

# Connecting the DOTs



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**VETERAN'S PARKWAY**

**PLOW NAMING - PAGE 1**

**THE SECRETARY'S CORNER -**

**VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS -**

**PAGE 2**

**RAPID CITY REGION**

**PARTNERS FOR SAFETY-**

**PAGES 3 & 4**

**TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS AND**

**UNsung HERO AWARD -**

**PAGE 5**

**FEBRUARY MENTORING**

**MINUTE - PAGE 6**

**EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHTS! -**

**PAGES 7 & 8**

**GIS NEWS - PAGE 9**

**PARTNERSHIP WITH**

**CONTRACTING SERVICES -**

**PAGES 10 & 11**

## Veteran's Parkway Ribbon Cutting

Monday, Feb. 15, 2021



The state's political leadership marked the opening of Veteran's Parkway in Sioux Falls heralding the major milestone as key to expanding economic opportunity in the city and state.



### Area:                      Plow Name/Submitted by:

- Aberdeen                      **Darth Blader** by Dave Bacon (Aberdeen)
- Belle Fourche              **Art** by Marleigh Hulm (Bison), Cleo DeKnikker & Kathy Collins (Faith)
- Custer                        **Mt. Plowmore** by Landon Harrod (Edgemont)
- Huron                         **Snow Mater** by Jim Bruce (Highmore)
- Mitchell                      **Blizzard Wizard** by Cordell Davis (Plankinton)
- Mobridge                     **Winter Warrior** by Marion Goehring (Herried)
- Pierre                         **Lewis & Clark** by Jackie Heier (Pierre)
- Rapid City                    **Polar Patroller** by Tiffany Hoff (Rapid)
- Sioux Falls                    **SnowBeGone Kenobi** by Shawn Hanson (Sioux Falls)
- Watertown                   **Thaw Enforcement** by Robert Innes (Aurora)
- Winner                        **Walter the Salter** by Winner Dairy Queen
- Yankton                       **Frosty the Snowplow** by Lilly Kroger (Beresford)



## The Secretary's Corner

### The Power of Partnerships

Throughout this edition, you will read several feature stories about SDDOT partnerships. Our work is not possible without collaboration.

We recently celebrated the Veteran's Parkway Project with Gov. Noem, South Dakota's U.S. Congressional delegation, and state leaders. This project has taken an enormous investment of time, energy, and capital. The corridor demonstrates a strong collaborative partnership among many entities. Our SDDOT team has done an amazing job in all aspects with this multi-phased project. Below are a few remarks from our South Dakota leaders about the importance of the work of our team!

"South Dakota has touted itself as a state where businesses can locate or expand," **Governor Noem** said. "This type of DOT project is incredibly important for that."

"What we worked on for 20 years is now coming into shape," said **Senator Rounds**, who has worked both as a governor and a senator to secure funding for the Veteran's Parkway project.

**Representative Johnson**, who was chief of staff to former Gov. Dugaard, noted successful projects often have a thousands fathers and mothers. In this case, it included taxpayers, public officials, engineers and road crews who worked on the highway. "This project unlocks a tremendous amount of value," he said.

Besides unlocking land for development and enhancing freight transportation, **Senator Thune** noted the importance of highway safety.

Thune was new to the senate when the first federal funding started, and he said Veteran's Parkway is a perfect example for how federal infrastructure funding should be used.



Many thanks to the Transportation Commissioners who were able to join the ribbon cutting celebration!



Gov. Noem thanked all DOT employees for their continued commitment to providing better lives through better transportation!

Below is an email received from a Sioux Falls resident this past month.

"I wanted to send a note to tell you how much I appreciate two projects that greatly improve my family's quality of life: 26th at I-229, and Highway 100's Exit 402 at I-90. These are gorgeous roads, and I truly admire the aesthetics and the engineering quality. I continue to firmly believe that you folks at SDDOT do outstanding work, especially considering the funds (which I consider meager) that are available to you. Crossing the state boundary from MN to SD brings great relief, and a great first impression to travelers west."

Sincerely, John F.



