



Year in Review

Message from the Board of Directors

The Heartland Expressway Association has had a year of significant progress, strengthened partnerships, and forward momentum toward our long-term vision of a completed corridor.

In December, members testified at the NDOT Public Hearing in Minatare on the Environmental Assessment for the Minatare to US Highway 385 segment. This important project, with construction anticipated as early as 2026, will ultimately link Alliance through Scottsbluff, Gering, and Kimball to I-80. Our members' voices helped demonstrate local support while also acknowledging community concerns.

Early in 2025, HEA supported Leadership Scottsbluff's annual trip to Lincoln, giving young business leaders an opportunity to engage directly with the legislative process and meet with state leaders. HEA also took positions on key legislation, opposing LB449 to protect rural funding equity and supporting LB779 to increase resources for high-priority expressway corridors. These actions reflect our continued commitment to ensuring rural Nebraska is represented fairly and benefits from state investment in infrastructure.

In March, our representatives traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of the Ports-to-Plains Fly-In. While the details of this effort are highlighted in a separate article in this report, the Fly-In reaffirmed the importance of a united, multi-state approach to federal advocacy. It also reinforced HEA's role as a strong voice for Nebraska within the larger corridor effort.

Federal advocacy remained a priority this year. HEA submitted a \$1 million request for truck turning improvements on Highway 71 near Kimball, while Colorado leadership advanced a complementary \$5 million request extending to the Nebraska border.

We continued to support the Chadron North project, set for 2026, which will add shoulders and passing lanes to Highway 385 to improve safety and traffic flow.

At the same time, HEA invested in strengthening the organization itself. A membership "Ask List" encouraged outreach to new partners, and we are looking forward to welcoming attendees at our Annual Meeting in Alliance on August 21, 2025.

At a Glance: 2024–2025 Highlights

- NDOT Public Hearing – Minatare–US 385 segment advanced
- Leadership Scottsbluff Trip – Supported 25 young leaders
- Legislative Action – Opposed LB449, supported LB779
- Federal Advocacy – \$1M request for Hwy 71, Chadron North backed
- Ports-to-Plains Fly-In – Met with Nebraska delegation in D.C.
- Membership Growth – Launched new outreach efforts
- Leadership Transition – Welcomed Ria Rebman as Secretary/Treasurer
- Annual Meeting – Set for August 21, 2025, in Alliance

We also proudly welcomed Ria Rebman as Secretary/Treasurer of the Board this year. Her energy and dedication to Western Nebraska are already making an impact and will help guide us through a period of growth and renewed advocacy.

Looking ahead, we are considering one of our most important steps yet: supporting three federal resolutions critical to the future of the Expressway and our partner corridors. These resolutions would:

- Establish a long-term formula funding program for future interstate highways
- Authorize a multi-state feasibility study to unify data and accelerate designation
- Secure formal interstate designation and route numbering as I-27.

Together, they will position Nebraska and neighboring states to advance in a coordinated way, unlock new funding opportunities, and bring economic growth to communities along the corridor.

The Heartland Expressway Association exists because of the collective efforts of our members, partners, and communities. As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, we recognize that each step forward has been possible through collaboration, persistence, and shared vision. With your continued support, we are confident that the year ahead will bring even greater progress toward completing this essential corridor.

HEA In Washington

Ports-to-Plains Fly-In 2025

In March 2025, representatives of the Heartland Expressway Association traveled to Washington, D.C. to join colleagues from across the Ports-to-Plains Corridor for the annual Fly-In. Board members Deb Cottier, Annie Folck, and Sharaya DeSersa represented Nebraska, bringing the voice of Western Nebraska directly to Capitol Hill. Over four days, the delegation met with Senator Deb Fischer, Senator Pete Ricketts, and Congressman Adrian Smith, as well as members of other states' Congressional delegations. These conversations reinforced the importance of coordinated federal investment in rural infrastructure and the unique role of the Heartland Expressway in supporting trade, safety, and economic growth.



The annual Fly-In continues to be a cornerstone of HEA's federal advocacy efforts, ensuring that Nebraska's priorities are heard and considered in national decision-making.

