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**SD Department of Transportation
Office of Research**

SDDOT 2004 Statewide Customer Satisfaction Assessment

**Study SD2003-12
Final Report**

Prepared by

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16. Abstract <p>This report summarizes, by user segment and region, perceptions of the South Dakota Department of Transportation's performance in delivering services to citizens across South Dakota. It is the fourth in a series of surveys that tracks and monitors attitudes and needs among SDDOT customers. This is the second in the series of surveys that gathers data from all key user segments: citizens, visitors, farmers, emergency vehicle operators and trucker/shippers. A subset of surveyed legislators (70) is treated as a sixth segment. The study includes opinions of 1,740 South Dakota residents representing the six user segments.</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 quality of the Department of Transportation's key products and services; assess the Department's progress in addressing customer concerns through development and execution of its strategic plan; and identify specific actions the Department can take to improve its performance and the perception by the public and key customer groups regarding that performance.</p> <p>By assessing the public's opinions of the SDDOT's performance and understanding its significance, this research provides the framework for development of a management action plan for Department response.</p>			
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	9
OBJECTIVES.....	11
TASK DESCRIPTIONS.....	13
1 MEET WITH TECHNICAL PANEL	13
2 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS.....	13
3 CONDUCT FOCUS GROUPS	14
4 SUMMARIZE AND PRESENT FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS ..	17
5 DEVELOP SURVEY INSTRUMENTS	18
6 CONDUCT SURVEY(S).....	19
7 TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM SUMMARIZING SURVEY RESULTS.....	21
8 CONDUCT WORKSHOP FOR EXECUTIVE TEAM.....	21
9 DEVELOP ACTION PLAN	26
10 PREPARE FINAL REPORT	28
11 MAKE EXECUTIVE PRESENTATION TO THE RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD AND EXECUTIVE TEAM	28
FINDINGS	29
CONCLUSIONS.....	44
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION.....	54
APPENDIX A. CHARTS AND GRAPHS	A-1
APPENDIX B. BENCHMARK DATA	B-1
APPENDIX C. CROSSTABS BY REGION.....	C-1
APPENDIX D. CROSSTABS BY GROUP	D-1
APPENDIX E. VISITOR SURVEY DATA.....	E-1
APPENDIX F. SURVEY INSTRUMENTS.....	F-1
APPENDIX G. INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY REPORT.....	G-1
APPENDIX H. EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY REPORT	H-1
APPENDIX I. FOCUS GROUPS	I-1
APPENDIX J. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	J-1

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Sample Size for the 2004 External Survey by Customer Group	20
2	Sample Size for the 2004 Resident Survey by SDDOT Region	20
3	How Would You Describe the Length of the Delay?	29
4	What Is Your Level of Agreement with the Following Traffic Safety Statements?	31
5	What Is Your Level of Satisfaction with the Following Highway Maintenance Activities?	32
6	Maintenance Services Residents Think Should Receive the Most Emphasis Over the Next Two Years	33
7	What Is Your Level of Satisfaction with the Following Features of South Dakota Highways?	34
8	Highway Features Residents Think Should Receive the Most Emphasis Over the Next Two Years	35
9	Familiarity with SDDOT Website.....	36
10	Are You Familiar with 511	37
11	Trends: How Would You Rate the Job the SDDOT Does in Keeping Citizens Informed of Current Highway Construction and Maintenance Plans?	38
12	Trends: Which of the Following Should Receive the Highest Priority for Funding? 1999 to 2004	40
13	How Supportive Are You of the Construction of Truck Routes That Bypass Cities and Towns Located Along South Dakota Highways?	41
14	Compared to Five Years Ago, How Has the Quality of SDDOT Services Changed?	43
15	TRENDS: What Is Your Overall Level of Satisfaction with the Maintenance of State Roadways This Past Year? 1997 to 2004.....	45
16	Satisfaction with Features of State Highways South Dakota vs. North Central U.S.....	46
17	Compared to Five Years Ago, Do You Think Highways in Your State Are	47
18	Which One of the Following Road Conditions Is the Biggest Safety Problem	48
19	Do You Think the SDDOT Is a Good Steward of the Environment.....	49
20	How Do You Think the Current Level of Funding for State Highways Should Change Over the Next Five Years?	51
21	TRENDS: How Would You Rate the Job the SDDOT Does in Keeping Citizens Informed of Current Highway Construction and Maintenance Plans	52
22	How Would You Like to Get or Receive Information from the South Dakota DOT?.....	53
23	Methods of Communication That Were More Desirable to Specific Customer Groups.....	53
24	2004 SDDOT Performance-Needs Assessment Matrix Highway Maintenance Issues	55
25	2004 SDDOT Performance-Needs Assessment Matrix Design of Highway Features	56
26	Methods of Communication That Were More Desirable to Specific Customer Groups.....	58
27	Transportation Priorities Residents Think Should Receive the Most Emphasis Over the Next Five Years.....	59

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Focus Group Type by Location.....	16

Executive Summary

Purpose

In 2004, the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) conducted a Customer Satisfaction Assessment of residents and key customer groups, including truckers, out-of-state visitors, state legislators, 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 strategic planning process and will be incorporated into the Department's 2005 Strategic Plan. SDDOT previously completed statewide Customer Satisfaction Assessments in 1997, 1999 and 2002.

Objectives

The 2004 SDDOT Customer Satisfaction Assessment had three primary objectives.

- **Objective One:** *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.*
- **Objective Two:** *To assess the Department's progress in addressing customer concerns through the development and execution of its strategic plan.*
- **Objective Three:** *To identify actions that SDDOT can take to improve its performance and the perception its customers have of the Department.*

Research Approach

The 2004 SDDOT Customer Satisfaction Assessment involved numerous data collection elements. The survey design process was composed of interviews with internal and external stakeholders and focus groups with residents and key customers groups. Surveys were conducted to obtain statistically representative data from six key customer groups including: residents, legislators, shippers/truckers, emergency vehicle operators, out of state visitors, and farmers/ranchers.

The survey format involved the administration of a core set of questions to all groups with supplemental questions that were tailored to individual groups. Each of the major components of the Customer Satisfaction Assessment are described below.

Stakeholder Interviews

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. A total of 53 interviews were conducted during April 2004. The information from the internal and external interviews was used to develop questions for the focus groups that were administered in May 2004.

Focus Groups

During May 2004, ETC Institute facilitated a total of 12 focus groups with residents and key customer groups of the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT). The focus groups were conducted with transportation stakeholders at four sites across the State of South Dakota including Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. Each city hosted three focus groups.

The purpose of the focus groups was three-fold: (1) to identify the core expectations residents and key customer groups have with regard to the delivery of transportation services, (2) to understand how residents and key customer groups evaluate the SDDOT's performance in different areas, and (3) to identify ways that residents and key customer groups think the SDDOT could improve the delivery of specific services.

Surveys

The South Dakota Department of Transportation conducted a survey of residents and key customer groups during June and July 2004. The purpose of the surveys was to gather statistically valid data from residents and transportation stakeholders 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 five major customer groups: (1) state legislators (2) truckers/shippers, (3) emergency vehicle operators, (4) farmers/ranchers, and (5) visitors. The goal was to obtain a total of 600 completed surveys from persons in these five groups. The actual number of completed surveys

was 726, including 70 state legislators, 168 truckers, 101 emergency vehicle operators, 156 farmers, and 231 visitors.

- *Resident Survey Methodology.* The resident survey was administered to a stratified random sample of 1170 South Dakota residents during the months of June and July 2004. The sample was stratified to ensure the completion of at least 200 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 1170 residents has a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 2.9%. The sample included 156 farmers and ranchers.
- *Benchmarking Survey.* In addition to the surveys that were administered to residents and key customer groups in South Dakota, ETC Institute also administered a regional Benchmarking Survey to residents of other North Central States, including North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. The benchmarking survey contained many of the same questions that were asked of residents in South Dakota to allow valid comparisons of the results of the 2004 resident survey to the results from other states.

Significant Findings

Some of the major findings of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment are provided below. The findings are grouped according to the topic areas that were addressed on the survey.

Highway Safety

- Residents of South Dakota were four times more likely to report that they thought state highways in South Dakota had become “safer” over the past five years than they were to report that state highways had become more “dangerous.” Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the residents surveyed indicated that South Dakota highways were “much safer” or “somewhat safer” than they were five years ago; 47% rated highways safety “about the same”; 9% thought highways were “more dangerous” and 5% did not have an opinion.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the residents surveyed thought that the SDDOT did a good job of signing in work zones on state highways.

Highway Maintenance

- Overall satisfaction with the quality of maintenance on state highways has increased significantly over the past five years. In 1999, 62% 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 2004, 87% of the resident surveyed indicated that they were statisfied with the overall quality of maintenance on state highways.

- The highway maintenance activities that had the highest levels of satisfaction were: maintaining guard rails, visibility of signs, cleaning rest areas, and maintaining bridges. The areas that had the lowest levels of satisfaction were removing roadway and shoulder debris, maintaining the surface of highways, and striping on the sides of road.
- Areas of maintenance that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next two years were: (1) maintaining the surface of highways, (2) removing roadway and shoulder debris, (3) plowing, salting, and sanding of snow covered roadways, and (4) striping on the sides of roads.

Construction and Detours

- Most (87%) of the residents surveyed who had experienced a delay caused by construction on state highways reported that the length of the delay was acceptable.
- Three-fourths (73%) of the residents surveyed who had traveled through a detour on state highways described the detour as “easy” or “very easy” to follow.

Highway Design

- Highway features that had the **highest** levels of satisfaction from residents were: the flow of traffic on state highways, the adequacy of shoulders on Interstate and divided highways, and the adequacy of lighting at interchanges along Interstates in urban areas.
- Highway features that had the **lowest** levels of satisfaction among residents were: the frequency of roadside rest areas on non-Interstate highways, the adequacy of shoulders on rural 2-lane highways, and the smoothness on rural 2-lane highways.
- The two highway features that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next two years were: (1) the adequacy of shoulders on rural 2-lane highways and (2) the smoothness of rural 2-lane highways.

Transportation System Priorities

- The transportation system priorities that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next five years were: repairing and maintaining existing highways (56%), widening highways to accommodate large truck and agricultural equipment (37%), expanding transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities (34%), adding shoulders to highways (33%) and adding passing lanes to state highways (29%). Some customer groups placed significantly more importance on various transportation priorities than other groups. For example, 24% of the state legislators surveyed thought improvements to freight rail service should be a top priority compared to just 8% of the residents surveyed.
- Residents were nearly twice as likely to think that rural two-lane highways (33%) should receive priority for additional funding than they were to think Interstate highways (17%) should receive priority for additional funding.
- Nearly half (44%) of the residents surveyed thought that funding for state highways should be “increased”, 41% thought it should “stay the same,” and 14% didn't have an opinion. Only 1% indicated that the current level of funding should be “reduced”.

Overall Perceptions of SDDOT

- When asked how the overall quality of SDDOT services has changed compared to five years ago, 41% of the residents surveyed reported that it was “better”, 44% “about the same”, 2% “worse,” and 13% did not have an opinion. Only 2% of those surveyed thought the overall quality of SDDOT services was worse than it was five years ago.
- More than three-quarters (78%) of the residents surveyed thought that SDDOT is an efficient organization.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were made based on the results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment. The supporting evidence and rationale for each conclusion is provided in the main body of this report.

- Conclusion #1: SDDOT has made substantial progress in the area of Customer Satisfaction (Goal Area 1), but there is still room for improvement.
- Conclusion #2: Residents and key customer groups generally thought state highways in South Dakota are safer today than they were five years ago, but there are still opportunities to enhance traffic safety on state highways (Goal Area 2).
- Conclusion #3: Environmental Stewardship (Goal Area 3) is important to residents, but many residents are not aware of what SDDOT's is doing in this area.
- Conclusion #4: The Department's capital improvement (Goal Area 4) program has generally been responsive to the needs of customers, but the Department will need to continue to reassess customer needs to ensure future investments continue to be targeted in the appropriate areas.
- Conclusion #5: SDDOT's communication efforts (Goal Area 5) have had a positive impact and the Department should begin tailoring its communication strategies to specific customer groups.

Recommendations for Action

The results of the surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews provide SDDOT with a comprehensive set of information to identify and manage customer-oriented improvements over the next two years. Although there are many applications for the data from the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment, the research team has limited recommendations for improvement to the "10 Priority Areas" that are listed below. The rationale for these recommendations is provided in the "Recommendations Section" of the main report.

1. SDDOT should increase its emphasis regarding the removal of debris on state highways.
2. SDDOT should improve the quality of centerline and roadside striping on state highways.
3. SDDOT should continue to place a strong emphasis on maintaining roadway surfaces and removing snow/ice from state highways.

4. SDDOT should place a higher priority on the development of shoulders and improving smoothness on rural 2-lane highways.
5. SDDOT should examine ways to enhance lighting at rural interchanges on Interstate highways.
6. SDDOT should continue its efforts to actively communicate with the public and key customer groups. As part of this effort, the Department should begin tailoring both the content and method of communication the Department uses to communicate with key customer groups.
7. SDDOT should continue to make itself accessible to customers via public meetings, the website, 511 information systems, and other methods.
8. SDDOT should proactively address environmental concerns as part of the Department's planning and project development process. The Department should also encourage contractors and other external partners to do the same.
9. SDDOT should ensure that the 2005 Strategic Plan includes provisions to address the transportation needs of the State's elderly and disabled population.
10. SDDOT should ensure that the 2005 Strategic Plan is updated to address the Department's role in supporting non-highway transportation modes, such as rail, airport, and public transportation services.

Implementation Schedule

- **By December 1, 2004**, SDDOT should issue press releases to the media and informational notices to leaders of key customer groups to report the findings of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment and announce the Department's plans to respond to the findings.
- **By January 1, 2005**, SDDOT should ensure that the results of the survey are communicated to all employees in the Department.
- **By February 1, 2005**, the Executive Team should require subordinate managers from the Area Engineer level and above to identify specific ways that they will use the results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment to improve organizational performance over the next two years.
- **During the Spring of 2005**, SDDOT should complete an update to its Strategic Plan to reflect the priorities that were identified in this assessment.

- **During the Spring and Summer of 2005**, SDDOT should begin working with external customer groups to identify new funding sources for capital improvements to the State's highway system. This should include discussions with state legislators and other external partners about funding for a new transportation program.
- **By the Summer of 2005**, SDDOT's budget should reflect increased funding in areas that were identified as priorities for residents and key customer groups.
- **During the Fall of 2005**, SDDOT managers from the Area Engineer level and above should provide an update to their immediate supervisor regarding how they have used the results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment to improve their work unit's performance as part of their performance review process.
- **In the Spring of 2006**: SDDOT should begin the process of reassessing its performance again.

Summary

Although the short-term benefits of customer surveys and strategic planning initiatives 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 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment clearly demonstrate that SDDOT's commitment to its Strategic Plan and the Department's on-going efforts to gather input from customers have 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 five years. Despite significant progress, the Department still has room for improvement. In order to continue achieving success, SDDOT will need to respond to the priorities that were identified during this assessment and be prepared to respond to new issues that will emerge in the years ahead.

