

MARCH 2021

Connecting the DOTs



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2021 Virtual Airports Conference



36th Annual Airports Conference Via Zoom

March 31 and April 1, 2021

Starting at 1 p.m. CST each day

There will be several speakers presenting over the two day conference including FAA, DOT Staff, Highway Patrol, Airport Owners & Pilots Association, and several consultant engineers.

The Airports Conference is a time for airport personnel, consultant engineers, state and federal aviation staff to come together and share ideas benefits all parties.

If you would like to join the conference, please email Jennifer.boehm@state.sd.us with your contact information no later than Friday, March 26, and a conference link will be sent to you.

Extra Mile Mentoring Book Club Opportunity

For anyone who is interested, you can still sign up to participate in the **Extra Mile Mentoring Book Club** being held in April. The Mentoring Committee received extra copies of the book, [Keep Your Head Up!](#) by Sam Glenn. The book is an easy read with an uplifting message. The book club meets on Tuesday, April 6 from 1 - 4 p.m. (CT) via Microsoft TEAMS.



The discussion is led by Tammy Williams, Planning & Administration Program Manager. EMM Book Club is open to all DOT employees. The discussion is always lively and filled with co-workers sharing real-DOT experiences. If interested, please contact Scott Eisenbeisz (scott.eisenbeisz@state.sd.us) in the Aberdeen Region.



The Secretary's Corner

"Only through open and honest two-way conversations with all team members can we truly achieve our vision of better lives through better transportation by being the best."

**INTERIM SECRETARY,
JOEL JUNDT**

Capturing Your Voice

The department's strategic objective, **Value All Team Members**, is focused on a culture of a highly engaged and effective work force. One key aspect of creating and sustaining this culture is listening and finding ways that allow employees to influence the direction and priorities of the department. The past employee engagement surveys have been very helpful to leadership during the development of the annual strategic plan and action plans. However, the discussion held in focus group provides insight that you can't get from a survey. The focus group feedback from the ten meetings held in August of last year provided an in depth understanding on priorities in the department, concerns of the employees, and challenges the department faces going forward from the perspective of our employees.

There were six primary themes discussed in detail that included suggestions and ideas to improve.

#1: Work Life Balance

#2: Teamwork - A Team Commitment to Quality Work

#3: Development and Use of Technology

#4: Communication

#5: Innovation and Use of Technology

#6: Advancement, Pay, and Personnel Concerns

These are a documented resource for the Executive Team during our strategic planning and development and prioritization of action plans. The document also provides areas that we have already been working on and potential areas to focus on in 2021. This summary will soon be available to all employees on our Intranet site.

The Executive Team encourages you to review to understand what was heard from the focus groups and areas we can work together to be better. This certainly isn't a short term or one-time exercise. It takes ongoing work, two-way communication, and teamwork to achieve the excellence we are striving to obtain. In 2021 BHR will be administering the next round of employee engagement surveys for all state agencies. All employees should be taking the time to provide their input through the surveys.

Comprehensive and well thought out feedback will lead to making the department better. As always, if you have ideas or suggestions for improving our process and services, please visit with your supervisor.

SD1806 Singing Bridge Teamwork

By John W. Villbrandt, Mobridge Area Engineer

I wanted to thank everyone involved in the SD1806 Singing Bridge emergency event. This 4,002 ft. bridge is an important link between Mobridge and the communities of Wakpala and Kenel on the Standing Rock Reservation. The average daily traffic is 806 vehicles.

While none of us would ever wish for a situation such as this, I do think we nailed our Strategic Objectives . . .



Provide Excellent Services:

On Saturday evening, February 20, 2021, within three hours of Area Senior Secretary Wanda Fuhrer receiving a call reporting damage on the Singing Bridge, we had the bridge closed to traffic and a press release out to the public.

The Pierre Region's snoopers truck was unavailable. The Aberdeen Region graciously agreed to provide their bridge crew and snoopers truck to assist with the inspection and eventual repairs.

By 11 a.m. Sunday morning, we had a snoopers truck on the bridge along with Aberdeen and Pierre Bridge staff inspecting the structure.

On Monday, before the end of the day, we had a plan in place for temporary repairs in order to re-open the bridge to light traffic for the local community!

