

# Project Development Division

## NDOT 2021 Strategic Communications Plan



*Mission:* Working collaboratively to engage our partners, challenge our business practices and support delivery of the best possible statewide transportation system through efficient, customer-focused programs and policies.

### 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

The Project Development Division endeavored in 2020 to complete several key goals.

Project Development's efforts to complete environmental review documentation associated with the 2019 flood continued throughout 2020. Most notably, the Environmental Section was able to complete the Categorical Exclusion documents and Section 404 (Clean Water Act) permit applications for the Niobrara West Bridges and Niobrara River Bridge Holt/Garfield County Line (also known as "Spencer") emergency relief projects. This information was delivered to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and marks the Section's final step in completing their work. Receipt of the final Section 404 permit authorization from the USACE will enable NDOT to seek reimbursement for nearly \$70M in expenses associated with these major emergency repair projects.

Other accomplishments include:

- For the past year, The Nebraska Environmental Documentation System (NEDS) has been underway building a new platform for reviewing, documenting, and approving projects. The NEDS team has spent this time focused primarily on planning, which included meeting with business owners to define the business requirements and create mockups that represent the look and feel of their future modules. Near the end of 2020, the NEDS development team moved from planning to development. Starting first with the foundational pieces that form the NEDS website, work then began on the first NEDS module, Hazardous Materials. Hazardous Materials staff has recently begun testing in the test site.
- NDOT began development of a long-anticipated transportation improvement project at US-275 and 72nd Street in Omaha, often referenced as the 72nd & L Interchange. NDOT conducted consultant interviews using unconventional processes, which included video production followed by a question and answer session. Olsson was selected and work has begun to assess operations at the intersection, identify stakeholders, and develop alternatives that address the complexities of this location.
- Coordination with ACEC occurred throughout 2020 to develop a new, two-part Scope of Services (SOS) for Roadway Design projects. This new SOS will be piloted in Consultant Agreements for the 2021 Multi-Service projects.
- Agreements and Consultant Services Section, with assistance from the Environmental Section and BTSD, completed the first phase of a robust Consultant Evaluation Workflow designed to provide timely and consistent feedback to Consultants working for NDOT. This phase focused on developing new scoring criteria, evaluation triggers, and data structure that enables Consultants to automatically receive evaluation data when it becomes available. Continued partnership with ACEC and BTSD is occurring during implementation.

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## 2021 GOALS

### Complete Project Development activities to support letting 85% of projects on time

*Tactics:*

- Use available data to understand project delivery areas that create re-work or slow task progress down, which may impact timely project delivery. This includes tracking on Project Description changes, re-evaluations, 404 timelines and other items. Project Development will work with Corey Donahoo and others, to develop reports and/or dashboards to support this.
- Work with Roadway Design and other Divisions (as needed) to develop a schedule for multi-service contracting. Upon identification of project candidates, develop draft scopes of services prior to consultant selection. Prioritize contract development/negotiation and contract as many services at initial NTP as possible.
- Develop a comprehensive wetland mitigation program "2031 Vision" that considers traditional NDOT site development as well as alternative methods. Identify strategies, develop baseline cost data, and present the plan to NDOT Administration for implementation in 2022.
- Provide Consultants with a way to electronically submit their Statement of Qualification (SOQ) in response to RFQ advertisements, thereby advancing their information directly into NDOT's RFQ OnBase application.

### Coordinate, collaborate and communicate with business partners to support mission alignment

*Tactics:*

- Update or create MOUs with other agencies or entities to streamline project delivery, including the Section 106 PA, Matrix Agreement, and Tribal Agreements.
- Refine consultant evaluation process, provide training and clarify expectations for NDOT PCs, and make data available to Consultants.
- Meet at least quarterly with ACEC. In Q1, prioritize topics to address in 2021, establish small groups (formal or informal) as needed, and report progress at Fall Workshop.
- Update our 2016 Consultant Procurement Manual and provide to FHWA for approval by end of Q4.

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## 2021 GOALS (con'td.)

