path toward permanently altering a beautiful route that is currently one of the more scenic and enjoyable entrances into the Black Hills.

For many people entering South Dakota from Wyoming, this road is their introduction to the Black Hills. It follows the natural topography of the landscape rather than cutting aggressively through it. The curves, elevation changes, trees, and surrounding terrain are part of the experience. The road itself helps establish the character of the Black Hills and sends a message about what we value.

The project's stated goal is to protect the integrity of the corridor and the beauty of the Black Hills while enhancing the experience for all users. That goal should cause us to carefully question whether extensive straightening, widening, and mountainside clearing are truly consistent with the project goals or with the type of roadway and entrance to the Black Hills that we want to present to visitors and guests.

Safety improvements are necessary, but wider and straighter roads can also encourage higher speeds. Drivers generally respond to the design of a road. When a roadway feels wider, straighter, and more forgiving, drivers often feel comfortable traveling faster. Higher speeds reduce reaction time and increase the severity of crashes when they occur.

Therefore, we should be careful not to assume that straightening every curve will necessarily produce the safest long-term outcome. A road that encourages higher speeds may simply move the problem rather than solve it.

Lower speeds should also be considered as part of the safety solution. If excessive speed is contributing to crashes, reducing speed limits and designing the roadway in a manner that encourages appropriate speeds may preserve both safety and the character of the corridor. Slower speeds give drivers more time to react and improve the likelihood of surviving a crash.

A closer examination and reinterpretation of the crash data from 2020 through 2024 may also be warranted. It appears that some of the straighter sections of roadway west of Sunny Meadows, where higher speeds are possible, are experiencing the largest number of crashes. Aerial imagery also shows that portions of this roadway have already been straightened over time.

This raises an important question: Have previous alignment “improvements” encouraged higher travel speeds, and could those increased speeds be contributing to some of the crash patterns we now see?

For example, there appears to be a concentration of crashes near the curve east of Sunny Meadows, followed by fewer crashes farther east toward Cheyenne Crossing. It is possible that drivers entering from Wyoming are approaching this area at excessive speeds and encountering a curve that requires a greater reduction in speed than they expect. Drivers who successfully navigate that area may then recognize the changed nature of the road and reduce their speed for the remainder of the descent.

If that is occurring, then the underlying issue may be speed management from the Wyoming border to just east of Sunny Meadows and driver expectations rather than the simple existence of curves. When you look at the data as presented, there appear to be more crashes as the road becomes straighter. If that relationship is real, it raises the possibility that straighter roads are encouraging drivers to travel faster and become overconfident in their ability to navigate the roadway. They may then encounter a curve that requires a greater reduction in speed than they anticipate.

Increasing the frequency of curves west of Sunny Meadows might actually reduce the incidence of crashes by encouraging drivers to remain cautious throughout this high-crash area. Further straightening of the road may have the opposite impact from what the project is trying to achieve: reducing crashes and protecting the beauty of the Black Hills.

The project should therefore focus on identifying the specific causes of crashes and applying solutions that address those causes with the least possible impact on the corridor. Improvements such as pavement replacement, drainage improvements, targeted shoulder widening, improved signage, speed management, and selective alignment improvements may accomplish many of the project's safety objectives without unnecessarily transforming the roadway.

The stated goal of reducing impacts on the natural environment during construction should also be given significant weight. Large-scale excavation, tree removal, rock cutting, and widening may have permanent environmental and visual consequences that extend far beyond the construction period and may unintentionally exacerbate the risks to drivers on the roadway.

We should not assume that the fastest route to reducing crashes is automatically the best solution for the Black Hills.

If the goal were simply to move vehicles as quickly and safely as possible from the Wyoming state line to Cheyenne Crossing, we could imagine increasingly extreme solutions—even a tunnel through the mountains. But that would completely miss the point of traveling through the Black Hills. Roads are not merely transportation infrastructure. In places like this, they can also enrich the traveling experience.

We should strive to meet the project's legitimate needs—reducing crashes, replacing pavement, and improving drainage—while remaining faithful to its stated goals of protecting the integrity and beauty of the corridor.

Improve the road where improvements are truly necessary. Add shoulders where they can be added without unnecessary damage. Correct dangerous conditions where the evidence clearly supports doing so, with priority given to speed reduction and improved signage. Resist the temptation to transform this scenic mountain roadway into a wider, straighter, faster corridor.

Once the character of this road and the surrounding landscape are permanently altered, we will not be able to get them back.

Please improve the road and leave the route alone. Encourage travelers to think: “Relax, you have finally made it: The Black Hills! Please... slow down and enjoy what the road has to offer.”

Design the roadway as the destination, not merely as a means to an end.

Thank you again for your time.

Fri 09/04/2026 11:38 PM

To: Mr. Malone

As a resident of SD, I respectfully ask that this project be done without decimating one of the most beautiful places on earth. As it stands now, the destruction of this area is unacceptable.

Please stop this project from going forward until an acceptable alternative has been found.

Sat 09/05/2026 12:29 PM

Why destroy the beauty of that drive? Have taken that drive for many years when on vacation out in the beautiful black hills of sd it's just so very SAD

Sun 09/06/2026 9:57 AM

I would like to support efforts to NOT CHANGE this piece of road. How can I help?

Sun 09/06/2026 5:04 PM

Dear Mr. Malone,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the proposed US Highway 85 west of Cheyenne Crossing reconstruction project. This is a beautiful, historic roadway and there is absolutely no need to destroy not only the beauty but the the ecosystems and wildlife habitats. Please leave this area in its current state. If it seems unsafe, perhaps people should consider that before traveling at unsafe speeds and in unsafe manners. We cannot protect people from their ignorance by ruining our beautiful Black Hills and the things that make is such.

The Highway 385 project and the recent project on Highway 14A between Deadwood and Sturgis (Boulder Canyon) are examples of unnecessary use of taxpayer dollars to solve problems that really don't exist and destroying ecosystems and wildlife habitats. The Highway 85 project falls into the same category. I ask that you please reconsider this extreme project and the long-term consequences.

Mon 09/07/2026 8:45 PM

Dear Sir,

I respectfully ask that you & the powers that be, please consider a solution for Hwy 85 that keeps the scenic value as a priority. I understand safety concerns however I also notice the speed which 385 now allows people to "safely" drive. Speeding is commonplace especially when the tourist have left. Let's keep 85 scenic & maybe you just can't pass often. Pull overs yes, but let's allow enjoyment for the ride. Better yet, better signage for all the great trails off of 85! Encourage actually getting off the road & out of your vehicle!

Appreciate your efforts on our behalf

Tue 09/08/2026 10:41 AM

US85 – WY State Line to Cheyenne Crossing, safety should be the priority, shoulders for emergency and car (vehicle) trouble.

Tue 09/08/2026 1:10 PM

Mark I am writing to encourage you to make the much needed repairs to 85, but please do not destroy the scenic beauty of that highway. Doing a project like 385 is , in my mind, extreme and would not be needed.