Crews were on site at 8 a.m. Wednesday beginning repairs. The temporary repairs were completed by mid-morning on Thursday. The bridge was reopened to restricted traffic early Thursday afternoon.

Value all Team Members:

None of this would have come together so efficiently without the help of countless staff members. It took a great team effort to accomplish the following:

- contact Area staff about the problem
- alert Jason Humphrey, Craig Smith, and Joel Jundt to the situation
- mobilize crew to the site to close down the bridge
- retrieve and program message boards
- provide updates regarding the closure to the public
- review damage and determine a repair by the Bridge office
- coordinate traffic control needs
- coordinate staff for the repair work and . . .
- **re-open the bridge to traffic!**



People sacrificed weekend activities as dedicated public servants! Your efforts are greatly appreciated. JOB WELL DONE!

Singing Bridge Teamwork continued

Continually Improve:

These “emergency” situations cause us all to think on our feet, focus our attention, and to rely on our knowledge and experiences for sound decision-making. Having this experience will help us improve when the next situation arises. With the initial emergency now behind us, we can look back and see how well we did. While I’m sure there are areas to improve, I was very impressed with everyone’s effort during those six intense days!

Everyone Home Safe & Healthy Everyday:

Our quick response, and team effort, averted a potentially deadly situation on the bridge. Though time was of the essence, our team members did not sacrifice safety while performing their duties. Everyone went home safe . . . with the exception of one deer that got in the way of the Aberdeen snooper truck traveling to Mobridge.

Provide the Best Transportation System:

Maintain our bridges for the people who depend on them!

Events like this tend to bring out the best in all of us, and the Singing Bridge situation was no exception. Employee engagement and DOT pride was on full display.

If I miss anyone who worked on this emergency situation, I apologize. Please know all efforts are greatly appreciated.

I’m proud to be a part of that team with all of you . . .

Central Office Operations – Craig Smith and Christina Bennett

Pierre Region Admin – Jim Hyde, Jason Humphrey, and Darren Griese

Pierre Region Bridge Crew – Paul Nelson, Ron Bren, Kyle Meier, and Andrew Livermont

Office of Bridge Design – Steve Johnson, Hadley Eisenbeisz, Tom Kallemeyn,

Todd Thompson, and Dave Coley

Aberdeen Region Admin – Mark Peterson

Aberdeen Region Bridge Crew – Josh Olson, Quentin Berger, Shawn Patton, and John Heidenreich

Mobridge Area – Wanda Fuhrer, Kelly Armfield, Bill Dunbar, Doug Wager, Neil Filler, Chris Byre, Steven Jacobs, James Bieber, Brian Hintz, and Jason Kraft

Thanks again for all your help!

John



DOT Collaboration with Art Council in Sisseton

By Scott Rabern, Road Design

The SDDOT recently received a very kind note from John Rasmussen, who works with the Sisseton Arts Council. John thanked all DOT team members involved in the multi-phased design and installation process of two art sculptures on Highway 10 in Sisseton.

Sisseton Community Showcases Art on Highway 10

With the financial support of a grant from the Bush Foundation, the Sisseton Arts Council was able to install sculptures on Highway 10 during the road construction process over the last two years.

A Call to Artists (crafted by Community Artist Markus Tracy) went out in October 2019 to artists in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota. Fourteen artists/artist teams responded. A seven-member panel representing the Sisseton area reviewed the proposals and evaluated them on several criteria: reflection of community, visibility, and safety for drivers and pedestrians, and experience with installation of large sculptures in public places.

The panel recommended their top two choices which were then reviewed by the South Dakota Department of Transportation and the Sisseton City Engineer. The Sisseton City Council approved the selections in March 2020. Once the sculptures were installed, they became the property of the City of Sisseton.

Artist Greg Mueller's **"Pathway Parabola"** features design elements found in nature such as tree trunks and branches, as well as the nomadic tepee structure. The leaf and fish cut-outs in the panels are illuminated at night creating a constellation effect. The selection committee saw the design linking the two panels as a representation of connections between the indigenous and immigrant cultures in our community. Greg Mueller is from Lutsen, MN.

"Cloud Horse" was created by Alan Milligan from St. Paul, MN. The family of horses appears to be running wild across the Coteau des Prairies. The sculpture's dynamic lines echo the hills that surround it and the waves of the glacial water that once covered this land and now move across our prairie lakes.



