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SDDOT 2015-16 Statewide Customer Satisfaction Assessment

Study SD2015-07 Final Report

**Prepared by
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Olathe, KS**

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<p>16. Abstract</p> <p>This report summarizes perceptions of the South Dakota Department of Transportation's performance in delivering services to residents and key customer groups across South Dakota. It is the seventh in a series of surveys that tracks and monitors attitudes and needs among SDDOT customers, including the general public, farmers, emergency vehicle operators, and trucker/shippers. The study includes opinions of 1,223 residents, 227 truckers/shippers, 96 emergency vehicle operators, 221 farmers, 248 senior citizens, and 35 state legislators.</p> <p>Key objectives that guided this research were to: assess the opinions of the public and key customer groups regarding the composition, importance, and delivered quality of the SDDOT's key products and services; assess the opinions of contractors regarding the SDDOT's business practices and relationships; assess progress in addressing customer concerns through SDDOT's ongoing efforts to develop and execute strategic plans; and identify actions SDDOT can take to improve its performance and the perception of customer groups and contractors regarding its performance.</p> <p>By objectively assessing the opinions of the general public and key customer groups, this research provides a framework to help senior SDDOT managers continually identify and to respond to the needs of its customers over time.</p>					
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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) conducted a Customer Satisfaction Assessment of residents and key customer groups, including senior citizens, truckers, farmers/ranchers and emergency vehicle operators. The purpose of the assessment was to gather statistically valid data from residents and persons who impact transportation decisions in the State of South Dakota to help identify short-term and long-term transportation priorities for the Department. The assessment findings presented in this report will be used as part of SDDOT's on-going strategic planning process. SDDOT previously completed statewide Customer Satisfaction Assessments in 1997, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2011.

OBJECTIVES

The 2015 SDDOT Customer Satisfaction Assessment had four primary objectives.

1. *To assess the opinions of the public and key customer groups regarding the composition, importance, and quality of the Department of Transportation's key products and services.* This objective was addressed by asking customers to objectively assess the Department's performance in key areas of service delivery. Stakeholder interviews were used to identify the expectations and concerns of external customers. Internal interviews with SDDOT managers were implemented to identify the informational needs of SDDOT employees. The "Findings" section of this report has been developed to address this objective.
2. *To assess the opinions of key business partners regarding the effectiveness of SDDOT's business practices and relationships.* This objective was accomplished through the administration of a statistically valid survey to contractors. The surveys gathered input on a wide range of issues related to SDDOT's business practices including: the effectiveness of communication with business partners, the electronic bid letting system, paper work requirements, the technical competence of SDDOT employees, and other issues.
3. *To assess progress in addressing customer concerns through SDDOT's ongoing efforts to develop and execute strategic plans.* This objective was accomplished by linking each question on the survey to specific elements in the Department's Strategic Plan. By identifying the relationship between survey questions and the Strategic Plan prior to the administration of the survey, SDDOT was able to link the results of the survey to specific components of the Strategic Plan. The "Conclusions" Section of this report has been developed to address this objective.
4. *To identify specific actions that the Department can take to improve its performance and the perception its customers have of the Department.* This objective was addressed by using the results of the survey to identify the areas that should be priorities for the Department over the next two years. The "Recommendations" Section of this report has been developed to address this objective.

TASK DESCRIPTIONS

The 2015 SDDOT Customer Satisfaction Assessment consisted of eleven major tasks. Each of these tasks is described below.

TASK 1: INITIAL PANEL MEETING

Initial meeting with the project's technical panel to review the project's scope and work plan. In July 2015, ETC Institute conducted a virtual meeting met with members of the project's technical panel and the Executive Team to ensure that all members of the project team had the same understanding of the goals and objectives for the project. At this meeting, the details of the research design strategy were discussed and the research objectives were finalized. A list of transportation stakeholders and the SDDOT managers to be interviewed were also developed along with a list of questions that should be asked of these individuals. In addition, ETC Institute began reviewing prior surveys and research administered previously by the SDDOT to ensure that the research efforts for this project would build on previous studies.

TASK 2: STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews with senior SDDOT managers, along with interviews with key transportation stakeholders from across the State of South Dakota.

Based on issues identified at the initial planning meeting, ETC Institute designed and administered a short open-ended interview that was administered to internal stakeholders (SDDOT managers) and a web-based external stakeholder survey throughout the State. The purpose of the internal and external stakeholder interviews was to assess the perceptions that senior SDDOT managers and external stakeholders have about the delivery of services provided by the South Dakota Department of Transportation. The information from the internal and external interviews was used to develop questions for the statewide survey that were administered during the fall of 2015.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews

ETC Institute conducted one-on-one interviews with senior SDDOT managers and a representative from the Association of General Contractors during September 2015. The purpose of the internal interviews was to gather input about a wide range of issues related to the planning of SDDOT's statewide customer satisfaction survey. Some of the findings from the internal interviews with senior SDDOT managers are listed below:

- Every member of the Executive Team rated the overall quality of the State's transportation system as good or excellent.
- All members of the Executive Team thought the survey was valuable to the Department and most thought the results of the survey should be open shared with employees.
- Most (17 of 27) of the senior managers who were interviewed thought the State's transportation system has gotten better over the past five years.
- Winter maintenance and construction project management were the two items that were mentioned most frequently as strengths of SDDOT.
- Senior Managers were asked if there had been any significant internal or external changes since the last survey was conducted in 2011 that could have affected customer expectations for

or satisfaction with SDDOT, two items were frequently mentioned by the managers who were interviewed: (1) funding (2) social media and technology.

TASK 3: DEVELOP SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Based on the results of the interviews and feedback from the Executive Team, ETC Institute designed multiple survey instruments. One survey was designed to gather input from residents. In addition, ETC Institute developed and refined survey instrument(s) for key customer groups including truckers/shippers, emergency vehicle operators, farmers/ranchers, contractors, legislators, and senior citizens. After several drafts of each survey were conducted, ETC Institute provided the Technical Panel with copies for review. Based on the comments received from the Technical Panel, ETC Institute submitted a revised draft to the SDDOT for approval.

The resident survey was approximately 20 minutes in length and was administered by phone. The surveys for key customer groups varied in length and were administered by a combination of mail, phone, and fax.

TASK 4: CONDUCT SURVEYS

The South Dakota Department of Transportation conducted a survey of key stakeholder groups and a statewide survey of residents during the fall of 2015. The purpose of the surveys was to gather statistically valid data from transportation stakeholders and residents to objectively assess the relative importance of a wide range of issues that were identified during survey design process. The methodology for each survey is briefly described below.

Stakeholder Survey

The stakeholder surveys were administered to a stratified random sample of persons who influence transportation decisions in the State of South Dakota. The sample was designed to obtain data from major customer groups, including: (1) truckers/shippers, (2) emergency vehicle operators, (3) farmers/ranchers, (4) legislators, and (5) seniors. The goal was to obtain a total of 600 completed surveys from persons in these five groups. The actual number of completed surveys included 227 truckers/shippers, 96 emergency vehicle operators, 221 farmers/ranchers, 35 legislators, and 248 seniors (customer groups were not mutually exclusive). The precision of the results for each stakeholder group at the 95% level of confidence is as follows: 227 truckers/shippers (+/-6.5%), 96 emergency vehicle operators (+/-9.9%), 221 farmers/ranchers (+/-6.6%), 35 legislators (+/-16.5%), and 248 seniors (+/- 6.2%).

Contractor Survey

A separate contractor survey was administered to contractors who do business with the Department. The survey was designed to gather qualitative input from contractors regarding the perceptions of working with the Department. A total of 103 contractors completed the contractor survey online. The sample of 103 contractors has a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 9.7%.

Resident Survey

The resident survey was administered to a stratified sample of 1,223 South Dakota residents during the fall of 2015. The sample was stratified to ensure the completion of at least 250 surveys in each of the four SDDOT regions. The survey was administered by phone and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The statewide sample of 1,223 residents has a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-2.8%. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates the distribution of the resident survey by region. Figure 2 is a map that shows the location of the respondents to the survey.

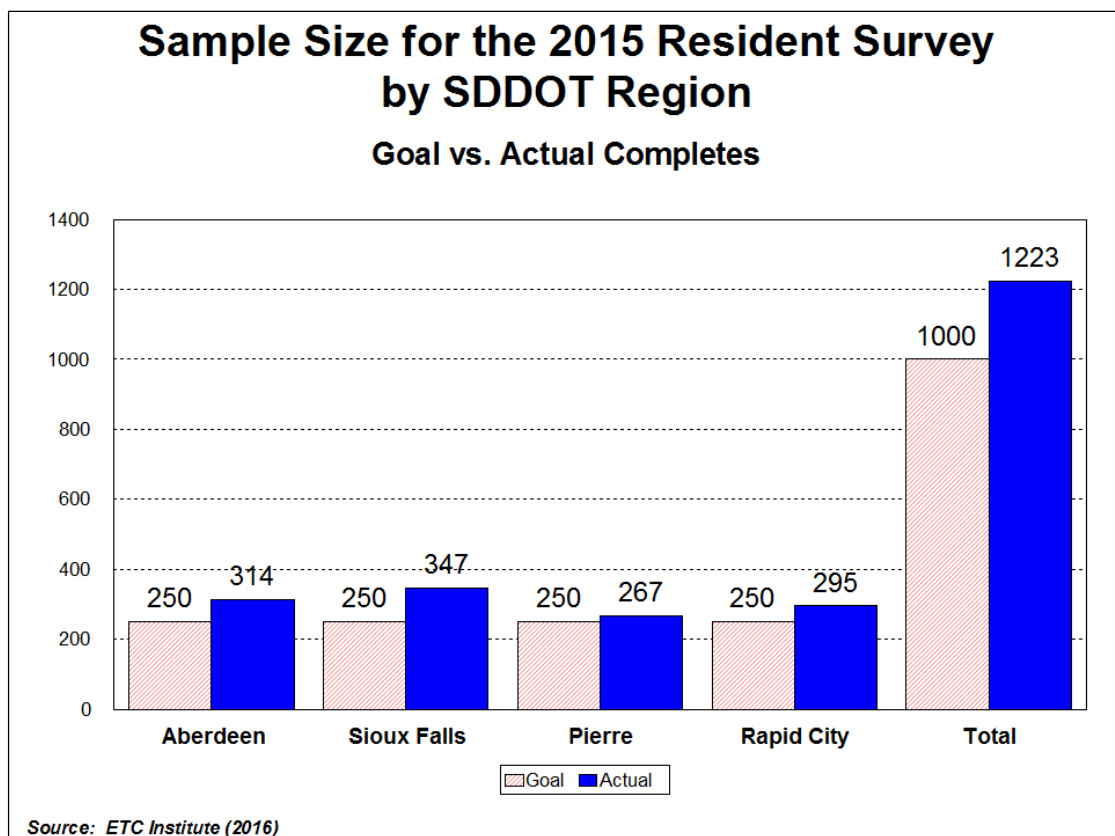


Figure 1: Number of Completed Surveys by Region

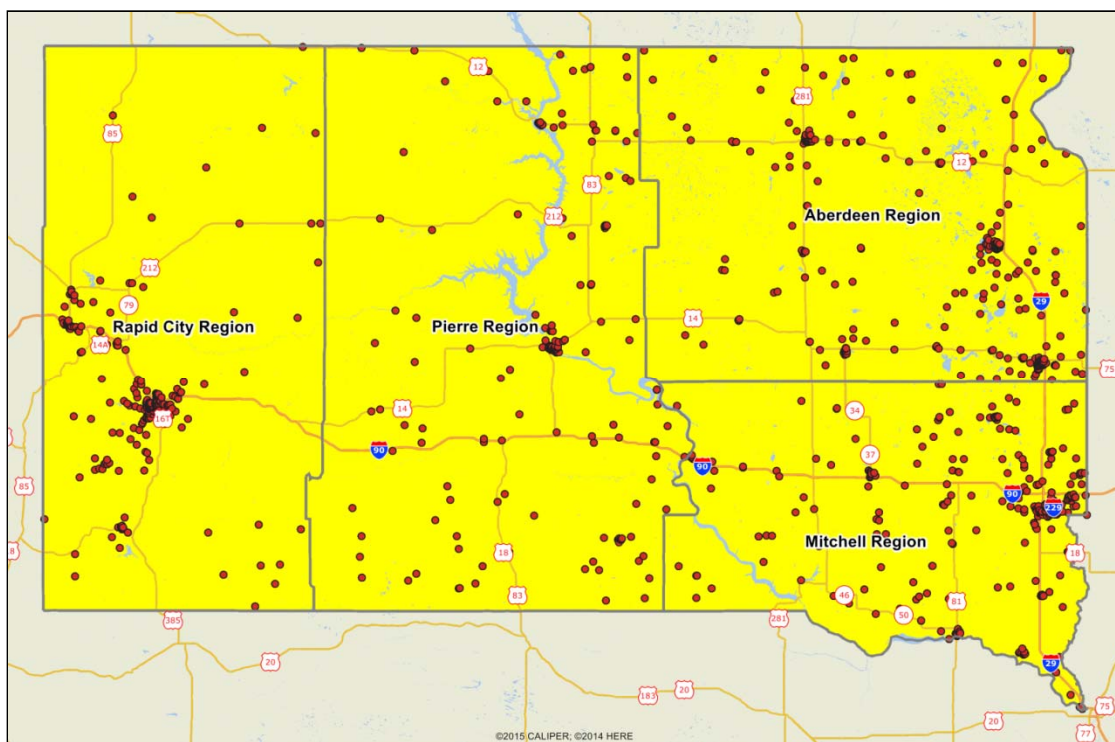


Figure 2: Location of Respondents

TASK 5: TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

ETC Institute prepared and submitted a technical memorandum that summarized the survey results, compared the results to previous assessments and identified issues that are most deserving of action by the SDDOT.