Problem Description

In 2004, the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) conducted a Customer Satisfaction Assessment of residents and key customer groups, including truckers, out-of-state visitors, state legislators, farmers/ranchers and emergency vehicle operators. The South Dakota Department of Transportation previously commissioned statewide customer satisfaction assessments in 1997, 1999, and 2002. SDDOT uses the results of the surveys to (1) objectively evaluate how well the Department is meeting the transportation needs of residents and key customer groups and (2) to help identify short and long-term transportation priorities for the Department. The data gathered from the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment will also be used to update SDDOT's Strategic Plan.

Customer Satisfaction Assessments are used by SDDOT to raise awareness of customer concerns and provide insights into ways the Department can serve residents and key customer groups better. Various offices within the Department have used the information from previous surveys to help establish organizational performance measures. Perhaps more importantly, findings significantly influence the Department's strategic planning process, which is regularly updated to respond to changing customer expectations.

Objectives

The 2004 SDDOT Customer Satisfaction Assessment had three primary objectives.

- **Objective ONE:** *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 and focus groups 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.
- **Objective TWO:** *To assess the Department's progress in addressing customer concerns through the development and execution of its strategic plan.* 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.
- **Objective THREE:** *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 Description

The 2004 SDDOT Customer Satisfaction Assessment consisted of eleven major tasks. Each of these tasks is described below.

Task 1: Initial meeting with the project's technical panel to review the project's scope and work plan.

During March 2004, ETC Institute 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: 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 external stakeholders 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. A total of 53 interviews were conducted in April 2004. The information from the internal and external interviews was used to develop questions for the focus groups that were administered during May 2004.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews. ETC Institute conducted 11 one-on-one interviews with members of the Executive Team on April 6-7, 2004. The purpose of the senior manager interviews was to gather input about a wide range of issues related to SDDOT's external customer survey, including the following:

- What do members of the Executive Team like about previous surveys?
- How have they used the information?
- What kinds of information from previous surveys have been most valuable?
- What kinds of information do they need that they have not been getting?
- What concerns do they have about the way the data has been used in the past?
- What suggestions do they have to make the survey process better?

A full summary of the internal stakeholder interviews is provided in Appendix G.

External Stakeholders Interviews. ETC Institute conducted 42 one-on-one interviews by phone with leaders of organizations outside the Department of Transportation who use transportation services or influence transportation decisions in the State of South Dakota. The interviews were conducted April 2-12, 2004. The purpose of the external stakeholder interviews was twofold. First, it was designed to help identify issues that should be addressed in the 2004 External Customer Survey. Second, it was designed to involve external customers in the survey development process to educate key customer groups about the Department's process for gathering customer input. Some of the topics that were addressed during the interviews included the following:

- Overall perceptions of the quality of the State's Transportation System
- What External Customers think SDDOT does best
- What SDDOT can do to improve the services it provides
- Concerns External Customers have about travel safety on state highways
- Concerns about construction and maintenance on state highways
- Suggestions for improving the way SDDOT communicates with its customers
- Perceived adequacy of transportation funding in South Dakota

A full summary of the external stakeholder interviews is provided in Appendix H.

Task 3: Conduct focus groups.

During May 2004, ETC Institute facilitated a total of 12 focus groups with residents and key customer groups of the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT). These key customer groups included residents, farmers, emergency vehicle operators, truckers/shippers and senior citizens. The focus groups were conducted with transportation stakeholders at four sites across the State of South Dakota including Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. Each city hosted three focus groups. Focus groups were designed and administered to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Identify the core expectations that residents and key customer groups had with regard to the delivery of transportation services. This involved a discussion about which services are most important and why. Since expectations for transportation services change over time, the focus groups were used to validate the types of information that are being gathered on the survey and to measure satisfaction with services that had not been assessed in previous surveys.

2. Understand how residents and key customer groups evaluate the SDDOT's performance in different areas. This involved a discussion about what constitutes good (or bad) service delivery in order to identify performance measures that will assist SDDOT in better evaluating the delivery of specific services.
3. Identify ways that residents and core customer groups think the SDDOT could improve the delivery of specific services. This involved the solicitation of ideas regarding improvements to existing services as well as a discussion regarding the need for services that are not currently provided.

In order to ensure that the focus groups met their intended purposes, the following steps were carried out:

- A moderator's script was developed by ETC Institute based on input from SDDOT staff and others as appropriate; moderators met with SDDOT staff to ensure that the project's goals were understood and achieved.
- A time line was developed for the focus groups ensuring that each of the major topic areas was covered in the 90-minute period. The moderator(s) rehearsed the script with a test audience at ETC Institute's focus group facility before the focus groups were conducted.
- A notebook was developed to ensure that note taking efforts are uniform. The notebook contained an outline of the moderator's script and provided ample room to write comments. Different notebooks were used to record comments from each of the focus groups.
- Debriefings were conducted at the end of each focus group to ensure that all pertinent points were captured and recorded.
- Notes from the completed focus group sessions were compiled and reviewed by the senior staff at ETC Institute for content and accuracy. The notes were compared to audio recordings of each meeting to ensure that all the information was accurate.

A total of 111 persons attended the 12 focus groups. Four focus groups were conducted with residents while two focus groups were conducted for each of the other groups. Of the 111 individuals who attended the focus groups, there were 15 emergency vehicle operators, 21 farmer/agriculture participants, 22 seniors, 17 truckers/shippers, and 36 residents.

Focus Group Type by Location

Type	Groups	Participants				
	#	Aberdeen	Pierre	Rapid City	Sioux Falls	Sum
Emergency Vehicle Operators	2			9	6	15
Farmers/Ranchers	2	7	14			21
Seniors	2	13	9			22
Truckers/Shippers	2			9	8	17
Residents	4	9	11	6	10	36
TOTALS	12	29	34	24	24	111

Sixteen topics were covered during the focus groups. The topics were grouped into the five major areas of discussion listed below.

- First, participants were asked a series of questions about their general perceptions of SDDOT.
- Second, they were asked to discuss which SDDOT services are most important.
- Third, they were asked to provide their opinion of specific SDDOT services.
- Fourth, they were asked to identify ways the SDDOT could improve the delivery of specific services.
- Fifth, they were asked about their willingness to pay more for transportation services in South Dakota.

At the end of each focus group, all participants were given an opportunity to make closing comments on any topic.

Task 4: Summarize findings of focus groups and interviews and present the summary to SDDOT's technical panel and Executive Team.

Once the interviews and focus groups had been completed, ETC Institute prepared a report that summarized the methodology for gathering the data and the major findings. A copy of the Summary Report for the focus groups is provided in Appendix D. Some of the major findings from the focus groups are provided below.

- **General Perceptions of SDDOT by Focus Group Participants.** Almost all of the individuals who attended the focus groups thought SDDOT was generally doing a good job of providing highway transportation services for the State of South Dakota. When asked to rate SDDOT's overall performance on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 was best, the mean score for all focus group participants was 6.8. Only six of the 111 participants gave a rating below 5. Many of the concerns that focus group participants had about the state transportation system related to the length of construction projects, limited shoulder widths, poor striping, and lane width. Several participants commented that they thought SDDOT did an excellent job with the budget they have available. Only five of the 111 participants rated the value received from their transportation dollars in South Dakota as "poor."
- **Most Important Transportation Issues to Focus Group Participants.** Participants were asked to make a list of the most important transportation issues in South Dakota. Once the participants had recorded their thoughts, each person was asked to share their thoughts with other members of the group. The moderator wrote the ideas on a large piece of paper for everyone in the room to see. Once everyone's ideas had been presented, the moderator asked each member of the group to identify the three most important issues for SDDOT to address over the next five to ten years. Listed below are the top issues that were identified by all respondents based upon the number of participants who selected the item as one of their top three issues.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Issue</u>
1.	More four-lane highways
2.	Increase repairs/maintenance to existing highways
3.	Smoother highways
4.	Reduced construction time
5.	Better striping
6.	Improvements to traffic flow in construction zones
7.	Better communication with the public/businesses

- **Funding for SDDOT Services.** Focus group participants were asked a number of questions regarding funding issues. Nearly all the participants indicated that they trusted the South Dakota Department of Transportation and believed the organization provided good services given the resources available. When participants were asked whether or not they would be willing to support a tax increase to offset a decrease in Federal funding, more than two-thirds of the participants indicated that they would be willing to pay “a little more” on the condition that these funds were clearly marked for transportation improvements. On average, participants indicated that they would be willing to pay between 1 to 2 cents more per gallon in fuel taxes to maintain the current quality of the State’s transportation system in the event Federal funding was reduced. Although the majority of participants were willing to consider a slight increase in taxes, support was reserved. Nearly every focus group participant indicated that they would need more information regarding the amount of funding that is currently available and information on why the additional funding was required before they would be willing to support an increase in the fuel tax. Examples of commonly expressed opinions regarding support for increased funding are listed below:

- If we had to pay more in taxes I suppose I’d have to bite the bullet. Transportation is important enough.
- We don’t want to let the quality of service decline, we can agree on that.
- I’d like to see how the added tax is going to be allocated.
- I’d hate to see the quality of roads decline significantly.
- If it is a safety issue, I’m willing to pay for it.
- In order for me to support it, I would want to know more about how it was going to be spent. I’m not interested in extravagances like bike trails
- I’d like to know what is going to happen in 25 years. Tell me what the future of rural South Dakota then I’d tell you how I’d feel about paying more taxes for added transportation services. Who is going to come live out here
- If they can make it reasonable, then I could probably support it.
- I am in favor of a wheel tax. If it fixes the potholes, the cost of the wheel tax would be offset by saving me for having to pay for another alignment.
- We’re already paying all we can afford.

Task 5: Develop survey instruments.

Based on the results of the interviews, focus groups, 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, emergency vehicle operators, farmers, visitors and legislators. After several drafts of each survey were constructed, 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.

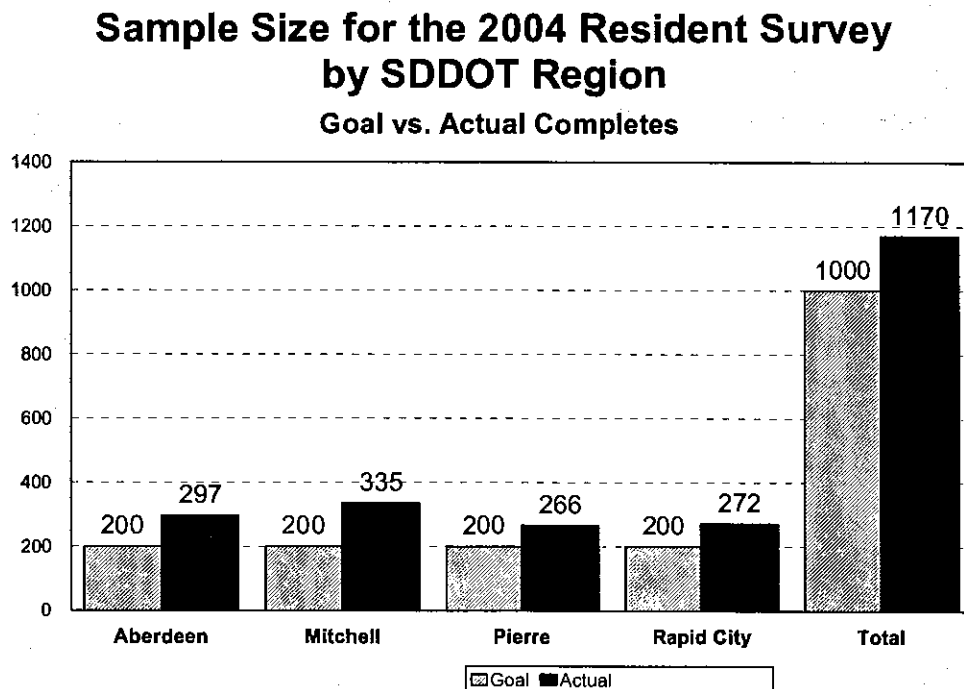
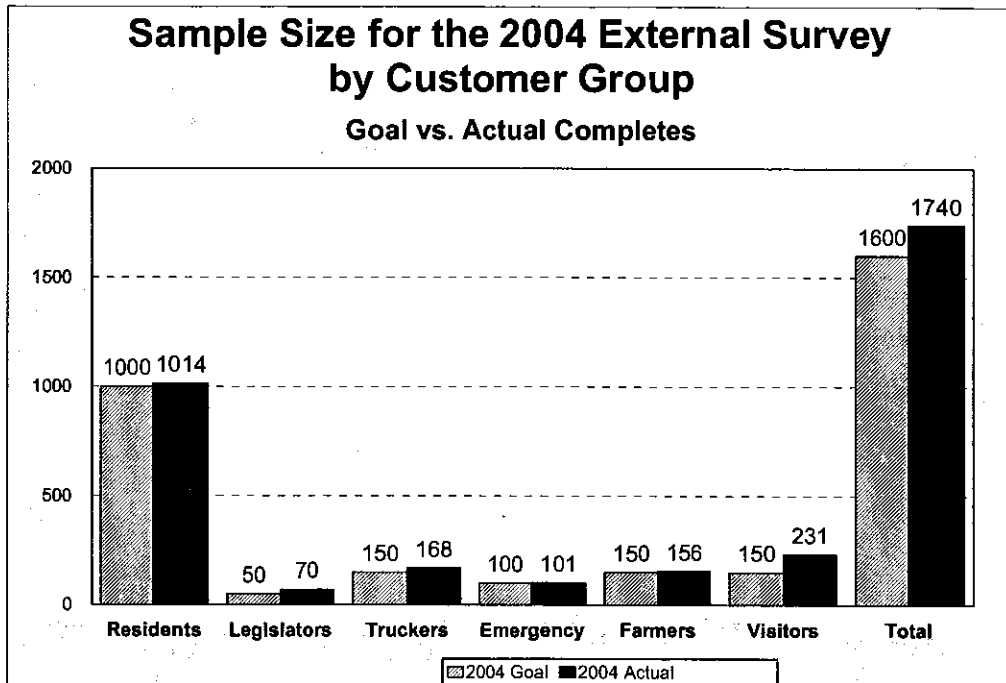
The resident survey was approximately 20 minutes in length and was administered by phone. The surveys for key customer groups, stakeholders and legislators varied in length and were administered by a combination of mail, phone, and fax. The key customer group surveys contained questions that were tailored to these specific groups. For example, the survey administered to truckers/shippers contained some questions that were not asked of farmers and vice-versa. Copies of the survey instruments are provide in Appendix F of this report.

Task 6: Conduct surveys.

The South Dakota Department of Transportation conducted a survey of key stakeholder groups and a statewide survey of residents during June and July 2004. 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 processes.

Stakeholder Survey Methodology. 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 five core types of stakeholders: (1) state legislators (2) truckers and shippers, (3) emergency vehicle operators, (4) farmers, and (5) visitors. The original goal was to obtain a total of 600 completed surveys from persons in these five groups. The actual number of completed surveys was 726, including 70 state legislators, 168 truckers, 101 emergency vehicle operators, 156 farmers, and 231 visitors. The graph at the top of the next page illustrates the distribution of the external surveys by customer group.

Resident SurveyMethodology. The resident survey was administered to a stratified random sample of 1170 South Dakota residents during the months of June and July 2004. The sample was stratified to ensure the completion of at least 200 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 1170 residents has a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 2.9%. The survey included 1014 residents and 156 farmers. The graph at the bottom of the next page illustrates the distribution of the resident survey by region.