March Mentoring Minute

Update on Mentoring Program

by Joel Jundt, Mentoring Program Champion



The formal mentoring has been on hold since COVID-19 hit. I hoped that I would be sending out an email announcing the opening of registration for the next session of the mentoring program. Unfortunately, I'm announcing that the program will remain on hold until fall of 2021. I don't think any of us thought the need for social distancing and avoiding large groups would still be an issue a year from when our world got turned upside down.

Our world changed a year ago and the DOT has adapted as best we could to maintain our services to our customers. Along the way we've had to continually evaluate how we can keep all the various programs moving forward effectively and efficiently. It's been no different for the mentoring program.

The mentoring committee, composed of a cross section of SDDOT employees, has spent a great deal of time looking at various ways to get the next session of the mentoring program launched. The committee has participated in mock virtual sessions and brainstormed new ideas. The committee is not ruling out the need for virtual sessions, the group is betting on the continued vaccine distribution and hopes by fall of 2021 that in-person sessions will be feasible.

Mentoring is more than just the in-person orientation sessions to get the pairs started on the right track. It can involve various other in-person activities such as job shadowing, interviews with situational mentors, observing field operations, etc. We don't want any future program participants to miss out on any opportunities that being in the mentoring program provides.

I and the entire mentoring committee are committed to moving forward this fall. There may have to be some combination of virtual and in-person interactions to make it work, but we are working on it. In the meantime, I strongly encourage you to seek out a situational mentor during this interim period. If you need help finding a situational mentor, please reach out to anyone on the mentoring committee. To see a complete list of the members of the committee go to the intranet:

<https://intranetdot.sd.gov/mentoring.aspx>



Benefits on Social Media

You can follow the South Dakota State Employee Benefits Program online on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

In addition to following benefits online, be sure to monitor your email for the upcoming **FY22 Decision Guide** and **ALEX** release. You can also check out the latest information on the New Plans Page or by attending one of the virtual or in-person Health Plan Presentations.

Employee Spotlight - March, 2021

Congratulations to Kevin Ellis on his retirement in March!

Employee Longevity and Milestone Celebrations

David Coley, Engineer – 30 years (Bridge Office/ Central)

James Costello, Engineer – 20 years (Central Lab)

Sheila Jandt, Transportation Analyst – 30 years (Bridge Office/ Central)

Brett Rice, Project Technician – 30 years (Custer Area)

Mark Malone, Engineering Manager – 20 years (Road Design/ Central)

Brad Letcher, Engineering Manager – 30 years (Huron Area)

Steve Johnson presents **Sheila Jandt** with her **30 year** plaque and pin. Congratulations to Sheila (and Dave Coley) in the Bridge Office.



Cliff Reuer, pictured with Mike Behm, is celebrating 50 years of public service!

Cliff worked 12 years with LTAP and 38 with SDDOT. He is truly committed to serving South Dakotans!



Rick Walton presents a 10 Year Anniversary Pin to Richard "Rik" Bartels.

Rik originally started out as a Winter Reserve Snow Plow Driver in November 2010 and then applied for and was hired as Highway Maintenance Worker in February 2011. Rik became Lead Highway Maintenance Worker in August 2018.



Employee Spotlight - March, 2021

New Hires:

Jared Denke, Highway Maintenance Worker - Wall
Scott Hymans, Highway Maintenance Worker - Sturgis
Eric Meehl, Engineer - Pierre
Peter Iverson, Structural Engineer - Pierre
Craig Lunde, ROW Transfer and GIS Asset Specialist - Pierre
Steven Marshall, Highway Maintenance Worker - Mission
Stevie Holmes, Foundation Engineer - Pierre
Jonathan Robb, Highway Maintenance Worker - Custer
Taylor Brusven, Communications Specialist - Sioux Falls
Bret Mattice, Communications Specialist - Rapid City
Jordan Cromwell, Accounting Assistant - Pierre
Earl Holben, Program Assistant (Office of Aeronautics) - Pierre

Promotions:

Joe Dietmeier, Land Surveyor-in-Training (Road Design, Pierre)

**Our thoughts and prayers are with our SDDOT co-worker John Hipple,
whose father Brian Hipple recently passed away.**

Employee Spotlight - March, 2021

Please send personal news such as marriages, babies, and other noteworthy achievements via email to julie.stevenson@state.sd.us. The Connecting the DOT's newsletter is shared internally with staff via email as well as externally with the public on our website.

