

WORKSHOP LUNCHEON DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Introduction

As a component of each of the eight workshops, participants who were seated at tables of about 6 persons each were asked to discuss their transportation concerns over lunch. After each table finished listing concerns, participants were asked to offer any solutions they might have for any of these concerns. Following is a short analysis of those concerns and solutions. A complete listing of all concerns and solutions noted at each workshop can be found at www.ugpti.org.

Findings

The 490 people who attended the eight workshops listed approximately 380 concerns and 350 solutions. About two-thirds of all concerns were related to highway funding/maintenance issues or public transportation/people mobility issues. Other transportation concerns included: highway maintenance cost and fuel cost increases; commercial road use; air and rail service; safety; economic development; regulations; and recycling.

Workshop concerns varied by region and workshop site as might be expected and, of course, by the personal concerns of the people attending. A short summary of each workshop's major concerns follows:

Dickinson

Highway funding and transit issues were listed about equally as major concerns. Construction and fuel cost inflation were often mentioned as was use of the road system by the oil and agricultural industries.

Williston

Transit or people mobility concerns outnumbered highway maintenance/funding concerns nearly two-to-one in this workshop. Inflation of maintenance costs and use of the road system by the oil and agriculture industries were significant concerns in Williston. Air service, safety, and economic development were also mentioned.

Minot

Concerns over highway maintenance and personal mobility ranked nearly equally in Minot. There was significant emphasis on city street repair and air and Amtrak service to the city. Agriculture and oil industry use of the local road system was also a significant concern.

Bismarck

People were equally concerned about the road system and transit issues in the Bismarck area. Fuel inflation and road maintenance cost increases were of particular concern. Safety, economic development, and regulations were also mentioned.

Fargo

Highway system maintenance concerns outnumbered personal mobility/transit issues nearly three-to-one among Fargo participants. While commercial road use and road costs were mentioned, many people noted rail service as a concern. Safety, recycling, and economic development were also listed.

Jamestown

Area residents were nearly equally divided in their concern about highway system maintenance and people mobility. More use of recycling and use of local materials were more often noted at this site. The impact of commercial traffic, mainly oil-related services, was also of concern here.

Devils Lake

Concerns about the highway system dominated concerns about personal mobility by nearly four-to-one in this region. Devils Lake's rising waters is a driving force here. Safety and economic development were also major concerns as was the increase in highway maintenance costs.

Grand Forks

Local residents were equally concerned about the road system and personal mobility. Maintenance costs of city streets and repair of bridges to Minnesota were significant concerns. Rail service, commercial road use, and economic development also were cited by workshop participants.

Solutions

Given the wide array of concerns and solutions presented at the various workshops, it is probably better to focus on the two major concerns, the highway system and personal mobility. Only a few of the most often mentioned solutions are listed here. Many other solutions to these two concerns and other participants' concerns are found in the individual workshop table discussion summaries on the Website.

Highway Maintenance and Funding Solutions

- Increase fuel taxes and make them a percentage of fuel prices
- Charge by vehicle-miles-traveled rather than fuel use
- Divert vehicle excise taxes to the highway distribution fund
- Use surplus general revenue funds to invest in upgrading the road system
- Make oil, agriculture, and other industries pay more for road use
- Move more freight to rail lines
- Prioritize the road system and maintain only what is needed
- Use most appropriate repair and maintenance materials
- Improve federal, state, county, and township communication and partnering

Personal Mobility and Public Transportation Issues

- More federal and state funding is needed to local areas
- Regional transportation coordination hubs should be built
- Develop more fixed route systems to carry more people

- More coordination among transit providers to better use equipment
- Increase public awareness on the importance of transit services
- Tap other federal funding sources such as housing and medical assistance
- More use of school buses to transport elderly and disabled
- Better communication and collaboration among service providers

Summary

While these workshops offer particular insight into the major transportation concerns of North Dakota's people, many participants saw these workshops as only the beginning of the dialogue. Time after time as the workshops concluded, there would be a number of tables still discussing their concerns and possible solutions. It is hoped these summary sheets of concerns and solutions will continue to stimulate those important discussions. Following are several memorable quotes from the various workshops.

"Before a farmer can be rich, he must have a road." – Chinese proverb

"Surplus time is the best time to invest in infrastructure." – Workshop participant

"Feed the horse that pulls the wagon." – Workshop participant