



REST AREA

• REVITALIZATION PLAN •

BACKGROUND

In 2015, due to the age and condition of our interstate rest areas, Governor Daugaard commissioned a task force consisting of members from the Department of Tourism and Department of Transportation to develop and propose a plan for improvements over the next three years and beyond. The result was the creation of the Rest Area Revitalization Plan, which includes a long-term vision for the state's welcome centers and rest areas:

VISION STATEMENT

“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 a 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.”

This vision statement has become the basis for many of the welcome center and rest area upgrades. The following press release from November 2016 introduces some of the upgrades that will be implemented:

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: SD'S REST AREA REVITALIZATION PLAN

A column by Gov. Dennis Daugaard:

In 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed into law the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, creating the interstate highway system. Along with 41,000 miles of roadway came construction of interstate rest areas, which served a dual purpose: to provide basic services for motorists and give travelers a place to get out, stretch their legs and rest.

South Dakota currently has 21 rest areas, some of which were constructed as long ago as 1969. Due to age, several of these facilities are in dire need of major maintenance, renovation or complete reconstruction. Additionally, the availability of information over mobile devices is changing the way that visitors plan their travels and access information about our state. To address these challenges, I asked staff from the departments of Tourism and Transportation to develop a revitalization plan for our rest areas.

After nearly a year of review, analysis, research and discussion, this work group developed a plan which addresses the needs and expectations of today's motorists. Over the next few years, this plan will bring our rest areas into the modern era of travel and help us prepare for the future. Upon completion, South Dakota will offer five staffed welcome centers at our state's borders and at Chamberlain, along with 12 additional rest areas along interstates 29 and 90.

The plan includes construction of two new welcome centers near Vermillion and on the Minnesota border, as well as an expanded and remodeled welcome center at Wilmot. These centers will be staffed during the summer months and, in addition to providing a safe place for travelers to stop, serve as South Dakota's "front door" for vacationers seeking tourism information.

The welcome centers will be more extensive than our current rest areas. They will contain enhanced displays and exhibits as well as modern stations for travel-related information, such as road closures, weather conditions and construction. The welcome centers will provide a great first impression for our visitors, and I know South Dakotans will be proud of how well they represent our Great Faces and Great Places. For more information go to sd.gov and type "interstate" or "rest area" into the search engine.

Challenges very often lead to great opportunities. Through the changes outlined in the rest area revitalization plan, we will continue to meet the needs of our travelers and we will make South Dakota even more enticing to visitors. It's a plan that will benefit our state well into the future.

To view the full Rest Area Revitalization Plan, you can visit the link below:

<http://www.sddot.com/resources/reports/InterstateRestAreaFinalReport.pdf>

TIMELINE

The first phase of the Rest Area Revitalization Plan took place in the fall of 2016 with the permanent closure of the Wasta and Tilford information centers. At the end of the 2017 season, we will see the next phase of the plan implemented. This fall the Wilmot and Vermillion information centers will be temporarily closed for renovations. These two centers will remain closed during the 2018 season, while the remaining centers [New Effington, Valley Springs, Salem eastbound and westbound, Chamberlain, Vivian, and Spearfish] will continue to serve visitors in 2018. Once the renovations are complete, the Wilmot and Vermillion welcome centers will reopen for the 2019 season, while the New Effington, Salem eastbound and westbound, and Vivian centers will be permanently closed. Additionally, the Valley Springs information center will be temporarily closed during the 2019 season as it undergoes reconstruction, and will reopen to the public in 2020. Below is a timetable which helps explain how the Revitalization Plan will affect each center over the next few years.

CENTER	2017	2018	2019
New Effington	Open	Open	Information Center: Closed Rest Area: Open
Wilmot	Open	Temporarily Closed for Remodel	Open
Valley Springs	Open	Open	Temporarily Closed for Reconstruction
Vermillion	Open	Temporarily Closed for Reconstruction	Open
Salem eastbound	Open	Open	Information Center: Closed Rest Area: Open
Salem westbound	Open	Open	Information Center: Closed Rest Area: Open
Chamberlain	Open	Open	Open
Vivian	Open	Open	Information Center: Closed Rest Area: Open
Spearfish	Open	Open	Open

***Please note that the closure of an information center does not mean that the rest area itself will be closed.** The only rest areas that have been permanently closed as a result of the Rest Area Revitalization Plan are the Tilford eastbound and westbound rest areas west of Rapid City and the Hidewood southbound and northbound rest areas south of Watertown.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What will be done with the publications we supplied to the centers that will be closing at the end of the season?

A: Industry partners will be given the opportunity to collect any remaining inventory once the centers have closed. As we get closer to the end of the season, an email will be sent to all Publication Program participants with instructions on how to collect any remaining material.

Q: Will there still be lit swaps each year?

A: The lit swaps will continue as usual, and the South Dakota interstate information centers will continue to have tables at the lit swaps. Please refer to the timetable above to see which centers will be open in a given year. If the timetable indicates that the center will be open, then you will see a table for that center at the lit swaps. Keep in mind that the lit swaps are hosted by two of South Dakota's regional tourism associations, and not by the Department of Tourism. The lit swap in Mitchell is hosted by the Southeast South Dakota Tourism Association, while the Rapid City lit swap is hosted by the Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association. If you have additional questions regarding the lit swaps, you can reach out to the respective association.

Q: Can we still send publications to the centers?

A: Absolutely! Any information center that will be open for the season is happy to receive and distribute your publication. Remember that you must register your publication and meet all program requirements before distributing your publication to the centers.

Q: Do we still need to register for the Publication Program?

A: Yes. It is required that all publications be registered through the Department of Tourism. You can review the program requirements and register your publication at SDVisit.com. This webpage will be updated in December to prepare for the 2018 season.

Q: Will alternate/temporary information centers be put into place while the Wilmot, Valley Springs, and Vermillion centers are closed for construction?

A: No. While construction is taking place, motorists will not be able to access the rest areas or exits at these locations. However, the Spearfish, Vivian, Chamberlain, and Salem information centers will remain open to travelers. We will also have state travel counselors at the Black Hills & Badlands Visitor Center and Minuteman Missile National Historic Site Visitor Center. In addition to providing information, our travel counselors will work hard to promote other visitor centers across the state so that travelers always know where to find information on local attractions.

[Questions continued on next page.]

Q: What alternative advertising opportunities exist if an information center we rely on is closing permanently?

A: The Department of Tourism is currently exploring options for placing travel information and signage, to a limited degree, in non-staffed interstate rest areas. This information will consist of state and regional vacation guides, the official SD highway map, and other wayfinding resources. Additionally, the Department of Tourism has partnered with the Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association and the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site to place certified state travel counselors within the visitor information centers at both of these locations. We are always looking for new and creative ways to promote destinations in South Dakota. If you have ideas for other alternative advertising opportunities, we would love to hear them!

Q: What advertising opportunities will be available at the welcome centers?

A: We will continue to offer the publication program at all of our welcome centers. Additionally, we are currently exploring various options for new advertising opportunities at the welcome centers. The new facilities will have more space and better technology, which should help to expand our possibilities. If you have any suggestions for advertising opportunities you would like to see made available, please let us know.

Q: Will the new welcome centers charge for advertising?

A: There is currently no plan to charge for any advertising opportunities at the welcome centers. The publication program and any other advertising opportunities introduced at our welcome centers will be offered at no cost.

Q: Will the new welcome centers be open year-round?

A: The welcome centers will continue to operate on a seasonal basis. However, depending on the amount of traffic we see at these sites, it is possible that in the future we would consider extending the hours or length of the season in order to meet the needs of our visitors.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me.

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