

**Kevin Minor:** 0:04

Greetings and welcome to the NASBO Pulse. We've got our finger on the pulse. I'm your host, Kevin Minor.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 0:10

And I'm Amanda Valdivieso.

**Kevin Minor:** 0:11

Amanda, I am so prepared for today's episode.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 0:15

Oh yeah.

**Kevin Minor:** 0:16

Yeah, I have been working out all week getting my calves ready your calves, yeah, you know like leg exercises, squats. I've been looking up a lot of information about it.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 0:26

No, no, you mean calves, right.

**Kevin Minor:** 0:28

Yeah, that's what I said, Calves. I've really been trying to do a lot of.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 0:32

No Calves. Connected and automated vehicle technology. Um what yeah? The research team at NASFO just published a new case study the Minnesota Connected and Automated Vehicles CAV Challenge. Did you read it?

**Kevin Minor:** 0:47

Well, yeah, of course.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 0:48

Yeah, because it looks at the project that the Minnesota Office of State Procurement and the Minnesota Department of Transportation partnered on. That's why today we're talking with Rachel Daugherty, enterprise Contracts Counsel from the Minnesota Office of State Procurement. Oh really, yeah, she also manages the professional technical contracts team that worked on this innovative RFP. So we're going to talk with her about early interagency collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Minnesota Office of State Procurement and look at some of the challenges they initially faced and how they overcame them.

**Kevin Minor:** 1:20

Well, that sounds a lot more interesting than what I was going to talk about, but I'm probably still going to try to fit in something about my calves in that conversation.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 1:28

You know, Kevin, as much as I love working out, no, no, you can't do that.

**Kevin Minor:** 1:32

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**Amanda Valdivieso:** 2:04

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**Kevin Minor:** 2:11

Let's take that pulse, rachel, thank you so much for joining us today. How are you? I'm fine. How are you? We're doing well, we're doing well. We really appreciate you taking some time to speak with us today. Rachel is the Enterprise Contracts Council and manages the team for professional and technical contracts for the Minnesota Office of State Procurement. Did I get that right, rachel?

**Rachel Dougherty:** 2:31

Yes, you did.

**Kevin Minor:** 2:32

Can you give our listeners just a little bit of background about your roles and responsibilities in the state of Minnesota?

**Rachel Dougherty:** 2:38

Sure, I manage a professional technical contracting team and professional technical contracts. Professional technical contracting team and professional technical contracts Generally we're talking about things that are intellectual in nature engineering, consulting, basically anything that uses brainpower. So those kind of service contracts are the ones that we're initiating and we have oversight over the professional technical contracting process, which means that agencies are generally going about their business, but then they're sending the request for proposals to us for review contract documents, amendments and we're helping them through the contract life cycle, basically from start to finish, providing oversight and also making sure that we're living up to the values of fair and open competition.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 3:23

That's quite a bit of responsibility living up to the values of fair and open competition. That's quite a bit of responsibility. Yes, it absolutely is. And you know we serve a variety of different customers and we're accountable to you know a lot of different. You know we want to be a good partner to our agency customers and, of course, you know we're the state of Minnesota and we serve the public.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 3:40

So, speaking of working with agencies, so the reason we're actually here today is to talk about the Connected and Automated Vehicle Technology Project that your team worked on with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. So recently you worked with our research innovation team to develop a case study on your efforts and the outcome of the I guess the term is CAV RFP process as well the term is CAV RFP process as well. So can you tell us a little bit about this CAV project, what the project was, what the challenges were, what the process was like?

**Kevin Minor:** 4:10

Maybe even start with what CAV is.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 4:13

Yes, what is CAV? Connected and Automated Vehicles. That's what CAV refers to, and it's just like you hear it a couple of times and then all of a sudden, you know CAV is just rolling off the top.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 4:23

But yes, it's one of the many acronyms that we tend to use in state government. But that's what CAV refers to and you know we're talking about connected and automated vehicles. It's new technology and that's actually kind of what started. The whole thought process that led to the request for proposal was how do we harness this rapidly evolving technology through the state's procurement process?

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 4:47

So I'm assuming the Department of Transportation had come to you with the question of wanting CAV vehicles for their fleets, or how did that go about?