- ACEC and NDOT, along with several other Local Public Agencies, participated in the first ever, fully virtual Annual ACEC / NDOT Partnering Workshop. Due to the pandemic, the event expanded to include the Cities of Lincoln and Omaha, as well as some County Officials whose conferences had been cancelled earlier in the year. The workshop occurred over the month of November, with two-hour sessions hosted every Tuesday and Thursday.
- During the fall of 2020, FHWA conducted its second monitoring review of Nebraska's Categorical Exclusion (CE) program, as required by our CE Assignment MOU. This review concluded that NDOT's environmental review process and documentation for CEs is in "substantial compliance" with applicable laws and regulations.
- NDOT continued to assist in the NGS GPS on Benchmark Campaign. This nationwide effort will assist in the improving National Spatial Reference System (NSRS) and prepare for the modernization of the system that is tentatively planned for 2022. In 2020, the Geodetics Field Office submitted 573 observations to National Geodetic Survey (NGS), which was the third most in the nation, trailing only MnDOT and IDOT.
- Other important project milestones:
  - US-275, Scribner to West Point draft EIS neared completion.
  - 192nd & West Dodge - conceptual design neared completion, including multiple stakeholder engagement meetings with adjacent property owners.
  - Initiated services for development of US-275, N-57– E Jct N-15, including environmental reviews and preliminary design.
  - Agreements and Consultant Services Section published 19 RFQs – Seven RFQ's were for unique services, four were for projects, and eight were for on-call services.
- Agreements and Consultant Services Section, in coordination with BTSd, completed the backend development of a new OnBase application to manage the RFQ procurement process used to hire Consultants. This included electronic Selection Committee scoring and ranking, and documentation. Future phase of development will allow Consultants to electronically submit their responses to RFQ directly into the program.
- Development of Standard Operating Procedure for processing consultant invoices to achieve better consistency and efficiency.

### Identify processes and procedures for modernization and create action plan for completion

#### Tactics:

- Create documentation to support Section 327 Assignment. Completion of documentation should conform to schedule developed in Q1, and support 327 Application and MOU goal dates.
- Work with appropriate stakeholders to ensure RTK survey network remains available through agreement with Seiler or RFQ for new service provider. Also support efforts to develop procedures for survey datum elevation change occurring in 2022.
- Complete application for Section 327 Assignment by end of Q3 and complete draft 327 MOU by end of Q4.

### Support the workforce development needs and priorities of Project Development Division, using tools such as 6+6 and HR Onboarding guidance

#### Tactics:

- Complete Environmental Training Plan to support 327 Assignment and Section workforce development and identify an LMS. Draft to FHWA in Q1, finalize in Q2-3. Implement upon execution of 327 MOU.
- Identify training material gaps and associated action plan. Gaps may exist in material availability in 6+6 plan that PDD staff can support, or technical training may be missing, and material needs to be developed by Consultant or provided by vendor. Create at least 4 technical training modules in 2021 to support Environmental Training Plan.
- Create SOPs for positions with unique job responsibilities. Work with an LSS Process Improvement Coordination to ensure that processes are not only documented, and where appropriate, improved to verify that steps are value-added.

## 2020 PRIORITIES

This section identifies priorities that need additional emphasis in order to complete the division's goals. The following is the approach the Project Development Division is taking to complete project development activities to increase project timeliness, support mission alignment, develop dashboards, and implement training. Additionally, Project Development is supporting other Agency initiatives that are important to our business, but are not directly reflected in the division's Business Plan.

A strategy to support 85% on time delivery of projects is **developing better project management tools** that quickly assess delivery status of key environmental review tasks, including 404 permit development and CE approval. Key to this effort is working with BTSd and others to identify the appropriate data source.

Another strategy to support 85% on-time delivery of projects requires **collaboration between the Environmental Section, Project Studies and Survey Section and the Agreements Section**. Establishment of clear contract documents, including schedule milestones and a template document, will support timely completion of these major transportation improvement projects.

Project delivery efficiencies were realized through execution of an MOU between FHWA and NDOT to assign certain environmental review responsibilities to NDOT (CE Assignment). In 2021, the Environmental Section will collaborate with FHWA to ensure the MOU is renewed for an additional three years and program improvements continue to be implemented.

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The Section 106 (Historic Preservation Act) Programmatic Agreement (PA) between NDOT, FHWA, American Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) outlines procedures to streamline project delivery as it relates to reviews under Section 106. Efforts to renew and update the previous PA with greater emphasis on tribal coordination procedures are currently underway and are expected to conclude in 2021 with a new PA or a one-year extension to the current version to allow adequate time for tribal engagement.