Benchmarking Survey. In addition to the surveys that were administered to residents and key customer groups in South Dakota, ETC Institute also administered a regional Benchmarking Survey to residents of other North Central States, including North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. The benchmarking survey contained many of the same questions that were asked of residents in South Dakota to allow comparisons of the results of this survey to be made to other states. Appendix B contains the results of the benchmarking survey.

Task 7: Prepare and submit a technical memorandum that summarizes the survey results.

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. Appendix A contains charts and graphs that show the results to many of the questions from the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment.

Task 8: Conduct a workshop with the Department's Executive Team

ETC Institute facilitated a workshop with members of the Department's Executive Team in late August 2004. The purpose of the workshop was to present the results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment to senior leaders of the Department and solicit feedback regarding how the results of the survey should be used to update the Department's strategic plan. Using the results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment as a guide, members of the Executive Team were asked to provide the following feedback for each of the Department's five Customer Satisfaction Goal Areas:

- Relative Strengths (areas in which the Department has performed well)
- Opportunities for Improvement
- New issues that should be added to this goal area for the 2005 Strategic Plan

The feedback for each goal area is summarized below.

Goal Area 1: Customer Satisfaction.

Relative Strengths. Members of the executive team thought the Department had made progress in several areas related to the goal of Customer Satisfaction, including the following areas:

- reductions in delays in work zones
- improved traffic signs
- improved overall safety
- improvements to the Interstate system

- smoother pavement on state highways
- cleaner rest areas
- improvements in snow removal
- improvements in Interstate design
- better communication with constituents
- improved maintenance and operations.

Opportunities for improvement. Areas where members of the Executive Team thought the Department could improve Customer Satisfaction included the following:

- completing striping more quickly after project work has been completed
- adding and expanding shoulders on rural two-lane highways
- improving smoothness on rural two-lane highways
- doing a better job of removing roadway and shoulder debris
- addressing “dead” billboards.

Issues to Add to this Goal Area in 2005. New issues that members of the Executive Team thought should be addressed in the 2005 Strategic Plan to enhance Customer Satisfaction included the following:

- looking at the needs of the elderly and disabled
- evaluating which system to focus on (highest volume vs. lower volume) for debris removal
- evaluating how billboard concerns will be addressed.

Goal Area 2: Traffic Safety

Relative Strengths. Members of the executive team thought the Department had made progress in several areas related to the goal of Traffic Safety, including the following areas:

- research on accident and fatality rates
- reducing accidents in work zones
- improved analysis of highway safety assessments
- enhanced communication with other agencies
- improved education regarding work zone safety and seatbelt use

- improvements with 511
- improved use of the media to educate public and the development of an interagency task force.

Opportunities for improvement. Areas where members of the Executive Team thought the Department could improve Traffic Safety on state highways included the following:

- reduce the fatality rate on South Dakota roadways
- improve quality and efficiency of striping along roadsides and on center lines
- improve driver's education
- reduce accident rates
- address the issues of seat belt and helmet use
- better coordination with the Department of Public Safety
- improve highway shoulders and pursue a more proactive approach to safety issues through design.

Issues to Add to this Goal Area in 2005. Issues that members of the Executive Team thought should be addressed in the 2005 Strategic Plan to enhance Traffic Safety on state highways included the following:

- implement a regular pavement marking program
- assess snow removal efforts
- improve relationships with agencies and state radio
- increase advocacy efforts with state policies (e.g. seat belt use)
- review standards and current appropriateness of business processes for safety
- use dynamic message signs
- improve accident reporting including the use of digital pictures
- review best practices from other DOTs.

Goal Area 3: Environmental Stewardship

Relative Strengths. Environmental Stewardship is an emerging issue for the SDDOT. The relative strengths of the Department that were identified by members of the Executive Team in this area included the following:

- meet the minimum environmental requirements

- improve erosion management and sediment control
- increase employee awareness and training
- increase communication with other resource agencies
- improve internal communication of stockpile management.

Opportunities for improvement. Areas where members of the Executive Team thought the Department could improve its performance related to Environmental Stewardship included the following:

- improve weed control of noxious plants
- improve partnering with other agency and resource groups including state historical preservation organizations
- refine and consistently implement environmental strategies
- build buy-in from contractors.

Issues to Add to this Goal Area in 2005. Issues that members of the Executive Team thought should be addressed in the 2005 Strategic Plan to enhance the Department's performance regarding issues related to Environmental Stewardship included the following:

- promoting SDDOT's stewardship and environmental accomplishments
- taking ownership of the environment issue
- reviewing the implementation of environmental strategies
- developing environmental policies for both maintenance and design issues
- encouraging contractor participation
- educating customers about the reasons for and costs of environmental stewardship.

Goal Area 4: Responsive Capital Improvements

Relative Strengths. The Department has made substantial progress in its ability to have a responsive capital improvements program. Some of the Department's strengths in this area that were mentioned by members of the Executive Team included the following:

- promoted the STIP
- responsive to the changes in pavement conditions
- improved the quality of corridor access
- developed an effective needs based process for setting priorities

- improved coordination with political leaders in surrounding states to optimize funding
- increased flexibility in moving funds from construction to maintenance
- established a good process for estimating costs and ensure money is spent wisely

Opportunities for improvement. Areas where members of the Executive Team thought the Department could improve the responsiveness of capital improvements included the following:

- Increase emphasis on truck traffic and intermodal issues
- Increase emphasis on non-highway transportation (bike, pedestrian) and rail infrastructure
- Use of automation to improve upfront coordination of projects and securing funding.

Issues to Add to this Goal Area in 2005. Issues that members of the Executive Team thought should be addressed in the 2005 Strategic Plan to enhance the Responsiveness of Capital Improvements included the following:

- complete an economic analysis of rail systems and its integration with the highway system
- increase attention to the aging population (i.e., signing, public transit)
- assess biking and pedestrian needs
- develop more intermodal links (rail, air and highway)
- evaluate cash flow management
- coordinate ITS with other projects
- improve the Department's ability to react to items not in the STIP.

Goal Area 5: Communication with Constituents

Relative Strengths. Members of the Executive Team thought the Department had made significant progress in several areas related to communication with constituents including the following:

- added project related news releases
- fielded dynamic message signs
- implemented 511
- implemented SDDOT's website
- promoted the STIP

- improved the quality and timeliness of public hearings
- increased involvement of area engineers with local issues (i.e., Chamber)
- increased understanding by employees of the value of public information.

Opportunities for improvement. Areas where members of the Executive Team thought the Department could improve its ability to communicate with constituents included the following:

- educate contractors about the benefits of informing public of projects
- educate the public regarding system needs and the potential for increasing revenues
- evaluate benefits of AASHTO/WASHTO involvement
- improve system responsiveness to complaints
- address misperceptions that DOT employees are not working
- maintain the focus on long-term planning and intermodal issues
- improve contractors sense of ownership regarding environmental issues

Issues to Add to this Goal Area in 2005. Issues that members of the Executive Team thought should be addressed in the 2005 Strategic Plan to enhance Communication with Constituents included the following:

- develop targeted communication strategies for each customer group (state legislature, truckers, farmers)
- identify the best ways to effectively communicate these items to each group
- examine how the SDDOT can serve all of these key customer groups.

Task 9: Development of an Action Plan.

The survey results were used to develop an action plan that addressed issues that were raised in the surveys. The action plan was based on many factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

Overall results of the survey. Charts and graphs that show the overall results to most questions on the survey are provided in Appendix A of this report.

Changes/trends from previous surveys. Differences between the 2004 and previous surveys were reviewed. Significant differences are listed in the appropriate sections of this report.

Benchmarking. Comparisons between South Dakota and regional benchmarks for the North Central United States. The results of the 2004 Survey were compared to the results of the regional benchmarking survey. The results of the benchmarking survey are provided in Appendix B of this report.

Importance-Satisfaction Analysis. Importance-Satisfaction Analysis is a unique tool that allows organizations the ability to assess the quality of service delivery and to use survey data to help set organizational priorities. The Importance-Satisfaction rating is based on the concept that public agencies will maximize overall customer satisfaction by emphasizing improvements in those areas where the level of satisfaction is relatively low and the perceived importance of the service is relatively high. ETC Institute developed an Importance-Satisfaction Matrix for the SDDOT to display the perceived importance of core services against the perceived quality of service delivery. These matrices are provided in the recommendations section of this summary report.

Regional analysis/crosstabulation of the survey data. Although the primary objective of the Customer Satisfaction Assessment is to evaluate the delivery of services statewide, overall findings may camouflage important differences that exist within regions of the state. To ensure that potential differences are identified when they occur, individual analysis has been conducted for each of the four regions (Aberdeen, Mitchell, Pierre and Aberdeen) that constitute the SDDOT. The results for each question on the survey have been tabulated by region so that comparisons can be made between and across regions as well as to the statewide results. A complete summary of these regional crosstabulations are provided in Appendix C.

Comparison of the results from different 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 and legislators. To ensure that potential differences between key customer groups were identified, individual analysis was conducted for each of the four regions (Aberdeen, Mitchell, Pierre and Rapid City) that constitute the SDDOT. The results for each question on the survey have been tabulated by group so that comparisons can be made between key customer groups and residents. A complete summary of these customer group crosstabulations are provided in Appendix D.

GIS Mapping. GIS Mapping was originally proposed as a method to identify potential areas of concern based on the geographic location of the respondent's home.

Unfortunately, the sample size was too small to provide statistically significant findings. In most cases, the distribution of the respondents simply reflected the population density of the State of South Dakota. Areas with high concentrations of residents had more respondents. Areas that were less populated had fewer respondents. The research team believes that the crosstabulations by region in Appendix C are the best method for understanding differences based on geography.

Task 10: Prepare a final report summarizing the research methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

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
- Benchmarking analysis that shows how the results of SDDOT's customer satisfaction survey compares to regional norms
- Charts depicting the overall results of the survey
- Tabular data that shows the overall results for each question on each survey along with crosstabulations 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 focus groups

Task 11: Make Presentations to SDDOT's Research Review Board and the Executive Team at the conclusion of the Project.

In early November 2004, ETC Institute made a final presentation of the results to SDDOT's Research Review Board and the Executive Team. 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. These presentations were used to help set the stage for the development of the Department's 2005 Strategic Plan.

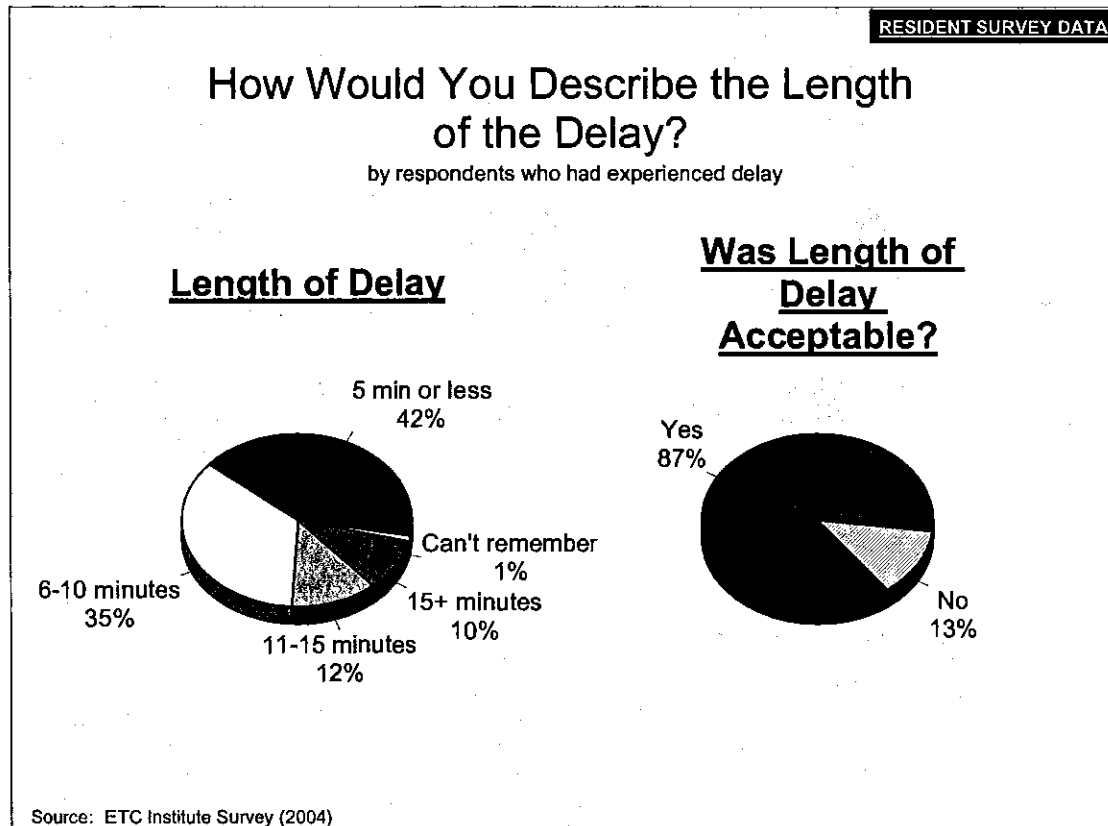
Findings

Mode and Distance Traveled

- Only 3% of the survey respondents have used public transit, such as buses, for mobility within South Dakota during the past 12 months.
- Nearly one-third (31%) of the survey respondents indicated that they drive 15,000 miles or more each year.

Construction and Detours

- Almost half (47%) of the residents surveyed had traveled through a detour on a South Dakota state highway during the last year.
- Three-fourths (73%) of the residents surveyed who had traveled through a detour on state highways described the detour as “easy” or “very easy” to follow.
- Nearly half (46%) of the respondents who encountered highway construction or maintenance experienced a delay.



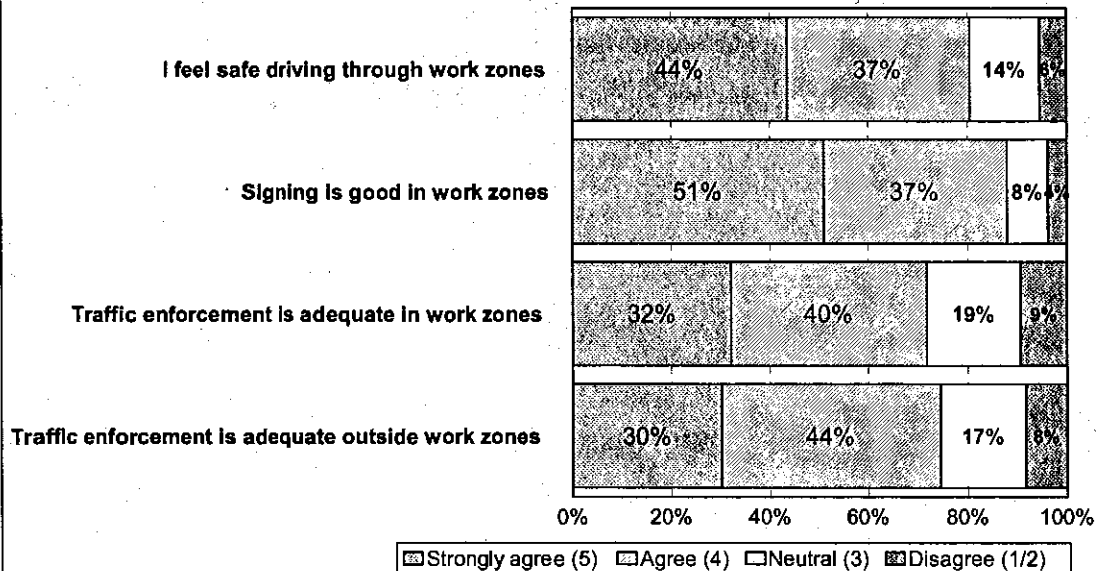
- More than three-quarters (77%) of the residents surveyed who experienced a delay indicated that the length of the delay was 10 minutes or less.
- Most (87%) of the residents surveyed who had experienced a delay caused by construction on state highways reported that the length of the delay was acceptable.