**Rachel Dougherty:** 4:59

You know it's not exactly connected and automated vehicles for their fleets. It's not exactly connected and automated vehicles for their fleets, it's all kinds of technology which just kind of you know. Really how it came about was we have a really close working relationship with the Contracts Council at Department of Transportation. They are probably the highest volume of contracting and in general, just a good working relationship. And they introduced us to the connected and automated vehicle team who, um wanted to do a little bit different kind of RFP. Uh, they had some concerns with um being able to bring in, uh, you know, brand new technology through the RFP process and they wanted to have a conversation about what we could do to make the process work a little bit better for them. And you know I, I think you know I did not know anybody on the connected automated vehicle team. It was my first time like meeting them or when this. You know we're in this room with our partners from, you know, contracts partners at department of transportation and it just started as a conversation really really so.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 6:04

what makes it so different than a traditional RFP? Why were they needing to look at this differently?

**Rachel Dougherty:** 6:10

So connected and automated like. What really makes this different is from a traditional RFP is, you know, rather than deciding on what the solution is and developing like long lists of requirements, we have, you know, more of it's like the vendors are kind of able to. They have a menu of potential solutions and they're offering us a variety of things, and then we're choosing which kind of projects we want to fund. In ways, it's kind of like a pitch, and you know how I would describe it. You know, you mentioned, you know, is this for them to add connected automated vehicles to their fleet? It's like, well, maybe, but really, you know, we funded quite a few like shuttle, like autonomous shuttle to get services there, and they don't have a car, and the automated shuttle is something that might bring them from their hotel to the clinic, to a restaurant, at least in the before times. So that's an example of something. But then we also there's a big project that looks at our right-of-way broadband infrastructure. So you bring in a whole bunch of like. You're open to different kinds of connected and automated vehicle solutions, and the way we're able to do this is we have this RFP that's open indefinitely. Ok, so it's been open since October, I believe, of 2019. I think I mess up my dates in these strange times that we're in, but anyway, so it's open indefinitely. Strange times that we're in, but anyway, so it's open indefinitely.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 7:49

So whenever a vendor has a good idea that fits what Department of Transportation is looking for, they can submit. We review on a periodic basis, so about every two to three months, and then the vendors are evaluated against the Department of Transportation stated goals. So their goals are everything from. You know, we're looking at sustainability, we're looking at equity, we are looking at how things are going to work in Minnesota's crazy winter weather, like we want things to address that because it's a big deal here. So there's a, you know, I think there's about six or seven goals and you know we want vendors to tell us, to tell us, how does this address these goals that we're trying to meet? Then they're all scored against the same kind of criteria and fairly traditional things that you see a request or proposal.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 8:35

We want to see your work plan. We want to know about the personnel. We want to know how that concept aligns with what we're looking for. I know how that concept aligns with what we're looking for. So really, it's just we're open to the different kinds of solutions that generally meet the goals that we're trying to, or at least Department of Transportation is trying to meet. So that's really how it's. Different is just how open it is.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 8:55

Oh, awesome, yeah. So, with that in mind, because it is so open and so different, you know, during this whole process, while you're working through it with DOT, what challenges did you guys face?

**Rachel Dougherty:** 9:06

You know, initially, like one of their, you know one of their the biggest deals for them was it's really hard to have an RMP that's open, like our posting period is 21 days, so that 21 days it's just like this is a tiny little blip in time. And when you actually I learned this from department of Transportation an example of why I think listening and hearing what people's concerns are is really important Basically, the way the industry is developing solution is very much based on kind of a quarterly business calendar. So when things are being like released and pushed and marketed is not necessarily when we have a request for proposal open. So this having it open for an indefinite amount of time really helps. It helps them. You know we're not having to. Um, you know you can't align your RFP process with every single industries uh, what their marketing and sales schedule is, so, um. So that's that's a really good thing and I think that, um, you know it's hard to develop specifications for something when it's brand new and we hardly know, like what it even is. How can we define um. You know something that is, you know, barely been used One of the vehicles that we ended up and this is an example of a connected and automated uh vehicle that we purchased and it's really not a whole vehicle, but it.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 10:35

There's these trucks that are placed in crash zone or in a work zone that are meant to absorb the crash of a car that, like speeds into the, and they protect other workers, but the driver in that truck is in a very dangerous position. So we purchased and there's only one other state that had purchased. It was like one truck has this thing called an attenuator on it and it leaves what they refer to as like wireless breadcrumbs, and then that second crash truck follows it and then you don't have to have a person in the vehicle. So it makes the work zone a little bit safer. But like, how do you know?