TASK 6: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The tools that were used to develop the recommendations that are contained in this report are described below.

- Trend Analysis. Differences between the 2011 and previous surveys were reviewed. Significant differences are identified in the appropriate sections of this report.
- Comparison of the results among different customer groups. In addition to the survey conducted among South Dakota residents, surveys were also conducted with key customer groups who have a prominent stake in the delivery of SDDOT services. These key customer groups included farmers/ranchers, shippers/truckers, emergency vehicle operators, contractors, and senior citizens. To ensure that potential differences between key customer groups were identified, individual analysis was conducted for each of the customer groups that were surveyed. Significant differences are noted where applicable in subsequent sections of this report.

TASK 7: FINAL REPORT

ETC Institute prepared a draft of the final report summarizing research methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as copies of the survey instrument that were used. This report included, but was not limited to, the following items:

- Executive summary of survey methodology and findings
- Charts depicting the overall results of the survey
- Tabular data that shows the overall results for each question on each survey along with cross tabulations of the results by region and other variables as appropriate
- Conclusions and recommendations for action
- Copies of the survey instruments
- Summary reports for the stakeholder interviews and resident surveys

TASK 8: EXECUTIVE PRESENTATIONS

In March 2016, ETC Institute made a final presentation of the results to SDDOT's Research Review Board and the South Dakota Transportation Commission. The presentations focused on the results of the survey, recommendations for action, and the implications that the survey results have for the Department's Strategic Plan.

ETC Institute made another presentation that was offered via webinar to all SDDOT employees on November 21, 2016.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

MAJOR TOPICS

The 2015 Customer Satisfaction Assessment was designed to evaluate SDDOT's performance in ten major areas:

1. Highway Maintenance
2. Highway Safety
3. Highway Design
4. Information and Communication
5. Construction and Detours
6. Environmental Stewardship
7. Transportation System Priorities
8. Overall Perceptions of and Satisfaction with SDDOT
9. Relationships with Contractors

Significant findings from each of these areas are described on the following pages.

1. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Some of the findings that were related to highway maintenance are listed below.

Highest Rated Maintenance Items

The highway maintenance activities that had the highest levels of satisfaction were:

- maintaining guard rails
- visibility of signs
- providing roadside care
- cleaning rest areas.

Lowest Rated Maintenance Items

The areas that had the lowest levels of satisfaction were:

- removing roadway and shoulder debris
- maintaining the surface of highways
- maintaining bridges
- striping sides of roads

Trends Since 2011

- Overall satisfaction with the maintenance on state highways decreased since 2011. In 2015, 80% of the residents surveyed indicated that they were satisfied (meaning they gave a rating of 7-10 on a 10-point scale) with the quality of maintenance on state highways in South Dakota. In 2011, 84% of the resident surveyed indicated that they were satisfied the overall quality of maintenance on state highways.

- Of the 13 highway maintenance *areas* that were assessed on the survey, satisfaction decreased in 12 of the 13 areas that were rated. The biggest decreases involved: maintenance of shoulders along highways, (-10%), maintenance of bridges (-8%), and cleanliness of rest areas (-8%). Satisfaction with efforts to maintain highway services was unchanged.

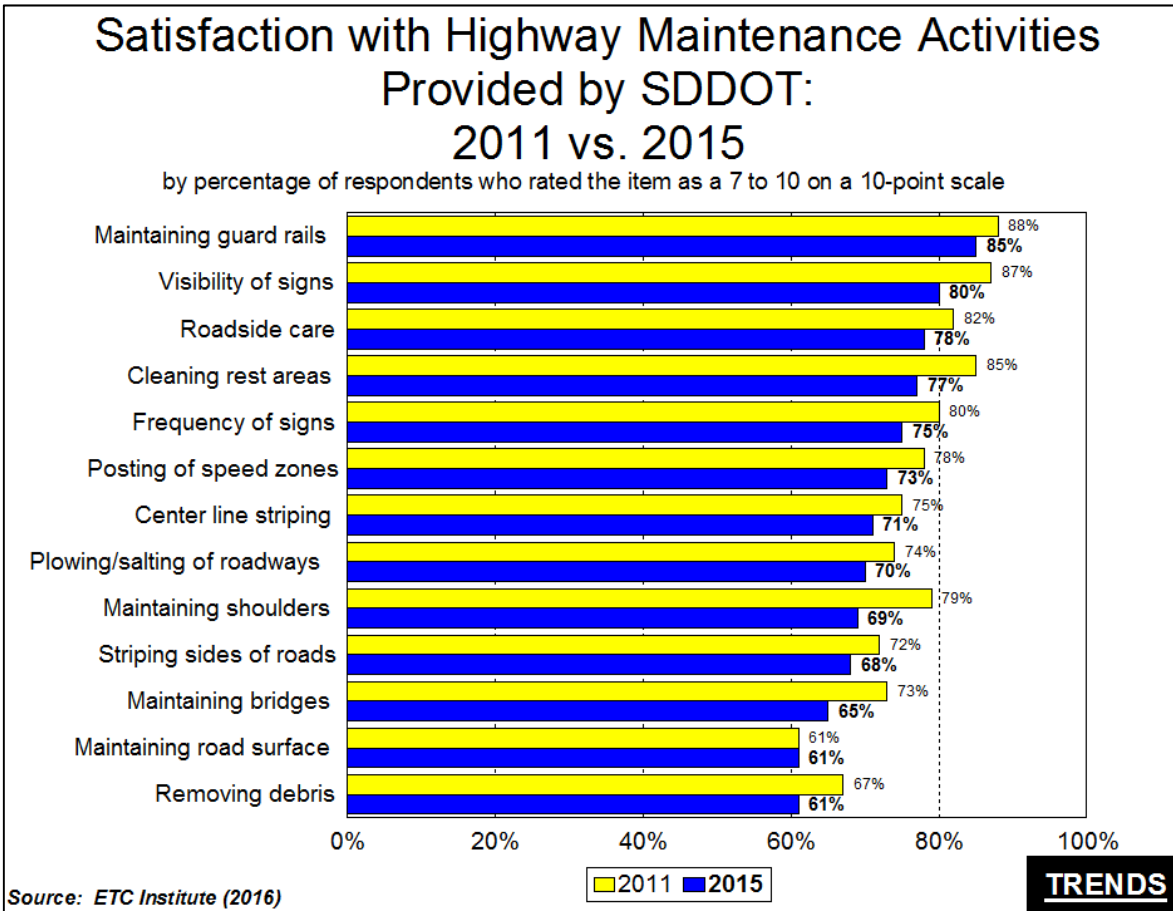


Figure 3: Satisfaction with Highway Maintenance Activities Provided by SDDOT - 2011 vs. 2015

Variations in Satisfaction Levels with Highway Maintenance By Location

The map below shows how satisfied residents were with the overall job SDDOT has done maintaining state highways based on the location of the respondent's home. The shading reflects the mean rating that was given by all respondents in each region. The entire state is shaded in blue, which indicates that residents generally thought SDDOT was doing a good job in all areas of the state.

Priorities for Highway Maintenance

Areas of maintenance that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next two years were: (1) maintaining road surfaces, (2) plowing and salting of snow-covered roadways, (3) maintaining bridges, and (4) removing debris. The figure below shows how the top 5 priorities have changed since 2006. Maintaining road surfaces, removing debris, and plowing/salting of snow/ice have been in the "top 5" in each of the past three surveys. The chart on the following page shows the results for all maintenance items that were assessed.

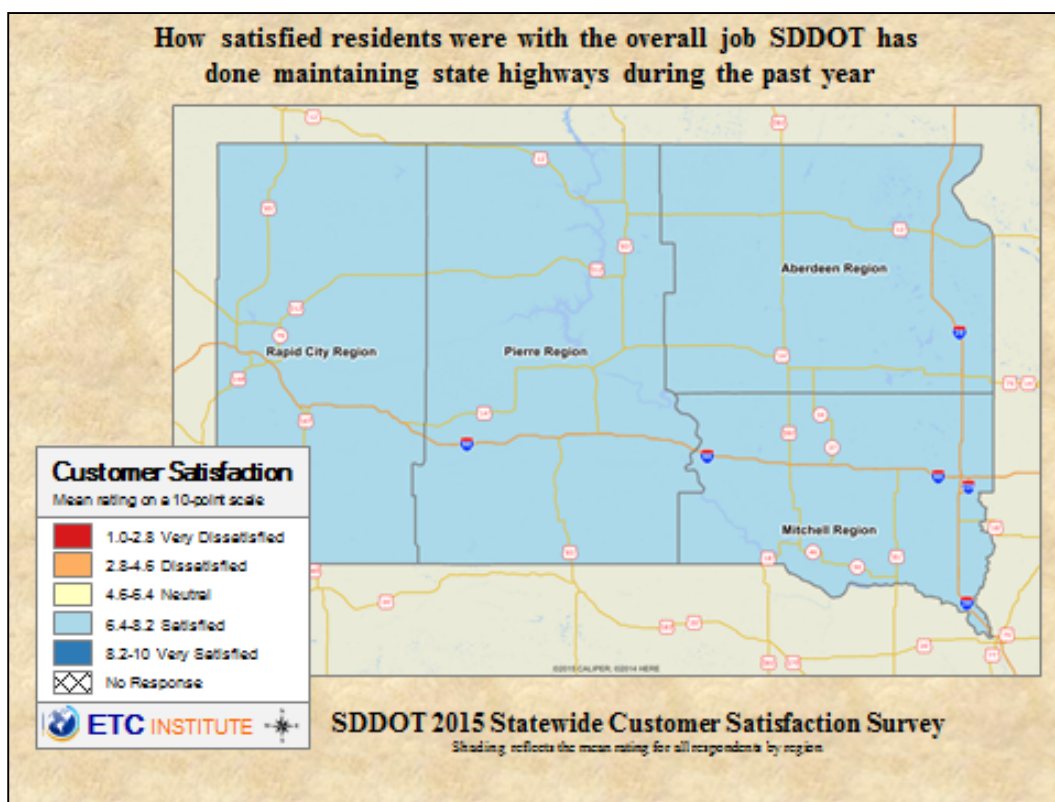


Figure 4: Satisfaction with Highway Maintenance by Region in 2015

Rank	2015	2011	2006
1st	Maintaining Road Surface	Maintaining Road Surface	Removing Debris
2nd	Plowing/Salting of Snow and Ice	Removing Debris	Maintaining Road Surface
3rd	Maintaining Bridges	Maintaining Bridges	Plowing/Salting of Snow and Ice
4th	Removing Debris	Roadside Striping	Maintaining Shoulders
5th	Maintaining Shoulders	Plowing/Salting of Snow and Ice	Roadside Striping

Figure 5: Priorities for Highway Maintenance - 2006 to 2015

The biggest change in priorities since 2011 involved the increase in priority that residents placed on the plowing/salting of snow/ice. The percentage of residents who selected plowing/salting of snow/ice increased 21% since 2011.

The biggest change in priorities since 2006 involved the increase emphasis on the importance of bridges. The percentage of residents who bridge maintenance as one of their top priorities has increased 26% since 2006. Nationally, residents have placed a higher priority on bridge improvements since the collapse of an eight-lane bridge on I-35 over the Mississippi River in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2007 that killed 13 and injured 145.

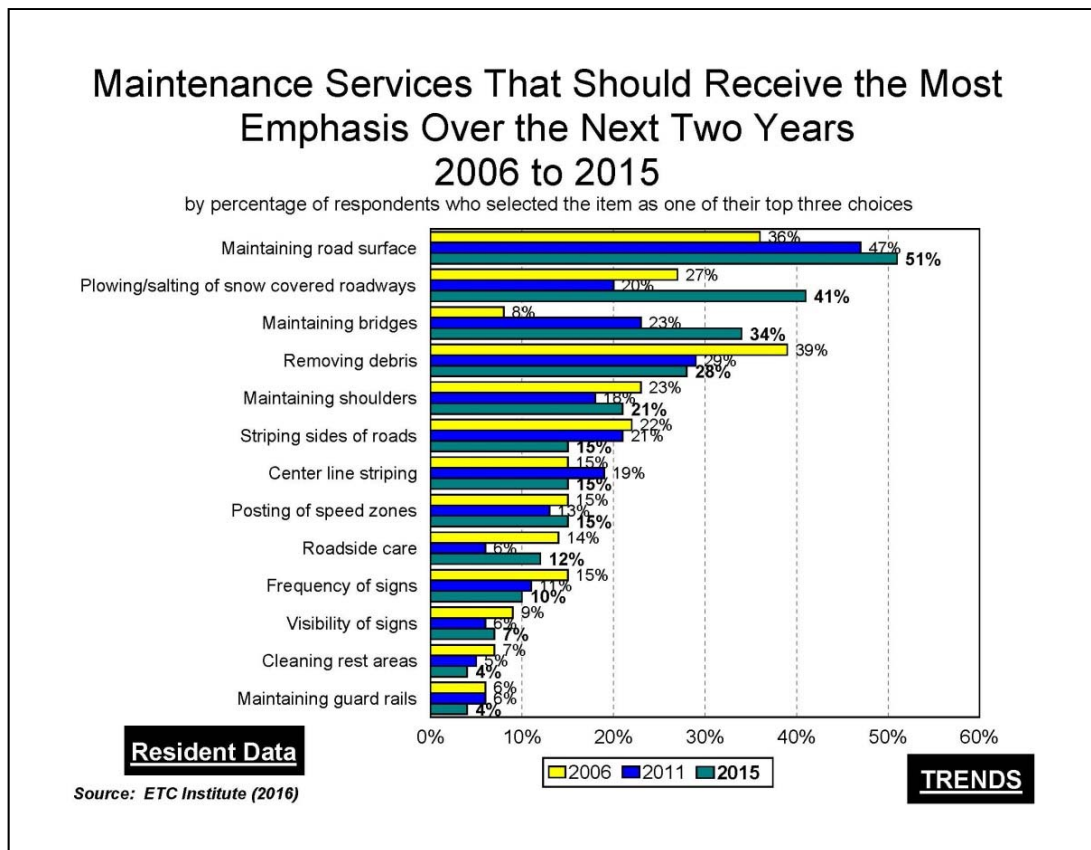


Figure 6: Priorities for Highway Maintenance - 2006 to 2015

Priority	% Change Since 2011	% Change Since 2006
Maintaining Road Surface	4%	15%
Plowing/Salting of Snow and Ice	21%	14%
Maintaining Bridges	11%	26%
Removing Debris	-1%	-11%
Maintaining Shoulders	3%	-2%

Figure 7: Changes in Highway Maintenance Priorities

Priorities by Region

The figure below shows the ranking of maintenance priorities within each of the State's four regions and the overall ranking statewide. The top three priorities were the same in all four regions: (1) maintaining the surface of highways, (2) plowing/salting of snow, and (3) maintaining bridges. The only significant difference by region involved the importance of striping on the sides of the road, which was significantly more important in the Rapid City region.

