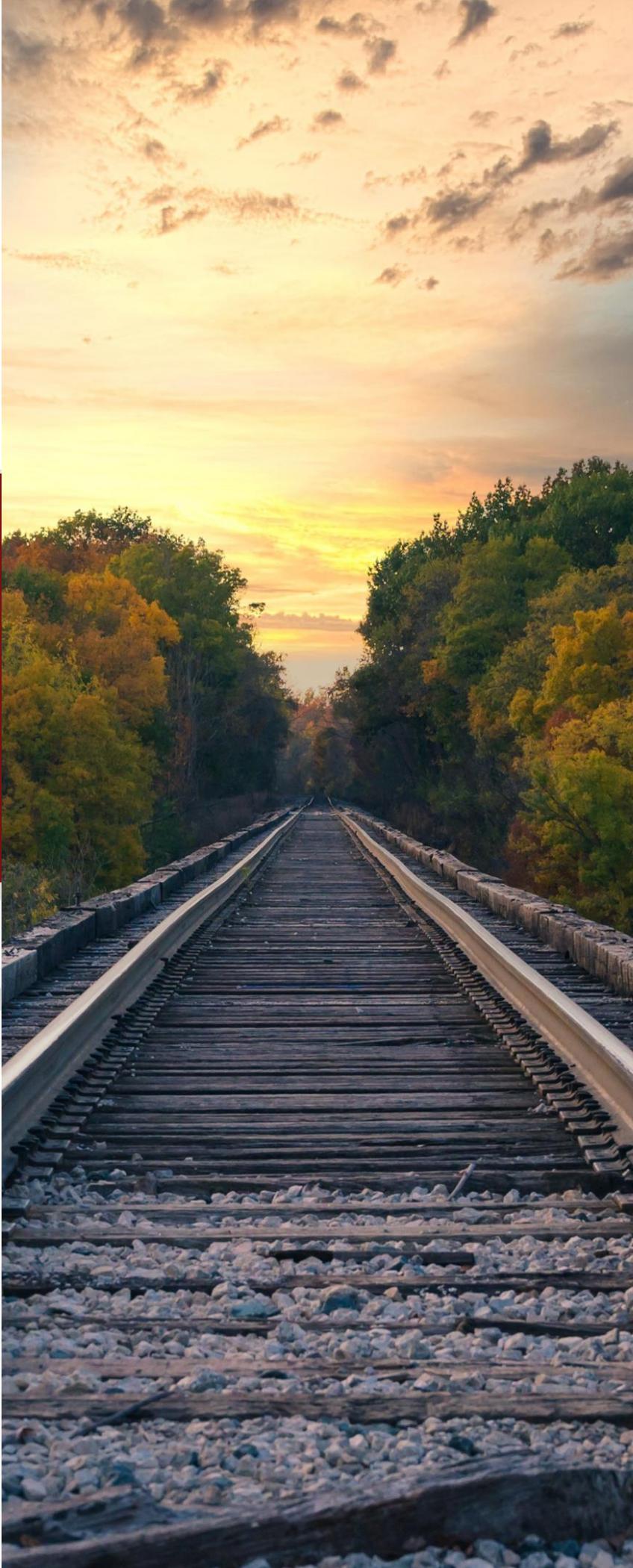


Chapter 1: The Role of Rail in South Dakota (Draft)

South Dakota State Rail Plan

June 2022



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INTRODUCTION

This chapter functions as an overview of the role of the rail industry in South Dakota within the overall economic, social, and cultural landscape of the state. Identifying the roles that rail fulfills in the South Dakota economy will provide the basis for the South Dakota State Rail Plan vision, goals, and objectives.

This chapter will integrate goals from relevant state planning documentation from the freight and highway sectors, and relevant federal rail goals. This chapter will help define South Dakota's vision and direction for rail and how to advance and implement strategies to assist with management of state-owned systems.

1.1 SOUTH DAKOTA'S GOALS FOR THE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The South Dakota Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provides a general statewide outlook to identify relevant opportunities and trends related to the multimodal transportation system. According to the LRTP, the mission of the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) is “to efficiently provide a safe and effective public transportation system.” The State’s overall vision is to achieve excellence in providing transportation facilities that meet the needs of the public, leading towards Better Lives through Better Transportation, By Being the Best.