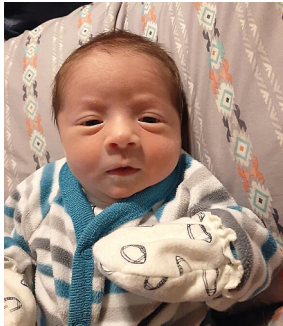


Nick Wuebben, Rapid City Region Traffic Technician, and his wife welcomed their second child.

Wyatt Gerrit Wuebben

Born March 2, 2021

8 lbs. 13oz.



Isaiah Nasir Sifuentes

Born October 16, 2020

7 lbs. and 19.5 inches long

Grandson of Bonnie Palmer, Senior Secretary Huron Area



Baker Chad Gorden

Born February 18, 2021

3 lbs. 6 oz. and 17.25 inches long

Son of Jessee Gorden Journey Tech., Huron Area and
Grandson of Bonnie Palmer, Senior Secretary Huron Area



Aubrey Dorfschimdt

Born January 29, 2021

Aubrey is pictured with her dad, Matt from the Aberdeen Region, and her grandpa, Jim who works for the DOT Belle Fourche office!



Krystal Bittle, Bridge Secretary, and her husband Heath recently welcomed a new son.

Harrison Rae Bittle

Born February 26, 2021

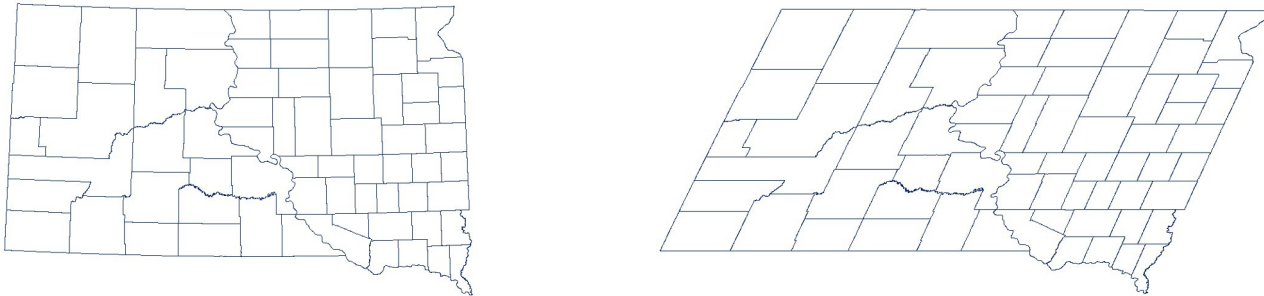
8 lbs. 7 oz.

Map Projections and Coordinate Systems

By Roger Brees GIS Specialist SDDOT-TIM

The first thing we need to understand is that map projections and coordinate systems are not the same but do go hand in hand. What is a map projection?

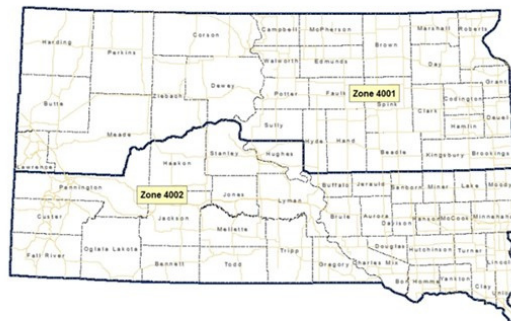
A map projection is a geometric function that transforms the earth's curved, ellipsoidal surface onto a flat, 2-dimensional plane. Yuck, what? A projection flattens the earth a certain way. There are several different types of projections.



Same data, different projected coordinate systems. The left side is Lambert Conformal Conic, the measure is US Feet. The right side is a Robinson (world) projection using Meters. In GIS you control how your data looks. It doesn't matter in what projection or coordinate system the data was created. You decide what's best for you to viewing or mapping.