## Stratobowl Parking Lot Partnership

By Todd Seaman – Rapid City Region Engineer, Mike Carlson – Rapid City Area Engineer, Bob Smith – Highway Maintenance Supervisor, and Ben Schumacher of the Black Hills National Forest Service

A few miles south of Rapid City, the ground seems to magically open on South Highway 16 in the Black Hills National Forest, revealing a natural bowl surrounded by trees and limestone walls. However, it's more than just a beautiful part of western South Dakota's Black Hills. It's a place where aeronautical history was made.

The area became known as the Stratobowl in November 1935 when the Army Air Corps and National Geographic Society launched manned balloon flights into the stratosphere to a record 72,395 feet; and this little valley became known as the "stratobowl". Every September, experienced balloonists gather to celebrate the anniversary of the historic 1935 balloon flight.

One of the best viewpoints for the Stratobowl is from the Stratobowl Rim Trail overlook which is a short 1.7-mile hike from a small trailhead off Highway 16. The views of the Stratobowl are unobstructed, and there are story stones placed near the overlook explaining the significance of the location and history of the launch.

Hikers visiting from near and far often provide similar sentiments. The Stratobowl Rim Trail is beautiful with great overlooks and a well-kept path providing an easy hike for the whole family. However, many comments also describe the lack of on-site parking and the inherent danger for pedestrians and motorists.

Mike Carlson's own family enjoys the Stratobowl Rim Trail. He too constantly worried about cars haphazardly parking along-side Highway 16, and the ability to keep his own kids, grandkids, and pets safe. The situation was presenting a danger to the hikers, as well as to vehicles traveling along this stretch of highway.

Mike talked with Bob Smith and Todd Seaman about approaching the Forest Service to discuss potential parking solutions. A collaborative venture soon grew out of the shared safety concerns on the part of the SDDOT and the Forest Service staff. Once a suitable site was identified, SDDOT offered equipment and the labor to help build a parking lot, the Forest Service obtained the necessary environmental clearances and provided materials such as the large rocks for the perimeter.

In September, the SDDOT staff completed the parking lot and by mid-October the Forest Service moved the gates and opened the parking lot to the public.

"In addition to addressing a huge safety issue, this collaborative project provided a great opportunity for our newer employees to gain experience on equipment, away from traffic," states Mike.

**Before . . .**



**and after!**



## Stratobowl Parking Lot Partnership continued

This isn't the first joint venture between the Rapid City Region and the Forest Service to address public safety. A few years ago, the SDDOT partnered with the Forest Service, and other local and state agencies, to build a parking area to address traffic safety concerns on Cleopatra Lane and access to Devil's Bathtub in Spearfish Canyon.

"The Rapid City Region works with the Forest Service a lot, but they usually serve as an approval agency in typical projects," states Todd Seaman. "The Stratobowl project provided a true joint venture with each partner contributing the necessary pieces of the puzzle to complete the work without the need for outside contractor involvement."

Bob Smith worked with the Forest Service team to design the project. Bob staked out the project. The result was a much needed, and greatly appreciated, 20-vehicle capacity parking lot. Hikers are no longer forced to park on Highway 16 to access the trail. Once the project was complete, the Forest Service posted signage and maintains the parking lot.

"This is an example of excellent cooperation among a federal and state agency to address a true safety issue," states Todd.

The fact that the project was brought forward by Mike, Bob, and Todd did not go unnoticed. In January, a Forest Service representative provided a token of appreciation to the SDDOT team. Each of the SDDOT crew received a commemorative coin.

### SDDOT team members recently honored by the Forest Service:

<b>Bob Smith</b>	<b>Mike Carlson</b>	<b>Bob Nolan</b>
<b>Colton Tines</b>	<b>Marcus Roth</b>	<b>Dustin Hackens</b>
<b>Kevin Nilson</b>	<b>Chad Shull</b>	<b>Steve Theunissen</b>



"It was very refreshing to see how efficiently governmental agencies came together to get a project done for the community," states Ben Schumacher, Recreation Specialist for the Black Hills National Forest. "Between the SD Game Fish and Parks providing input, the Forest Service getting the site surveys completed, and SDDOT doing the heavy lifting, there is now a safe place to park to enjoy a nice walk, take in the views of the landscape, and learn a little history as well."