Highway Safety

- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the residents surveyed thought that signing was good in work zones on state highways.
- Nearly three-quarters of the respondents reported wearing their seatbelt “all of the time”. Seventeen percent (17%) reported wearing their seatbelt “most of the time”, 7% “some of the time” and 4% “seldom/never”.
- Eighty-one percent (81%) of the residents surveyed indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they felt safe driving through work zones.
- Seventy-two percent (72%) of the residents surveyed “agree” or “strongly agree” that traffic enforcement was adequate in work zones.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) of the respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that traffic enforcement was adequate outside work zones.

What Is Your Level of Agreement with the Following Traffic Safety Statements?

by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 5 on a 5-point scale



Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

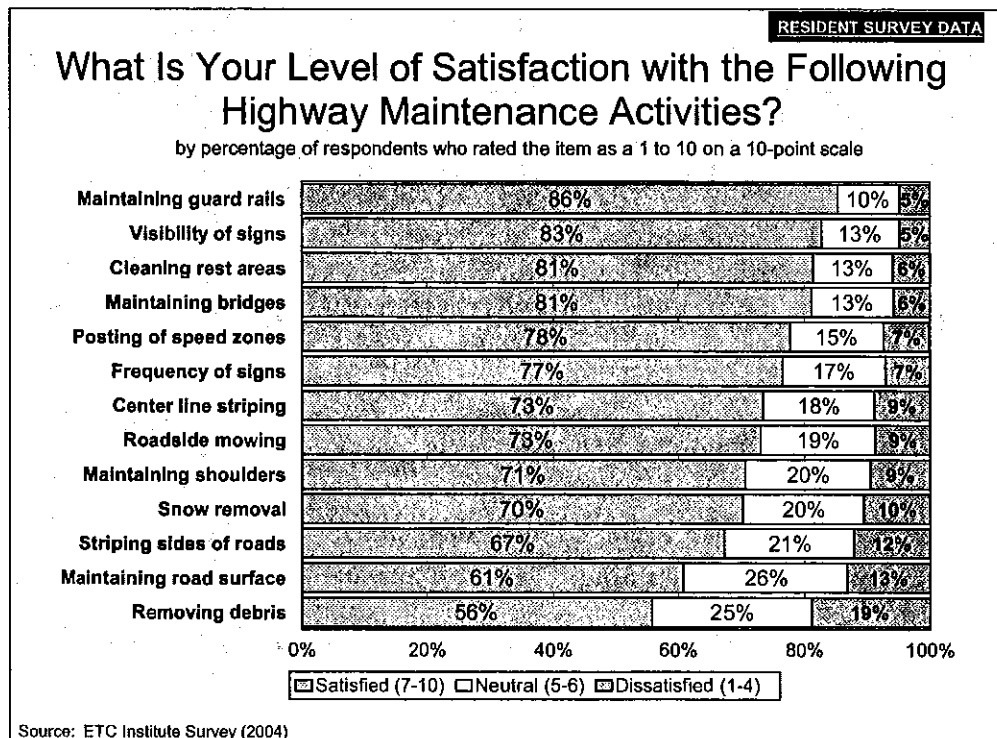
- Residents of South Dakota were four times more likely to report that they thought state highways in South Dakota had become “safer” over the past five years than they were to report that state highways had become more “dangerous.” Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the residents surveyed indicated that South Dakota highways were “much safer” or “somewhat safer” than they were five years ago; 47% rated highway safety “about the same”; 9% thought highways were “more dangerous” and 5% did not have an opinion.
- Over one-third (37%) of the residents surveyed indicated that winter road conditions are the biggest safety problem.
- Drinking and driving (64%) and inattentive drivers (49%) were identified by respondents as the two items that contribute to most accidents on state highways in South Dakota.

Highway Maintenance

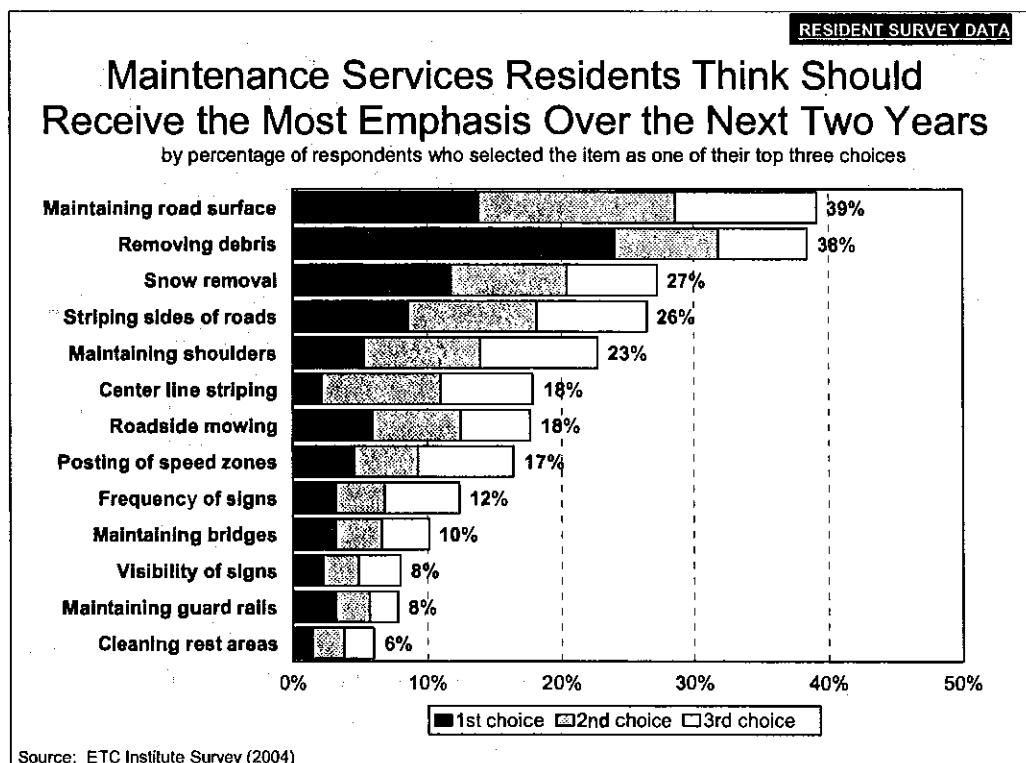
- Overall satisfaction with maintenance of state highways has increased significantly over the past five years. In 1999, 62% of the residents surveyed indicated that they were

satisfied (meaning they gave a rating of 7-10 on a 10-point scale) with the overall quality of maintenance on state highways in South Dakota. In 2004, 87% of the residents surveyed indicated that they were satisfied the overall quality of maintenance on state highways.

- The highway maintenance activities that had the highest levels of satisfaction from respondents were maintaining guard rails (86%), visibility of signs (83%), cleaning rest areas (81%) and maintaining bridges (81%).



- The highway maintenance activities that had the lowest levels of satisfaction from residents surveyed were removing roadway and shoulder debris (56%), maintaining the surface of highways (61%) and striping on the sides of road (67%).
- Areas of maintenance that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next two years were: (1) maintaining the surface of highways, (2) removing roadway and shoulder debris, (3) plowing, salting, and sanding of snow covered roadways, and (4) striping on the sides of roads.



Impact of New Construction

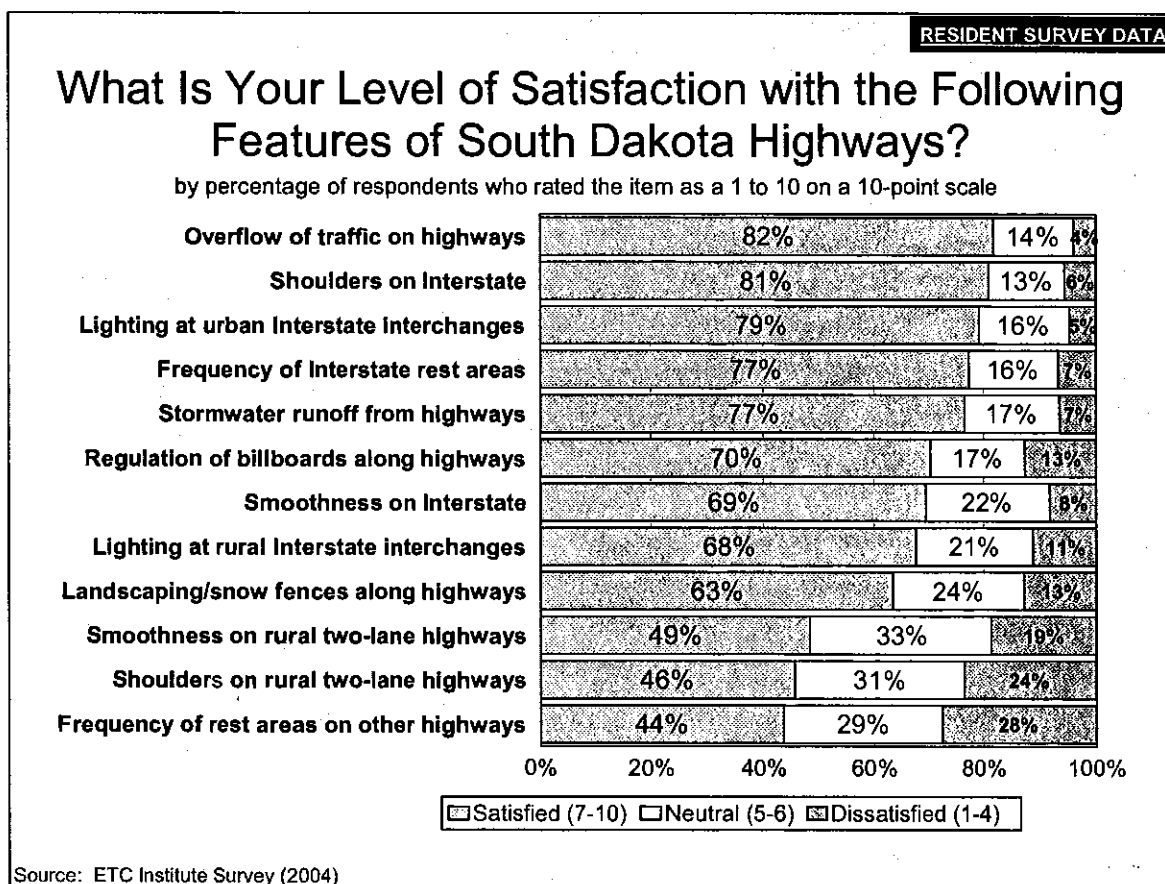
- Sixty-one percent (61%) of the respondents regularly use a highway where construction was completed by the SDDOT within the last five years.
- For those who regularly travel on a highway that has had construction completed in the last five years, over two-thirds (68%) indicated feeling “somewhat safer” or “much safer” compared to only 2% feeling “less safe”.
- Eighty-six percent (86%) of the residents surveyed reported that the overall quality of transportation in the area where they live has improved since construction was

completed.

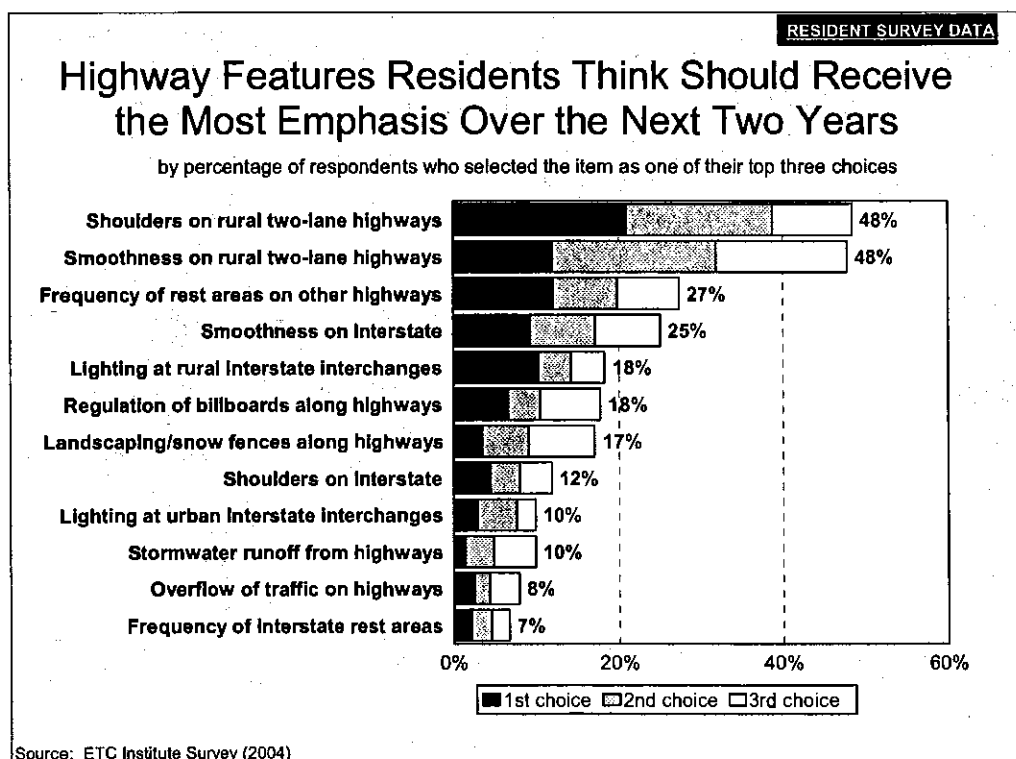
- Over two-thirds (68%) of the participants indicated that the SDDOT adequately involved their community during the planning of highway improvements in their area.

Highway Design Issues

- Highway features that had the **highest** levels of satisfaction from residents were: the flow of traffic on state highways, the adequacy of shoulders on Interstate and divided highways, and the adequacy of lighting at interchanges along Interstates in urban areas.
- Highway features that had the **lowest** levels of satisfaction among residents were: the frequency of roadside rest areas on non-Interstate highways, the adequacy of shoulders on rural 2-lane highways, and the smoothness on rural 2-lane highways.



- The two highway features that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next two years were: (1) the adequacy of shoulders on rural 2-lane highways and (2) the smoothness of rural 2-lane highways.



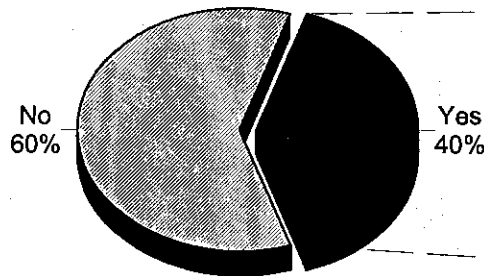
SDDOT's Website

- Only 40% of the residents surveyed knew that the SDDOT has a website.
- Of those respondents who did know SDDOT has a website, less than one-third (31%) have used the website in the last year.