Coordinate Systems

State Plane Zones of South Dakota



The State Plane Coordinate System (SPCS), is only used in the United States and is a plane coordinate system (north-south and east-west lines are perpendicular) in which each state has between one to six zones (South Dakota has two). This coordinate system's high level of accuracy is achieved using relatively small zones.

South Dakota DOT uses SPCS Zone 4001 and 4002 in the Lambert Conformal projection for CADD and GIS. The number of projections and coordinate systems is staggering. Everybody has a standard or favorite. Knowing what or if the data has a projection is very important. The DOT GIS section would be glad to help you with identifying or creating a projection file for your data.



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Improvement of Approach Smoothness for Integral Abutment Bridges, Research Project 2019-03

By Margo McDowell, SDDOT Office of Research

Have you ever heard of the “bump at the end of the bridge”? Ride roughness, at bridge approaches has been a historically persistent problem for highway agencies all over the United States and abroad. So, what is the solution? Bridge approach slabs provide a transition between the rigid structure and the more flexible approach pavement. The bridge approach slab acts as an intermediate bridge to span the embankment directly behind the bridge abutment backwall and pavement. There has been extensive research as to what causes bridge approach ride roughness. Time-dependent consolidation of the embankment and foundation soil along with inadequate compaction are primary causes. The natural thermal movement of an integral bridge abutment, which SDDOT uses extensively, can further compress the embankment material. Additional causes include design details, drainage, soil erosion, embankment material quality, and construction. The complexity of the problem is evidence that bridge approach roughness may be due to various conditions happening simultaneously, with a solution achievable only by design engineers, geotechnical engineers, field engineers, and contractors working together.

Over the past 30 years, the SDDOT has used various solutions to resolve “the bump at the end of the bridge”. Solutions have included periodic use of geotextile fabric, various embankment geometries, diverse backfill materials, different joint details, and multiple drainage configurations. To date, the bump is still an issue, still a major complaint among road users, still expensive to repair, and still a potential safety hazard.

Office of Research Continued . . .

In 1990, the SDDOT initiated research project, Void Development Under Bridge Approaches. This investigation focused on causes of approach ride roughness on South Dakota Bridges. Then in 1996, the SDDOT initiated research project, Use of Fabric Reinforced Soil Wall for Integral Abutment Bridge End Treatment². The focus of this project was to investigate the use of geotextile reinforced soil for bridge approach embankment material. The current research project, Improvement of Approach Smoothness on Integral Abutment Bridges, will focus on solutions to bridge approach ride roughness. Wiss, Janney, Elstner, Associates, Inc (WJE) has been selected to perform the research.

It has been more than 20 years since the last bridge approach roughness research project, much has changed, and perhaps this issue is more significant now than ever. SDDOT's customer satisfaction surveys consistently identify dissatisfaction with roughness at bridges and traffic delays due to construction. With WJE as our researcher and the guidance of our technical panel (Hadly Eisenbeisz, Kevin Griese, John Matthesen, Jay Mueller, Tavor Diegel, Nate Buscher, Marc Hoelscher, Dave Huft, Thad Bauer, Micah Howard, and Margo McDowell), we can learn from our past practices, understand our current practices, and blaze a path for future practices.

Void Development Under Bridge Approaches, Study SD90-03, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering SDSU, for the South Dakota Department of Transportation, Vernon R Schaefer and Jay C. Koch, May 1990-November 1992.

Use of Fabric Reinforced Soil Wall for Integral Abutment Bridge End Treatment, Study SD96-02, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering SDSU, for the South Dakota Department of Transportation, Reid R.A., Soupir, S.P., Schaefer V.R., May 1996-November 1999.

One of Our Own!

By Dean VanDeWiele, Jared Fosheim and Kit Bramblee (Pierre Area)

Something I never understood, until becoming an Area Engineer, was the resources and efforts necessary to help us all safely commute during the winter months. In addition to extensive equipment preparation, there is hiring and training of full-time seasonals and reservists to step in and operate like a full-time employee.



Orie Bramblee (father of Kit Bramblee in our Environmental office) is one such employee. To meet Orie is to be greeted with a smile, a handshake, and a witty joke or comment from under a cowboy hat.

Orie has been a public servant most of his life as he served over 15 years with the Pierre Police Department, 9 years as a deputy with the Hughes County Sheriff's Office, 4 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, 2 years in the S.D. Army National Guard, and over 10 years with the Four Corners Volunteer Fire Department holding roles as Chief, Assistant Chief, and board member.