Despite the physically hard work being done each day on this project site, Ben emphasized that the SDDOT crew was always a pleasure to be around and never lost focus of the project's true goal. "Bob and the crew were amazing to work with, especially when the site became increasingly difficult due to vast amounts of rock," notes Ben. "This project is simply a great example of the value of cooperation for a common community goal."

Mike and his family will certainly venture out on the Stratobowl Rim Trail together this spring and summer. He is glad to know his own family won't need to park on Highway 16 any longer. He also knows this collaborative venture will positively affect many other families for years to come.

"I am grateful that we could all work together for the safety of the public," says Mike.



## Training Highlights:

### March 1, TLN: Powerful Conversations to Engage Your Workforce

9:30 - 11: 30 a.m. CST

### March 11, Advanced Productivity with Eric Herdman

9 - Noon CST

This is Eric's 7th presentation with DOT. Over 200 DOT employees have attended the class.

Mark Malone, Road Design: "Eric Herdman is very energetic and entertaining, but most importantly gives some great ideas and strategies to increase daily productivity. By being more productive, my stress level decreases, and I can get more work done in less time. In turn, this allows more time for family and fun outside of work as well. I recommend this class to anyone that has an open mind to new ways of getting more work done in less time."

Joanne Hight, Environmental: "Eric Herdman's Advanced Productivity class gave me new perspective on how to prioritize my day, manage my time, and not let perfection get in the way of progress. This has significantly increased my productivity and reshaped my daily routine."

### March 16, BHR Customer Service with Laurie Guest

10 a.m. CST

BHR's Training Tuesdays! Every third Tuesday of the Month at 10 a.m. BHR will host a virtual training session. Topics and speakers will vary each month.

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### Curt Theisen, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker in Sioux Falls, earns UnSung Hero Award from South Dakota Highway Patrol

(Excerpt from Captain John Broer's, with Motor Carriers, letter to SDDOT)

I wanted to take a moment to express my thanks and gratitude for the consistent actions of one of your staff in Sioux Falls (Curt Theisen).

Master Inspector Curt Blasy and Master Inspector Phil Lentz wanted to recognize Theisen and express appreciation for always going out of his way to help others time and time again, no matter the need.

Most recently Theisen was asked to help with signing for required truck checks. The signing is labor intensive and dangerous as it is done in high traffic areas. Curt came up with a solution to create an approved fixture to attach to the already installed signs that can quickly deploy a simple flag bringing attention to the drivers the truck check were open & they need to stop. This helps drivers see the checks well in advance of needing to stop and keeps the inspectors and DOT staff off the interstate deploying signage every time a check needs to be done.

The SDDOT and the Highway Patrol certainly share many of the same goals and objectives. We have very different duties, but the working relationship between our two agencies is an example of how to work together. Staff like Curt play a major role in this relationship.

**We appreciate the work that Curt and all DOT employees do, whether its plowing snow, designing roads, or planning better traffic system.**

We would like to thank Curt for his years of going above and beyond what his duties are. They are appreciated and do not go unnoticed.



## February Mentoring Minute

BY JUNE HANSEN & BRAD REMMICH



As I started working with Brad on this month's mentoring minute, I went back and read some of the Mentoring stories I'd written in the past. As I read them, I realize that I am motivated by what's going on at the time or whatever song is in my head. I saw one that compared mentoring to the Olympics, another that tied being a Situational Mentor with the song "Taking Care of Business". As I struggled to get this month's minute written I asked myself what is going on now. I'm sorry but I not writing a Mentoring-related story that talks about the pandemic. I have hit my COVID-19 breaking point.

That led me to the Super Bowl. I realize by the time this newsletter goes out the Super Bowl will be over, and many will be starting to hope for next year. For those that know me, you know I am a huge football fan and devoted to the Minnesota Vikings. From Fran Tarkington to Kirk Cousins, I am always eternally hopeful this will be the Vikings' year. Brad worships NDSU and unfortunately, they have football to play this winter/spring so we'll be seeing a lot of that NDSU attire around the central office. Yet I digress.

