

Executive Summary

This study is aimed at recommending a location for the reconstruction of the Spearfish rest area along Interstate 90 (I-90) with a welcome center. Interstate safety rest areas called 'rest areas' by South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) are an important part of South Dakota's transportation infrastructure. Rest areas across the state were reviewed in May 2016 with the South Dakota Interstate Rest Area Revitalization Plan developed by the State departments of Tourism and Transportation. Since then, rest areas along I-90 and I-29 have been improved through reconstruction, adding welcome centers and/or the remodeling of facilities. The state's long-term vision for welcome centers and rest areas is:

“South Dakota’s interstate rest areas and welcome centers provide a safe, clean, accessible, and functional place for travelers to rest and rejuvenate. They present and positive impression that is welcoming and delivers educational value for visitors which enhances and extends their stay in South Dakota. The facilities are modern and aesthetically pleasing, while being cost-effective.”

The state's vision is to have five Welcome centers, one on each Interstate border location and one in Chamberlain.

At the time of the revitalization plan development, the City of Spearfish and local developers were exploring a possible partnership opportunity with the departments of Tourism and Transportation and Lawrence County. The intent of this study is to look at various potential site locations, while staying true to the Interstate rest area and information center/welcome center definitions.

Interstate Rest Areas – Public facilities located along South Dakota’s two interstates at which travelers can rest, use restrooms, stretch and rejuvenate. Services can include restrooms, vending machines, picnic shelters, pet exercise areas, truck and regular vehicle parking.

Information Centers or Welcome Centers – Facilities located within the interstate rest areas. Information centers or welcome centers are staffed by seasonally employed travel counselors who offer additional traveler information about South Dakota’s tourism offerings.

Based on previous studies, the Spearfish rest area was identified as in need of remodel or reconstruction to meet ADA standards and improve tourist information outreach. The 2016 South Dakota Interstate Rest Area Revitalization Plan noted that it would be more cost effective to reconstruct this rest area than to remodel or add a welcome center.

This study reviewed existing conditions, development of site alternatives, and filtered locations to identify three feasible locations along the study corridor. The selected locations for further analysis included the existing location at mile marker 1 (MRM 1), Exit 10, and Exit 17. Detailed analysis as at each of these locations was completed for environmental, traffic, utilities, and cost considerations.

An evaluation matrix was created utilizing the data gathered and analyzed throughout the study process. The results of this evaluation will be used by the departments of Tourism and Transportation to make an

informed decision on the best location for a rest area/welcome center that will benefit the traveling public and taxpayers of the State of South Dakota.

Based on results from this study, it is recommended to utilize the existing location for the reconstruction of the rest area with a welcome center. The site is rural and provides a needed welcoming refuge for the public entering the state. Unlike the other locations, no right of way or utility extension costs would be needed, and the historic tipi structure could more than likely remain in its current location. The rural nature of the existing location also mitigates noise, traffic, safety, and lighting concerns for residents within the City of Spearfish. The cost of the construction at the existing location is approximately \$5M. Costs associated with the other locations were three and four times more expensive and introduce additional cost, environmental, social, and traffic risks.



↑ Existing Spearfish Rest Area and Tipi at Mile Marker (MRM) 1