

Moorhead Snow Fences

Project Background

- There are blowing and drifting snow problems along Hwy 10 and I-94 corridors on the easterly and southeasterly side of Moorhead.
- Mitigating blowing and drifting snow in this area would have significant benefits in the safe, economical and efficient operation of the highway and interstate.
- MnDOT District 4 turned to the Blowing and Drifting Snow Control program, where the agency partners with landowners to install snow fences in open areas along state highways, as a possible solution.

Public Engagement Challenge

- The area involves multiple audiences, including other local governments (City of Moorhead, Clay County and the Moorhead Airport) and multiple landowners/operators ranging from individuals to families and corporations.
- The various owners were not aware of or educated about snow control methods, including snow fences, MnDOT uses to mitigate the impacts of blowing and drifting snow.
- There was a perception that the incentive (financial compensation) was not worth landowners' time or effort to participate in the snow fence program.

Public Engagement Tool

- MnDOT confirmed and documented that there really was a snow control problem by using agency resource staff and engaging with local governmental agencies.
- District 4 visited property owners to educate them and listen to their concerns.
- The district used exhibits and information supported by Office of Environmental Stewardship experts, State Patrol and MnDOT Right of Way and Maintenance staff to respond to concerns and to show the benefits.
- District 4 also used engagement staff to help document and share with the media the successes of snow fences and standing corn rows.
- Several news outlets aired stories on snow fences, and MnDOT has been able to acknowledge landowners and thank them for their willing to work with MnDOT.
- Installed a snow fence camera to allow the public to view the fence.
- Created a snow fence program website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/d4/snowfence/index.html>

Key Takeaways

- Visiting and educating the local community using solid information and exhibits worked well.
- Involving our maintenance staff (they see the problem first hand) to lead the effort with support from our other areas worked really well.

- Having maintenance staff promote the needs and benefits along with the use of MnDOT and State Patrol experts helped create understanding and uptake with landowners.
- Using social media to help show success of the corn row test worked well.
- The project also helps reduce chlorides and snow removal operations while increasing safety. As a result, the State Patrol spends less time in this area recovering stranded motorists and motorists involved in crashes.
- MnDOT has met with local soil and water conservation districts and they have showed great interest in working with MnDOT on future projects.
- This project has helped focus district and new shared service center efforts relating to blowing and drifting snow.

Level of Engagement: Collaborate, Empower

- MnDOT listened to property owners using a direct and positive approach; this helped them to address concerns about the snow fence project.
- MnDOT reached out to local government agencies to collaborate, helping to identify the problem.
- Let property owners decide what solution(s) work best for their needs.

Caveat

- The fixed options (permanent) involved extensive landowner engagement and review of multiple options/ways to mitigate the blowing and drifting problem.

Quote

- “The project was executed in a heavily traveled section of I-94 just outside Moorhead and that visibility has helped sell the concept to the public. Many travelers saw the snow fence benefits which is helping to generate interest in other needed areas of our district.” – Tom Lundberg, Project Manager

Contact

- Tom Lundberg, Project Manager, Thomas.Lundberg@state.mn.us, 218-846-3634
- Bryan Christensen, Public Engagement Coordinator, bryan.christensen@state.mn.us, 218-846-3609

Keywords

- Blowing Snow, Snow Fences, Maintenance, Multiple Agency, Collaborate, Empower