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 11:09

that's even out there, I didn't until you said it.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 11:13

I mean now I notice the crash trucks in the work zones all the time, but I never did like prior to working on this. But when there's only you know, one state or maybe it's one municipality that like is using it, how do you write an RFP for that specific product? And if you did write it for that specific product in that specific company, we probably might be bumping up against some procurement roles. So this process allows that vendor to come to us with their solution and we're not writing it, you know, after 10, 15, 20 states are already using it. So it's, you know, an example. To really get to, I guess, play with the technology, figure out how it works and all the kind of benefits that come with being able to lead in an area of industry.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 11:58

It's totally different than anything. I think anyone really has to deal with on a daily basis in terms of what they're needing to purchase.

**Kevin Minor:** 12:07

Yeah One, it's so specific too, right? I mean just that piece that you were talking about that goes on the truck Like I would have no idea that that's even a thing but now I'm going to look every time I go past. Yeah, I'm going to see it

every time, yeah.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 12:20

Yep, you'll see it every time and also it's just like I got to. You know we're we're working on professional technical contracting. I'm normally not like shipping trucks around the country, but we had to do some very creative shipping and started in Pennsylvania, then went to Florida, then to Minnesota and that was kind of wild.

**Kevin Minor:** 12:36

Yeah yeah, just even understand what position. You're putting other people in too. And I think it was interesting. You just talked about the, the scope of the contract. You're not just touching department of transportation, although that might be the end user agency. You're you're talking about your bandwidth, you're talking about safety. That's really interesting.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 12:58

Safety is one of the of MnDOT's like stated goals, things that make driving on the roads like safer for everyone. Anyways, it's just, yeah, the stuff that I I guess I get to talk about, that I never thought I'd be talking about like attenuators, but you know, like the right away, the broadband infrastructure along right away, I mean that's something that benefits the entire state and it's something that you know, you hope that our department of employment and economic development, you hope that they'll be able to like use that same product in a way that benefits all Minnesotans.

**Kevin Minor:** 13:31

Oh well, your state, and then hopefully other states too, I mean you know they may reach out to you with similar questions that you had.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 13:40

Absolutely, and it's you and you get to learn fun facts like connected and automated vehicles consume something like 8,000 times the data that an individual consumes on a given day.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 13:52

So we have to have infrastructure that's ready for that. And even if I think people think of cars as like connected and automated vehicles, they think of them like the car, the Tesla, driving around with no driver. But it really is a whole, like it's. The scope of it is much larger than that and it's things like you know, a stoplight, being able to tell that a snow plow is going through. So it changes to green, so we plow our roads faster.

**Kevin Minor:** 14:21

Wow. It's that's like an example of connected automated vehicle technology well, when you're done, please come to Kentucky and fix some of our lights, because I wait at red lights for hours.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 14:33

It feels like sometimes yes, well, you might have to buy a snowplow truck, okay I.

**Kevin Minor:** 14:38

I don't know if I could afford the gas I will see, I'll check with my wife.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 14:42

There you go.

**Kevin Minor:** 14:43

Rachel, you might have the hookup for us. Yes, so the focus of the case study and what also stands out in this story

is that early interagency collaboration that you had between Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Office of State Procurement. Rachel, can you talk just a little bit about what was unique to the interagency collaboration?

**Rachel Dougherty:** 15:07

Yeah, absolutely. I think with Minnesota Department of Transportation we have a really good relationship and the thing is it wasn't always that way and I can't, you know, comment on the before, like because I don't remember.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 15:21

I came to the state and immediately you know, met their contracts counsel and we, you know, comment on the before like, because I don't remember I came to the state and immediately, you know, met their contracts council and we, you know, worked with them really well.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 15:28

But it takes time to build those relationships and with relationships, good relationships, with open communication, I think, comes trust. And I think, because there was trust between our agencies to start with and I knew, you know, not only was you know they're following, they're drafting good contracts or drafting good RFPs, they're also very ethical and very, you know, they care about fair and open competition and I, you know, in our conversations I can tell that that's something that you know means something to them as an agency. But that trust kind of allowed us to probably like build on something that was a little risky. It's like I know that they're not going to use this process to be like, you know, hey, favorite company, like here's an opportunity. It really was like for the benefit of the state. It really was designed to like meet of the state. It really was designed to like meet these goals that we, like the agency, really cared about.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 16:28

So I think that trust was really key to the, especially those first meetings, and like being able to, like being willing to listen.