Priority	Mitchelle	Aberdeen	Pierre	Rapid City	Overall
Maintaining the surface of highways	1	1	1	1	1
Plowing/salting of snow	2	2	2	2	2
Maintaining bridges	3	3	3	3	3
Maintaining shoulders along roads	4	4	4	5	4
Removing roadway and shoulder debris	5	5	5	6	5
Center line striping	6	7	8	7	6
Striping on the sides of road	7	8	9	4	7
Providing roadside care, such as mowing and removing overgrowth	8	6	7	8	8
Posting of speed zones	9	9	6	9	9
Frequency of signs	10	10	10	10	10
Maintaining guard rails	11	11	12	11	11
Visibility of signs	12	12	13	12	12
Cleaning rest areas	13	13	11	13	13

Figure 8: Ranking of Maintenance Priorities by Region

Priorities by Customer Group

The figure on the following page shows the ranking of maintenance priorities by customer group. The top five priorities were the same for all five customer groups, but the order in which these five items were ranked varied slightly among the groups. For example, state legislators placed slightly more importance on maintaining bridges than the other groups, and emergency vehicle operators placed more importance on the maintenance of shoulders than other groups.

Priority	Truckers and Shippers	Emergency Vehicle Operators	State Legislators	Farmers and Ranchers	Other Residents
Maintaining the surface of highways	1	1	1	1	1
Plowing/salting of snow	2	2	3	2	2
Maintaining bridges	3	4	2	3	3
Maintaining shoulders along roads	4	3	5	5	5
Removing roadway and shoulder debris	5	5	4	4	4
Center line striping	6	9	8	9	6
Striping on the sides of road	7	6	7	7	7
Providing roadside care, such as mowing and removing overgrowth	8	7	6	6	10
Posting of speed zones	9	8	11	8	8
Frequency of signs	10	10	9	10	9
Maintaining guard rails	11	13	10	13	12
Visibility of signs	12	11	13	11	11
Cleaning rest areas	13	12	12	12	13

Figure 9: Ranking of Maintenance Priorities by Customer Group

2. HIGHWAY SAFETY FINDINGS

Residents and key customer groups across the State indicated that they thought highway safety should be one of the top priorities for SDDOT. Some of the specific findings that were related to highway safety are listed below.

- **Most residents think highways are just as safe or safer than they were five years ago.** Thirty-five percent (35%) of the residents surveyed indicated that South Dakota highways

were “much safer” or “somewhat safer” than they were five years ago; 46% rated highways safety “about the same”; 11% thought highways were “more dangerous,” 3% thought they were “much more dangerous,” and 5% did not have an opinion.

- **Residents now think distracted drivers are the biggest safety concern on highways.** Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the residents surveyed thought that “distracted drivers” was the biggest safety concern on highways. In 2011, the biggest safety concern was “winter conditions” (42%).
- **Residents think SDDOT does a good job providing signage in work zones.** Eighty-three percent (83%) of the residents surveyed thought that the SDDOT did a good job of providing signage in work zones on state highways.

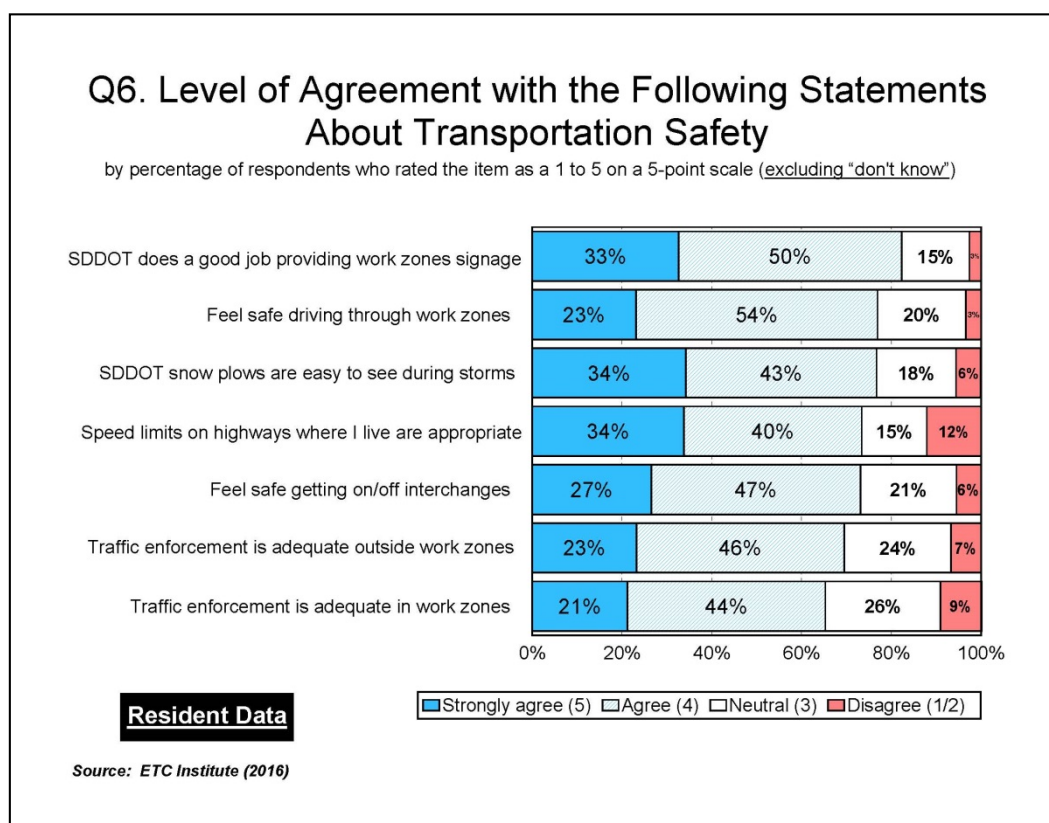


Figure 10: Resident Agreement With Statements About Transportation Safety

- **Most residents feel safe driving through work zones in all areas of the State.** The map on the following page shows how safe residents feel when driving through work zones on South Dakota highways. The shading reflects the mean rating that was given by all respondents in each region. The entire state is shaded in blue, which indicates that residents generally feel safe driving through work zones in all areas of the state.

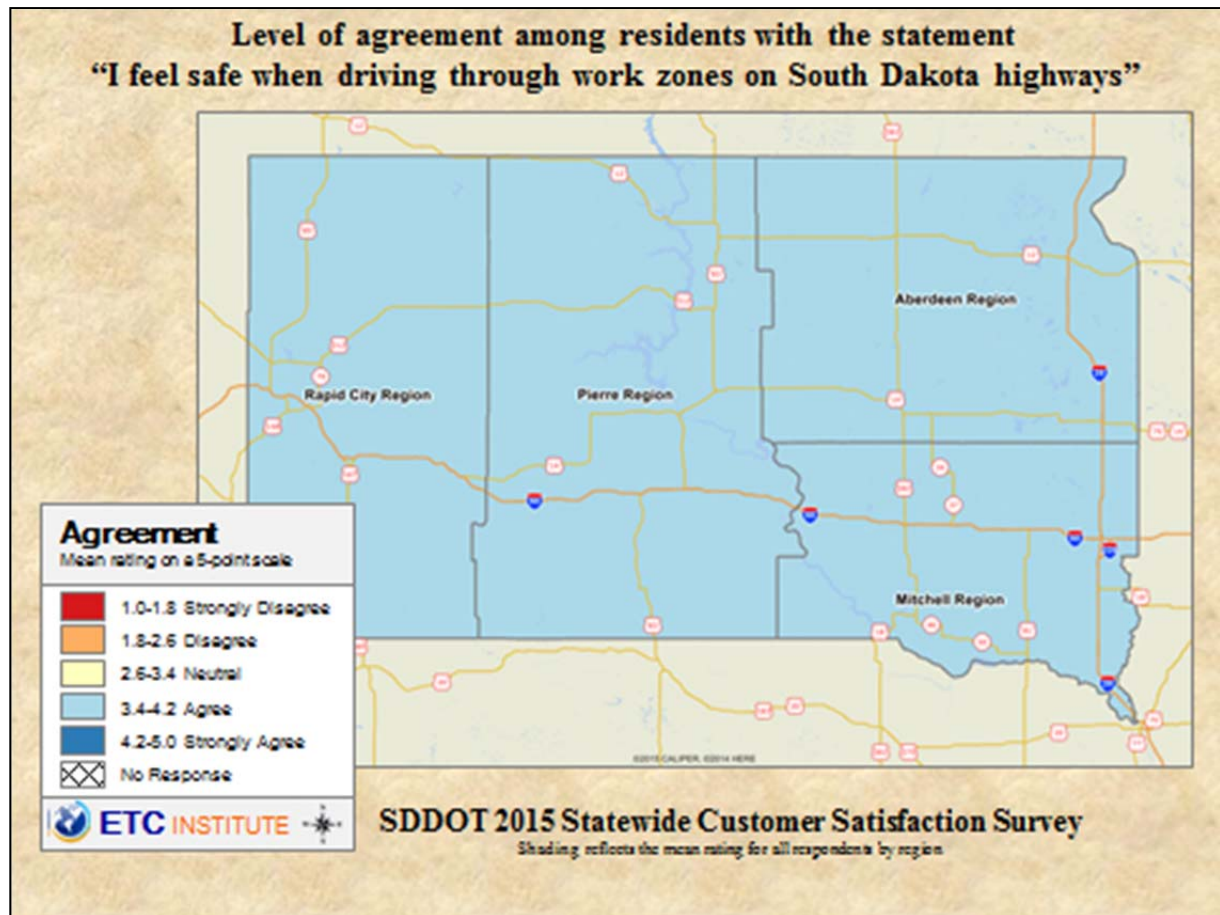


Figure 11: Agreement with How Safe Residents Feel When Driving Through Work Zones on South Dakota Highways

3. HIGHWAY DESIGN

In order to help SDDOT understand the expectations that residents have regarding the design of state highways, the survey contained several questions regarding satisfaction with specific highway features and the priority that should be placed on improvements.

Highest Rated Highway Design Features Items. The highway features that had the highest levels of satisfaction were:

- the lighting of interchanges in cities
- shoulders on interstates/divided highways
- overall flow of traffic on highways
- frequency of roadside rest areas on interstates.

Lowest Rated Highway Features. The highway features that had the lowest levels of satisfaction were:

- the smoothness of rural two-lane highways
- shoulders on rural two-lane highways
- landscaping/snow fences along highways.

Trends Since 2011. Of the 11 highway features that were assessed on the survey, satisfaction decreased in 8 of the 11 areas that were rated. The biggest decrease involved satisfaction with landscaping/snow fences along highways (-6%). The biggest increase involved lighting at rural interstate interchanges (+3%). The trends for all 11 features that were assessed are shown in the figure below.

