

Interim Transportation Committee
Thursday, November 12, 2015 - Roughrider Room

UGPTI Administrative Authority Study

North Dakota Department of Transportation
Director Grant Levi, P.E.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee - I'm Grant Levi, Director of the North Dakota Department of Transportation (DOT or Department). I am here to provide you information regarding the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) Change of Administrative Authority Study.

State statute clearly defines DOT's role in North Dakota Century Code 24-01-01 as: "While it is necessary to fix responsibilities for the construction, maintenance, and operation of the several systems of highways, it is intended that the state of North Dakota shall have an integrated system of all roads and streets to provide safe and efficient highway transportation throughout the state. To this end, it is the intent of the legislative assembly to give broad authority and definite responsibility to the director of the department and to the boards of county commissioners so that working together, free from political pressure and local interests, they may provide for the state an integrated system of state and county highways built upon a basis of sound engineering with full regard to the interest and well-being of the state as a whole."

To accomplish the role as defined in state Century Code, the Department plans, constructs and maintains the system of state roadways. We also work with local jurisdictions (city, county and townships) to ensure the state has an integrated system of roadways that allows the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

- This is done with a team of professionals who work at the Department and local jurisdictions.
- To assist the Department and local jurisdictions with their role UGPTI is asked to complete autonomous transportation studies.

From the Department's perspective, the ability to have an independent group complete those studies is in the public's best interest.

- For example, a third party perspective on transportation needs from a group that is not involved directly in the maintenance and construction of the transportation infrastructure is essential.
 - An independent group removes the perception of biases and provides the decision makers at the Department, local jurisdictions and the legislative body another perspective on transportation needs.
 - It also provides consistency in views of needs across all jurisdictions.

While UGPTI provides transportation studies their importance to the state is beyond studies completed for the Department and local jurisdictions.

State Statute defines UGPTI's role in NDCC 54-53-03:

“to conduct and supervise research in the field of transportation and logistics in order to facilitate acquisition of a wider knowledge and understanding of marketing factors associated with the geographical location of the state of North Dakota and the upper great plains in the field of transportation and their influence on the socioeconomic systems of the state, region, and country. Research areas must include the study of commodity and other freight movements into and out of the state in order to better know and understand the various factors affecting the marketing of area products and services.”

To accomplish this role, UGPTI's mission must extend beyond highway transportation and includes activities such as:

- Freight logistics
- Supply chain studies for agriculture and industrial groups.

It is in the state's best interest that UGPTI continues to have the ability to access federal and private grants which are typically available for Universities.

We don't believe there would be any efficiencies or benefits gained in changing the present working relationship between the Department and UGPTI. As a result we believe that it is important for UGPTI to be in University System.

Thank you for the opportunity to present information to you today.