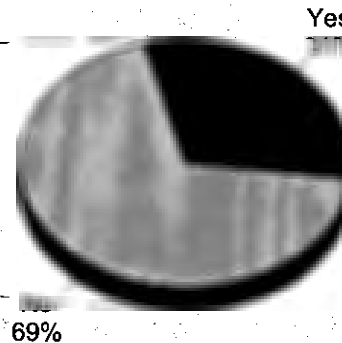
Familiarity with the SDDOT Website

by percentage of respondents

Did You Know About Website?



Have You Used SDDOT Website in Past Year?



Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

- For those who have visited the SDDOT website in the last year, over one-half (51%) of the respondents indicated that the purpose for visiting the website was to obtain road condition information, 13% to get information on a project, 12% to get detour or work zone information, 9% to get a response to a specific question and 4% to contact an SDDOT employee.
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the residents who had visited the SDDOT website in the last year reported that the website was “easy” or “very easy” to use.

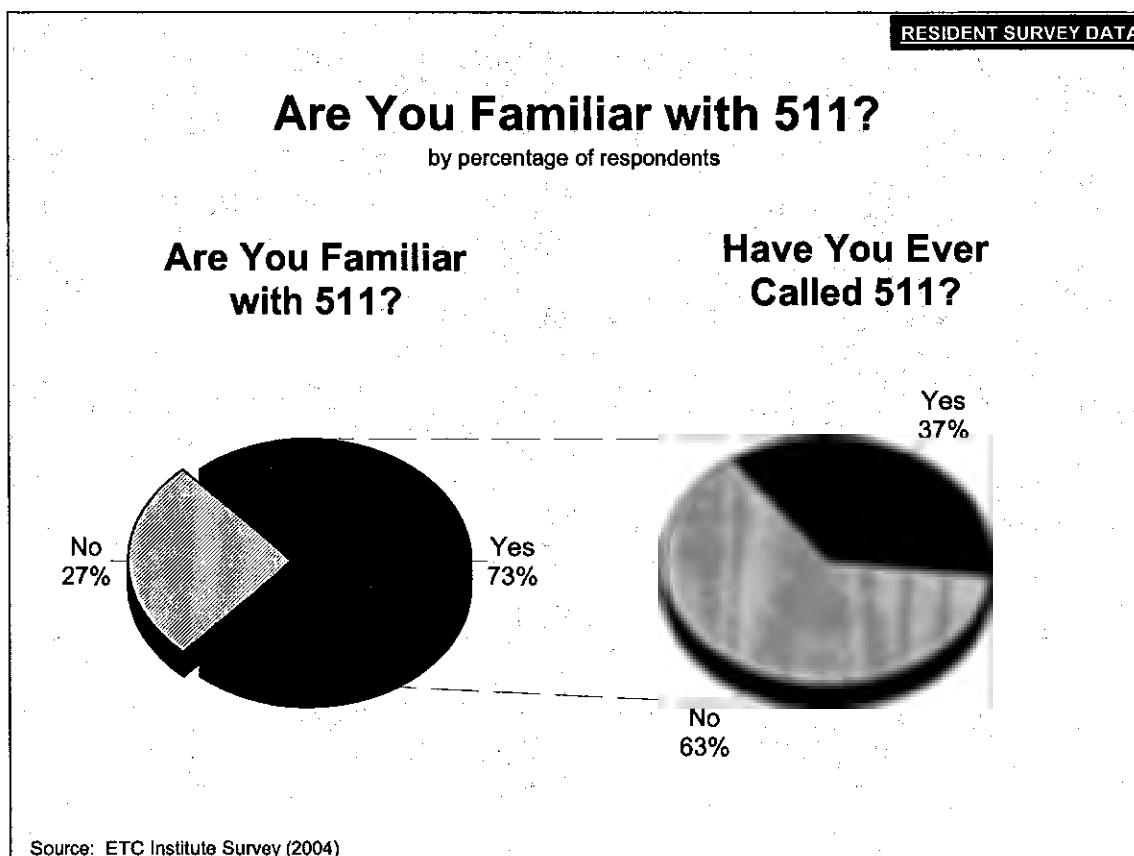
Customer Service

- Only 10% of the residents surveyed had contacted a SDDOT employee during the past two years.
- For those respondents who did contact a SDDOT employee during the past two years, 79% indicated that it was “easy” or “very easy” to contact the right person the last time they contacted the SDDOT.

- Eighty-two percent reported that they were able to get their question answered or get the information needed the last time they contacted the SDDOT, for those respondents who did contact a SDDOT employee during the past two years.

511 System

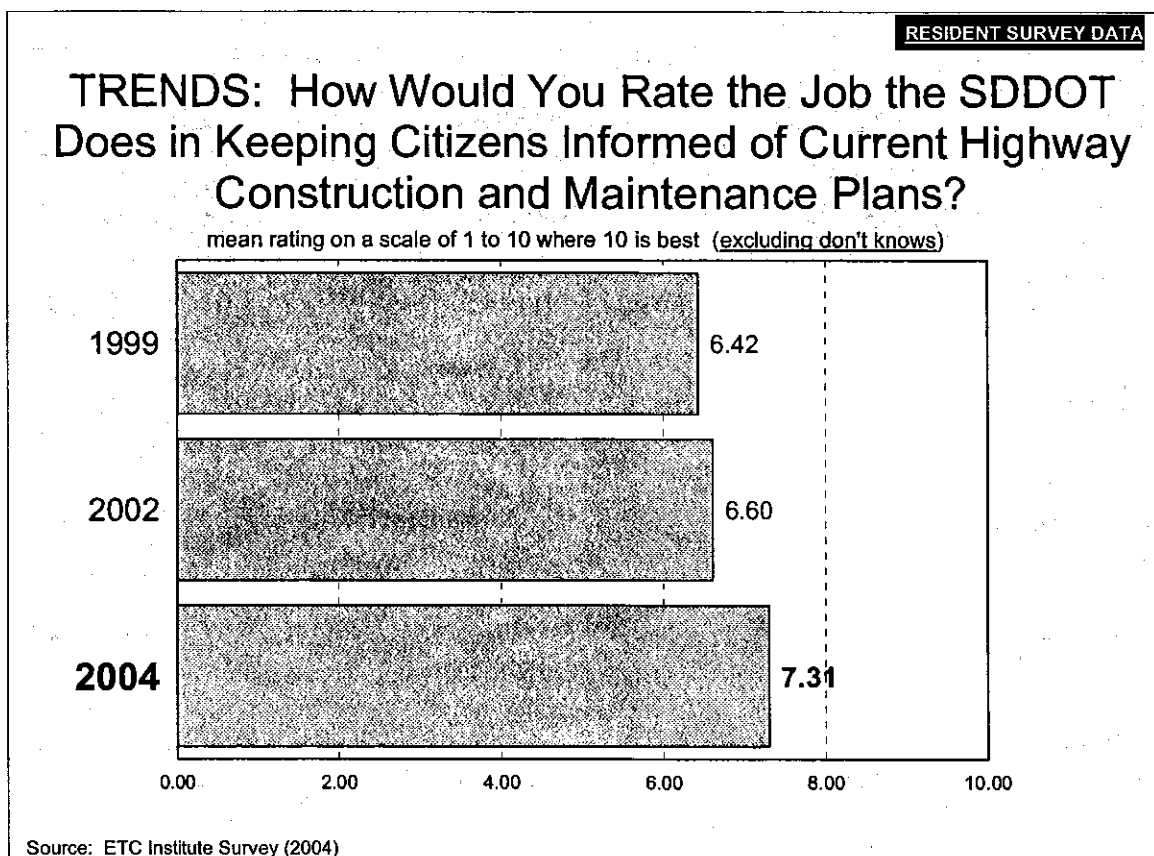
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the residents surveyed were familiar with 511.
- Of those familiar, 37% of the respondents had called 511.



- Of those who had used 511, 78% reported that the service was “easy” or “very easy” to use.
- Of those who had used 511, three-quarters (75%) indicated that the information provided was “accurate” or “very accurate.”

Communication

- The ways residents surveyed preferred getting or receiving information from the SDDOT were newspapers (35%), TV local public access channel (32%) and radio (31%).
- When asked to rate the job the SDDOT does in keeping residents informed of current highway construction and maintenance plans, respondents reported a mean score of 7.31 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is best. This is a significant increase from previous Customer Satisfaction Assessments conducted in 2002 (6.60) and 1999 (6.42).



- When asked to rate the job the SDDOT does in alerting residents of delays and alternate routes before traveling through current highway construction projects, respondents reported a mean score of 7.15 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is best. This is a significant increase from previous Customer Satisfaction Assessments conducted in 2002 (6.37) and 1999 (5.97).

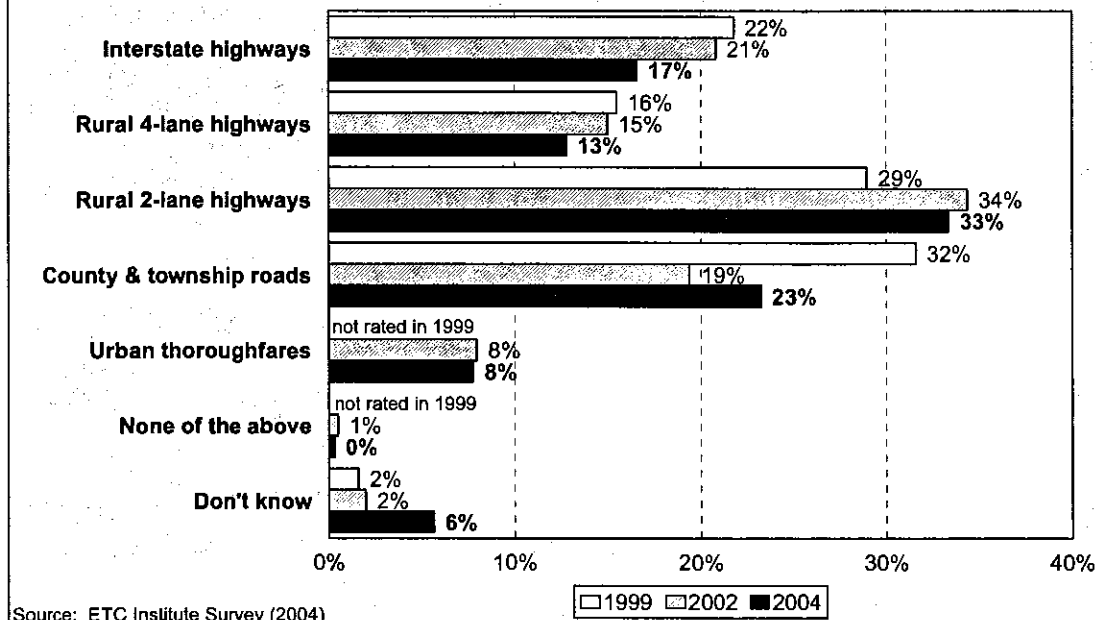
Transportation System Priorities

- The transportation system priorities that residents thought should receive the most emphasis over the next five years were: repairing and maintaining existing highways (56%), widening highways to accommodate large truck and agricultural equipment (37%), expanding transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities (34%), adding shoulders to highways (33%) and adding passing lanes to state highways (29%). The chart below shows how some customer groups placed significantly more importance on various transportation priorities than other groups. For example, 24% of the state legislators surveyed thought improvements to freight rail service should be a top priority compared to just 8% of the residents surveyed.
- Residents were nearly twice as likely to think that rural two-lane highways (33%) should receive priority for additional funding than they were to think Interstate highways (17%) should receive priority for additional funding.
- Nearly half (44%) of the residents surveyed thought that funding for state highways should be “increased”, 41% thought it should “stay the same,” and 14% did not have an opinion. Only 1% indicated that the current level of funding should be “reduced”.

TRENDS: Which One of the Following Should Receive the Highest Priority for Funding?

1999 to 2004

by percentage of respondents



- Twenty percent (20%) of the residents surveyed indicated that “not enough work” was being done to repair the state’s Interstate highways. This is a significant increase from previous Customer Satisfaction Assessments conducted in 2002 (11%) and 1999 (16%).

Funding

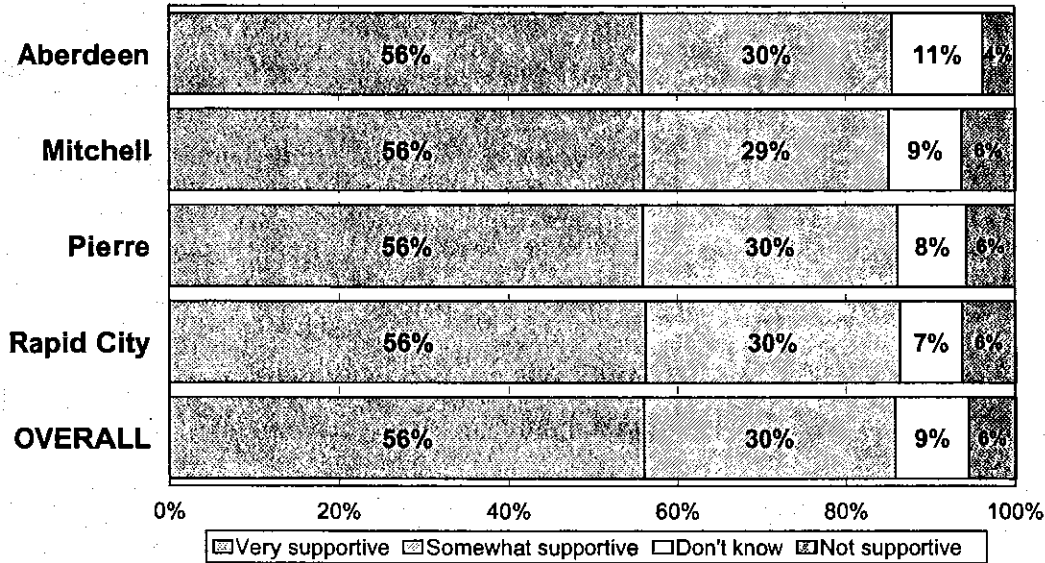
- When asked how they thought the current level of funding for state highways should change over the next five years, 44% of the respondents reported that it should be “increased”, 41% “stay the same”, 1% “reduced” and 14% “didn’t know.”

Support for Bypasses

- Eighty-six percent (86%) of residents surveyed indicated that they were “somewhat supportive” or “very supportive” of the construction of truck routes that bypass cities and towns that are located along South Dakota highways.

How Supportive Are You of the Construction of Truck Routes That Bypass Cities and Towns Located Along South Dakota Highways?

by percentage of respondents



Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

Environmental Stewardship

- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the respondents indicated that it was “very important” or “somewhat important” that the SDDOT consider the impact transportation improvements will have on the environment.
- Seventy-three percent (73%) of the residents surveyed think that the SDDOT is a good steward of the environment, 23% “didn’t know” and 4% did not think the SDDOT was a good steward of the environment.