**Kevin Minor:** 16:37

Yeah, well, and so in the case study it says that the Office of State Procurement partnered with Minnesota Department of Transportation to overcome the potential issues that were identified and deliver a modern look at procurement in the form of a challenged based RFP. That you're talking about, and I think that maybe the key word there is partnership, right.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 17:01

Absolutely. When I started at the Office of State Procurement, we called our agency partners. We called them our customers.

**Kevin Minor:** 17:08

Yeah.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 17:09

And that's one way of looking at it. But a customer is different than a partner. A customer means they're coming to us and we're supposed to give them good service. That's the idea. But a partner means we share a goal and we're working at that together. And I like the word partner also because I like my own team to feel invested.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 17:33

You know we're a central service agency and I want them to feel invested in the connected and automated vehicle challenge or invested in other you know projects that come forth, whether it be something related to, you know, wic, like delivering WIC services. I think that word partner makes everyone feel invested and and I think Minda and

you know we we partnered on this. It was. You know they were a little probably nervous. They really wanted to do it the right way, so they really wanted the office of state procurements oversight and that's a really good thing when they they, I guess they want the person that's watching, like in the room with them.

**Kevin Minor:** 18:13

So this launched. Did this this launched in in 2018, right.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 18:18

That might be more correct. Okay, yeah, I'm trying to look at my dates.

**Kevin Minor:** 18:20

No, that's okay because I was just going to ask. I'm wondering how it's going now.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 18:26

Yes, it's going really well. There was a little bit of a pandemic slowdown and it was related to just all of a sudden agencies had to look at their budgets a little bit differently, and also I was actually really bummed I was going to be able to test one of like right in one of the shuttles. Oh that would be cool.

**Kevin Minor:** 18:50

Rain check. Surely Right, You're going to get to.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 18:53

I will, I will eventually.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 18:54

I'm sure we're holding out for you but you know, like stuff like some of the testing and the deployment was delayed because of, you know, social distancing and virtual work, um, but nonetheless the program has continued on.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 19:08

They actually just did a redo of their RFP. There was a couple of things that they wanted to tweak and like make sure that they were, um, like leadership, wanted a more of a kind of kind of more of a say so there's in what projects were funded. So it's like the, the team really liked it, but then like leadership is like this is not what we should be doing right now, for whatever reason, and like they might fund it eventually, but now is not the time. So they wanted to kind of make that really clear that that was a step, that the all projects would have to be like final, you know, go through that last kind of phase of review, and they also, you know they have built in dialogue with vendors and they kind of added to that and enhanced it a little bit, which I know like built in dialogue with vendors probably just makes like lots of procurement people cringe. But you know the meeting isn't about like we really love your project, we want to fund it, here's what you need to do. It's like.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 20:07

This is what the process is, these are what the goals are, um, and you know, making sure that it's really a good fit, because not everything is a good fit just because you know you don't want someone to spend three months drafting a proposal when, like, we kind of knew from the start that it really wasn't something that was appropriate for this program all right, you know because we want technology we can deploy, not necessarily um, you know, like research, like there was some crazy things that had like images of like intersect cars, like passing each other, like there's, like you know, there's this wildness like we're 25 years away from that yeah, it's a really good idea, but it's just there's a different place for that, probably, you know, in department of transportation, but this is the right home for it or the right time.

**Kevin Minor:** 20:51

Yeah, oh yeah yeah, one, one step at a time too, though, right, yep?

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 20:56

yeah exactly exactly. So what are some of the challenges of having that partnership, that early collaboration with MDOT? What was the you know how did that groundwork that you laid with them? Just make sure this CAV challenge was successful.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 21:11

Well, you know, that first meeting I think was really critical and, like you know, you can come in as a procurement person where it's like I have a list of rules that we need to follow and I'm going to recite them every time. Like, you state what you want to do, um, and instead it's like you know, we're going to listen and kind of take this all in my. Um, my big concern actually was that they were going to ask me to change a statute so they could have like a special exception and we we want to avoid that. Um, you know, all agencies have like special projects and you know, special initiatives and they all have their, maybe unique challenges with procurement. So we really want to try to make our procurement statutes and rules and policies work for agencies, tried to listen through that lens of like what can we do to make this work for you? So, um, you know, and I think they were probably thinking they're probably just going to say no, yeah.

