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# DOT Has A Plan Ready For Winter

By Bob Mercer  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – Weather wasn't so bad, so the state Department of Transportation had money left in its winter maintenance budget when spring arrived in South Dakota this year. Nonetheless, department officials want a little bigger budget for this winter, just in case.

The state Transportation Commission gave its approval Thursday. The latest plan calls for \$19,520,710. That's up from \$19,109,725 last winter, when actual spending was \$15,174,848.

Nearly all of the money is for ice and snow removal by DOT staff. The total includes \$77,000 for contract work.

"We had kind of a lighter year last year," Jason Humphrey told the commissioners. He is a construction and maintenance engineer for the department.

He said DOT wouldn't pull its plows if this winter burns through the budget and would spend what is needed.

"We don't go overboard, but if we run out of money, we don't stop plowing in February," Humphrey said.

South Dakota's winter operations went through a general modernization in recent years. No longer are trucks sent out to dump sand and salt without a detailed plan. Instead a modeling system with "an algorithm as long as my arm" is used, according to Humphrey.

Current and expected levels of traffic, weather conditions including forecasts and recent maintenance activities are fed into a computer program that generates recommendations such as the amount of anti-icing chemical to put down.

Some plow trucks have on-board computers tied into the systems so they can adapt on the go. Other plow drivers receive detailed instructions by radio.

South Dakota developed the system and approximately one dozen states have been involved, Humphrey said. He credited Dave Huff for leading the project. Huff was a long-time research engineer for the department.

"It's a big deal and has gotten a lot of attention," Humphrey said.

The plan for this winter keeps in place the plowing schedule of 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., with some round-the-clock maintenance at Sioux Falls and Rapid City. Conditions are updated three times on weekdays and twice daily on weekends, with more frequent information during weather events on specific routes.

The department increasingly relies on social media to distribute information via Twitter, Facebook, 511 texts and Safe Travel USA website, along with 30 digital messaging boards spread along Interstate 90 and Interstate 29.

DOT experimented with some forecast information last winter and plans to provide it more frequently this winter, Humphrey said.

## Noem: Support for South Dakota Rail is Good News for Producers, Shippers, and Economy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Kristi Noem today applauded the U.S. Department of Transportation for prioritizing investments into South Dakota rail through a partnership between the state and the Rapid City Pierre & Eastern Railroad (RCP&E). After a months-long push by the South Dakota delegation and others, RCP&E earned a \$6 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in order to increase the railroad's capacity.

"Nearly every commodity we produce in South Dakota is exported and shipped via rail," said Noem, who joined Senators Thune and Rounds in writing Transportation Secretary Foxx about the grant earlier this year. "Disruptions or delays in rail service have an immediate impact. That's what makes investing in our railways so critical to creating a healthy economy. The TIGER Grant is one way that our country makes that investment. I'm grateful the Secretary saw the merit of this project and recognized South Dakota freight rail as a worthy priority."

In June, Noem, alongside Senators John Thune and Mike Rounds, wrote to Secretary Foxx urging the full and fair consideration of RCP&E's grant application and stressing the railroad's importance to South Dakota producers and shippers. Two months later, the congresswoman visited the RCP&E Yard Office near Rapid City, visiting with a number of the railroad's 185 employees.

The TIGER grant announced today aims to increase the railroad's capacity by constructing a siding near Phillip, S.D., and replacing approximately 10 miles of rail near Huron, S.D.

## USD Sanford School of Medicine Names New Basic Biomedical Sciences Dean

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – William G. Mayhan has been named dean of the division of Basic Biomedical Sciences at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine.

Mayhan, Ph.D., an Omaha, Nebraska native, received his B.S. degree from Creighton University and his doctorate from the University of Nebraska. He completed his post-doctoral training at the University of Iowa and subsequently joined the faculty there. Mayhan returned to the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Department of Cellular and Integrative Physiology in 1989, rising to become full professor and vice-chair. He received the Outstanding Research and Creative Activity award from UNMC, which is the highest award given to a faculty member within the University of Nebraska system.

Mayhan comes to USD from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, Shreveport, where he was head of the Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy. He has received continuous research support from the National Institutes of Health since 1983, and he has served on study sections for various organizations, including the American Heart Association, the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. He has published more than 200 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters and editorial comments.

"Dr. Mayhan is an outstanding scientist who has the personal and professional attributes we look for in a colleague and leader. We enthusiastically look forward to having him join us," said Dr. Mary Nettelman, dean of the USD medical school.

Mayhan will take over in March for Ronald Lindahl, who is retiring in December after leading the division since its founding. Steve Waller will serve as interim dean.

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