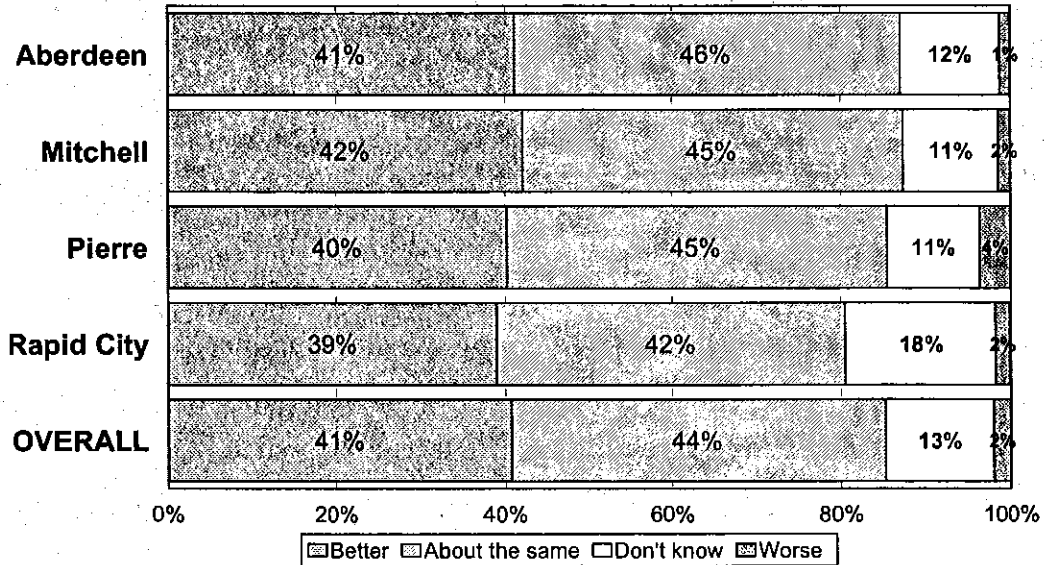
Other Perceptions of SDDOT

- Two-thirds (67%) of the residents surveyed “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT considers and values the opinions of the public.
- Eighty-four percent (84%) of the respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT designs safe highways.

- Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the residents surveyed “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT keeps construction delays to a minimum.
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT adequately supports non-highway transportation in South Dakota, such as public bus, rail, and airport services.
- Seventy-one percent (71%) of the residents surveyed “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT does a good job of planning for the State’s future transportation needs.
- Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT does a good job prioritizing highway improvements in South Dakota.
- Two-thirds (66%) of the residents surveyed “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT adequately supports local transportation projects for city and county governments.
- Over three-quarters (78%) of the respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that the SDDOT is an efficient organization.
- When asked to rate the value of the services provided by the SDDOT, 48% of the residents surveyed rated it as a “good value” for the money, 40% an “OK value” for the money, 4% a “low value” for the money and 9% “didn’t know.”
- When asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall delivery of all services provided by the SDDOT, 78% of the respondents were satisfied based on a scale of 1 to 10 where 7 to 10 were categorized as satisfied.
- When asked how the overall quality of SDDOT services has changed compared to five years ago, 41% of the residents surveyed reported that it was “better”, 44% “about the same”, 2% “worse” and 13% “didn’t know.”

Compared to Five Years Ago, How Has the Overall Quality of SDDOT Services Changed?

by percentage of respondents



Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

Conclusions

The 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment was designed to assess the Department's progress in five goal areas designated in the SDDOT Strategic Plan. These goal areas include:

- Goal Area 1: Customer Satisfaction
- Goal Area 2: Traffic Safety
- Goal Area 3: Environmental Stewardship
- Goal Area 4: Responsive Capital Improvements
- Goal Area 5: Communication with Constituents

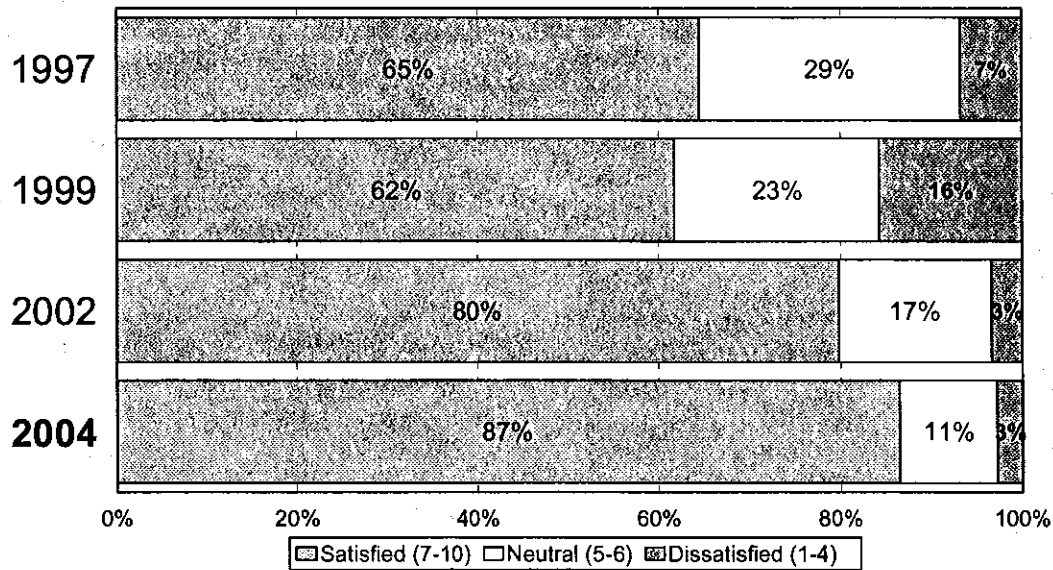
Conclusions related to the Department's progress in each of these areas are provided below.

Conclusion #1: SDDOT has made substantial progress in the area of Customer Satisfaction (Goal Area 1), but there is still room for improvement.

Supporting evidence: The overall level of satisfaction with the maintenance of state roadways increased from 62% in 1999 to 87% in 2004. Compared to other states in the North Central U.S., residents in South Dakota were significantly more satisfied with the following: overall flow of traffic (82% in SD vs. 68% in other states), frequency of interstate rest areas (77% in SD vs. 64% in other states), smoothness on rural two-lane highways (49% in SD vs. 40% in other states), smoothness on interstates (69% in SD vs. 62% in other states), frequency of rest areas on non-Interstate highways (44% in SD vs. 39% in other states), and maintenance of highway surfaces (61% in SD vs. 48% in other states).

TRENDS: What Is Your Overall Level of Satisfaction with the Maintenance of State Roadways This Past Year? 1997 to 2004

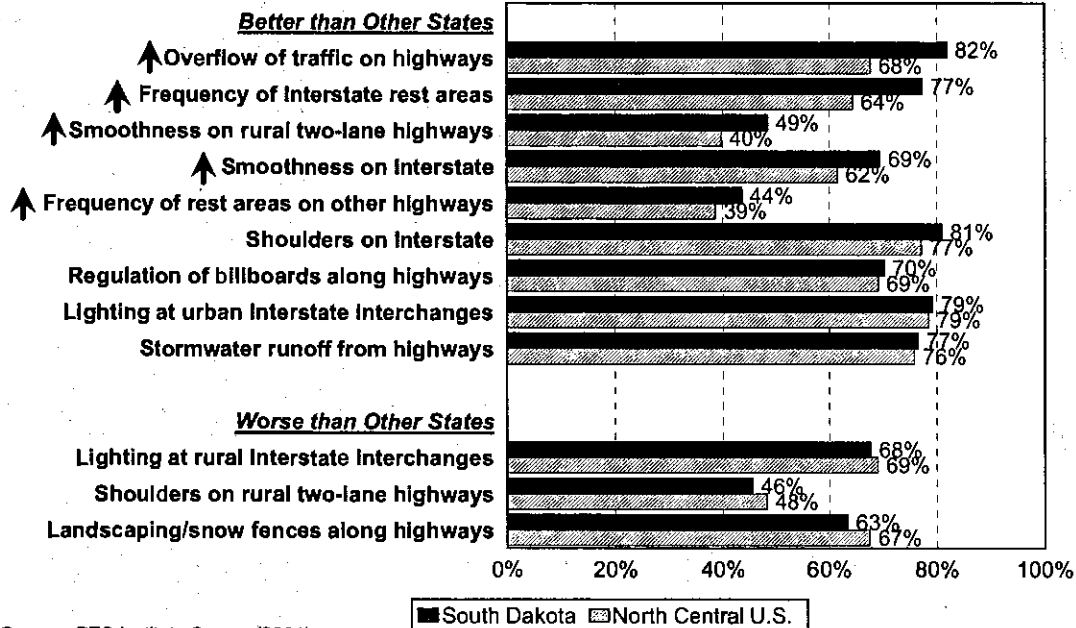
by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 10 on a 10-point scale



Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

Satisfaction with Features on State Highways South Dakota vs. North Central U.S.

by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 7 to 10 on a 10-point scale
where 10 was "extremely satisfied" and 1 was "not satisfied at all"



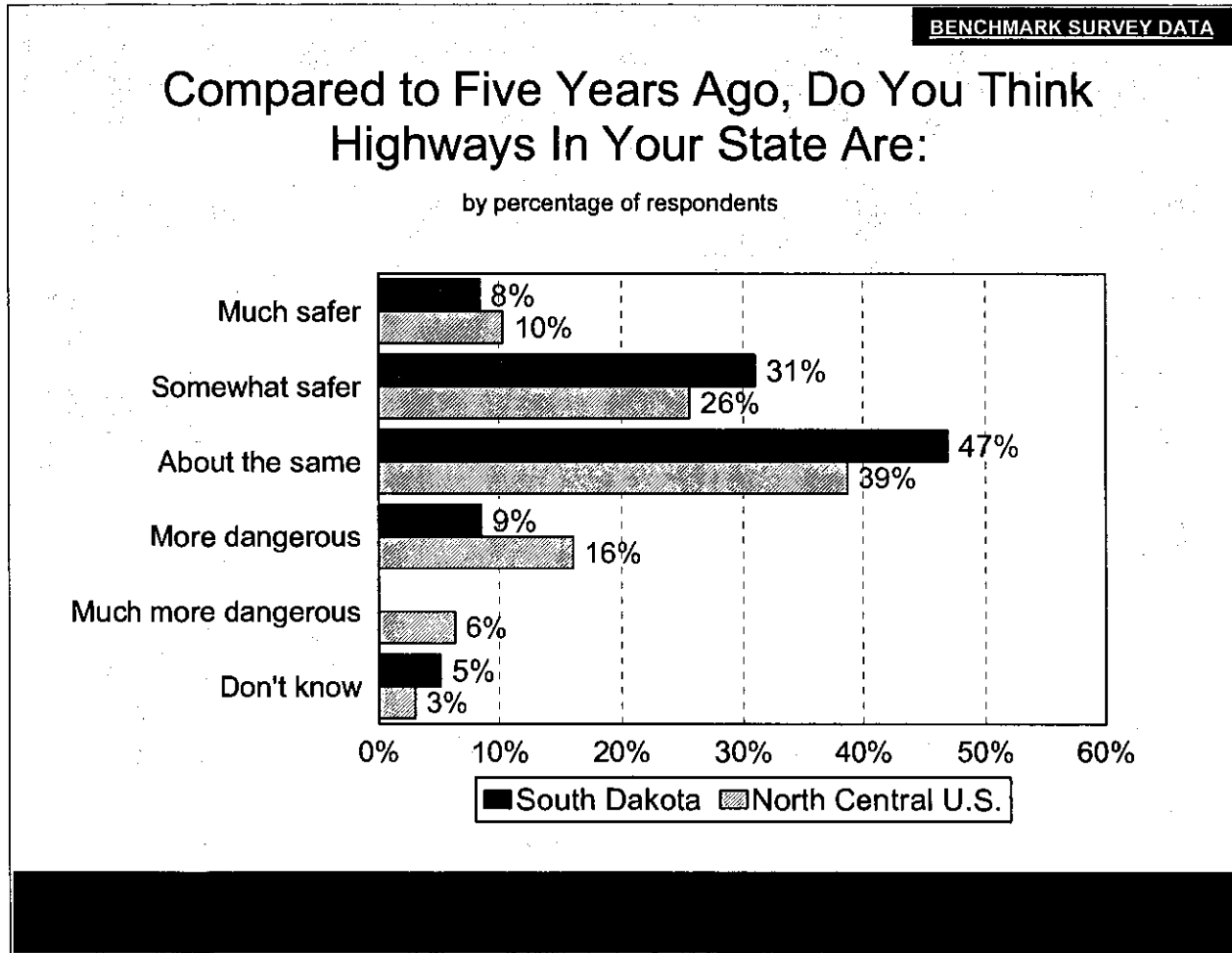
Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

Although overall satisfaction with state highway maintenance has increased significantly in recent years and South Dakota residents are more satisfied with many aspects of highway maintenance and design than residents in surrounding states, there are opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction by focusing on the following areas: (1) removal of debris from highways, (2) maintenance of shoulders, (3) centerline striping, (4) roadside striping, and (5) snow removal. The Department's performance in each of these five areas rated lower than the average for other North Central States. South Dakota residents also generally placed a higher level of importance on improvements in these areas.

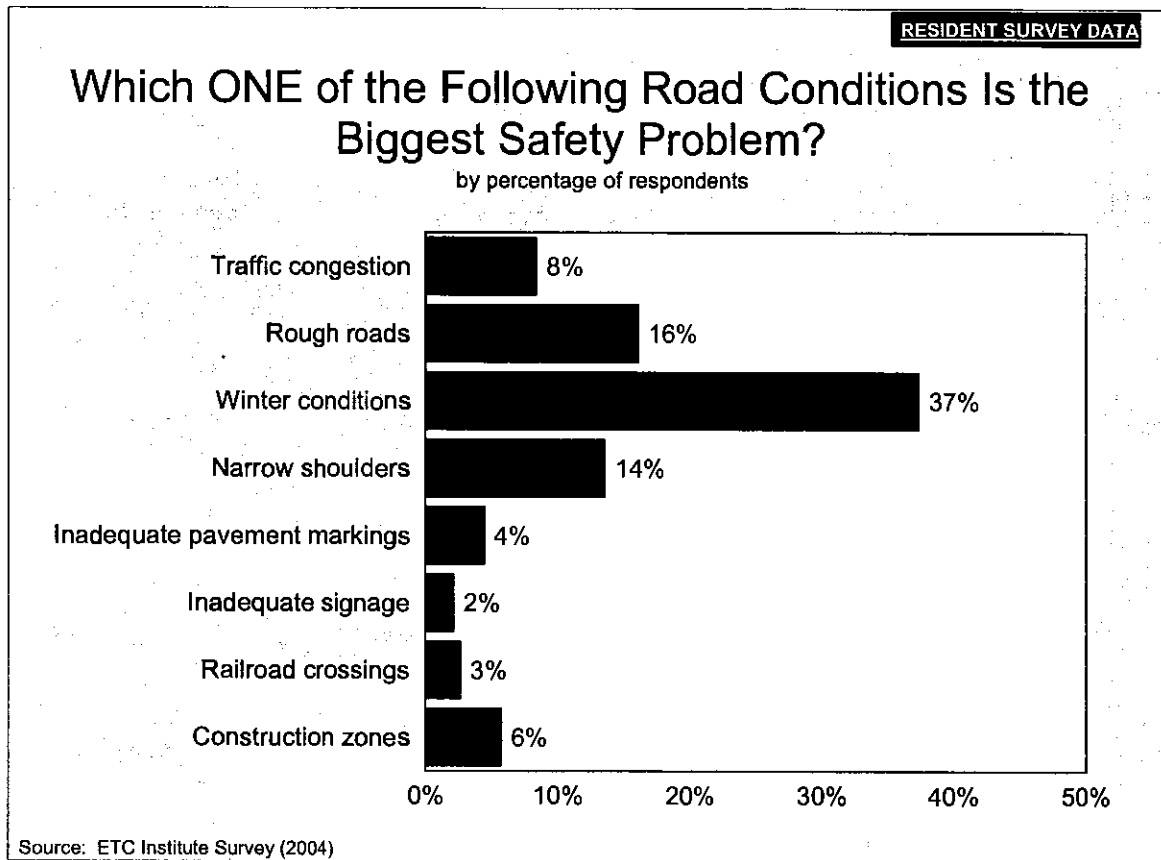
Conclusion #2: Residents and key customer groups generally thought state highways in South Dakota are safer today than they were five years ago, but there are still opportunities to enhance traffic safety on state highways (*Goal Area 2*).