**Kevin Minor:** 22:08

Yeah, might as well, try and.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 22:10

And then, you know, they kind of pitched and told me what they wanted to do and I I just, you know, I looked at a couple of statutes and I like identified what I thought would be some limitations and said, you know, I'm going to like, take a look at what you want, I'm going to take a look at the statute and then I'm going to come back with some uh, with some ideas.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 22:31

What was interesting, I think, was they came with this like crazy idea and but they didn't really have like an, a plan for how they would evaluate and how they would choose and select, and I think procurement kind of added that framework that was maybe missing from their idea to some degree. So it really ended up being like a great. That's how you know, one of the reasons it ended up being a really good partnership is they appreciated the framework. That kind of let them know like, yeah, this project is not something that we are interested in at this time. And they have like a number and a point, like you know points, to say yeah, you know, we've been always like funding things that are above X amount of points and this one's under, and you know, and that's something also related to like a lot of emergency purchasing the pandemic. We value procurement because it lets us know what is actually valuable for the state to purchase.

**Kevin Minor:** 23:30

It sounds like you guys stayed really open and solution focused right.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 23:36

Yes, yep, focusing on the solution, focusing on how we can make it work. And you know, and we didn't really want to push the envelope, you know that wasn't what we were setting out to do. It was really like you know it's. I know this project has got a lot of like recognition and that was never the goal. Yeah, the goal really was nice.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 23:57

It's sometimes what happens when you have to get innovative like this, when you have to solve a problem of this nature.



**Rachel Dougherty:** 24:03

It just kind of happens and I mean it's a. It's a great result, um, and I'm glad that it's getting attention, because I think there's a lot of places that we can apply this and start thinking about procurement a little bit differently. Like, when are those times where we don't necessarily have to be so rigid and so requirement driven? When can we be more open to just something that might come through the door and, like, surprise us?

**Kevin Minor:** 24:26

well so. And even end user agency, I mean that's a that's kind of an outdated term, right? I mean you talk, you talk about building partnerships and just even the term partnerships has been helpful for your team, right. Stay in that mindset.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 24:42

Absolutely the partnership mindset of like we're in this together and that we're here to support one another, and I also think it implies that both parties have value to add.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 24:55

And like procurement isn't just a roadblock, we're adding value. And that's kind of one of the goals for the team is what can we do to add value? You know how you get to a relationship like we have with MnDOT, where we have that trust. I think it starts with like little phone calls and little opportunities where you're helping agencies get and reach their goal and you're not just saying no and you're listening and being open is really key to, I think, being successful as a procurement office.

**Kevin Minor:** 25:25

Yeah, right, right, be proactive as opposed to reactive.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 25:29

And when you're a proactive helper, you get to be invited to the table earlier, which is always what I want as a procurement person. You know, if I can be involved earlier in the process, there's more opportunities to come up with a evaluation process that really works for you and your team.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 25:47

And to really communicate the things that I think are critical to getting things done. You know, it's like people always want their things, like yesterday, and you know, part of the problem is they are siloed in the business unit and they work on the request for proposal, then they send it to their agency contracting and procurement, and then, okay, here's all the things that you need to fix and they go back and it's just like gosh. Wouldn't it be easier if we were all just talking.

**Kevin Minor:** 26:11

Yes, my head is spinning already from from you Well, and it helps you. It helps keep your team happy too. I mean, you know, retention again is another, you know, unfortunate fortunate, depending on how you look at it. It's another side effect of this job, right and and and keeping your team happy and healthy and allowing them to come up with some of this innovative work is is helpful too.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 26:35

Yes, I absolutely, I guess, appreciate that you know the boss before I have one. I really appreciate that, um, my boss and my former boss have really allowed me the kind of space to be creative and be innovative and like try new things. Um, and also, I like to do the same for my team and, you know, give them opportunities to, uh, do things a little bit differently and think outside the box. And, you know, and it's great when we can be doing that side by side with agencies.

**Kevin Minor:** 27:07

Yeah, absolutely.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 27:09

So, Rachel, as more central procurement offices look to collaborate with other agencies within their state, what advice would you give them for strengthening those relationships to build a better procurement process for everyone?