The goals of the South Dakota LRTP, as set forth by internal stakeholders, are to:

- Improve Transportation Safety and Security for all Modes of Transportation
- Preserve and Maintain the Transportation System
- Improve Mobility, Reliability and Accessibility
- Preserve South Dakota’s Quality of Life
- Support Economic Growth and Development
- Promote Environmental Stewardship
- Promote Innovative Transportation Technologies

Goals specific to freight transportation are identified in the South Dakota Freight Plan. The freight plan, in turn, places the state’s LRTP goals in the context of the goals of the National Highway Freight Program that were established by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act of 2015 (the FAST Act).

These goals are presented in **Table 1**.

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Table 1: South Dakota Freight Goals

National Freight Goals	South Dakota Long Range Transportation Plan Goals					
	Safety and Security	Preservation	Efficiency and Connectivity	Quality of Life	Economic Growth and Tourism	Mobility and Transportation Choices
Improve economic efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness			X	X	X	
Reduce congestion, bottlenecks, and cost of freight transportation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Improve safety, security, and resiliency	X	X	X	X		
Improve state of good repair	X	X	X	X	X	
Use advanced technology, innovation, and competition	X		X	X	X	
Performance management and accountability	X	X	X	X	X	
Reduce adverse environmental and community impacts	X	X	X	X	X	X

1.2 RAIL TRANSPORTATION'S ROLE IN THE STATE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The railroad system in South Dakota, once totaling 4,420 route miles, has dwindled to a 2,038-mile system in 2021. South Dakota is currently served by two Class I railroads, one Class II railroad, seven Class III short line railroads, and one tourist railroad.

Rail transportation plays a vital role in supporting South Dakota's key industries, including agriculture, bioscience, construction, manufacturing, and tourism. Grain, feedstocks, biofuels, aggregates, and building materials make up the majority of originating rail freight traffic within the state. Freight railroads facilitate the movement of high-volume, long-distance shipments of these commodities for domestic, overseas, and international markets. In the Black Hills, the Black Hills Central Railroad's 1880 Train is a significant attraction for tourists visiting this region of South Dakota, operating over 10 miles of former Burlington Northern Railroad track between Hill City and Keystone with an eclectic roster of steam and diesel motive power.

South Dakota has not had regularly scheduled intercity passenger rail service since 1969, when the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad was given authorization by the federal Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to terminate its daily passenger trains, No. 42 and No. 43, operating in each direction between Omaha, Nebraska, and Billings, Montana.¹ These trains had served the town of Edgemont, South Dakota, en route between the two endpoints. Other passenger rail services in the state had already been discontinued in previous years.

The State of South Dakota undertook a proactive and valiant effort to preserve freight rail service during the rail crisis in the early 1980s. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (commonly referred to as the Milwaukee Road), embargoed service over nearly all of its route mileage in South Dakota as part of a bankruptcy reorganization and route rationalization strategy to preserve the financial and operational integrity of the underperforming railroad.

Since then, large portions of the state-owned network have been transferred or sold back into private railroad ownership. The "Main Line" was transferred to the Burlington Northern Railroad in 1991. Later, the "Core System" was sold to Burlington Northern's successor, BNSF Railway, in November 2005 for \$42.5 million. Finally, the Sioux Valley rail line which runs between Elk Point and Canton, South Dakota, was sold to D&I Railroad in April 2021 for \$10 million, and the Mitchell-Rapid City (MRC) rail line was sold to Ringneck & Western LLC in May 2021 for \$13 million.

Today, the State of South Dakota retains ownership of three principal segments: the former Milwaukee Road line between Napa and Platte, a portion of a former Burlington Northern line between Huron and Yale, and the former Burlington Northern line between Aberdeen and Geneseo Jct. with a spur to Britton.