Supporting evidence: South Dakota residents were significantly more likely to think state highways are safer today than they were five years ago compared to residents in other North Central States. The ratio of South Dakota residents who rated state highways as being "safer" vs. "more dangerous" compared to five years ago was 4.3 to 1. The ratio of residents in other North Central states who thought their state highways were "safer" vs. "more dangerous" compared to

five years ago was 1.6 to 1. More than 80% of each of the key customer groups agreed with the statement that SDDOT designs safe highways. More than 90% of the state legislators surveyed thought SDDOT designs safe highways.



The three areas related to highway maintenance and design that residents thought posed the greatest safety problem on state highways were: winter conditions, rough roads, and narrow shoulders. The three behavioral factors that residents thought contributed the most to accidents on state highways were: drinking and driving, inattentive driving, and allowing residents to drive too young.



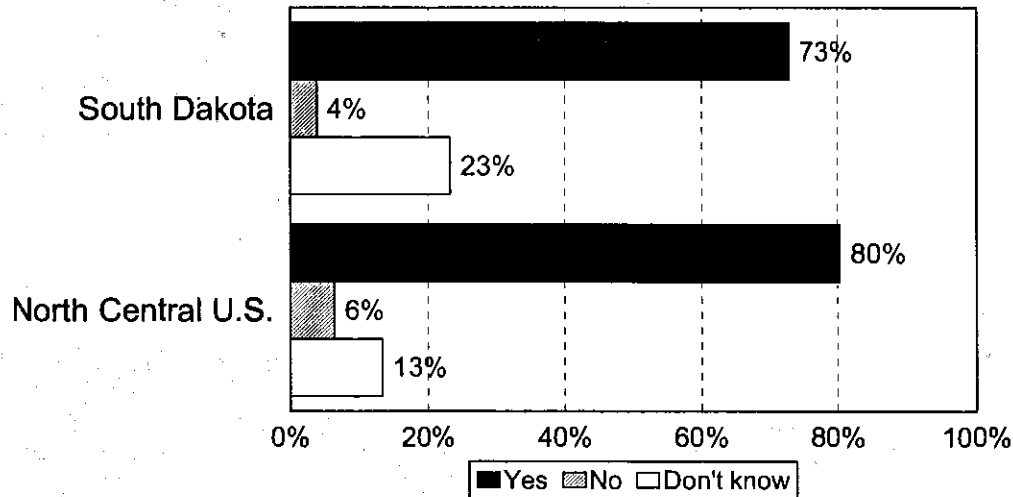
Conclusion #3: Environmental Stewardship (*Goal Area 3*) is important to residents, but many residents are not aware of what SDDOT's is doing in this area.

Supporting evidence: Most (88%) of the residents surveyed thought it was important for SDDOT to consider the impact that transportation improvements have on the Environment. When residents were asked if they thought SDDOT was a good steward of the environment, 73% said "yes," 4% said "no," and 23% did not have an opinion.

The percentage who did not have an opinion was nearly double the percentage of "don't knows" from other North Central States (23% in South Dakota vs. 13% for other North Central States respectively). The high percentage of respondents who did not have any opinion about the Department's role as an environmental leader provides SDDOT with an opportunity to positively shape customer attitudes about the Department on this topic over the next few years. If the Department does not proactively address environmental concerns over the next few years, attitudes among residents who do not currently have an opinion on this issue, may be shaped by those who think the Department is not doing enough to protect the environment.

Do You Think your DOT Is a Good Steward of the Environment?

by percentage of respondents



Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

Conclusion #4: The Department's Capital Improvement program has generally been responsive to the needs of customers, but the Department will need to continue to reassess customer needs to ensure future investments continue to be targeted in the appropriate areas.

Supporting Evidence. Three measurements that were incorporated into the 2004 Assessment to evaluate overall responsiveness of the Department's capital improvements program to customer needs were: (1) perceived value of services, (2) number of customers who benefit from improvements, and (3) change in the organization's overall performance in areas that are most important to the customer.

- With regard to **perceived value**, 48% of residents surveyed thought they received "good value" for their money from the SDDOT; 40% thought they received "OK value" for their money, and 9% did not have an opinion to relate. Only 4% of the residents surveyed thought SDDOT provided "low value."

- With regard to the **number of customers who have directly benefited from capital improvements** in their area, 61% of the residents surveyed indicated that SDDOT had completed construction on a highway they've regularly used during the past five years. Of those who regularly use a highway where construction had been completed, 86% thought the overall quality of transportation in their area had improved as a result of the new construction.
- With regard to the Department's **performance in areas that are most important to customers**, maintenance of existing highways was selected by all customer groups as the top transportation priority for the Department. Overall satisfaction with maintenance on South Dakota highways has improved by 25% in the last 5 years (62% in 1999 vs. 87% in 2004).

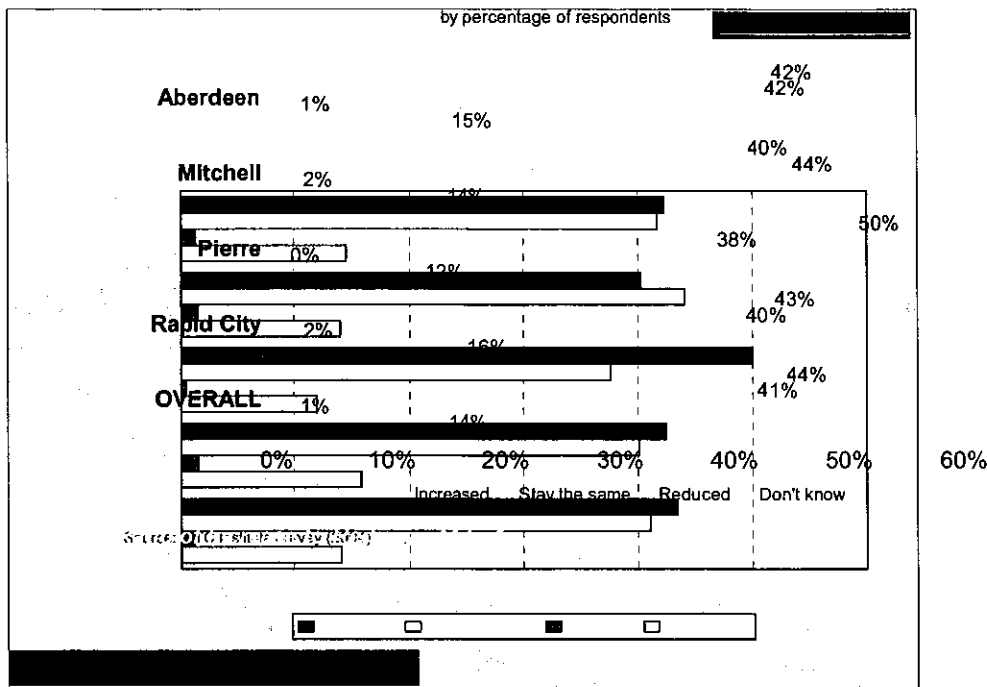
Although the Department's capital improvements program has been very responsive to the needs of customers over the past five years, SDDOT will need to continue assessing customer expectations to ensure that future investments continue to support the changing needs of residents and key customer groups for areas such as shoulders and smoothness on rural two-lane highways.

Funding Levels. When residents were asked how funding levels for transportation in the State of South Dakota should change over the next five years, 44% thought it should increase, 41% thought it should stay about the same, 1% thought it should decrease, and 14% did not have an opinion. The ratio of residents who thought funding for transportation should increase to those who thought it should decrease was 44 to 1.

There were no significant differences in perceptions regarding funding for transportation across the State of South Dakota. Residents of the Pierre Region were the most likely to think funding levels should increase; 50% of the respondents from the Pierre Region thought funding for State Highways should increase over the next five years.

The results for each region are provided in the chart that follows.

How Do You Think the Current Level of Funding for State Highways Should Change Over the Next Five Years?

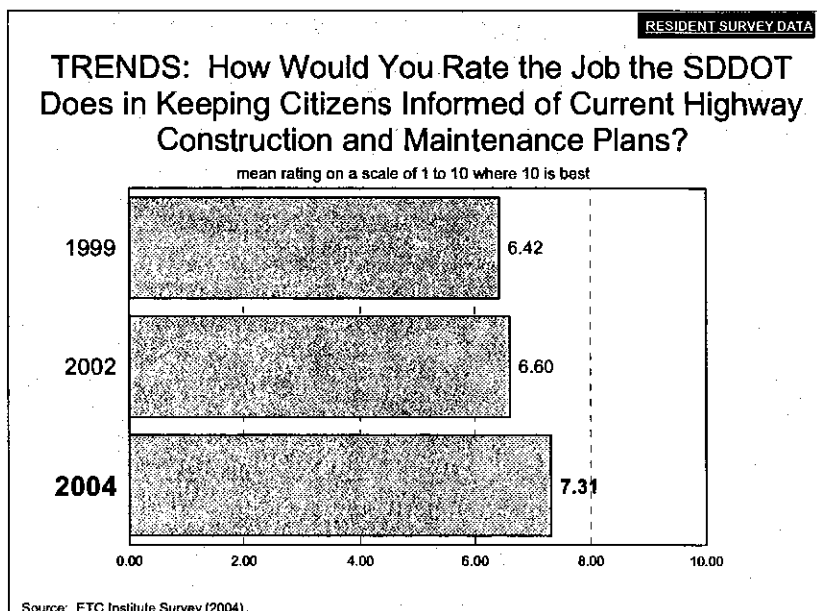


Comparison of Priorities Among Key Customer Groups. Transportation priorities differed significantly on some issues between residents and other key customer groups. On several issues, key customer groups placed significantly more importance on the item than residents. Some of the significant differences are listed below:

- Legislators placed significantly more importance on freight rail service (24% legislators vs. 8% residents) and the maintenance of existing highways (71% legislators vs. 56% residents).
- Farmers and ranchers placed significantly more importance on widening highways (49% farmers/ranchers vs. 37% residents) and improving freight rail service (17% farmers/ranchers vs. 8% residents).
- Truckers placed significantly more importance on widening highways (57% truckers vs. 37% residents), maintenance of existing highways (72% truckers vs. 56% residents) and adding shoulders to highways (48% truckers vs. 33% residents).
- Emergency Vehicle Operators did not rate any items as significantly more important than residents.

Conclusion #5: SDDOT's communication efforts have had a positive impact, and now the Department should begin tailoring its communication strategies to specific customer groups.

Supporting Evidence. Overall satisfaction with the Department's efforts to keep residents informed of current highway construction and maintenance plans has increased significantly over the past five years. In 2004, the mean rating on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 was "very satisfied" was 7.31. This was a significant increase from a mean rating of 6.60 in 2002 and 6.42 in 1999. Residents were also significantly more satisfied with the Department's efforts to keep residents informed about construction delays and alternate routes than they were five years ago. In 2004, the mean rating on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is very satisfied was 7.15. This was a significant improvement from a mean rating of 6.37 in 2002 and 5.97 in 1999.

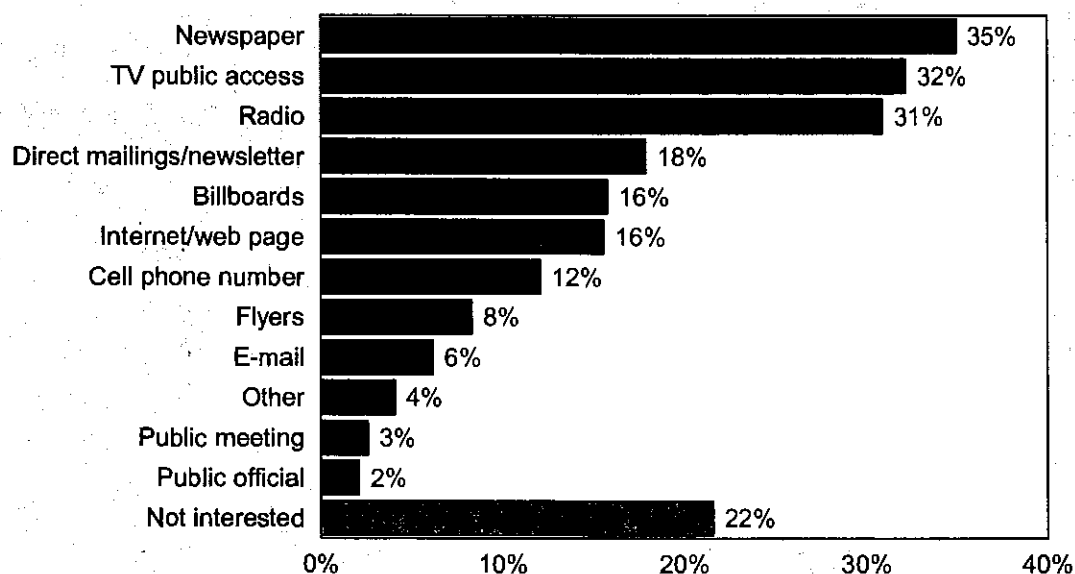


Only 9% of the residents surveyed did not think that SDDOT considers and values the opinions of the public and just 16% who live in areas where there has been new construction during the past five years did not think SDDOT adequately involved the public in the planning of transportation improvements in their area.

The preferred communication methods for residents are shown in the chart on the top of the next page. Methods of communication that key customer groups were significantly more likely to prefer than residents are shown in the chart at the bottom of the next page.

How Would You Like to Get or Receive Information from the South Dakota DOT?

multiple responses accepted



Source: ETC Institute Survey (2004)

Methods of Communication that Were Significantly More Desirable to Specific Customer Groups

- **Legislators**
 - Internet/Web (44% vs. 16% among residents)
 - E-mail (30% vs. 6% among residents)
 - Cell Phone Number on Signs (27% vs. 12% among residents)
 - Public Meetings (17% vs. 3% among residents)
- **Farmers**
 - Radio (42% vs. 29% among residents)
- **Truckers/Shippers**
 - Direct mailings (29% vs. 18% among residents)
 - Cell Phone Numbers on Signs (21% vs. 12% among residents)
 - E-mail (31% vs. 6% among residents)
- **Emergency Vehicle Operators**
 - E-mail (31% vs. 6% among residents)

Recommendations for Action

Importance-Satisfaction Analysis

In addition to the findings that have been presented in this report, the research team conducted importance satisfaction analysis to identify maintenance and highway design priorities for the Department based on the results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment. The results of this analysis are provided below.

Maintenance Priorities. 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. The chart on the following page shows the relative importance and satisfaction of each of the maintenance activities that were rated.

- Importance: Items on the right side of the chart were generally more important. Items on the left side were generally less important.
- Satisfaction: Items listed on the top of the chart rated above average. Items listed on the bottom of the chart rated below average.