The Section 7 (Endangered Species Act) Programmatic Agreement (PA) between NDOT, FHWA, US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (NGPC) provides for streamlined project delivery procedures for reviews conducted under Section 7. Efforts to update and renew this PA, often referred to as the “Matrix Agreement”, includes a process review, incorporation of new species listings, and recent delisting actions, are expected to conclude in 2021.

Based on results of the 2020 Employee Engagement Survey, Project Development Division will prioritize **revitalization of our employee recognition efforts**, including establishing a new committee, creating a plan for 2022, and working to implement an event during the summer of 2021 when fewer are working remotely.

In effort to support new and improved business processes, Project Development will continue to work with BTSD to **develop a fully web-based platform to document environmental reviews**. In the next 12 months, the NEDS development team will be working towards building at least four more modules into the site. This plan currently includes modules for Smartform, Environmental Justice and Public Involvement. The NEDS team will also continue working with business owners to develop mock-ups, integrating OnBase into NEDS, developing review and approval workflows, and data validation rules. NEDS will be built upon log tables, that will be used to track changes and ensure updated data is reviewed prior to approval. The Environmental Section will also be working on developing training materials and updating existing guidance documents as NEDS modules are launched.

A strategy to engage our partners is to **continue working with our Consultant partners to improve processes** that affect our business practices. In 2021, we plan to partner with BTSD on a more efficient and streamlined Consultant certification process utilizing a managed access, self-service portal. This pilot project will help determine feasibility of rolling out other

self-service modules giving Consultants real time access to view and update their critical business data used by NDOT.

A strategy to **develop our workforce** is to finalize the Environmental Training Plan, including potential integration with an enhanced Learning Management System (LMS) that would provide university-styled coursework (100/200/300 level). NDOT will be using EDC, the enterprise solution for NDOT, to manage training. Project Development will also be exploring other workforce development opportunities, including development of a “field school”, or identifying cross training/job shadowing opportunities.

With the replacement of the existing horizontal and vertical datums used by NDOT planned for 2022, Project Development will continue to coordinate with the Nebraska State Surveyor’s Office, National Geodetic Survey (NGS), the districts, and other divisions as needed to **develop a thoughtful plan to ensure a seamless transition in using the new reference frames**. In addition, the Geodetic Field Office will continue its effort of occupying federal benchmarks across the State to assist NGS in its development of the 2022 Transformation Tool.

**Ensuring Nebraska has a reliable RTK Survey Network** will continue to be a focal point in 2021. Research of the capabilities of existing survey networks available to NDOT is ongoing, including preliminary testing and validating results. Developing trust with multiple data sources will allow for survey work to continue with minimal disruptions if one survey network were to go down.

## KEY PROJECTS

Project Development Division will be focusing on key projects that are a high priority for NDOT or our local partners, are critical for maintaining delivery schedules, or are commitments made through the BNA project selection process. Those projects include:

- Central City Viaduct (CN 42013)
- US-275, Norfolk – Wisner (CN 32319)
- 192nd & West Dodge (CN 22721)
- Minatare - US-385 (CN 51521)
- Sarpy County I-80 Interchange - Planning & Environmental Linkage Study
- 72nd & L St. (CN 22469)
- Broadwell Ave. in Grand Island - Planning & Environmental Linkage Study
- 33rd & Cornhusker (CN 13294)
- Bridgeport Viaduct (CN 51299)

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNAL COLLABORATION

*This section includes internal opportunities for divisions and districts to collaborate and work together to accomplish their goals.*

**BTSD** – Assist with identifying data integrity and sources of “truth” for establishment of performance baseline data and goals. Additionally, collaborate on technology solutions for several business processes, including, but not limited to, RFQ development, Consultant Evaluations and NEDS.

**Strategic Planning** – Creating dashboards.

**Communications** – Implementing the new Public Involvement Procedures as required by our CE Assignment MOU and assistance with website updates, social media attention on recruiting efforts, new web-based platform and other newsworthy events.

**HR** – Assist in identifying and conducting training to support workforce development goals.

**Project Delivery Divisions** – Coordination to ensure project delivery needs are met, including timely development of RFQ’s.