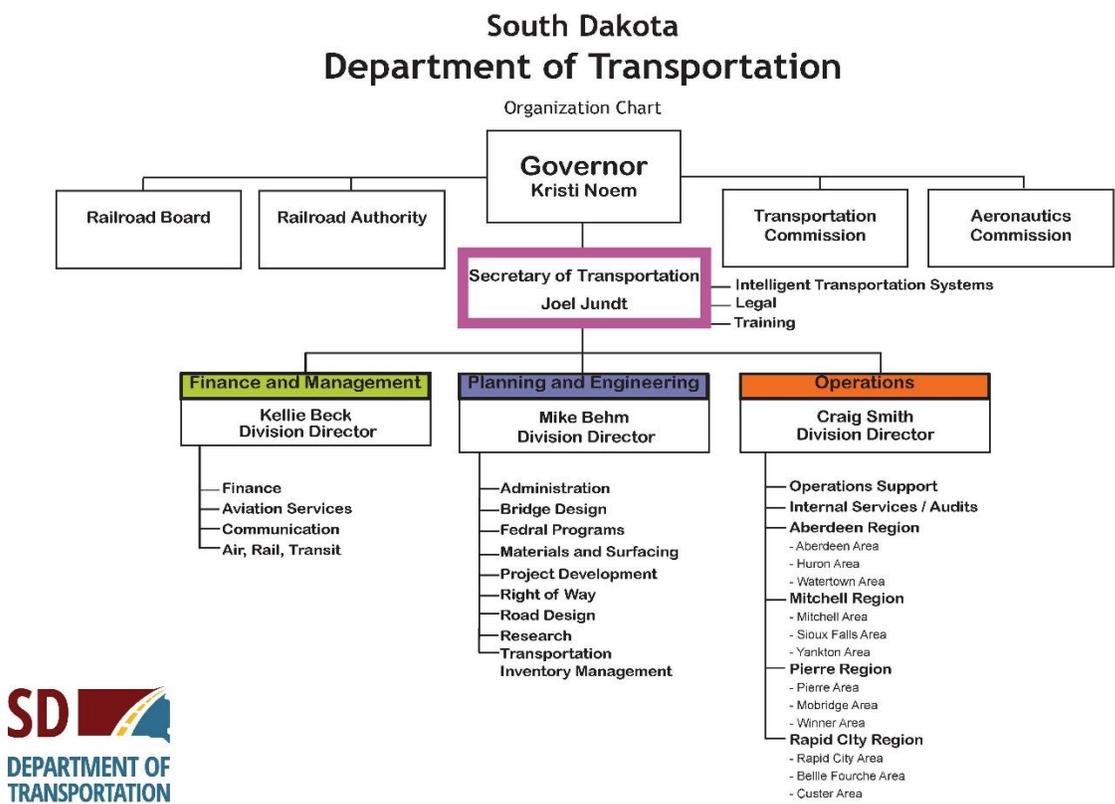
¹ City of Sheridan et al v. United States of America et al, Harvard Law Library No. 520, October 1969.

1.3 INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF SOUTH DAKOTA’S STATE RAIL PROGRAM

1.3.1 SOUTH DAKOTA DOT’S RAIL ORGANIZATION AND ROLES

The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) is led by the Secretary of Transportation, who reports directly to the Governor of South Dakota. The Office of Air, Rail, and Transit, within the Division of Finance and Management, administers a variety of railroad programs and is the Department’s liaison to the South Dakota State Railroad Authority, South Dakota State Railroad Board, and the South Dakota Transportation Commission. **Figure 1** shows the organizational structure of SDDOT.

Figure 1: Organizational Chart of the State of South Dakota Department of Transportation



Source: South Dakota Department of Transportation

Planning functions of the Office of Air, Rail, and Transit include monitoring rail traffic and commodity flows, performing detailed analyses on lines threatened by abandonment or in need of financial assistance, evaluating changes in status, condition, and service on rail lines, and analyzing State-owned rail operations. The Office of Air, Rail, and Transit also handles the management of all real and personal

property acquired by the State for railroad purposes, including leasing of property, utility installation, track rehabilitation, industrial track expansion, and construction. The Office of Air, Rail, and Transit prepares an annual report which outlines rail improvements that the State intends to complete for each year.

Per 1-44-18 of the South Dakota Codified Laws, the SDDOT shall conduct research on basic railroad problems, plan and assist in the development of rail transportation, develop and maintain a federal-state relationship of programs relating to railroads, assist any public or private agency or corporation in coordinating railroad services with those of other transportation modes, recommend, prepare, and review plans and specifications for any project undertaken by the South Dakota Railroad Authority, and arrange for and coordinate rail service over any properties and facilities acquired, leased, or controlled by the State of South Dakota Railroad Authority.