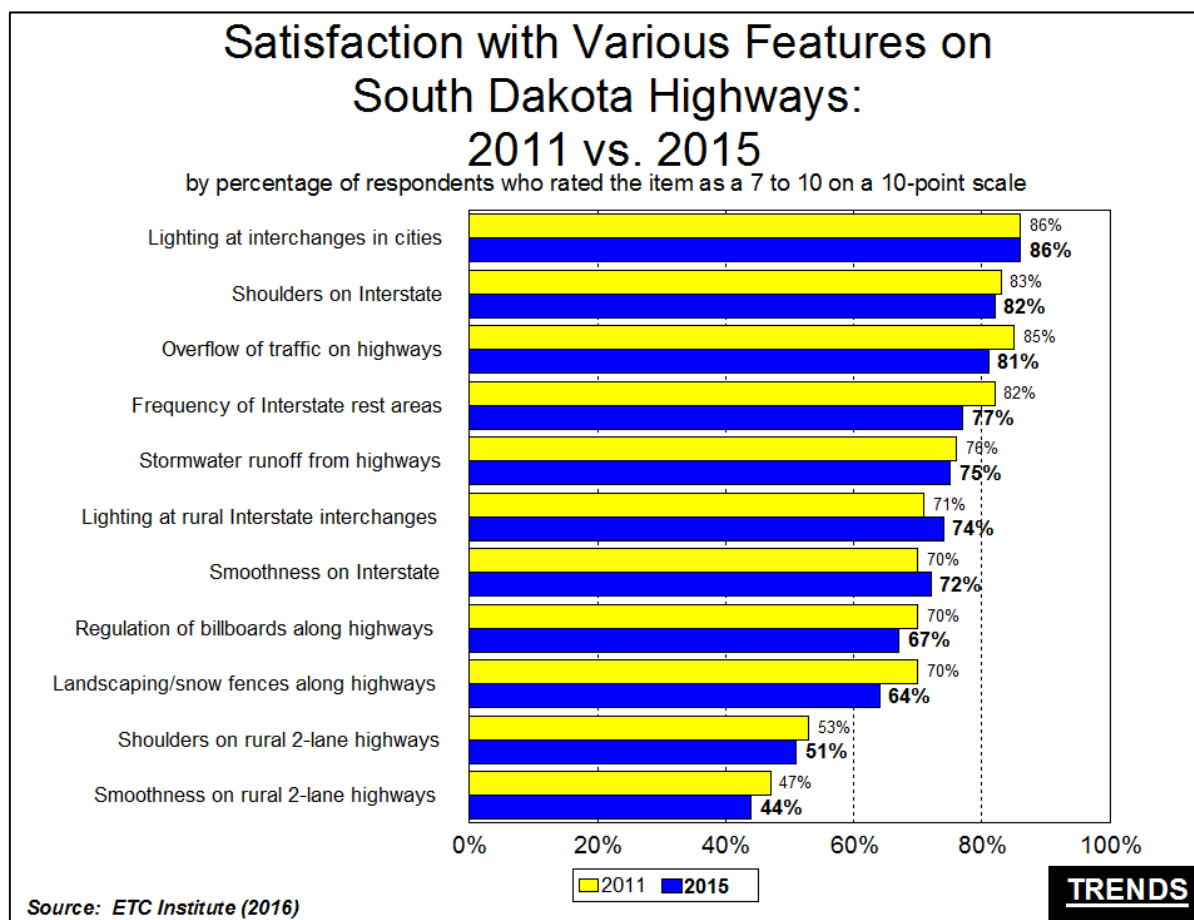


Figure 12: Satisfaction with Various Features on South Dakota Highways - 2011 vs. 2015

Highway Features That Should Be the Top Priorities for Improvement. The two highway features that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next two years were: (1) the smoothness of rural two-lane highways and (2) shoulders on rural two-lane highways. The figure below shows the importance of all 11 features assessed on the survey.

Q13. Highway Features That Should Receive the Most Emphasis Over the Next Two Years

by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top three choices

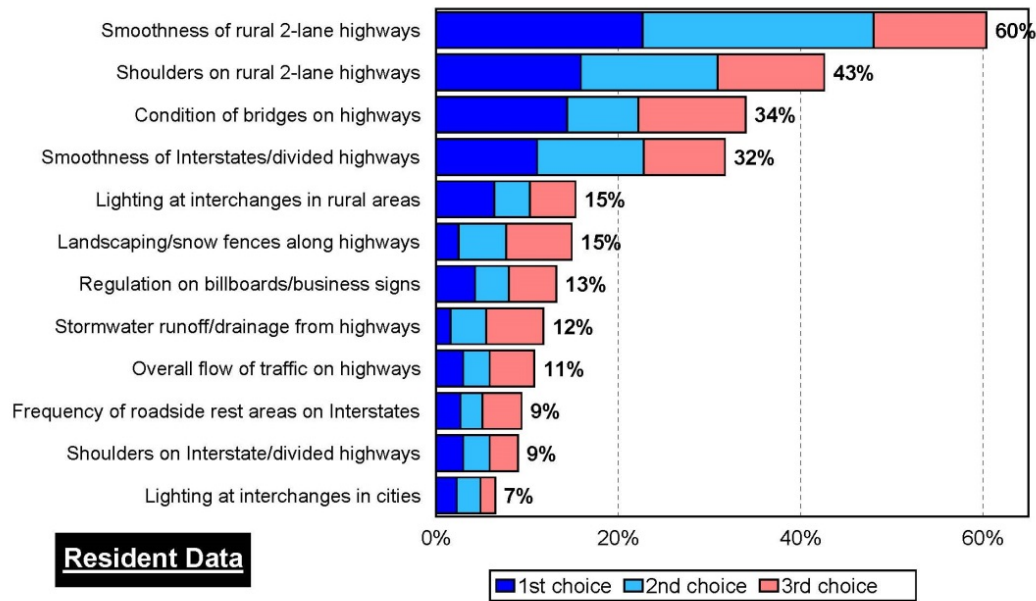


Figure 13: Highway Features That Should Receive the Most Emphasis Over the Next Two Years

Priorities By Region

The figure on the following page shows the ranking of highway design priorities within each of the State's four regions and the overall ranking statewide. The top four priorities were the same in all four regions, but the ranking varied slightly. The smoothness of rural two-lane highways was the most important feature in all four regions. The adequacy of shoulders on rural two-lane highways was the second most important feature in three of four regions. The condition of bridges was the second most important feature for residents of the Mitchell region. The overall ranking by region is shown for all highway features that were assessed in the figure below.

Priorities By Customer Group

The figure on the following page shows the ranking of highway design priorities by customer group. The top four priorities were the same for all five customer groups, but the order in which these four items were ranked varied slightly among the groups. For example, state legislators and farmers/ranchers placed slightly more importance on the smoothness of interstates and other divided highways. Emergency vehicle operators and truckers/shippers placed more importance on the condition of bridges.

Priority	Mitchelle	Aberdeen	Pierre	Rapid City	Overall
Smoothness of rural two-lane highway	1	1	1	1	1
Adequacy of shoulders on rural two-lane highways	3	2	2	2	2
Condition of bridges on highways	2	3	4	4	3
Smoothness of Interstates and other divided highways	4	4	3	3	4
Adequacy of lighting at interchanges along Interstates in rural areas	5	6	6	6	5
Landscaping and snow fences along highways	7	5	5	7	6
Regulation of the placement of billboards and business signs	8	10	11	5	7
Stormwater runoff and drainage from highway	9	8	7	8	8
Overall flow of traffic on highways	6	7	8	10	9
Frequency of roadside rest areas on Interstates	12	9	9	9	10
Adequacy of shoulders on Interstates and divided highways	10	11	10	11	11
Adequacy of lighting at interchanges along Interstates in cities	11	12	12	12	12

Figure 14: Ranking of Highway Design Priorities by Region and Statewide

Priority	Truckers and Shippers	Emergency Vehicle Operators	State Legislators	Farmers and Ranchers	Other Residents
Smoothness of rural two-lane highway	1	1	1	1	1
Adequacy of shoulders on rural two-lane highways	2	2	2	2	2
Smoothness of Interstates and other divided highways	4	4	3	3	4
Condition of bridges on highways	3	3	4	4	3
Adequacy of lighting at interchanges along Interstates in rural areas	7	6	5	5	5
Overall flow of traffic on highways	9	10	6	6	9
Landscaping and snow fences along highways	5	5	7	7	7
Regulation of the placement of billboards and business signs	10	9	8	8	6
Stormwater runoff and drainage from highway	6	7	9	9	8
Adequacy of shoulders on Interstates and divided highways	11	8	10	10	11
Adequacy of lighting at interchanges along Interstates in cities	12	12	11	11	12
Frequency of roadside rest areas on Interstates	8	11	12	12	10

Figure 15: Ranking of Highway Design Priorities by Customer Group

4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Most members of the Executive Team who participated in the stakeholder interviews felt it was important for SDDOT to communicate well with residents and key customer groups. In order to assess the effectiveness of communication programs that are currently in place, the research team included several questions about communication. Some of the major findings in this area are listed below.

Most residents think SDDOT does as good job keeping residents informed. More than three-fourths (76%) of the residents surveyed were satisfied with SDDOT's overall efforts to keep residents informed. Only 5% were dissatisfied as shown in the figure on the following page.

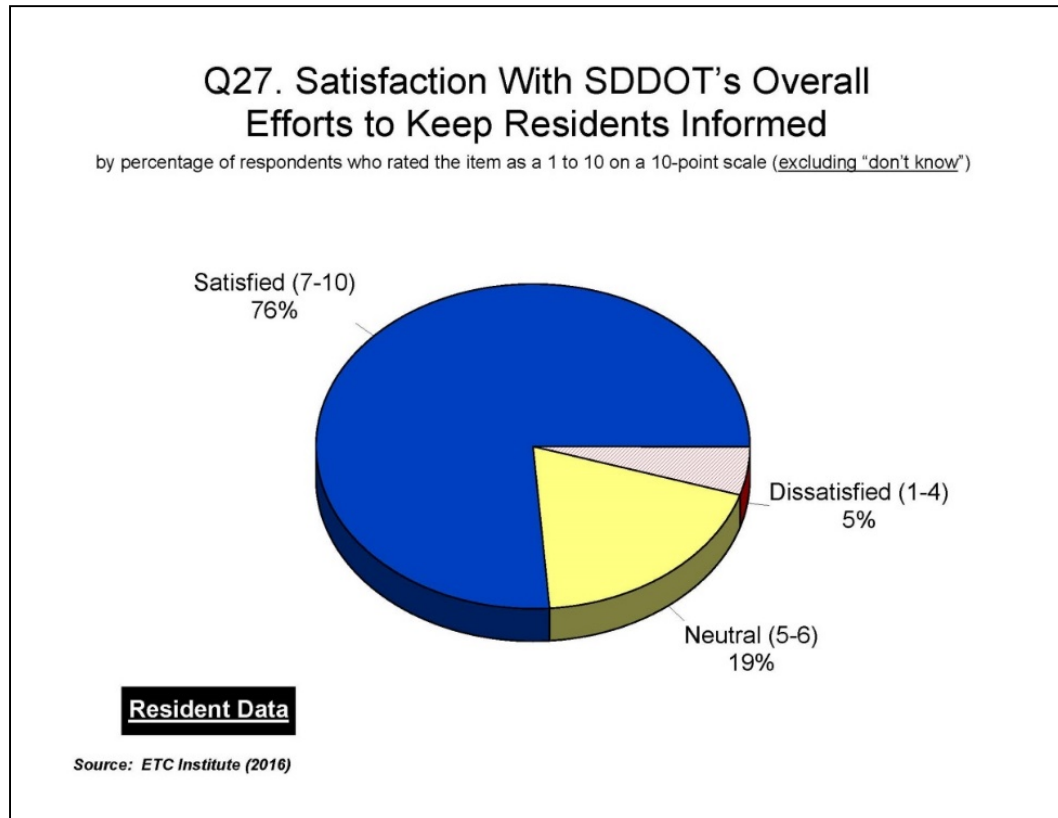


Figure 16: Satisfaction with SDDOT's Overall Efforts to Keep Residents Informed

Other findings related to SDDOT's efforts to keep residents informed include:

- Most (84%) of residents think SDDOT does a good job of keeping citizens informed about road conditions; 13% were "neutral" and 3% said "poor."
- Two-thirds (66%) of residents think SDDOT does a good job of alerting citizens about delays and alternate routes; 25% were "neutral" and 9% said "poor."

Most residents are satisfied with how easy it is to contact SDDOT employees. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the residents surveyed who indicated they have contacted a SDDOT office during the past two years thought it was "very easy" or "fairly easy" to contact the right person; 11% felt it was "somewhat difficult" and 7% felt it was "very difficult" to contact the right person.

Familiarity and usage of most traveler information systems.

- Three-fourths (76%) of the residents surveyed indicated that they are familiar with 511. Other traveler information services respondents are aware of include: camera images of road conditions (53%) and the Safe Travel/USA website (46%).
- The traveler information services residents have used most during the past two years include 511 (45%) and camera images of road conditions (44%).
- The top two types of information sought by residents from SDDOT's traveler information systems were (1) information about road conditions and (2) information about construction project. The top five types of information that were sought are shown in the figure on the following page.

