Nebraska Ports to Plains Interstate Corridor Advocacy Brief

Economic case and policy priorities

Nebraska's approximately 221-mile Ports to Plains segment is a central link in the Heartland Expressway. Advancing the route toward Interstate standards would connect producers and communities with regional markets, strengthen access to I-80, and improve the reliability of north south freight travel across the High Plains.

29,165	$5.82B	$3.21B	$255.4M
jobs supported	economic output	state GDP	state tax revenue

The economic case for action

Construction investment

- A roughly $3.38 billion investment is projected to generate $5.82 billion in statewide output.
- Construction supports $3.21 billion in GDP and $2.16 billion in personal income.
- The 29,165 jobs supported include 16,410 direct, 1,775 indirect and 10,980 induced jobs.

Benefits after construction

- Annual output above baseline rises from $908 million in 2055 to $1.96 billion in 2080.
- By 2080, employment is 3,433 jobs and population 5,954 residents above baseline.
- Cumulative state tax revenue is approximately $1.02 billion over 2055–2080.

Why the corridor matters

- A more consistent highway can improve travel reliability and reduce conflicts along rural segments.
- Lower transportation costs expand access to customers and suppliers for Nebraska businesses.
- A connected north south route improves access to I-80 and neighboring corridor states.

What policymakers can do

- Advance remaining Heartland Expressway segments through project development and construction.
- Support a multi-state feasibility study and Future Interstate designation and numbering.
- Establish predictable federal funding for a phased, coordinated corridor program.

Nebraska's role in the corridor

The Heartland Expressway connects western Nebraska with South Dakota, Colorado and Wyoming and links the larger corridor to I-80. Completing remaining gaps would make existing highway improvements more useful as a connected route, serving agriculture, manufacturing, freight operators and rural communities that depend on predictable travel.

Move from corridor vision to project delivery

Nebraska can build on Heartland Expressway improvements by advancing corridor planning, environmental review, preliminary engineering and phased construction. A coordinated multi-state feasibility study can identify the next links to deliver, while predictable federal funding would allow the states to sequence projects across borders.

Cost methodology. The Nebraska one-pager cites approximately $15.3 million per mile in 2026 dollars and a roughly $3.38 billion investment for 221 miles, assuming frontage roads along about 20 percent of the route. These are planning estimates, not REMI model outputs. Segment costs will vary with roadway configuration, structures, interchanges, right-of-way and other requirements.

About the analysis. The attached REMI/Proseris one-pager summarizes construction impacts and modeled transportation-efficiency gains. REMI develops economic forecasting and policy analysis tools. North Dakota State University's Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute supplied transportation research and data for the corridor analysis.

Ports to Plains Corridor — Nebraska

Economic Impact of Corridor Investment & Long-Run Transportation Efficiency

Construction Phase

Static impact

Construction in Nebraska spans an estimated 221 miles, a total investment of roughly $3.38 billion. This delivers $5.82 billion in total economic output and 29,165 jobs across the state economy, including 16,410 direct construction jobs and 12,755 supported indirectly through suppliers and household spending. Each direct job generates an additional 0.78 jobs statewide, and each dollar of direct output generates an additional $0.80 in statewide output. This construction phase generates a total of $255.4 million in tax revenue for the state.

For planning purposes, upgrading the Nebraska Ports to Plains corridor to Interstate standards is estimated at approximately $15.3 million per mile in 2026 dollars, assuming frontage roads are required along approximately 20% of the corridor. Actual costs will vary by segment based on existing highway configuration, structures, interchanges, right-of-way, utilities, environmental requirements, and urban conditions.

$255.4M	1.80×	29,165	$5.82B	$15.3M	221.00
TOTAL TAX REVENUE fixed 2022 dollars	OUTPUT MULTIPLIER total ÷ direct output	TOTAL JOBS SUPPORTED direct + indirect + induced	TOTAL ECONOMIC OUTPUT fixed 2024 dollars	COST PER MILE corridor construction	CORRIDOR MILES Nebraska segment

Impact Channel	Employment (jobs)	Economic Output ($M)	Description
Direct	16,409.89	3,227.63	Construction activity itself
Indirect	1,774.51	498.42	Supplier & supply-chain purchases
Induced	10,980.19	2,097.56	Household re-spending of wages
Total Impact	**29,164.59**	**5,823.62**	**All channels combined**

Gross Domestic Product: $3,211.28M (millions of fixed local 2024 dollars) · Personal Income: $2,155.55M (thousands of current dollars, shown in millions)

Operations Phase — Transportation Efficiency

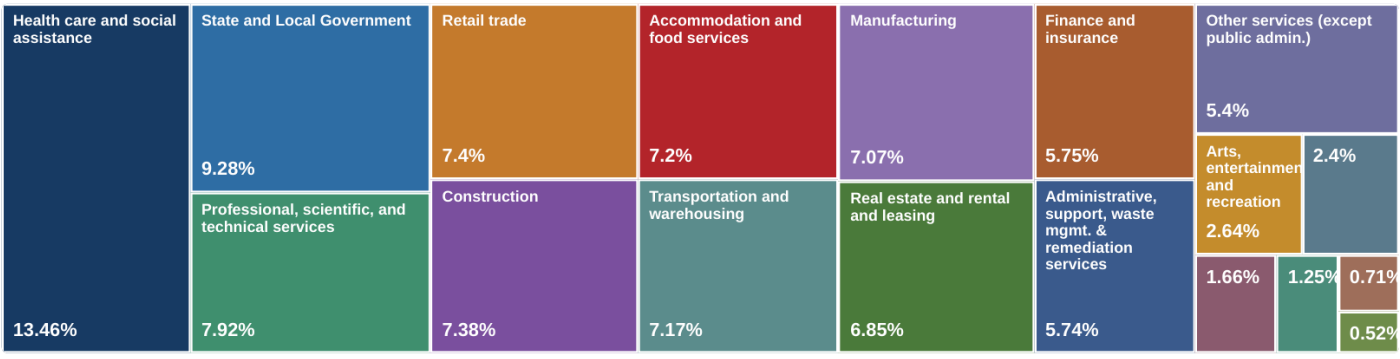
2055–2080 · 25-year horizon

Expanding the highway system increases transportation access and lowers transportation costs for businesses and residents of Nebraska, supporting a wide range of industries and employment opportunities. This generates sustainable economic growth from $908 million in 2055 to $1.96 billion in 2080. Employment reaches 3,433 sustained jobs by 2080 after peaking at 3,441 in 2076. Population reaches 5,954 residents by 2080, having peaked at 6,057 in 2075. Cumulative tax revenue reaches $1.02 billion over 25 years.

$1.02B
Total Tax Revenue
2055–2080, fixed 2022 dollars

Sustained Gain for Nebraska, Over Baseline	2055	2070	2080	Peak
Total Employment (jobs)	2,503	3,380	3,433	3,441 (2076)
Population (persons)	922	5,859	5,954	6,057 (2075)
Economic Output ($B, fixed 2025)	0.908	1.587	1.964	1.964 (2080)
Total Tax Revenue ($M/yr, fixed 2022)	**26.1**	**42.1**	**49.0**	**49.0 (2080)**

Employment Distribution — Operations Phase



Proseris/REMI simulation results, Nebraska only.