Building the Corridor

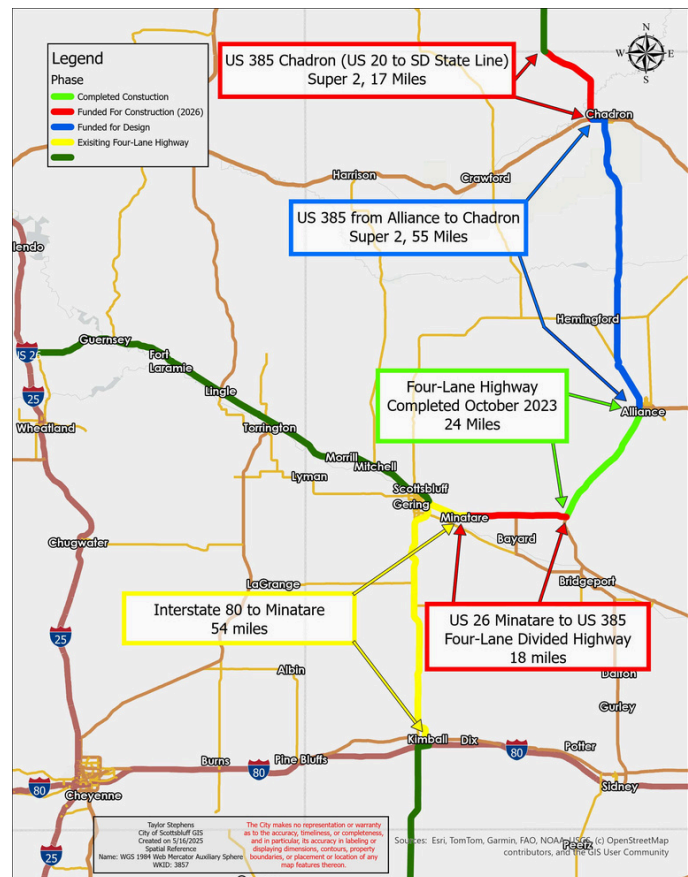
Where We've Been and Where We're Going

The Heartland Expressway is steadily moving forward, turning plans into real miles of highway across Western Nebraska.

In 2023, 24 miles of four-lane highway were completed near Alliance, adding to existing four-lane stretches around Scottsbluff, Gering, and toward I-80. Two major projects are already funded for construction: 17 miles from Chadron to the South Dakota line and 18 miles from Minatare to US 385. Another 55 miles between Alliance and Chadron are funded for design, laying the groundwork for the next phase.

The final major step is the 54-mile connection from I-80 to Minatare. Once complete, this link will fully tie Western Nebraska into the interstate system, improve safety and freight movement, and expand opportunities for economic growth across the region.

Through ongoing advocacy, partnerships, and community support, HEA is keeping momentum strong and ensuring that each mile brings us closer to completing a corridor that will serve Nebraska for generations.



Become a Member

By Heartland Expressway Chair Deb Cottier

The Heartland Expressway Association and its partnership with the Ports to Plains Alliance is empowering communities and businesses by paving the way for change in three critical areas: safety, economic development and transportation funding. With the continued unwavering support throughout the corridor, from Kimball to Scottsbluff-Gering, Alliance and Chadron we can improve transportation infrastructure and business networking opportunities so business and industry can thrive.

We invite you to join our efforts and become a Heartland Expressway Association (HEA) member. Together, we can drive change in rural Nebraska.

Safety

Currently, more than 42,000 Americans are killed every year on our nation's highways and another 3 million are injured. Nearly 60 percent of those fatalities occur on two-lane rural roads. The number of trucks moving along the HEA Corridor is expected to dramatically increase over the next three decades. Accidents will be significantly reduced on existing two-lane segments of the Corridor when they are upgraded to four-lane divided highways.

Economic Development

USDOT's Freight Analysis Framework 5 showed that Nebraska exported by truck \$9.4 billion in goods to the other eight states along the Corridor in 2020. By 2050, those exports by truck will grow to \$16.2 billion, an increase of \$6.8 billion exported from Nebraska to the additional eight states for a 73.1% increase. Additionally, Corridor communities are able to attract new primary industries by providing a highway system that allows for the successful and timely transport of those products to other markets. The Heartland Expressway Association works to keep that money in the pocket of residents by ensuring adequate transportation funding.