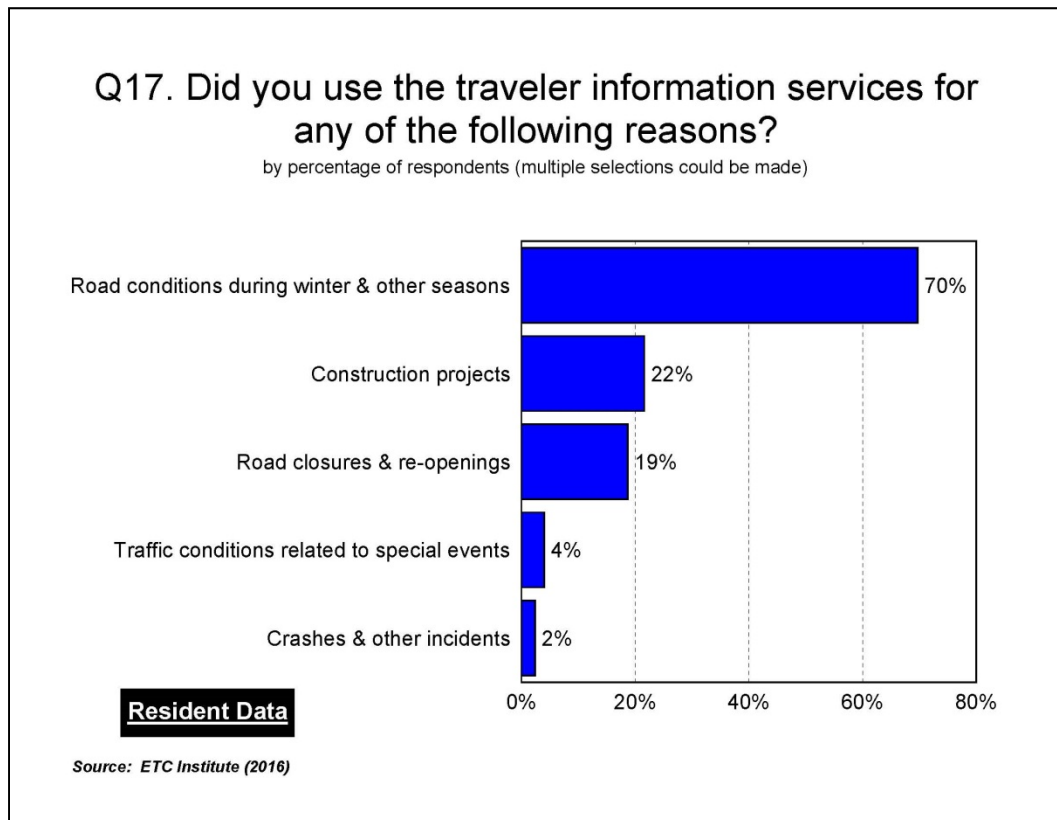
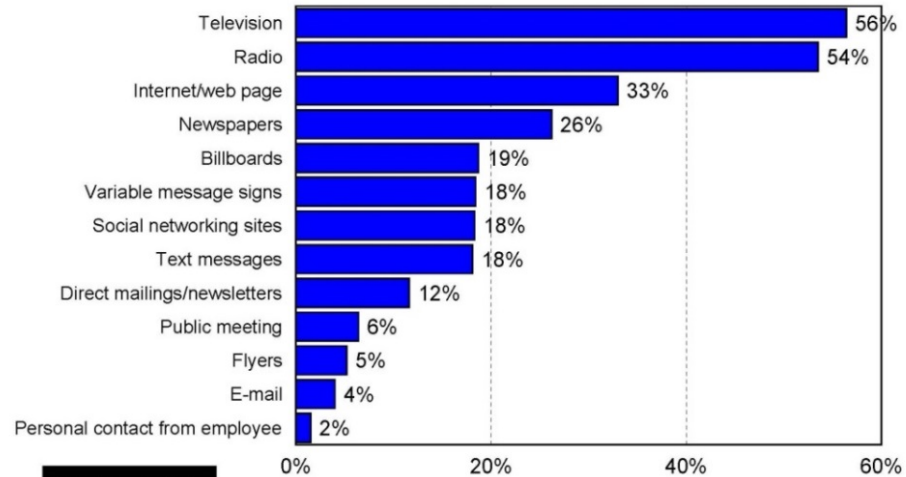


Figure 17: Reasons Why Residents Used Traveler Information Services

Preferred Sources of Information. The figures below show how residents would prefer to get information from SDDOT and the social media channels residents would like SDDOT to use

Q24. How Respondents Would Like to Get or Receive Information from the SDDOT

by percentage of respondents who indicated that they have visited SDDOT's website to obtain information other than road conditions in the past two years (multiple selections could be made)



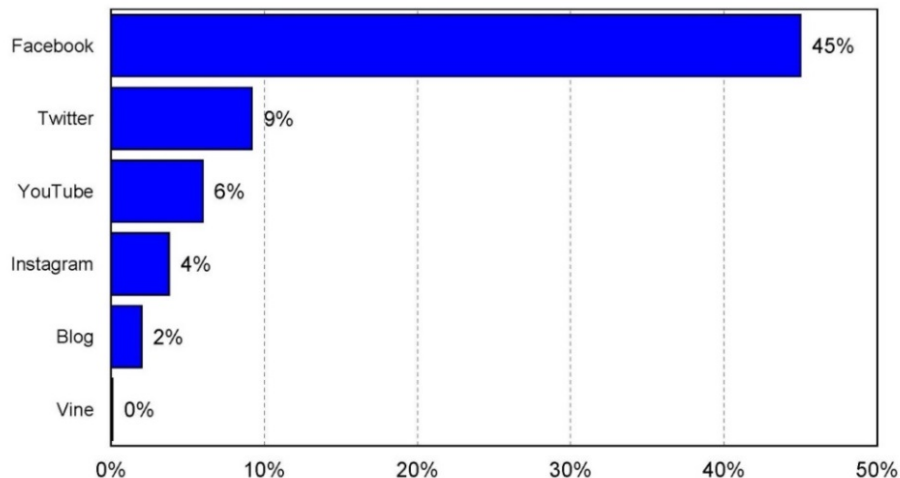
Resident Data

Source: ETC Institute (2016)

Figure 18: How Residents Prefer to Get Information from the SDDOT

Q25. Social Media Channels Respondents Would Like SDDOT to Use

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



Resident Data

Source: ETC Institute (2016)

Figure 19: Social Media Channels Preferred by Residents

5. CONSTRUCTION AND DETOURS

External stakeholders and members of the Executive Team thought it was important for SDDOT to gather input from the general public and key customer groups about construction and detours on state highways. Some of the major findings from this section of the survey are listed below.

Most residents have driven through work zones on highways in South Dakota. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the residents surveyed reported that they had driven through work zones on state highways in South Dakota during the past year. This was up from 87% in 2011.

Most residents think the length of delays caused by construction and detours is acceptable. Seventy-four percent (74%) of the residents surveyed who had experienced a delay caused by construction on state highways reported that the length (distance) of the work zone was “always” or “usually” acceptable.

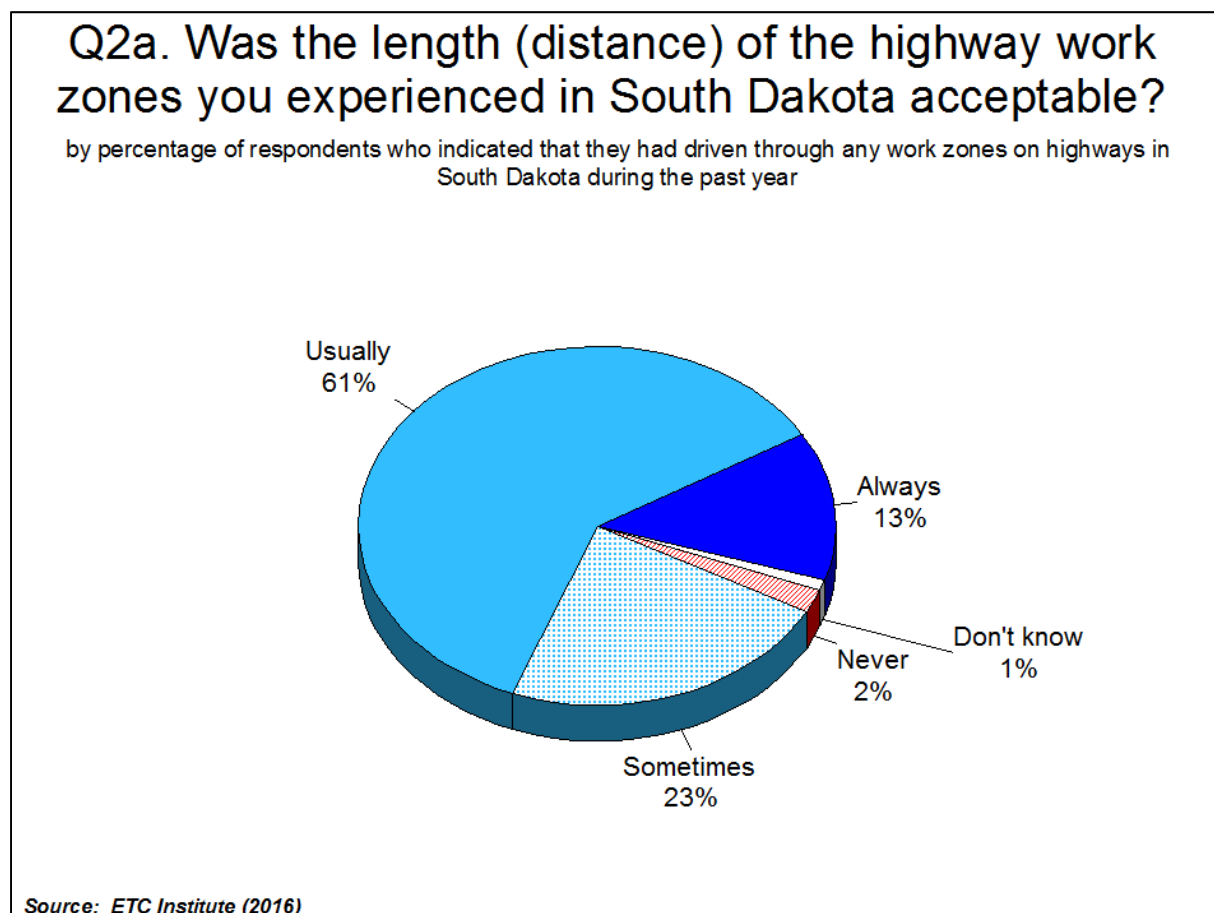


Figure 20: How Often Residents Felt the Length of Highway Work Zones Was Acceptable

Reducing Time to Complete Construction Projects vs. Minimizing Delays to Drivers. Residents and key stakeholder groups were asked if they thought was more important to reduce the time it takes to complete construction projects or minimize delays to drivers during the projects. The results were split. Truckers and residents generally thought it was more important to reduce the time it takes to complete construction projects. State legislators, farmers/ranchers, and emergency vehicles operators were generally more likely to think it was more important to minimize delays to drivers during the projects. The results for each group are shown in the figure below.

Area to Emphasize Most	Truckers/ Shippers	Emergency Vehicle Operators	State Legislators	Farmers/ Ranchers	Other Residents
Reducing the time it takes to complete construction projects	56%	45%	37%	43%	55%
Minimizing delays to drivers	40%	54%	63%	55%	43%
Don't know	4%	1%	0%	2%	3%

Figure 21: Importance of Time Reduction vs. Minimizing Delays, by Customer Group

6. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Increased public awareness about environmental issues combined with Federal mandates that govern the construction and reconstruction of highway have made it more important than ever for departments of transportation to be perceived as good stewards of the environment. For this reason, the survey asked residents if they thought SDDOT was being a good steward of the environment. The findings are below.

Although residents generally think SDDOT is a good steward of the environment, many residents do not have an opinion. Two-thirds (66%) of the residents surveyed thought that SDDOT was a good steward of the environment, and 30% did not have an opinion. Only 4% did not think SDDOT was a good steward of the environment.

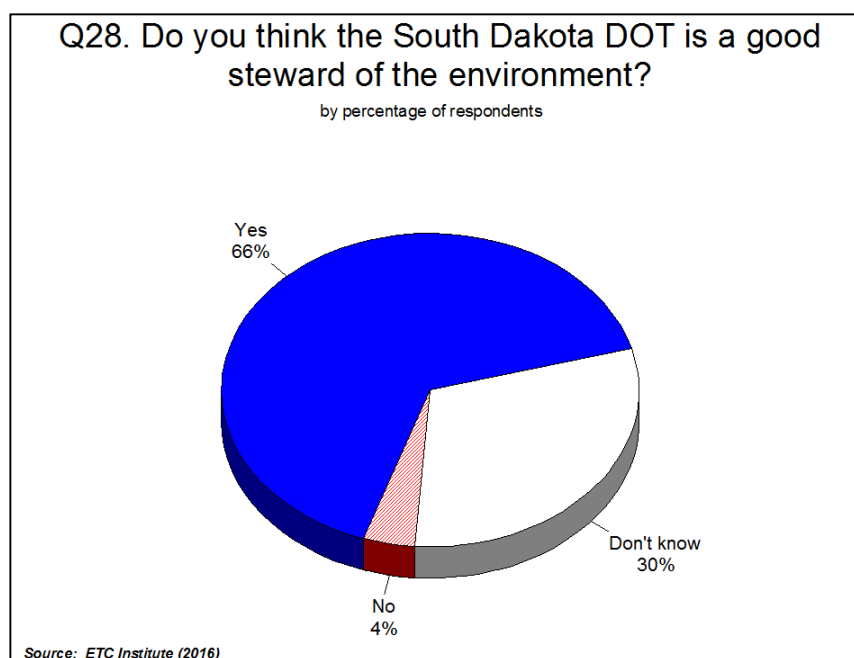


Figure 22: Resident Opinion About SDDOT's Environmental Stewardship

Most residents are concerned about damage caused by overweight trucks. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the residents surveyed were either “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about the damage caused by overweight trucks to highways in South Dakota; 14% were not concerned, and 5% did not have an opinion.

7. TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

In order to help SDDOT leaders set priorities for improvement to the State’s transportation system, the survey included a series of questions that asked residents to rate the importance of various transportation priorities. The transportation system priorities that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next five years were: maintaining existing highways (62%), adding turning/passing lanes to highways (34%), adding shoulders to highways (29%), and expanding transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities (24%). The figure below shows how the priorities have changed since 2011.