Per 1-44-20 of the South Dakota Codified Laws, the SDDOT, with the approval of the South Dakota State Railroad Board and the written consent of the Governor, may enter into agreements, contracts, leases (as lessor or lessee), or other arrangements with any corporation, partnership, individual, agency, or authority, on such terms and conditions as the department shall determine, including providing for the acquisition, operation, maintenance, and improvement of public rail lines, and the acquisition and disposition of any and all rights-of-way, land, facilities, fixtures and appurtenant structures, services and equipment, determined by the department to be necessary or appropriate.

1.3.2 SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Chapter 1-44 and Chapter 49-16B of the South Dakota Codified Laws establish the roles and responsibilities for the SDDOT with respect to rail, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the State Rail Board, State Rail Authority, and Regional Railroad Authorities.

1.3.3 STATE RAILROAD AUTHORITY

The South Dakota State Railroad Authority was authorized when the State purchased the “Core System” and has the power to acquire property and to construct, maintain, and equip railroad facilities as the Legislature declares to be in the public interest. The Authority also may conduct planning studies to determine the full scope of rail system needs. There are seven members on the Authority that are appointed to three-year terms by the Governor. Today, the State Railroad Authority and the State Railroad Board are one and the same, though the Authority and the Board retain their unique responsibilities and are still called to order separately during official meetings.

1.3.4 STATE RAILROAD BOARD

The South Dakota State Railroad Board approves matters related to operation, management, finance, marketing, and development of rail service over all properties and facilities acquired, leased, or controlled by the State. The Board also may, upon written approval of the Governor, make loans from the Railroad Trust Fund.

Per 1-44-25 of the South Dakota Codified Laws, the South Dakota State Railroad Board consists of seven members to be appointed by the Governor. Members shall serve a three-year term. No more than five members may be of the same political party. No person may be appointed to the board who is an elected official of the State of South Dakota or any subdivision thereof. Any member appointed to fill a vacancy arising from other than the natural expiration of a term shall serve only for the unexpired term but may be reappointed to a full term. The board shall annually choose from its membership a chair, a vice chair, and a secretary-treasurer. No member may be removed from office except for cause.

Per 1-44-26 of the South Dakota Codified Laws, at least one member, in the opinion of the Governor, shall be a person experienced in or having a favorable reputation for skill, knowledge, and experience in business management. At least one member, in the opinion of the Governor, shall be a person experienced in or having a favorable reputation for skill, knowledge, and experience in the operation of railroad service. At least one member, in the opinion of the Governor, shall be a person experienced in or having a favorable reputation for skill, knowledge, and experience in private or public finance. At least one member, in the opinion of the Governor, shall be a person experienced in or having a favorable reputation for skill, knowledge, and experience in marketing. At least one member of the commission shall be, in the opinion of the Governor, a person who is a user of rail service. Two members shall be from the public at large.

Per 1-44-27 of the South Dakota Codified Laws, the Department of Transportation shall obtain the approval of the Railroad Board in the matters of operation, management, finance, marketing, and development of rail service over all properties and facilities acquired, leased, or controlled by the state.

1.3.5 REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITIES

In 1978, the South Dakota Legislature allowed two or more subdivisions to unify to establish Regional Railroad Authorities. A Regional Railroad Authority may plan, establish, acquire, develop, construct, purchase, enlarge, improve, maintain, equip, operate, regulate, and protect railroads and railroad facilities used or useful in the operation of the railroad. They also may have taxing power through the subdivisions through which the Authority was established. The Authority serves as a legal entity to accept State Railroad Trust Fund dollars. The Authority concept is in wide use in South Dakota, with 27 Railroad Authorities established in the State, shown in **Table 2** below, although not all of these Authorities are currently active.

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Table 2: South Dakota Regional Railroad Authorities