Seven years ago, Orie could no longer tolerate "retirement"; so he volunteered to be a winter seasonal in our Hayes shop. We figured if we could get an operator who could handle all the predicaments law enforcement has had to deal with, he would have no issue handling white-out blizzards and the rigors of a 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. day. Orie has been a dedicated winter seasonal for us since 2013. Orie has become "one of our own". He has been a great employee, which is what makes this story a little hard to write.

Jared Fosheim, the maintenance supervisor in Philip/Hayes called last September to report some terrible news. Orie had been standing beside a tractor hooked to a round baler working on the starter. He was successful in his repair, only to tragically realize one terrible oversight; the tractor was left in gear. Upon starting, the tractor lunged forward running over Orie with the rear tire severely fracturing his right femur, crushing his pelvis, fracturing and dislocating at least 7 ribs, puncturing his left lung, fracturing his left shoulder and finishing its travel path over the top of his head leaving him with additional muscle tears, scrapes and bruises. After the tractor rolled over him, the round baler followed; leaving Orie lying in the middle the yard. The tractor proceeded into the Quonset and punched a hole through the side before abruptly stopping after rolling up enough metal to stall out the engine. You can see the repaired hole from U.S. 14.

One of Our Own continued

Arlen Prince, friend and DOT co-worker, saw Orie before they loaded him into the ambulance. The prognosis did not look good. From what we had heard, neither Jared, nor I, thought we'd see Orie alive again. Two days later, news from the hospital was nothing short of uplifting; Orie called Jared from the hospital and said that it was going to be a while before he would be able to come plow snow and was concerned how staff was going to cover in his absence. We could only conclude the morphine was working its magic!

Four months later after that fateful day in September, Orie strode into the Area office to fill out his winter seasonal application and do the required testing to get into the CDL pool. (If you are unfamiliar with the "pool", let's just say drinking a lot of water helps with providing a sample!)

Orie was his typical positive self and excited to get back to work. Many would think it logical that it may be time to become one with the rocking chair, but not Orie. This is a public servant through and through, who asks for no thanks and takes great pride in serving all of us knowing he helped us get safely home.

When you find yourself 1.5 miles west of Hayes, look north at the Quonset and honk your horn, and let the guy who spent the majority his career keeping us safe know that you appreciate all he does and that you are proud he is one of ours!



When asked to share a few comments about his father, Kit noted the following:

I appreciate you and Jared working on this story for my dad. I know his seasonal job working with the Hayes crew brings light to his life. I hear about every bit of it every time we get together...at least twice.

His two biggest concerns after this accident were "Am I going to be able to help plow this winter?" and "Do you think I will still be able to pheasant hunt this year?"

He has accomplished both of these.

FY 20 Safety Award Winners Maintenance

Best Region State Wide: Aberdeen
Best Unit State Wide: 191 Huron - Clark - DeSmet
Best Region Maintenance: Aberdeen
Best Area Maintenance: Huron

Congrats to all recognized with a Safety Award!

Thanks to everyone who provided photos.
Watch for more photos in April.

Best Maintenance Unit by Region

Aberdeen Region: Huron - Clark - DeSmet
Mitchell Region: Platte -Bonesteel - Armour
Pierre Region: Herreid- Selby - Mobridge
Rapid City Region: Bison - Faith - Lemmon

FY 20 Safety Awards Engineering & Operations

Safest Operations State wide: Pierre
Safest Engineering State wide: Watertown

Safest Area Engineering by Region

Aberdeen Region: Watertown Area
Mitchell Region: Yankton Area
Pierre Region: Winner Area
Rapid City Region: Belle Fourche

Aberdeen Region



Clark



DeSmet



Huron



Platte-Bonesteel-Armour



Miller - Highmore - Redfield



Bison - Faith - Lemmon



Herreid - Selby - Mobridge



Yankton Area



State Funding Sources and Trends

By Kellie Beck, Director of Finance

The State Highway Fund is a special fund within the state treasury. It was created by South Dakota Code 31-2-13.2, which defines the funds use and expenditures under SDDOT direction. The Fund was created for constructing and maintaining highways and bridges in this state, paying the salaries and expenses of the department, and funding public transportation, as appropriated for these purposes by the Legislature.