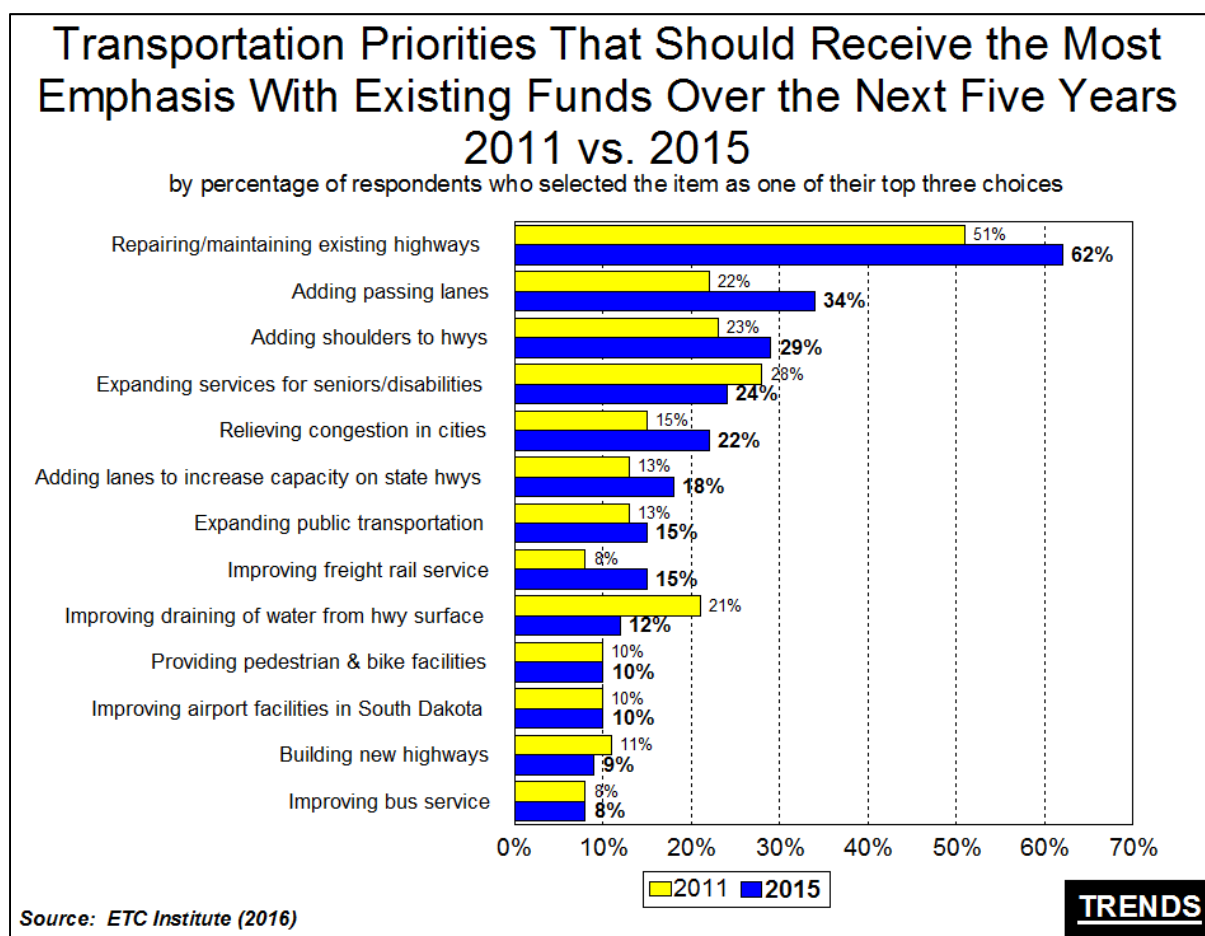


Figure 23: Transportation Priorities That Should Receive the Most Emphasis With Existing Funds Over the Next Five Years - 2011 vs. 2015
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Priorities By Region

The figure below shows the top transportation priorities for residents in each of the State’s four regions and the overall ranking statewide. Repairing and maintaining existing highways was the top priority in all four regions. Adding turning and passing lanes was the second highway priority in three

of four regions. Residents of the Pierre region placed slightly more importance on adding shoulders to highways. Residents of the Mitchell region placed more importance on relieving traffic congestion than residents in the other regions. Residents of the Aberdeen region placed more importance on adding lanes to increase capacity on highways.

Priority	Mitchelle	Aberdeen	Pierre	Rapid City	Statewide
Repairing and maintaining existing highways	1	1	1	1	1
Adding turning and passing lanes	2	2	3	2	2
Adding shoulders to highways	4	3	2	4	3
Expanding transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities	5	5	4	3	4
Relieving traffic congestion	3	6	5	5	5
Adding lanes to increase capacity	6	4	8	7	6
Improving freight rail service	7	7	7	9	7
Expanding public transportation/bus service	8	9	6	6	8
Improving the draining of water from highways	9	10	9	8	9
Improving airport facilities	11	8	10	11	10
Providing pedestrian & bicycle facilities	10	12	13	10	11
Building new highways that provide more direct links between communities	12	11	11	12	12
Improving passenger bus service between cities	13	13	12	13	13

Figure 24: Top Transportation Priorities for Residents by Region and Statewide

Priorities By Customer Group

The figure on the following page shows the top transportation priorities by customer group. Repairing and maintaining existing highways was the top priority in all four regions. Adding shoulders to highways was generally more important to truckers/shippers and farmers/ranchers than other groups. Residents, state legislators, and emergency vehicle operators placed slightly more importance on adding turning and passing lanes. Adding lanes to increase capacity on highways was significantly more important to truckers/shippers than other groups.

Priority	Truckers/ shippers	Emergency Vehicle Operators	State Legislators	Farmers and Ranchers	Other Residents
Repairing and maintaining existing highways	1	1	1	1	1
Adding turning and passing lanes	3	2	2	3	2
Expanding transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities	6	4	5	5	3
Adding shoulders to highways	2	3	3	2	4
Relieving traffic congestion	5	8	7	6	5
Expanding public transportation/bus service	10	10	10	9	6
Adding lanes to increase capacity	4	6	6	7	7
Improving the draining of water from highways	9	5	9	8	8
Improving freight rail service	7	7	4	4	9
Improving airport facilities	11	9	8	11	10
Providing pedestrian & bicycle facilities	13	11	11	10	11
Building new highways that provide more direct links between communities	8	13	13	12	12
Improving passenger bus service between cities	12	12	12	13	13

Figure 25: Top Transportation Priorities by Customer Group

8. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF AND SATISFACTION WITH SDDOT

At the end of the survey, the research team included several questions to assess overall perceptions and satisfaction with SDDOT. The major findings are listed below.

- Percentage of respondents who thought SDDOT designs safe highways:
 - 82% of state legislators
 - 76% of farmers/ranchers
 - 75% of residents
 - 73% of emergency vehicle operators
 - 74% of truckers/shippers
- Percentage of respondents who thought SDDOT does a good job planning for future needs:
 - 52% of farmers/ranchers
 - 63% of emergency vehicle operators
 - 52% of residents
 - 44% of state legislators
 - 55% of truckers/shippers
- Percentage of respondents who thought SDDOT is an efficient organization:
 - 59% of state legislators
 - 49% of emergency vehicle operators
 - 52% of residents
 - 42% of farmers/ranchers
 - 42% of truckers/shippers

- Percentage of respondents who were satisfied with the overall quality of all services provided by SDDOT:
 - 69% of state legislators
 - 76% of emergency vehicle operators
 - 75% of residents
 - 75% of farmers/ranchers
 - 76% of truckers/shippers

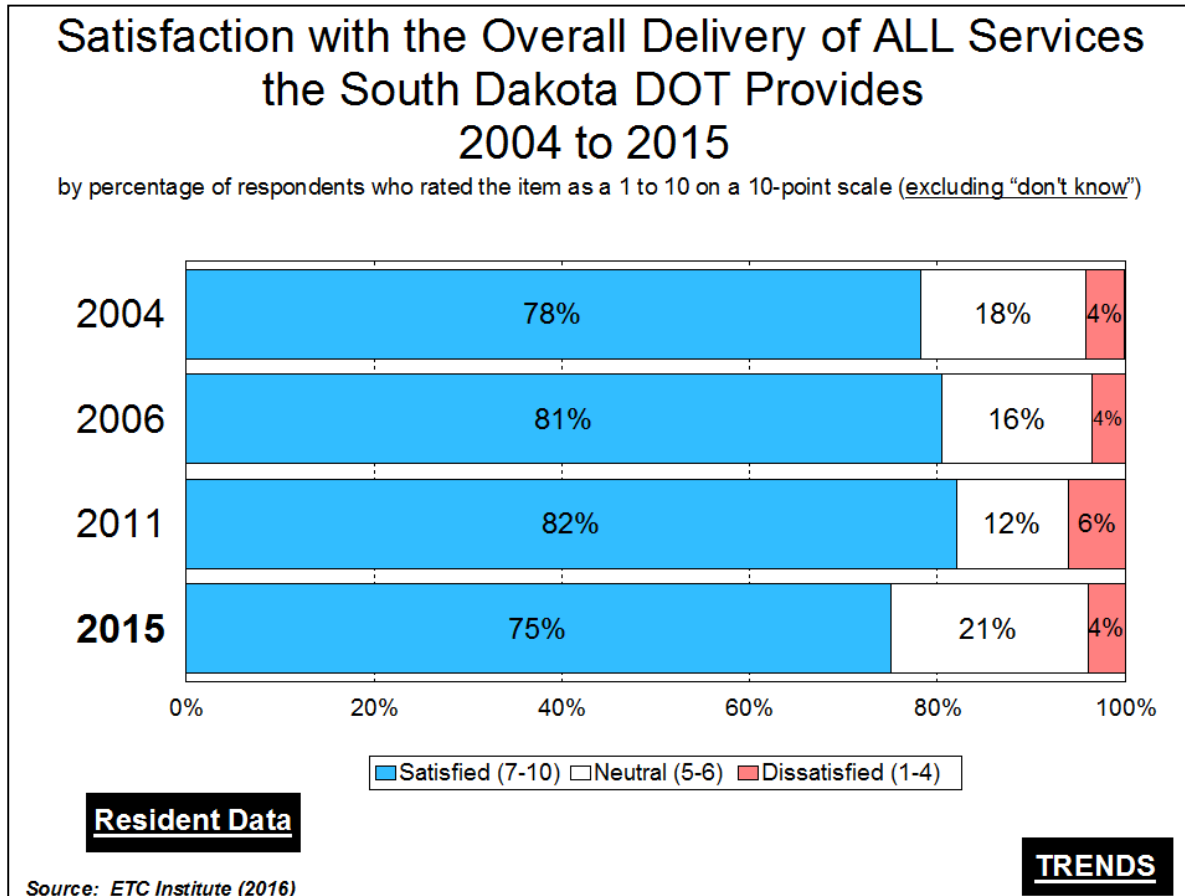


Figure 26: Satisfaction With Overall Delivery of ALL Services Provided by SDDOT - 2004 to 2015

9. RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONTRACTORS

Some of the findings from the contractor survey are listed below:

Most contractors are satisfied with the overall quality of services provided by SDDOT. Sixty percent (60%) were either “extremely satisfied” or “satisfied,” 39% indicated “average” satisfaction, and only 1% were dissatisfied.

Contractors generally think SDDOT highways are safer than they were 5 years ago. More than half (54%) of the contractors surveyed indicated South Dakota’s highways are either “much safer” or “somewhat safer” compared to 5 years ago; 37% thought the safety was “about the same,” 3% indicated they were “somewhat more dangerous,” and 7% did not have an opinion.

Most contractors think SDDOT designs safe highways. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of contractors surveyed either “strongly agree” or “agree” that SDDOT designs safe highways; 10% are “neutral,” and 3% disagree.

Only 1% of contractors rated the quality of highways as “poor”. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the contractors rated the quality of South Dakota highways as either “excellent” or “good”; 40% rated the quality as “fair,” 1% rated it as “poor,” and 1% did not have an opinion. The percentage of contractors who rated the condition of highways as poor declined from 4% in 2011 to just 1%.

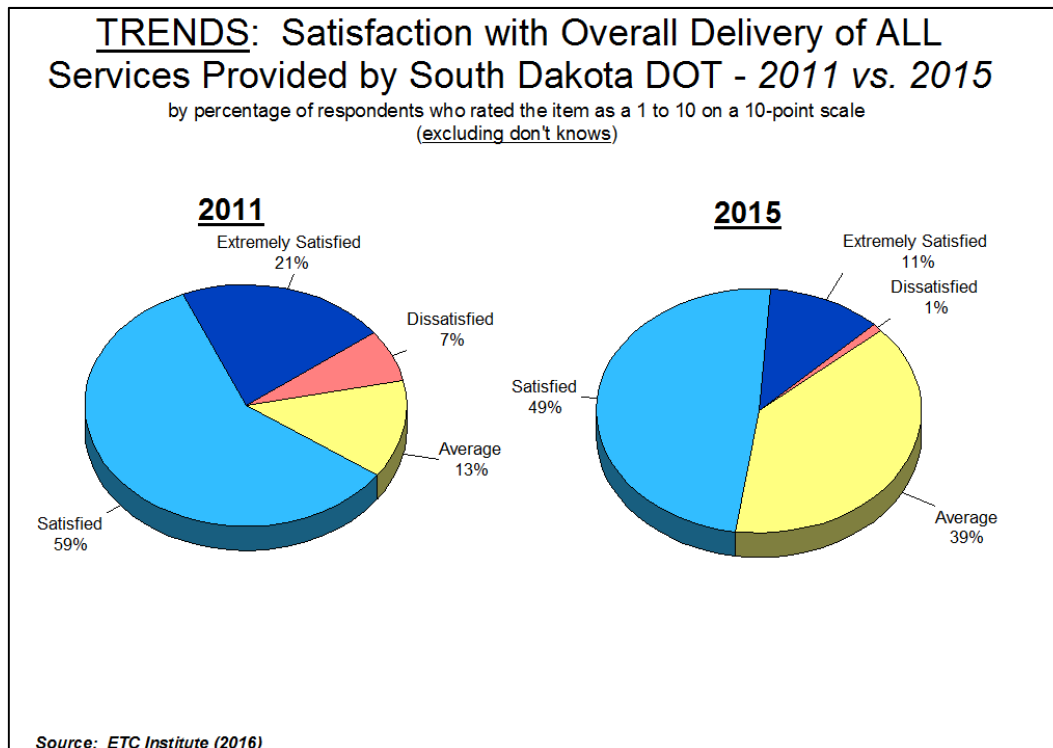
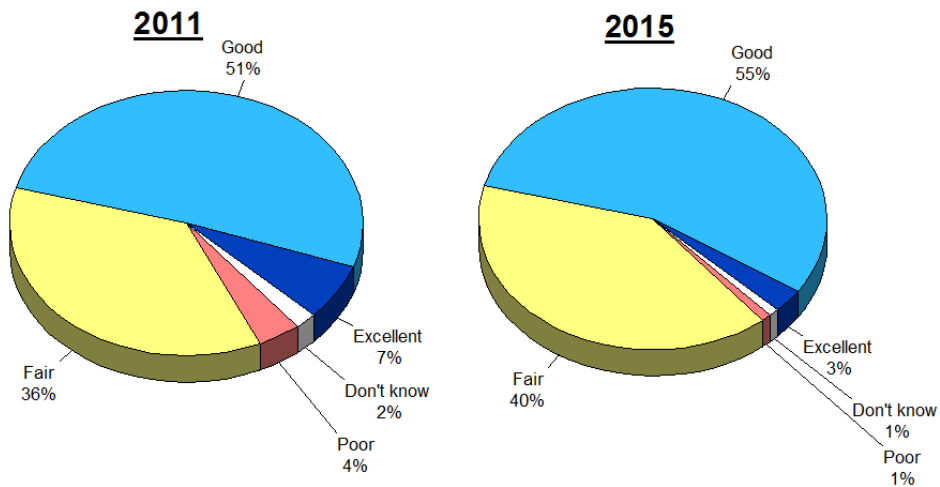