NFL teams always seem to be looking for the right combination of players, coaches, and fans to hoist the Lombardi trophy. And when a team is considered good but just missing that one thing...teams try to find that one piece to fill a void. Does that mean that Tampa Bay filled that void by bringing in a 43-year veteran who has six super bowl rings to make the difference? As I pondered this...I asked myself, does that make Tom Brady a situational mentor? I mean who better than the GOAT to be a situational mentor. (For those non-sports fans GOAT stands for "greatest of all time".) Tampa Bay was a middle of the road team and the first part of the season looked pretty inconsistent. It seemed as though Mr. Brady continued to situationally mentor the players on and off the field to believe in the game plan right up to the final whistle on Super Bowl Sunday. And it worked. The Tampa Bay Bucs are Super Bowl champs.

How many of you are looking for that direction or guidance on an area of your work life? It could be you're looking for specific technical expertise to tap into or it could be someone to bounce ideas off or get career advice. Whatever it may be, the department is filled with situational mentors who can help you.

A situational mentor is someone who is the right person at the right time. It's the subject matter expert who can shed light on a topic of interest or provide that technical expertise needed for a particular project. All you need do is reach out and ask them to help you. They are all around you. Maybe you're not sure who to ask, then contact anyone on the Mentoring Committee. We have a list of situational mentors who have assisted with previous mentoring programs that we can access to find the right person for you. Start your super bowl run with a situational mentor.



## **Employee Spotlight - February, 2021**

### **Employee Longevity:**

Matt Brey, Area Engineer – 30 years (Watertown Area)

Barry Bruce, Equipment Shop Foreman – 35 years (Rapid City Region)

Noel Pothast, Traffic Data Analyst – 20 years (Central Office)

Monica Ortbahn, Business Manager – 35 years (Pierre Region)

Harvey Oden, Project Engineer – 35 years (Sioux Falls Area)

Lanny Iwans, Business Manager – 20 years (Rapid City Region)

Mark Peppel, Project Engineer – 25 years (Winner Area)

### **No Employee Retirements in February!**

#### **New Hires:**

Tanner Zach, Highway Maintenance Worker (Sioux Falls) - New Hire

Rex Ryckman, Journey Transportation Tech (Pierre) - New Hire

Montana Rivard, Journey Transportation Tech (Belle Fourche) - New Hire

Doug Johnson, Highway Maintenance Worker (Martin) - New Hire

Pete Richards, Highway Maintenance Worker (Martin) - New Hire

Mark Liang, Engineer I (Pierre) New Hire

Nathan Remmich, Journey Transportation Tech (Pierre) - New Hire

Jerold Runge, Highway Maintenance Worker (Brookings) - New Hire

#### **Promotions:**

Tom Druvystein, Operations Maintenance Engineer (Operation Support, Pierre)

Tom Docken, Wildlife Biologist (Pierre)

Tom Newell, Program Assistant II (Operations Support, Pierre)

Joe Sestak, Access Management Engineer (Yankton)

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**Our thoughts and prayers are with our SDDOT co-workers who have recently experienced the passing of a loved one.**

Karla Leiferman Grosz - sister of Mark Leiferman

Helen Leslie - mother-in-law of Craig Smith

Eileen Kusser - mother of Jan Talley

Larry Peterson - husband of Robin Peterson

### Thanks for submitting photos of milestones!

Congratulations to **Barry Bruce** on **35 years of service** to the department and the public as Rapid City Region Equipment Shop Foreman. Amongst other duties, Barry oversees keeping 100 plus snowplows, about ¼ of the DOT's fleet, operational. His customer service and willingness to share his knowledge with others define him. (L to R: Todd Seaman-Rapid City Region Engineer, Barry, and Tom Horan-Rapid City Region Operations Engineer)



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**Harvey Oden** is pictured with Greg Aalberg receiving his **35 year pin**. Harvey is an E2 project engineer in the Sioux Falls Area office. He started with the DOT as a summer intern in 1986, and was hired full time as a project tech in 1988.

