**NDDOT Launches Project to Expand U.S. 85 from Watford City to Long X Bridge**

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The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) is expanding U.S. Highway 85 to a four-lane highway from Watford City to the Long X Bridge over the Little Missouri River. NDDOT is launching this highway widening project by starting project design, right-of-way acquisitions and utility relocations along the corridor.

“Highway 85 is a critical route for transportation and commerce in western North Dakota, yet it continues to see a high number of traffic crashes,” Gov. Doug Burgum said. “This expansion project will improve the flow of traffic for the public, business and industry and enhance safety as we work toward Vision Zero in our state.”

Located in the energy fields of western North Dakota, this stretch of U.S. 85 moves about 4,500 vehicles a day. The 11-mile, roughly $104 million expansion project is the second phase of a multi-phase plan to four-lane the corridor.

NDDOT is applying for a federal grant through Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) to help fund a portion of the project. This grant along with state funding would assist the Department in widening this segment of U.S. 85.

“On a project of this magnitude we work in collaboration with many stakeholders to make sure we are serving the needs of everyone impacted,” said NDDOT Director Bill Panos. “Our collaborative approach also benefits the project itself and gives us a better result for the impacted communities, businesses and the State of North Dakota.”

It takes time to complete all the steps needed for a major road project, especially one that adds more lanes. Once the four-lane project is designed and land is secured, the project may be bid in late 2022 with construction starting in 2023.

The first phase of the multi-phase U.S. 85 plan is currently underway as construction is progressing on a new four-lane Long X Bridge, approximately 15 miles south of Watford City. The bridge is expected to be completed in 2021.