Figure 27: Satisfaction With Overall Delivery of ALL Services Provided by SDDOT - 2011 vs. 2015

Areas that contractors thought SDDOT should emphasize over the next two years. The top three areas that contractors thought SDDOT should emphasize most over the next two years were: (1) doing a good job of empowering employees and (2) requiring a reasonable amount of paperwork, and (3) producing clear, accurate and complete construction plan sets.

TRENDS: Overall Rating of the Quality of South Dakota highways - 2011 vs. 2015

by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 10 on a 10-point scale

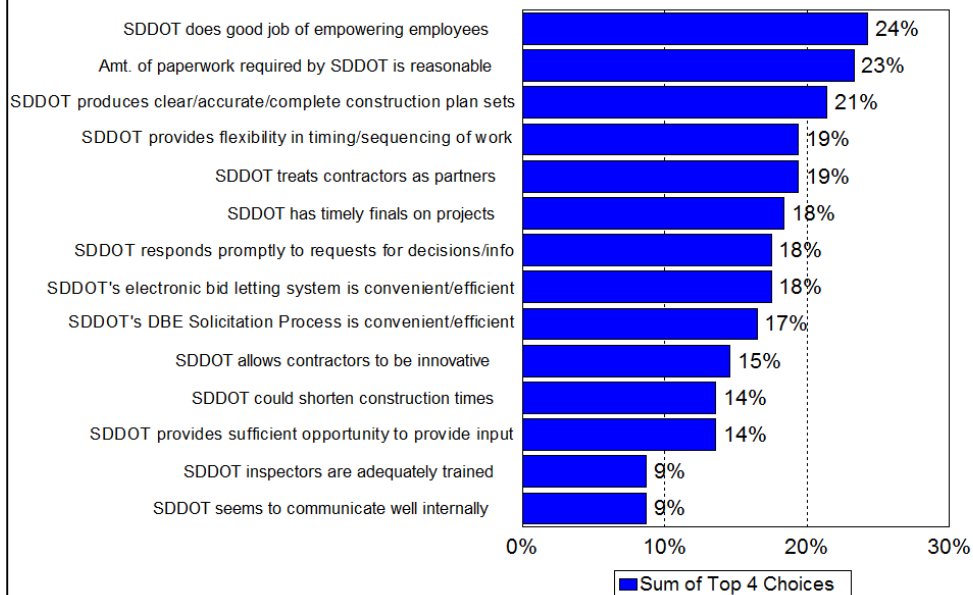


Source: ETC Institute (2016)

Figure 28: Overall Rating of Quality of South Dakota Highways

Q2. Areas That Should Be Emphasized Over the Next Two Years

by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



Source: ETC Institute (2016)

Figure 29: Areas that SDDOT Should Emphasize of the Next Two Years

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were made based on the results of the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Assessment. The supporting evidence accompanies each conclusion.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH SDDOT REMAINS HIGH

Supporting Evidence

Three-fourths (75%) of the residents surveyed indicated they were “satisfied” with SDDOT’s overall performance by giving ratings of “7” or higher on a 10-point scale where “10” means “extremely satisfied.” Another 21% gave ratings of “5” or “6” which were classified as “neutral” responses, meaning the Department was meeting the respondent’s basic expectations. Only 4% of the residents surveyed gave “dissatisfied” ratings of “4” or less.

The ratio of residents who gave “satisfied” to those who gave “dissatisfied” ratings was nearly 19 to 1 (75% vs. 4%). This means for every South Dakota resident who is dissatisfied with SDDOT’s overall performance there are nearly 19 residents who are satisfied.

ALTHOUGH SATISFACTION IS HIGH, RATINGS HAVE DECREASED

Supporting Evidence

The percentage of residents who were “satisfied” (ratings of 7 or more on a 10-point scale) declined from 2011 to 2015 in most areas that were surveyed. For example, the percentage of residents who were “satisfied” with the Department’s overall performance decreased from 82% in 2011 to 75% in 2015. Trends in satisfaction with highway maintenance services and the design of highway features are described below:

- **Trends in Satisfaction with Highway Maintenance.** Among the highway maintenance services that were assessed, satisfaction decreased in 12 of 13 areas. The three most significant decreases involved the maintenance of shoulders (-10%), maintenance of bridges (-8%), and the cleanliness of rest areas (-8%). The only area that did not decrease involved satisfaction with the Department’s efforts to maintain the surface of roadways, which was unchanged.
- **Trends in Satisfaction with the Design of Highway Feature.** Among the 11 highway features that were assessed, satisfaction decreased in 8 areas. All of the decreases were by 5% or less, with the exception of satisfaction with landscaping and snow fences along highways, which declined by 6%. The feature with the most increase in satisfaction was lighting at rural interchanges on Interstates, which increased by 3%.

EXPECTATIONS FOR SDDOT’S PERFORMANCE MAY BE RISING

Although the percentage of respondents who were “satisfied” (ratings of “7” or more) with SDDOT services decreased in many areas, the percentages who were dissatisfied (ratings of “4” or less) also declined. For example, the percentage of residents who were dissatisfied with SDDOT’s overall performance decreased from 6% in 2011 to 4% in 2015. Rather than seeing an increase in dissatisfaction, which typically occurs when expectations are not met, the results of the 2015 survey showed a shift from “satisfied” to “neutral” ratings (ratings of “5” or “6” on a 10-point scale). The percentage of “neutral” ratings nearly doubled from 12% in 2011 to 21% in 2015.

The significant increase in the percentage of “neutral” respondents suggests that expectations for the Department’s performance increased slightly, but not enough to cause customers to be dissatisfied or upset with SDDOT. Some of the factors that could have contributed to a slight rise in expectations include the following:

- **Increase in the State Fuel Tax.** The State of South Dakota raised its fuel tax during the Spring of 2015. It is not uncommon for expectations to rise following a tax increase because residents expect more as soon as they begin paying more taxes. Since the tax increase was implemented just a few months before the survey was conducted, the decrease in the satisfaction ratings may be due to higher expectations caused by the tax increase.
- **Higher Expectations Among New Residents.** Another factor could be that expectations are higher among residents who have recently moved to South Dakota. The results of the survey showed that only 15.8% of residents who had lived in South Dakota for 5 years or less were “extremely satisfied” with the Department’s overall performance compared with 25.12% of all respondents (see the figure below). If newer residents have higher expectations than long-time residents, the Department’s overall rating will likely decline as more new residents move to the state.

Years of Residency in SD	% Giving “Extremely Satisfied” Ratings (10 on 10-point scale)
0-5	15.80%
6-10	34.80%
11-20	26.30%
21-30	25.00%
31+	23.70%
Average	25.12%

Figure 30: Percent Giving “Extremely Satisfied” Ratings

RESIDENTS FEEL SAFER DRIVING ON STATE HIGHWAYS THAN THEY DID FIVE YEARS AGO

Supporting Evidence

- Thirty-five percent (35%) of the residents surveyed indicated that South Dakota highways were “much safer” or “somewhat safer” than they were five years ago. This is a significant increase of 5% from 2011, when 30% of residents indicated that South Dakota highways were “much safer” or “somewhat safer.”

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE MAINTENANCE SERVICES PROVIDED BY SDDOT

Supporting Evidence

One method for using customer satisfaction data to help set organization priorities involves an assessment of both how well the organization is performing in an area and how important the activity is to the customers. Figure 31 shows the relative importance and satisfaction of each of the maintenance activities that were rated. Items on the right side of the chart were generally more important, while items on the left side were generally less important. Similarly, items listed on the top of the chart rated above average in satisfaction, while items listed on the bottom of the chart rated below average. Based on the distribution in the chart, the areas that should receive the highest priority from the South Dakota Department of Transportation are those in the lower right quadrant labeled

“opportunities for improvement.” The items in this quadrant are generally more important to residents, but the agency is underperforming relative to customer expectations. Based on the results of this analysis, SDDOT should consider increasing its emphasis on:

- Maintaining the surface of highways
- Removing roadway and shoulder debris
- Maintaining bridges
- Maintaining shoulders along roads
- Plowing and salting of roadways

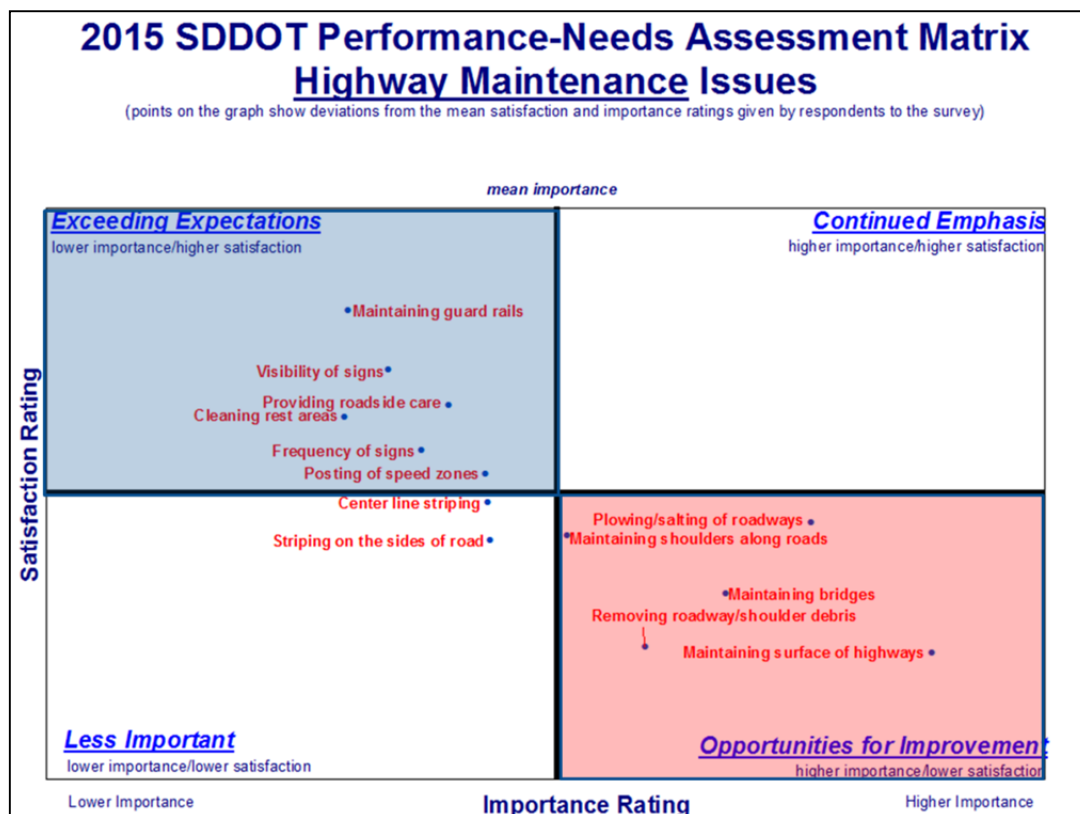


Figure 31: Highway Maintenance Effectiveness Needs Assessment

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE HIGHWAY FEATURES

Supporting Evidence

Using the same method that was just described, the research team analyzed the results of the survey to identify highway design issues that should be addressed. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows the relative importance and satisfaction of each of the highway design features rated.

Based on the distribution in the chart, the areas that should receive the highest priority from the South Dakota Department of Transportation are those in the lower right quadrant labeled “opportunities for improvement.” The items in this quadrant are generally more important to residents, but the agency is underperforming relative to customer expectations.