Transportation Funding

Funding for transportation relies on the federal government and state departments of transportation. We work with the Ports-to-Plains Alliance staff and lobby team at the federal level and with support from local communities at the state level. Members successfully guide policy by maintaining strong working relationships with legislators on both sides of the aisle. Regular visits to Washington D.C. for face-to-face or virtual meetings help ensure proper funding for the Expressway.

Membership Benefits

As a member of The Heartland Expressway Association, we can set Nebraska on a path to help build a strong and sustainable transportation system together, one that makes visible and steady progress to improving our mobility and quality of life.

As a member of the HEA, you will benefit from:

- Better roads and safe passage for tourists, shoppers, citizens and employees
- Legislative strength on the federal and state level in the form of face-to-face meetings, letters of support for your projects and collaboration with legislators on transportation funding matters
- Shared knowledge, experience and education
- Regional, national and international exposure
- Leveraged, collaborative marketing resources

The Heartland Expressway funnels hundreds of thousands of travelers into our communities. These visitors impact the economy as they spend money at hotels, restaurants, gas stations, shopping outlets, convention centers and sporting venues.

The HEA is committed to improving transportation infrastructure and, in turn, improving the economic and business interests that are the lifeblood of the region.

Our efforts depend on your support. For years (decades, really) cities, counties and organizations have financially supported these efforts through membership dues. We are looking to broaden our base of support so we can continue to work for you.



Deb Cottier

Chair - Board of Directors - Heartland Expressway Association

Advocacy Opportunities

Heartland Expressway Advocate: \$5,000 or greater annually

Pioneer Advocate: \$2,500-\$4,999 annually

Gold: \$1,000-\$2,499 annually

Silver: \$500-\$999 annually

Bronze: \$250-\$499 annually

Associate/Not for profit: \$100 annually

Governmental Jurisdiction: \$0.36 per capita annually

Contact our Secretary/Treasurer to sign up today:

Ria Rebman- rrebman@tcdne.org
308-633-2862 - 1620 Broadway, Scottsbluff

\$452.4 million projected total benefits from 2016 to 2054

Across the value of Economic Inventory Savings, Value of Accident reductions, Time Savings for diverted and existing users according to the 2014 HEA Corridor Development Management Plan.



INTERSTATE ADVANTAGE

DRIVING TRADE ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

PORTS TO PLAINS 2025 CONFERENCE | 9.30 - 10.2

Join us September 30–October 2 in Lubbock, Texas for the Ports-to-Plains Annual Conference. This year's theme, Interstate Advantage: Driving Trade Across North America, highlights the future of I-27 and the corridor's role in connecting communities, commerce, and opportunity from Mexico to Canada. Don't miss the chance to hear from national leaders, industry experts, and regional partners shaping the next phase of our highway system.

Register at: www.portstoplains.com/conference/2025-annual-conference

Special Thanks to Our Members

Government

City of Alliance
City of Chadron
City of Gering
City of Kimball
City of Scottsbluff
City of Terrytown
Kimball County
Scotts Bluff County

Gold

Platte Valley Bank
Regional West Medical Center
Box Butte General Hospital

Silver

The Hiner Foundation
Panhandle Area Development District (PADD)
Ally Dakota

Bronze

Aulick Industries

Associate

Scottsbluff-Gering United Chamber of Commerce
Alliance Chamber of Commerce
Ameri-Co Carriers
Twin Cities Development
Open Plains Transit
Box Butte Development Corporation

Contact our Secretary/Treasurer to sign up today:

Ria Rebman, rrebman@tcdne.org, 308-633-2862, 1620 Broadway, Scottsbluff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025

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- Annie Folck: City of Gering, NE, Vice-Chair
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- Mark Harris: Scotts Bluff County, Director
- Rich Flores: Kimball County, Director
- Sharaya DeSersa: City of Scottsbluff, Director
- Tom Menke: City of Chadron, Director
- Annette Brower: City of Kimball, Director
- Hannah Robinson: BBDC, Director
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- Lauren Garduno: Ports to Plains, Ex-Officio
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- Tearza Mashburn: City of Alliance, Alternate
- Pat Heath: City of Gering, Alternate