No.	Name	Counties	Status
1	Aberdeen-Brown County Regional Railroad Authority	Brown, Spink, Beadle, Edmunds	Active
2	Beadle County Regional Railroad Authority	Beadle	Inactive
3	Brookings County Regional Railroad Authority	Brookings	Active
4	Butte County Regional Railroad Authority	Butte	Inactive
5	Dakota Regional Railroad Authority	Statewide	Inactive
6	Day County Regional Railroad Authority	Day	Active
7	East Central Regional Railroad Authority	Beadle	Active
8	Grant County Regional Railroad Authority	Grant	Inactive
9	Haakon County Regional Railroad Authority	Haakon	Inactive
10	Hand County Regional Railroad Authority	Hand	Active
11	Hughes County Regional Railroad Authority	Hughes	Active
12	Hyde County Regional Railroad Authority	Hyde	Inactive
13	Kingsbury County Regional Railroad Authority	Kingsbury	Inactive
14	Lake Area Regional Railroad Authority	Lake	Inactive
15	Lake-Minnehaha County Regional Railroad Authority	Lake, Minnehaha	Inactive
16	Marshall County Regional Railroad Authority	Marshall	Active
17	McLaughlin-Corson County Regional Railroad Authority	Corson	Inactive
18	MRC Regional Railroad Authority	Davison, Aurora, Brule, Lyman, Jones, Jackson	Active
19	Napa-Platte Regional Railroad Authority	Charles Mix, Bon Homme	Inactive
20	Northeast Roberts Regional Railroad Authority	Roberts	Inactive
21	Northern Hills Regional Railroad Authority	Butte, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington	Inactive
22	Roberts Regional Railroad Authority	Roberts	Inactive
23	Sioux Valley Regional Railroad Authority	Lincoln, Union	Active
24	Southern Union County Regional Railroad Authority	Union	Inactive
25	Sully County Regional Railroad Authority	Sully	Active
26	Turner County Regional Railroad Authority	Turner	Inactive
27	Watertown-Codington County Regional Railroad Authority	Codington	Inactive

1.3.6 ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SECTOR RAIL PLANNING IN SOUTH DAKOTA

1.3.6.1 SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT²

The South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED) works to expand primary job opportunities for the people of South Dakota. The GOED strives to retain and expand existing businesses, foster new businesses, facilitate business succession, and recruit out-of-state businesses. Recruitment efforts are focused on key industries, listed below:

- Manufacturing
- Bioscience
- Value-Added Agriculture
- Livestock Development
- Precision Agriculture
- Cybersecurity

The office works closely with community economic development corporations to expand and diversify the state’s industry and economy. Additionally, the GOED administers a variety of financing opportunities available to new and existing businesses.

1.3.6.2 SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURE³

In addition to its primary role as a regulator, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SD DANR) also promotes agriculture and the markets for South Dakota products. According to National Agricultural Statistics Service data from 2020, South Dakota’s top agricultural commodities in terms of production are beef in the livestock category and corn, soybeans, hay & haylage, wheat, and sunflowers in the crop category. Many of these products can be shipped to destinations nationwide via the state’s rail network. The Department of Agriculture works with SDDOT regarding long-range plans for all transportation modes.

1.3.6.3 METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

The purpose of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is to coordinate the local transportation planning activities of urbanized areas with the statewide planning activities of the SDDOT and to facilitate the programming of federal and state transportation funding for regional transportation improvement projects.

The state MPO Coordinator acts as the liaison between SDDOT and the three active MPOs in South Dakota by representing SDDOT on various MPO committees and providing technical assistance as requested.

² South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development. Retrieved from: <https://sdgoed.com/about-us/>

³ South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Retrieved from: <https://danr.sd.gov/>

The three active MPOs in South Dakota are listed below:

- Rapid City Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO)
- Sioux Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization

1.3.6.4 LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

South Dakota has a number of entities statewide that aim to bolster local economic growth opportunities through various means including retaining and recruiting businesses and industries based on location, skills of the labor force, room for expansion, and transportation assets and access. These entities are commonly referred to as local economic development agencies. A number of local economic development agencies in South Dakota have been instrumental in promoting freight rail service and advocating for direct rail access for rail-served industries.

SIoux FALLS DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION⁴

The Sioux Falls Development Foundation is a non-profit economic development corporation with the mission of improving the economy of the Sioux Falls region. The Sioux Falls Development Foundation has been instrumental in developing Foundation Park, the latest rail-served industrial park development in Sioux Falls.

BELLE FOURCHE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION⁵

The Belle Fourche Economic Development Corporation (BFEDC) is a local economic development agency focused on growth, revitalization, housing, workforce development, business retention and expansion, and community development. BFEDC is currently developing a rail-served industrial park to provide ease of access to rail freight transportation for prospective businesses.