In 1999 he was promoted to his current E2 project engineer position.



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Dean VanDeWiele congratulates **Dan Strand** on reaching **35 years of service** with the DOT in January. Dan started his career in the office of research before joining the Pierre Area office in 2002. Dan is currently the project engineer on the \$50 Million Missouri River Bridge replacement project in Pierre-Ft. Pierre.



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Patti Devitt presented **Brandi Hansen** with her **15 year pin**. Brandi started in revenue 15 years ago as an accounting secretary then moving into an accounting assistant position. She has been an accounting assistant with DOT for 6 years!



### Employee Spotlight - February, 2021

Please send personal news such as marriages, babies, and other noteworthy achievements via email to [julie.stevenson@state.sd.us](mailto: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.



Doug Sherman, Winner Area Engineer, and his wife Val are grandparents once again!

#### **Thea Jean Heiser**

born on Jan. 31, 2021

8 lbs 4 oz and 20.5 inches



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Chris Kaus, and wife Ginny, are excited to show off

#### **Jenelle Kaus**

born on Dec. 3, 2020

6 lbs 15 oz and 19 inch long

Chris works in Transportation Inventory Management in Pierre and his dad Paul is retired from Mitchell DOT Maintenance.



## The SDDOT GIS LRS



**It's not alphabet soup, but like a tape measure**

**By Roger A. Brees**

For over 25 years, the SDDOT GIS section has maintained a statewide Linear Referencing System (LRS). The best description of LRS is a way to display tabular data in a linear format. The LRS helps the SDDOT meet and report on federally required programs like the Highway Performance Management System (HPMS). The SDDOT LRS is a collection of individual highways. Each state highway is like a line, and along this line many things happen such as summer and winter maintenance, new construction, reconstruction, and accidents.

**The question is . . . how does the line in GIS become a route?**

**The answer is . . . you have to add measurements to it.**

Every highway in the state has a beginning and ending point. The SDDOT uses U.S. miles for its measurement system. Looking at U.S. 212, it begins at the Wyoming border at mile zero and ends at the Minnesota border at mile 404.097. The LRS uses mileages from the SDDOT Mileage Reference Marker (MRM) system to create routes. Those green marker signs along the highways are MRMs. An MRM is a numerical name (not the mileage) for a specific location on a highway. Each MRM has a highway mileage assigned to it. If the MRM was the actual mileage, every time a highway mileage changed, dozens or even hundreds of MRMs would have to be moved to somewhere else along the highway.

For decades the SDDOT has painstakingly measured and recorded the mileages of every highway and has placed MRM signs at specific locations along every route. The LRS uses the mileages from key locations (highway junctions and intersections) and key features (bridges) from the MRM system to create route control measures. Any data in the SDDOT with highway and mileage information can be displayed on a map, used in analysis, and shared through ArcGIS Online. The LRS is continuously updated and revised to reflect the most current highway alignments and mileages throughout the state.

If you want more information on the LRS and how you can use it to map your data, contact the GIS team.

## **Provide Excellent Services, A Key SDDOT Strategic Objective**

**By Craig Smith and Mike Behm**

While our primary focus is customers, one key aspect is fostering a healthy contracting industry to ensure our ability to deliver quality projects. It is important that we have open communication with the contracting industry. This has primarily been accomplished through the annual winter meetings between members of the Associates General Contractors (AGC) Highway Heavy Division and the department. Improvement efforts are reviewed and future opportunities considered.

In December a virtual meeting was held with nearly 100 participants from the contracting industry and the department. While the format changed due to COVID, the interaction and open dialogue continued to be focused on improvements. The agenda included a review of proposed changes to some Division I Specifications, which included an in depth discussion on project delays related to utility relocations. We also focused on factors that impact project cost, alternative contracting methods, STIP project review, federal funding updates, electronic submittal of wage scales, and updates from improvement work groups. The department will review the meeting feedback and initiate additional discussions through the work groups.