Funding Sources and Trends:

While our Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) was down quite a bit in 2020 during the months of March, April, and May; SDDOT has been very fortunate to not experience the drastic revenue drops felt by DOTs in other states due to Covid 19.

South Dakota Traffic Trends										
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
All State Highways	-14%	-36%	-20%	-9%	-3%	-1%	-1%	-6%	-9%	-6%
Rural Interstate	-13%	-40%	-25%	-11%	-5%	-2%	0%	-8%	-9%	-10%
Rural Non-Interstate	-11%	-33%	-12%	-6%	-2%	1%	4%	-4%	-4%	-3%
Urban	-15%	-34%	-19%	-8%	-2%	-2%	-3%	-6%	-9%	-4%

Motor Fuel – Within the State of South Dakota, motor fuel tax was increased from 22 cents per gallon to 28 cents with the passage of Senate Bill 1 (SBI) in 2015.

- Motor Fuel Revenues for FY February 2021 are \$14,644,350, which is an increase of 4.4% or \$614,589 from FY February 2020.
- The cumulative FY21 Motor Fuel Revenues are \$123,937,335, which is a decrease of 1.9% or \$2,349,056 from FY20.

Excise tax – This is the tax collected on a vehicle purchase. Excise taxes levels increased from 3% to 4% via SBI in 2015.

- Motor Vehicle Excise Revenues for FY February 2021 are \$11,900,281 which is an increase of 21.8% or \$2,132,000 from FY February 2020.
- The cumulative FY21 Excise Revenues are \$96,456,423 which is an increase of 11.9% or \$10,256,983.00 from FY20.

Total FY21 Highway Fund Revenues are \$245,284,863 which is an increase of 4.12% or \$9,710,198 from FY20.

New Health Plans – New Opportunities

With Open Enrollment just around the corner, we have many opportunities for you to learn about our 4 new health plans, get information on the available flexible benefits and familiarize yourself with some of the new features such as an eye exam included with your medical plan covered at 100% and the state contribution to dental premiums.

Information is Available

We will continue to maintain a zero premium option for employee coverage with the opportunity to buy up to coverage levels that are more appropriate for you and your family. Information on the four health plans can be found on the [New Plans Page](#) on the BHR website. ALEX will also be back in time for open enrollment to assist with navigating the different options available to you.

The [Plan Design Matrix](#) will allow you to compare the four plans in a consistent and easy-to-read format.

A number of virtual and in-person information sessions are being offered between now and Open Enrollment (May 3 – 17, 2021). These sessions have been staggered throughout the month at different times during the day to provide you with the flexibility to get the information you need to make the best decision possible for you and your family. Visit the [Health Plan Presentations page](#) to learn more or register.

New Third-Party Administrator

Additionally, BHR has selected a new partner in the delivery of our health benefits. Even though our plan is self-insured, meaning the state assumes all financial responsibility of the plan and associated benefits, we need a partner to administer claims payments and negotiate network discounts with health care providers and facilities included in our plans. Effective July 1, 2021, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) of South Dakota will be the administrator of our benefits. You will see significant benefit enhancements as a member of the Wellmark BCBS network, including deeper network discounts, a member portal, a mobile app, and the Blue 365 discount program. Wellmark coverage not only includes 95% of doctors and 100% of hospitals in South Dakota but across most of the United States as well.

Earn Your \$500 Incentive

In addition to providing you with an accurate snapshot of your health, completing a health screening can help you earn the \$500 incentive. You and your covered spouse (if applicable) must each complete your health screening to qualify for the employee incentive. If you did not participate in one of the events offered between July 2020 and February 2021, you can schedule an annual wellness preventive exam with your primary health care provider, complete the [health care provider form](#) with your physician, follow the instructions on the form and submit to Total Wellness by April 1, 2021. The incentive will be based on the health plan you select during open enrollment in May. (Detailed explanation on [New Plans Page](#)) If you and your covered spouse (if applicable) have not already completed a health screening and wish to earn the employee incentive, visit benefit.staywell.com to get started. Contact the StayWell HelpLine at 1.800.721.2749 or SOSDwellness@staywell.com with questions.