1.4 STATE AUTHORITY FOR GRANT, LOAN, AND OTHER FINANCING

The South Dakota Railroad Board loan program allows Regional Railroad Authorities to apply for loan(s) from the Railroad Trust Fund for the rehabilitation, expansion and construction of industrial sidings or main line track. SDDOT is currently evaluating potential strategies to provide a more prescriptive loan program structure for the Railroad Trust Fund.

⁴ Sioux Falls Development Foundation, Overview. Retrieved from: <https://siouxfallsdevelopment.com/foundation/>

⁵ Belle Fourche Economic Development Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://bfdcsd.com/>

1.5 SUMMARY OF RAIL SERVICES, INITIATIVES, AND STUDIES

1.5.1 FREIGHT RAIL SERVICES AND INITIATIVES

South Dakota is currently served by two Class I railroads, one Class II (regional) railroad, seven Class III (short line) railroads that each provide common-carrier rail freight transportation in the state with access to the entire North American rail network spanning the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The North American rail network is closely integrated with coastal seaports and inland river ports to facilitate import and export of raw materials and finished products to and from overseas trading partners.

Freight rail service is provided exclusively by privately owned railroad companies that own, lease, or have joint-use agreements for all of the track that they operate on. Large Class I railroads typically achieve a sufficient return on investment to maintain rail infrastructure and other assets in a state of good repair to support ongoing operations and are expected to remain self-sufficient or attract additional private investment to meet their capital needs. Regional and short line railroads, by contrast, continue to be faced with unmet needs due to having legacy infrastructure inherited from prior Class I railroad owners where underinvestment or deferral of routine maintenance have created capital improvement backlogs that exceed the smaller railroads' own capabilities.

Current initiatives include ongoing work to ensure that the rail network is maintained in a state of good repair and is capable of accommodating loaded railcars with a maximum gross weight of 286,000 lbs. These efforts are being directly supported through recent federal grant awards. There are also initiatives underway to develop customizable industrial sites with direct rail access in order to accommodate new businesses.

1.5.2 PASSENGER RAIL SERVICES AND INITIATIVES

South Dakota does not currently have any regularly scheduled intercity or commuter passenger rail service. South Dakota has not been served by the federally funded National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) since Amtrak's inception in 1971. Amtrak was created to assume the operation of passenger rail services that prior to 1971 had been operated by privately-owned Class I railroad companies. At the time of Amtrak's creation, Amtrak retained only a fraction of the total route miles of intercity passenger rail service operated by Class I railroads at the time, leading to the termination of many services. Many other intercity passenger rail services had already been discontinued prior to the creation of Amtrak. This was precipitated by the United States Post Office's decision in 1967 to discontinue the use of passenger trains for intercity mail and parcel movement in favor of trucks.

Since 1971, there has been considerable curiosity and public support for the reintroduction of passenger rail services.

1.5.2.1 MIDWEST INTERSTATE PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION⁶

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) is an interstate compact commission of Midwestern state legislators, governors and their designees that promotes the growth and development of state and regional passenger rail to create and maintain a modern, clean, efficient transportation network.

Formed by compact agreement in 2000, MIPRC's current members are Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio, and South Dakota are also eligible to join.

Since 2000, the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission has brought together state leaders from across the region to work towards developing and implementing a 21st-century passenger rail system. Accomplishing this goal involves adding the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative network and additional state-supported corridors to the region's existing passenger rail infrastructure.

MIPRC has a primary role in advocating for the federal government to develop an enduring collaboration with states for passenger rail development similar to the partnership it has with states for other modes of transportation. MIPRC also works to ensure that Midwestern states have the support and interstate coordination they need to move forward with the region's passenger rail improvement plans.

1.5.2.2 ALL ABOARD NORTHWEST⁷

All Aboard Northwest is an advocacy organization that seeks to cultivate regional support for the reinstatement and expansion of long-distance intercity passenger rail service across the "Greater Northwest Region" spanning the northern tier of the western United States, encompassing the states of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho, where a large geographical area is not currently served by Amtrak.

All Aboard Northwest has a goal of establishing a formal Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Coalition working group to enable stakeholders in the region to work directly with the Federal Railroad Administration on a federally supported multi-state service development planning effort.