A highlight and brief summary of topics discussed:

### **1. Division I Specifications**

**4.3.B Significant Changes in Character of Work** – Currently considered when item exceeds 10% of the total contract and the increase is in excess of 125% or decrease is below 75% of the original bid quantity.

**9.3 Payment for Extra Haul** – What can be done when aggregate quantities overrun and deplete the stockpiles produced by the contractor.

**5.6 Cooperation with Utilities** – Delays during construction due to utility relocations has been an ongoing and reoccurring topic. This past year the department updated Policy DOT-S-ADM-6.2 Utility Adjustments and/or Relocation. The updates included additional emphasis on open and ongoing communication with the utility companies both prior to the project bid letting and during construction. Specifically, Area Office project staff are expected to contact all utility companies involved to establish expected project schedules and have ongoing communication once agreements or permits are in place.

**9.1 Measurement of Quantities** – Current specifications limit the use of loader scales to 10,000 tons or less. The accuracy of this equipment continues to improve and there will be consideration to increase the quantity.

**8.1 Subcontracting** – Currently the prime contractors are required to self-perform 50% of the total contract work. It is common that this is reduced to 30% based on project size and type. There is consideration to making this a permanent change.

### **2. Factors that Impact Project Cost** – Contractors presented items that increase their bid costs:

**a. Completion requirements on items that could be carried over until the following construction season and/or seasonal limitations on certain work types** – While the department is using substantial completion dates and allowing some work to carry over, there is need to review the decision making process and provide a consistent approach to set provisions.



**b. Timeliness of field decisions can delay project progress or cause additional re-mobilization costs**

– There are two examples that cause issues for contractors. The first is incomplete or ongoing punch lists that continue to grow. It is best practice to communicate with contractors and sub-contractors when corrective or cleanup work is needed, and provide information before their crew's leave the project. The second, delays waiting for decisions or direction from the department.

**c. Waiting until the end of the project to negotiate contractor requests for additional contract time or additional costs**

– It is a standard department practice to wait until all work is completed to consider contract time requests. However, when the request is related to additional work, these days should be negotiated and included on construction change orders. Monetary requests should be responded to immediately and negotiated prior to work beginning.

**3. Alternative Contracting Methods** – The department currently uses design-bid-build contracting method as approved in state law for highway construction. The methods below were presented as alternate to our current practices and discussed with contractors. Based on feedback, Senate Bill 21 was proposed by DOT this legislative session to allow two of these methods, Indefinite Delivery and Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) method and emergency procurement. SB 21 has passed both the house and senate and will allow the department greater flexibility in our contracting practices.

**a. Design Build** – Design and construction under a single lump sum contract with a two-phase selection process using qualifications and price plus technical components. This alternative was not pursued with SB 21, and future discussions are needed to determine customer benefit.

**b. Construction Manager / General Contractor (CM/GC)** – A negotiated construction contract based on selection criteria to include qualifications, experience, strategic approach, and price elements. Allows a selected construction manager to be involved during design and construction to provide constructability advantages. This alternative was not pursued with SB 21, and future discussions are needed to determine the customer benefit.

**c. Indefinite Delivery and Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ)** – Contract that provides an estimated quantity of work or specified location, rather there are established prices for work types and general area. These are like the department's current guardrail maintenance projects, which essentially provides an "on-call" contractor to respond quickly.

**d. Emergency Response** – Currently there are no provisions to use construction funds for emergency response, unless bid through our typical process. This change will allow construction funds to be used through a defined selection process when there is a threat to public health, welfare, safety, or other compelling reason.

**4. Large Project Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)** – In order to plan future work, contractors are requesting additional information and details on certain project types. This may include high level sequencing, if projects are multiple year construction, or will be let in combination bid with other projects.

Through these discussions, the department and AGC are able to work closely to improve efficiency, quality, and timeliness of construction projects. The department is reviewing feedback and working with AGC to develop actionable improvements. Due to COVID, there will not be a Annual Summit this year. **Please plan to attend the 2-3 hour virtual session on March 4, 2021.**