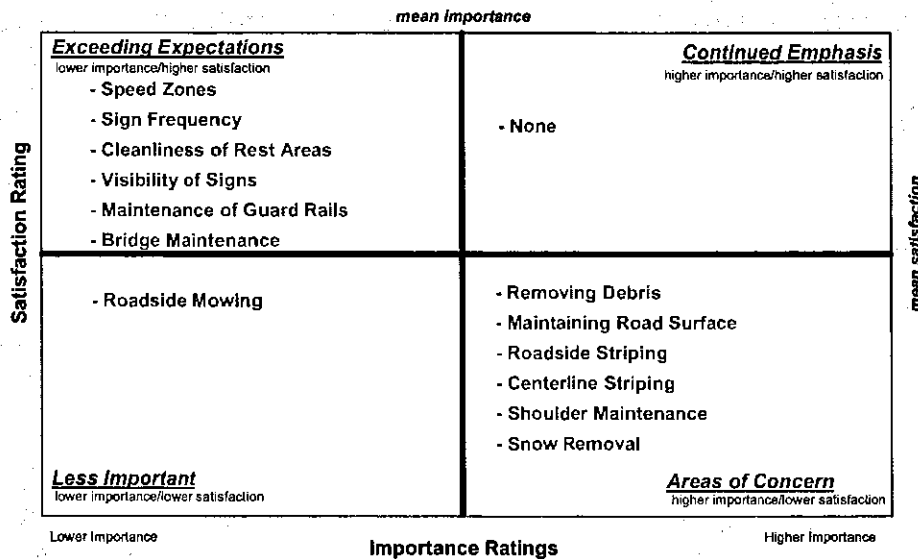
Based on the distribution in the chart, the areas that should receive the highest priority from the South Dakota Department of Transportation are those in the lower right quadrant labeled “areas of concern.” The items in this quadrant are generally more important to residents, but the agency is underperforming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

Based on the results of this analysis, SDDOT should maintain or increase its emphasis in the following areas:

- Removal of debris on highways
- Maintenance of roadway surfaces
- Roadside striping
- Centerline striping
- Shoulder maintenance
- Snow removal

2004 SDDOT Performance-Needs Assessment Matrix Highway Maintenance Issues

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean satisfaction and importance ratings given by respondents to the survey)

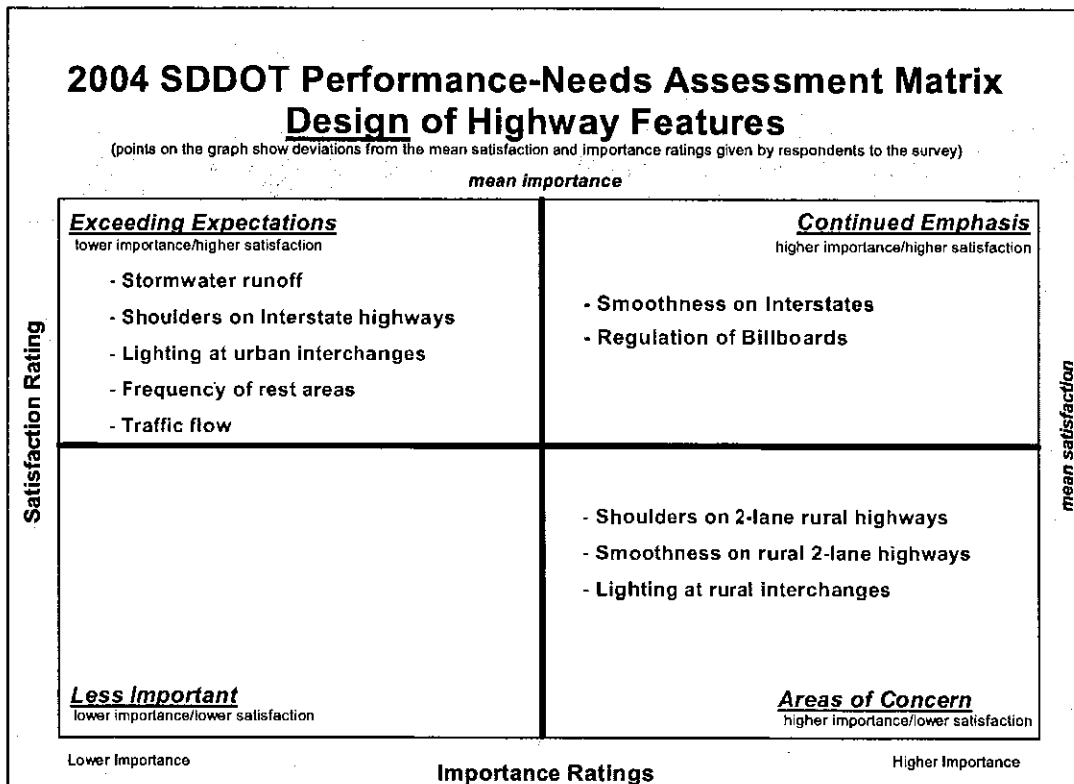


Highway Design Priorities. Using the same method that was just described, the research team analyzed the results of the survey to identify highway design issues that should be addressed. The chart below shows the relative importance and satisfaction of each of the maintenance activities that were rated.

- Importance: Items on the right side of the chart were generally more important. Items on the left side were generally less important.
- Satisfaction: Items listed on the top of the chart rated above average. 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 “areas of concern.” 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 maintain or increase its emphasis in the following areas:

- Shoulders on 2-lane rural highways
- Smoothness on rural 2-lane highways
- Lighting at rural interchanges on Interstates



Priority Areas for Action

The results of the surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews provide SDDOT with a comprehensive set of information to identify and manage customer-oriented improvements over the next two years. Although there are many applications for the data from the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment, the research team has limited the number of recommendations for improvement to the “10 Priority Areas” that are listed below.

1. **SDDOT should increase its emphasis regarding the removal of debris on state highways.** Given the low population densities in many parts of the state, this will not be an easy issue to address. However, it is an area that the Department could positively affect in the short term by reallocating resources and getting employees and contractors to support this effort. Overall satisfaction with the removal of debris on state highways in South Dakota rated 11% below the regional average for North Central States. In addition, removal of debris had the highest percentage of respondents who selected it as the most important maintenance area for SDDOT to address over the next two years. The relatively low satisfaction rating combined with relatively high importance rating is the reason the removal of debris from highways was identified as a Priority Area for the Department.

2. **SDDOT should improve the quality of centerline and roadside striping on state highways.** Overall satisfaction with centerline striping and roadside striping was lower in South Dakota compared to other states in the North Central U.S. Among thirteen maintenance areas that were rated, residents of South Dakota thought roadside striping was the fourth most important area to emphasize over the next two years. They thought centerline striping was the sixth most important area to emphasize. The relatively low satisfaction ratings combined with relatively high importance ratings is the reason centerline and roadside striping were identified as Priority Areas for the Department.
3. **SDDOT should continue to place a strong emphasis on maintaining roadway surfaces and removing snow/ice from state highways.** Overall satisfaction ratings with the maintenance of highway surfaces and snow removal have improved over the past five years. In fact, overall satisfaction with the maintenance of highway surfaces rated 13% above other states in the North Central U.S. Although overall satisfaction with these two areas have improved, residents still think the Department should place a strong emphasis on these areas over the next two years. Maintenance of highway surfaces was rated as the most important maintenance area. Snow removal was the third most important maintenance area. As a result, continued emphasis on these two areas was identified as a Priority Area for the Department over the next two years.
4. **SDDOT should place a higher priority on the development of shoulders and improving smoothness on rural 2-lane highways.** Residents placed a significantly higher level of importance on these two design features than all other highway design features that were rated.
5. **SDDOT should examine ways to enhance lighting at rural interchanges on Interstate highways.** Compared to other states in the North Central U.S., residents of South Dakota were slightly less satisfied with lighting at rural interchanges on Interstates than residents in other North Central States. The comparatively low satisfaction rating combined with relatively high importance rating is the reason lighting at rural interchanges was identified as a Priority Area for the Department.

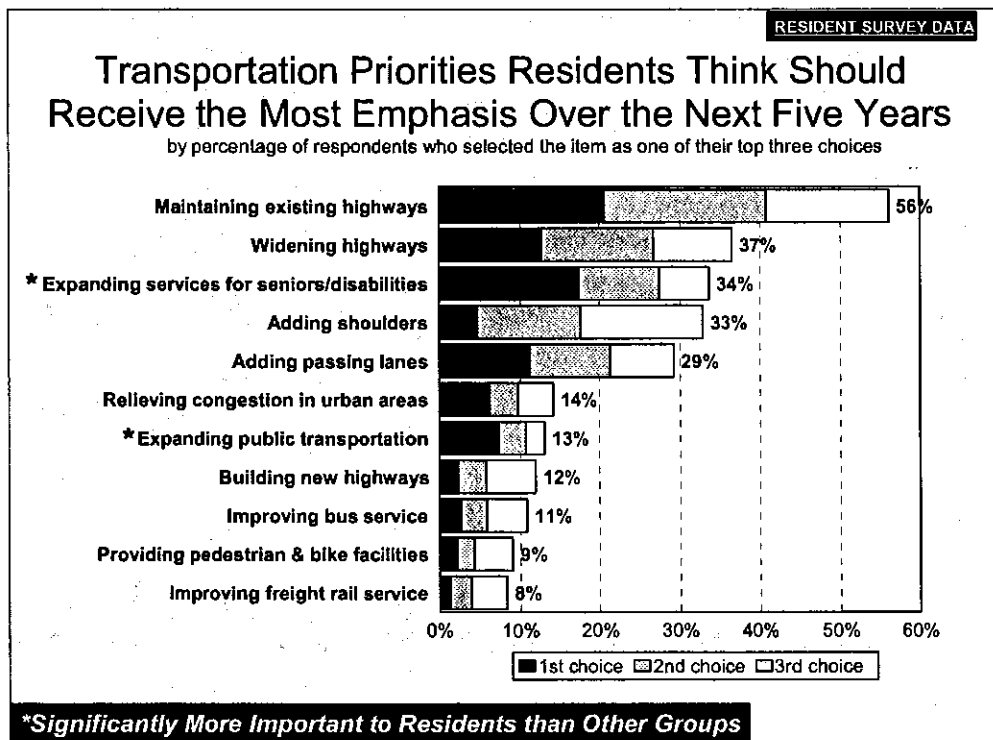
6. **SDDOT should continue its efforts to actively communicate with the public and key customer groups.** As part of this effort, the Department should begin tailoring both the content and method of communication the Department uses to communicate with key customer groups. Although SDDOT has done a good job of communicating with constituents, the Department should realize that the preferred methods of communication differed significantly between residents and key customer groups as shown in the Chart below.

Methods of Communication that Were Significantly More Desirable to Specific Customer Groups

- **Legislators**
 - Internet/Web (44% vs. 16% among residents)
 - E-mail (30% vs. 6% among residents)
 - Cell Phone Number on Signs (27% vs. 12% among residents)
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- **Truckers/Shippers**
 - Direct mailings (29% vs. 18% among residents)
 - Cell Phone Numbers on Signs (21% vs. 12% among residents)
 - E-mail (31% vs. 6% among residents)
- **Emergency Vehicle Operators**
 - E-mail (31% vs. 6% among residents)

7. **SDDOT should continue to make itself accessible to customers via public meetings, the website, 511 information systems, and other methods.** There was strong correlation between overall satisfaction with the Department's overall performance and the ratings residents gave for the quality of communication. This finding suggests that improved communication enhances the general perception that customers have of the Department, which is the reason the Department should continue emphasizing communication over the next two years.

8. **SDDOT should proactively address environmental concerns as part of the Department's planning and development process.** The Department should also encourage contractors and other external partners to do the same. Over the next 10 years, environmental issues will become increasingly important in the planning and development of transportation improvements in South Dakota. By being proactive on environmental issues, the Department will increase its ability to work with environmental groups as partners rather than seeming to be confrontational.
9. **SDDOT should ensure that the 2005 Strategic Plan includes provisions to address the transportation needs of the State's elderly and disabled population.** Given the State's aging population, it will be important for the Department to address the transportation needs of the State's growing elderly and disabled population. The chart below shows that this topic was considered to be one of the most important transportation priorities to residents over the next five years.



10. **SDDOT should ensure that the 2005 Strategic Plan is updated to address the Department's role in supporting non-highway transportation modes, such as rail, airport, and public transportation services.** Although non-highway transportation issues did not rank as one of the most important priorities for the agency as a whole, some members of the Executive Team along with external customers who participated in focus groups and stakeholders interviews identified this as an area that should be addressed by the Department as a long-term issue.

Other Recommendations. The recommendations in the "10 Priority Areas for Action" identify ways for SDDOT to enhance customer satisfaction. The recommendation below identifies an opportunity to improve the process for conducting the External Customer Satisfaction Survey.

1. **SDDOT Should Reassess the Value of Doing the Visitor Survey.** The results of the visitor survey did not provide significant insights regarding transportation priorities for the State of South Dakota in 2002 or 2004 that were not identified through other means. For this reason, the research team recommends that SDDOT either (1) involve other agencies that are concerned about tourism and/or economic development in the design of the visitor survey or (2) discontinue the administration of the visitor survey in future years. If the results of the visitor survey had applications for other agencies, SDDOT might be able to share the cost of administering the survey with another agency. If other agencies are not willing to share of the cost of conducting the visitor survey, SDDOT should use the resources that are currently allocated for the visitor survey in other areas.

Implementation Schedule

In order to help the Department move forward with actions to address the 10 Priority Areas, the following implementation schedule is provided.

- **By December 1, 2004,** SDDOT should issue press releases to the media and informational notices to leaders of key customer groups to report the findings of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment and announce the Department's plans to respond to the findings.
- **By January 1, 2005,** SDDOT should ensure that the results of the survey are communicated to all employees in the Department.

- **By February 1, 2005**, the Executive Team should require subordinate managers from the Area Engineer level and above to identify specific ways that they will use the results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment to improve organizational performance over the next two years.
- **During the Spring of 2005**, SDDOT should complete an update to its Strategic Plan to reflect the priorities that were identified in this assessment.
- **During the Spring and Summer of 2005**, SDDOT should begin working with external customer groups to identify new funding sources for capital improvements to the State's highway system. This should include discussions with state legislators and other external partners about funding for a new transportation program.
- **By the Summer of 2005**, SDDOT's budget should reflect increased funding in areas that were identified as priorities for residents and key customer groups.
- **During the Fall of 2005**, SDDOT managers from the Area Engineer level and above should provide an update to their immediate supervisor that relates how they have used the results from the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment to improve their work performance, as part of their performance review process.
- **In the Spring of 2006**: SDDOT should begin the process of reassessing its performance again.

Summary

Although the short-term benefits of customer surveys and strategic planning initiatives are difficult to measure, the long-term effects of such processes can have a dramatic and lasting impact on an organization. The results of the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Assessment clearly demonstrate that SDDOT's commitment to its Strategic Plan and the Department's on-going efforts to gather input from customers have had a very positive impact on public perceptions of the Department. The Department's priorities are generally aligned with the needs of its customer, and overall satisfaction ratings have improved in almost every area that has been rated over the past five years. Despite significant progress, the Department still has room for improvement. In order to continue achieving success, SDDOT will need to respond to the priorities that were identified during this assessment and be prepared to respond to new issues that will emerge in the years ahead.