⁶ Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission. Retrieved from: <https://miprc.org/>

⁷ All Aboard Northwest. Retrieved from: <https://allaboardnorthwest.org/>

1.5.3 SOUTH DAKOTA RAIL STUDIES

1.5.3.1 FREIGHT RAIL STUDIES

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE RAIL PLAN (2014)^{8 9}

The most recent South Dakota State Rail Plan published in 2014 provided an assessment of the freight railroad system serving South Dakota businesses and communities. The plan provides information on the condition and performance of the freight rail system and guidance on policies, programs, and projects to improve the system.

The plan accomplished the following:

- Examined how the State uses railroad services
- Identified where improvements are needed
- Described opportunities for the State, through policy initiatives and targeted investments, to make public sector investments and encourage private sector investments; and
- Recommended priorities for State and public and private rail partner action

The plan identified and illustrated South Dakota's commitment to the following goals:

- Support economic growth and development
- Ensure connectivity for critical industries
- Maintain State railroad assets in a state of good repair
- Reduce highway impacts
- Improve railroad safety, security, and resiliency

The plan identified 27 potential projects to address rail system needs, totaling \$455.4 million. These included projects to address bottlenecks and increase interchange efficiency, bridge capacity projects, track condition projects, safety projects, and projects that would support industrial development opportunities. Of those 27 projects, 15 were located on the state-owned system, totaling \$162.9 million.

SOUTH DAKOTA HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE CROSSING STATE ACTION PLAN (2021)

The purpose of the South Dakota Highway-Rail Grade Crossing State Action Plan (SAP) was to describe South Dakota's current practices and programs related to highway-rail grade crossing safety, conduct a conceptual safety analysis to identify potential emphasis areas and key areas of need, and develop an action plan for the implementation of short- and long-term strategies to aid in achieving the overarching goals of improving safety at public highway-rail grade crossings throughout the state.

⁸ South Dakota Department of Transportation, South Dakota State Rail Plan Volume 1, September 2014. Retrieved from: https://dot.sd.gov/media/documents/DR2_Vol1_SDDOT_StateRIPln.pdf

⁹ South Dakota Department of Transportation, South Dakota State Rail Plan Volume 2, September 2014. Retrieved from: https://dot.sd.gov/media/documents/DR2_Vol2_SDDOT_StateRIPln.pdf

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The development of the SAP complied with federal requirements as described under Section 11401 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and as amended by the Final Rule issued by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on December 14, 2020.¹⁰ The SAP development process also provided South Dakota an opportunity to work with multiple stakeholders to identify strategies for improving highway-rail grade crossing safety statewide. Per the Final Rule, each State's SAP must accomplish the following:

- Identify highway-rail and pathway grade crossings that:
 - Have experienced at least one accident/incident within the previous 3 years.
 - Have experienced more than one accident/incident within the previous 3 years.
 - Are at high-risk for accidents/incidents as defined in the Action Plan.
- Identify data sources used to categorize and evaluate the highway-rail grade crossings, including pathway grade crossings.
- Discuss specific strategies, including highway-rail grade crossing closures or grade separations, to improve safety at those crossings over a period of at least four years.
- Provide an implementation timeline for the strategies identified.
- Designate an official responsible for managing implementation of the State's highway-rail grade crossing action plan.

The SAP presents a data analysis for 10 years of available accident/incident data between the years 2011 and 2020. This assessment is based on accident/incident records maintained by the FRA Office of Safety Analysis. The total number of accidents/incidents at public highway-rail grade crossings in South Dakota has averaged approximately 12 per year over this time period. While the total number of accidents/incidents fluctuates from year to year, the overall trend has recently seen a modest increase. However, of particular note is the lack of fatal accidents/incidents on record between the years 2015 and 2018.

Per federal guidance, the SAP also identifies locations where two (2) or more accidents/incidents have occurred within the previous five (5) years. In total, five (5) locations were identified that experienced two (2) or more accidents/incidents between 2016 and 2020. These crossings were reviewed further to identify common features or safety trends.

¹⁰ Federal Register, Volume 85, Number 240, December 14, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-12-14/pdf/2020-26064.pdf>.