Based on the results of this analysis, SDDOT should consider increasing its emphasis in the following areas:

- smoothness on rural 2-lane highways
- shoulders on 2-lane rural highways
- conditions of bridges on highways

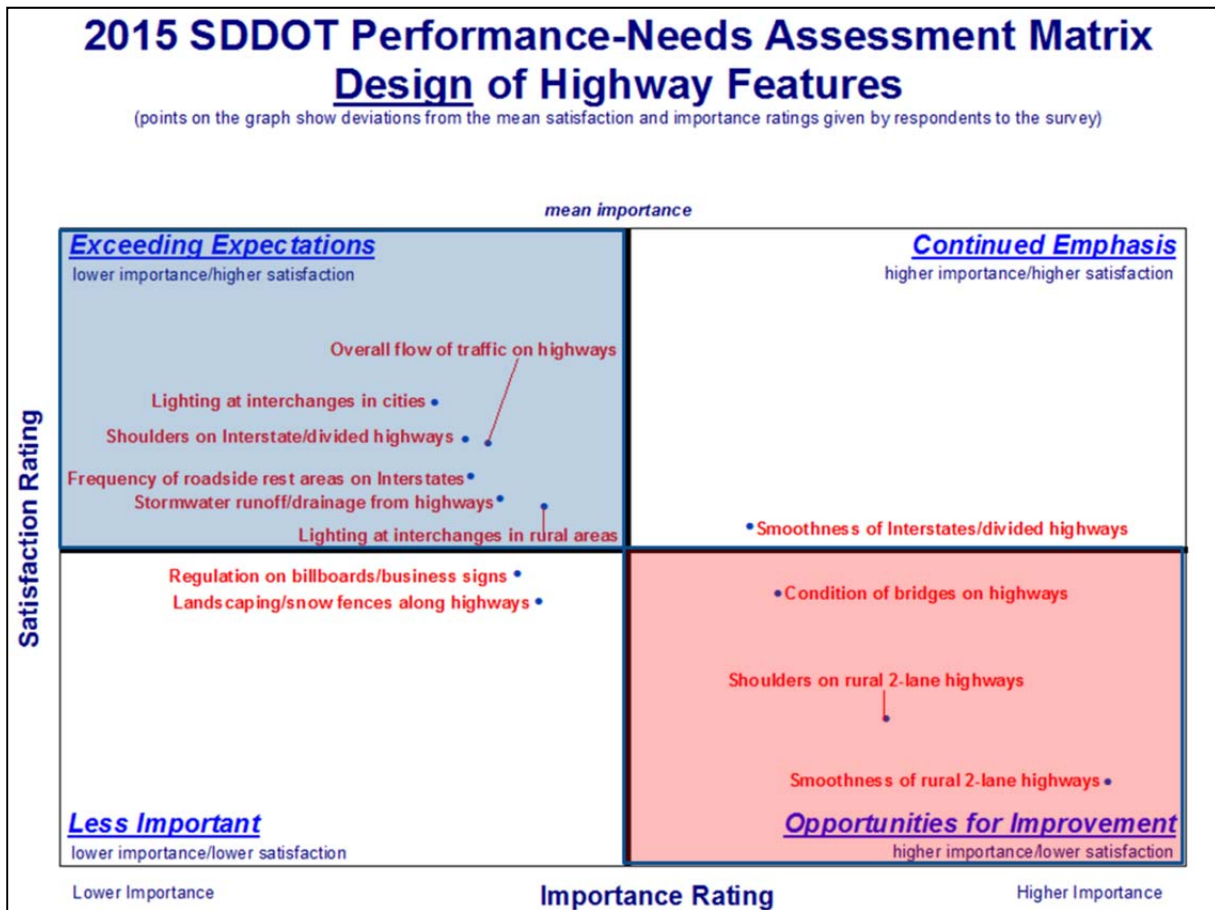


Figure 32: Highway Feature Performance-Needs Matrix

SDDOT IS PROVIDING HIGH LEVELS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Supporting Evidence

- 81% of the residents surveyed who had contacted SDDOT during the past year thought it was “very easy” or “easy” to contact the right person at the Department.
- 84% of the residents surveyed indicated that they were able to get the information they needed the last time they contacted the Department.

SDDOT IS KEEPING RESIDENTS INFORMED ABOUT ROAD CONDITIONS AND DELAYS

Supporting Evidence

- 84% of residents surveyed indicated SDDOT does a good job of keeping its citizens informed about road conditions.

- Two-thirds (66%) of residents surveyed indicated SDDOT does a good job of alerting its citizens about delays and alternate routes.

ALTHOUGH CONTRACTORS GENERALLY GIVE SDDOT HIGH MARKS FOR THE ORGANIZATION’S OVERALL PERFORMANCE, THERE ARE DEFINITELY OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONTRACTORS.

Supporting Evidence

- Contractors gave SDDOT high ratings in several areas that were surveyed. For example:
 - Only 1% of the contractors surveyed were dissatisfied with the overall quality of services provided by SDDOT
 - Only 3% of the contractors surveyed did not think SDDOT designs safe highways.
 - More than half (54%) of the contractors surveyed indicated that South Dakota highways are “much safer” or “somewhat safer” than they were five years ago. This is a significant increase of 9% from 2011, when 45% of contractors thought highways were safer than the previous five years.
 - Contractors also generally think SDDOT treats their organization fairly. Most (79%) of the contractors surveyed thought SDDOT treats their organization fairly; only 5% did not; the remaining 17% had a neutral opinion on the issue.
- Although contractors give SDDOT high marks for the overall quality of services provided and the safety of highways, ratings from contractors declined in 21 of the 22 areas assessed by contractors about their working relationship with SDDOT. The areas with the most significant decreases included:
 - SDDOT is a customer-oriented organization (-29%)
 - SDDOT does a good job developing employees (-32%)
 - SDDOT responds promptly to requests for decisions (-24%)
 - SDDOT provides flexibility in the timing/sequencing of work (-24%)
 - SDDOT is an innovative organization (-20%)
 - SDDOT seems to communicate well internally (-17%)
 - SDDOT does a good job empowering employees (-16%)

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to increase satisfaction among residents and key customer groups, ETC Institute recommends that SDDOT take the following actions based on the results of the survey. If SDDOT takes the actions described below, the Department should see an increase in overall satisfaction in the years ahead.

Recommendation #1: Make “repairing and maintaining existing highways” the Department’s Top Priority for Investment.

When residents and key customer groups were asked to rank which of 13 transportation priorities should be the top priorities for funding over the next five years, “repairing and maintaining existing highways” was clearly the top priority. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the residents surveyed selected “repairing and maintaining existing highways” as one of their top priorities, which was nearly double the percentage who selected “adding turning/passing lanes to highways,” which was the second highest rated item at 34%. “Repairing and maintaining existing highways” was the top priority in all four SDDOT regions. It was also the top priority among all key customer groups. Other actions that should be considered in support of this recommendation include:

- Informing the public and key customer groups about how SDDOT is planning to maintain and preserve the state highway system in future years.
- Ensuring that projects that support the preservation of the existing system are given a high priority in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.
- Continuing to emphasize the importance of maintaining the surface of state highways to all SDDOT employees so the organization will continue to be responsive to customer expectations in this area.

Recommendation #2: Improve the Way SDDOT Maintains Road Surfaces and Provides Winter Maintenance on 2-Lane U.S. and State Highways.

ETC Institute initially identified the following items as the top maintenance priorities based on an analysis that focused on the “importance” and “satisfaction” ratings:

- maintaining road surfaces
- plowing/salting in winter
- bridge maintenance

In order to help refine SDDOT ability to target improvements in these areas, ETC Institute conducted a supplemental survey in August 2016. Based on the results of the supplemental survey, the recommendations for maintenance improvements were refined as follows:

- Improvements to the surface of 2-lane U.S. and State highways will have a greater impact on satisfaction than improvements to the surface of other types of highways
- Improvements to plowing/salting during the winter should place slightly greater emphasis on 2-lane U.S. and State highways
- Improvements to SDDOT maintained bridges will probably not have as much impact on overall satisfaction with SDDOT as initially thought, because the results of the supplemental survey showed that residents were generally satisfied with bridges on SDDOT maintained facilities, but very dissatisfied with bridges on county and township roads.

In addition to these findings, the supplemental survey also showed that the best way for SDDOT to improve satisfaction with pavement markings would be to enhance the visibility of pavement markings during winter weather and at night.

Recommendation #3: Make investments that (1) sustain the smoothness of SDDOT highways and (2) improve the width/condition of shoulders on 2-Lane U.S. and State highways.

ETC Institute initially identified the following items as the top highway design priorities based on an analysis that focused on the “importance” and “satisfaction” ratings to identify opportunities for improvement:

- smoothness of highways
- shoulders on 2-lane highways
- bridges

As with the maintenance priorities, ETC Institute used the supplemental survey to help refine recommendations for improvements to the design of highway features. Based on the results of the supplemental survey, the recommendations for improvements to the design of highway features were refined as follows:

- Improvements to the smoothness of highways should positively impact overall satisfaction with SDDOT, particularly improvements to the smoothness of 2-lane U.S. and State highways and Interstates.
- Improvements to shoulders on 2-lane highways should focus both on the condition and width of shoulders. Improvements to the width of shoulders were just as important as improving the condition of the shoulders.
- As with the maintenance issues, bridge improvements were downgraded as a priority for SDDOT because the results of the supplemental survey showed that residents were generally satisfied with bridges on SDDOT maintained facilities.

Recommendation #4: SDDOT should continue to emphasize operational investments and activities that support travel safety on state highways in South Dakota. Specific operational activities that should be considered included the following:

In addition to addressing winter conditions, the Department should also emphasize investments in rough roads and narrow shoulders on state highways. Both areas showed significant increases among residents when asked what they thought were the biggest safety problems on state highways.

Recommendation #5: SDDOT should clearly define and communicate the Department’s role and service levels in areas that are important to residents to help managing rising expectations.

Given the importance of issues, such as maintenance of existing highways, the condition of bridges, winter maintenance, shoulders, and other issues, SDDOT needs to clearly define and externally communicate what its role in these areas will be. In addition, since SDDOT is not responsible for maintaining local systems, customers may expect the Department to provide more support for local transportation projects, such as bridge improvements, if the condition of local systems continues to decline. In order to manage expectations, the Department should clearly define what, if any, role SDDOT will have in providing funding for local projects over the next three to five years. If the Department does not take action to manage expectations in this area, residents and other key customer groups may develop unrealistic expectations for the Department, which could have a negative impact on overall satisfaction in future years.

Recommendation #6: Enhance Relationships with Contractors.

Although contractors continue to think SDDOT provides safe, quality highways, the results of the survey showed that contractors are significantly less satisfied with their interaction with SDDOT in 2015 than they were in 2011. In order to enhance relationships with contractors, SDDOT should consider improvements in the following areas:

- finding ways to empower employees who are working with contractors to make decisions
- reducing the amount of paperwork required
- ensuring that SDDOT produces clear, accurate, and complete construction plan sets
- Reviewing the process for reviewing/developing construction plans with contractors to ensure it is as efficient as possible
- Doing more outreach with all contractors, including those who are not members of AGC. This could begin by hosting a webinar or other forum with contractors to share the results of the survey and how the Department plans to use the results.

Recommendation #7: Repeat the Survey Every 2-3 Years.

In order to more effectively evaluate the impact of SDDOT investments, the Department should conduct the survey every 2-3 years. As the interval between surveys increases, it becomes more difficult to assess the reasons for changes in the results.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The recommendations described above should be implemented in three steps as described below.

Step 1: SDDOT Should Market the Results of the Survey to External Customers

- During the spring of 2017, SDDOT should consider issuing press releases to the media and informational notices to leaders of key customer groups to report the findings of the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Assessment and announce the Department's plans to respond to the findings.

Step 2: SDDOT Should Establish Awareness and Accountability within SDDOT

- During the fall of 2016, SDDOT should consider sharing the results of the survey with all employees in the Department.
- During the spring of 2017, the Executive Team should consider having subordinate managers from the Area Engineer level and above to identify specific ways that they will use the results of the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Assessment to improve organizational performance over the next two years.
- During the late summer or early fall of 2017, SDDOT should consider having managers from the Area Engineer level and above provide an update to their immediate supervisor regarding how they have used the results of the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Assessment to improve their work unit's performance as part of their performance review process.

Step 3: SDDOT Should Initiate Another Assessment

- During the winter of 2017/2018, SDDOT should initiate the necessary actions to conduct another Customer Satisfaction Assessment in 2019.

BENEFITS

Although the short-term benefits of customer surveys are difficult to measure, the long-term impact of such processes can have a dramatic and lasting impact on an organization. The results of the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Assessment clearly demonstrate that SDDOT's on-going efforts to gather input from customers has had a very positive impact on public perceptions of the Department. The Department's priorities are generally aligned with the needs of its customers, and overall satisfaction ratings have improved in almost every area that has been rated over the past seven years.

By conducting surveys every few years, SDDOT has been able to provide its senior managers and employees with objective feedback from residents and the key customer groups on a regular basis. This has created a corporate culture that is customer-oriented, which has helped the Department meet the needs of its customers.

Although the customer satisfaction survey should not be the only tool the Department uses, it is a very important tool because it helps the Department balance feedback that would otherwise only be provided by special interest groups or those who have a direct stake in the outcome of major transportation planning and investment decisions. The Customer Satisfaction Assessment ensures that the needs of the general public and key customers who do not interact with SDDOT on a regular basis are incorporated into the Department's decision-making process.

Despite progress in some areas, the Department still has room for improvement. To continue achieving success, SDDOT should respond to the results of this survey and be prepared to respond to new issues that will emerge in the years ahead. If resources are available, SDDOT should share the result of the 2015 survey with all employees and administer the survey again in two years. Even if no change in the survey results occur, the overall assessment process engages community leaders, the general public, and key customer groups in a manner that demonstrates the Department's commitment to customer satisfaction. Knowing that things have not changed can be just as important as knowing that they have. This process will help build long-term customer loyalty, which will provide immeasurable benefits to the Department in the years ahead.