**Rachel Dougherty:** 27:21

I think the key is getting ahead of issues and getting ahead of problems. We have this really great group of people. We call them our professional technical coordinators and they are, you know, one person at every agency is dedicated as the contact. We meet quarterly and you know these are people that have a higher level of procurement knowledge than like most people around the state and they, you know we share information and it's you know the office of state procurement is giving them a lot of information.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 27:53

But they're also telling me things. They're telling me things that they're noticing around their agencies struggles that they see, and then we're trying to kind of figure out how to get ahead of that. So I think, giving people tools and then you know it's like another thing I learned very early in this job is, you know it's like there's a tendency to take that RFP and like redline it and send it back and it's just like, oh, here's your RFP, this is what you need to do, and I think the business that wanted to get that done yesterday probably receives that and they probably they might cry this probably feels like so it's much better to pick up the phone and talk through it.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 28:35

Yeah, yeah, and like, hey, you know, and actually with like microsoft teams, I love the ability to screen share. It is so nice.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 28:41

Oh yeah, that's such a great collaboration tool and you know, and actually with, like Microsoft Teams, I love the ability to screen share. It is so nice, it's such a great collaboration tool and you know so, picking up the phone and talking to people and I I'm a millennial so I get to say this, but I think, like millennials had to like, have a tendency to really want to communicate via email. Yeah, I see that. And I get it, but the phone has been my friend. And procurement Sure, and I get it, but the phone has been my friend in procurement.

**Kevin Minor:** 29:03

Sure.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 29:03

And I encourage it with my team to just talk and I think the pandemic has actually helped that a lot where we're like collaborating via teams and whatnot, yeah, so just think being proactive, and then you know approaching things with an open mind and kind of getting at like what is this, what do they really want, and how can I help them get that and how can we make the procurement process a good part of this. Not quite something like we have to do, but we get to do this, yeah.

**Kevin Minor:** 29:33

A challenge for you and your team.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 29:35

Yeah.

**Kevin Minor:** 29:36

Something to overcome and be proud of.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 29:38

Yes, absolutely I like that outlook, Rachel. It's very positive and refreshing. Yes, absolutely I like that outlook, Rachel, it's very positive and refreshing.

**Kevin Minor:** 29:44

It is refreshing.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 29:44

Yeah, you know, I actually think you know there's been times where you know the pandemic, where it's like, yes, we do have an emergency authority that allows us to just purchase it, but agencies aren't always comfortable with that approach. They like the kind of system to evaluate. So, even with that emergency authority, we still did some competition because you know, agencies see the value in it and I think it's important to maybe try to build on that. Like, hey, it was kind of hard when we just picked that vendor and it didn't work out quite how we wanted. You know, that's one of the reasons why we do have a system for selecting vendors, among many other great reasons. Yes, exactly.

**Kevin Minor:** 30:22

Well, and they'll want to work with you again.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 30:24

Yes, yes, um, and I, I want people to want to work with um, want to work with our team.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 30:30

Well, Rachel, I just want to thank you so much for joining us today here on the pulse, and we hope you'll come back and visit us soon I'm sure you know down the line to see how this cab challenge is going for Minnesota and any updates on any cool new technology that we were not aware of before that your teams might be working on. So thank you so much, Rachel.

**Kevin Minor:** 30:50

Rachel, you're a friend of the pod now.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 30:52

Yes.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 30:53

Oh.

**Kevin Minor:** 30:53

Congratulations.

**Rachel Dougherty:** 30:55

I'm a big pod fan, so Yay.

**Kevin Minor:** 30:57

Excellent. What a breath of fresh air. You can really tell that Rachel enjoys what she does.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 31:03

I know we hear a lot about collaborating between agencies too, but it's great to see it put into practice. I think this is a great example that a lot of states can learn from.

**Kevin Minor:** 31:13

Yeah, you know, I really like when we were talking about you got to start looking at end user agency as a partner, right, instead of like just somebody or something you work for. I mean, Rachel's team had no idea what they were looking for in the beginning and, like she said, it's hard to develop specs for something that's brand new.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 31:31

I agree, and that partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation really helped to make that a successful RFP.

**Kevin Minor:** 31:37

Absolutely. If you haven't already, make sure you subscribe to us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google or wherever you get your sweet listens. Make sure to check out the NASPO blog, [pulsenaspo.org](http://pulsenaspo.org), and catch up on some procurement articles written by your very own NASPO staff.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 31:53

Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to us, and good journey to all of our procurement officials.

**Kevin Minor:** 31:58

Good journey.

**Amanda Valdivieso:** 31:59

Good journey.