As identified during the data and risk analysis and the stakeholder outreach conducted during development of the SAP, the highest priority highway-rail grade crossing safety needs and challenges in South Dakota and related key areas of need/emphasis areas include:

- **Urban Crossings:** Crossings located in denser and more developed areas present unique challenges. These crossings often have much higher traffic volumes than their rural counterparts and are also much more likely to have commercial access points, private driveways, and intersections with public roadways in close proximity to the crossing. These crossings are also more likely to host pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- **Rural Crossings:** Rural crossings present their own unique challenges. In many cases, the highway approach speed at rural crossings is higher than in urban areas, increasing the importance of advance warning signs and clear sight distances to ensure that motorists are prepared to stop for an oncoming train.
- **Stopped Vehicles on Crossings:** Instances of vehicles stopped or stalled on the tracks at the crossing prior to being struck by a train. In some cases, this may be the result of a tractor-trailer becoming stuck due to a severely humped crossing. In other cases, the queue of vehicles stopping at an adjacent traffic signal may extend onto the crossing.
- **Pedestrian Accidents/Incidents and Trespass Prevention:** While vehicular accidents/incidents at grade crossings nationwide have been steadily decreasing for the past 30 years, there has been a recent increase in the number of pedestrian and trespass-related accidents/incidents at crossings and along railroad right-of-way.
- **Accidents/Incidents with Older Drivers:** Older drivers face unique challenges, particularly in regard to crossing warning device visibility and vehicle reaction time.
- **Accidents/Incidents with Younger Drivers:** National railroad crossing accident/incident trends show a strong correlation between young drivers and the propensity to ignore or circumvent grade crossing warning devices.

Through the development of the SAP, SDDOT established a series of goals and objectives and related strategies designed to improve safety for the key areas of need/emphasis areas identified through the safety analysis. Each is based on federal guidance to establish goals that are Smart, Measurable, Agreed-upon, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART). SDDOT's SAP goals include the following:

- Goal 1: Reduce Total Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Accidents/Incidents by Half
- Goal 2: Work Towards Achieving and Maintaining Zero Fatal Accidents/Incidents
- Goal 3: Prioritize Safety Improvements at Crossings Experiencing Multiple Accidents/Incidents
- Goal 4: Increase Awareness of Railroad Crossing Improvement Program (RCIP)
- Goal 5: Increase Transparency and Objectivity of Safety Improvement Selection Process

Specific measures of progress for each goal are detailed further within the SAP. Specific actions and related strategies identified to achieve the goals are also provided in further detail in the SAP. For each action, the SAP proposes a series of specific items for SDDOT and other rail safety stakeholders to pursue. The actions described in the SAP include:

- Action 1: Implement Modified Approach for Safety Improvement Selection
- Action 2: Develop Enhanced Statewide Grade Crossing Inventory
- Action 3: Identify Opportunities for Implementation of Crossing Illumination
- Action 4: Enhance Communication with Eligible RCIP Applicants
- Action 5: Ongoing Coordination between Rail Safety Stakeholders
- Action 6: Targeted Public Education and Awareness Efforts

While no formal agreements between SDDOT and rail safety stakeholders have yet been established, the SAP identifies the potential roles and responsibilities of these partners. Representatives from these stakeholder groups have been involved throughout the development of the SAP. They have had the opportunity to review the final documentation and SDDOT will coordinate with them with further throughout the implementation of these goals and action items during the short-term horizon for the SAP (years 2022 through 2025) and beyond.

1.5.3.2 PASSENGER RAIL STUDIES

Midwest Regional Rail Plan¹¹

The Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study (MWRRP) is a multi-state intercity passenger rail network planning study led by the Federal Railroad Administration, in partnership with stakeholders from across the Midwest region. The MWRRP sets forth a strategic long-term vision for passenger rail in the Midwest, addressing topics including potential network configuration, service levels, financing, and governance. This study builds on established rail initiatives as well as other ongoing state planning efforts and is intended to support existing plans.

The Midwest is a large and economically robust region located at the geographic crossroads of North America. The rail network in the Midwest is dense and provides numerous potential existing route options for future passenger rail corridors. The MWRRP evaluated developing rail plans within the context of this regional outlook, which included a current network of passenger, commuter, and freight rail systems.

Further details about the Midwest Regional Rail Plan as it relates to regional intercity passenger rail corridor development in South Dakota are provided in Chapter 3 of this State Rail Plan.

¹¹ Federal Railroad Administration, Midwest Regional Rail Plan (2021). Retrieved from: <https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/2021-10/Final%20Report-MWRRP%20with%20Appendices%20PDFa.pdf>