

Director's Board Report

July 2017

Thank you Chairman Whitehead.

Good morning members of the Idaho Transportation Board.

I would like to thank Jason Minzghor and the District 6 employees for hosting the Director visit this week.

(Ad lib about the visit . . .)

During the last week of June, WASHTO hosted its Annual Conference in Juneau Alaska.

And I am pleased to report that two of ITD's projects were honored with **America's Transportation awards** for the WASHTO Region.

The Elk City Landslide Project won the award for Operational Excellence.

In 2016, the massive landslide unleashed 47 million pounds of mud, rock and debris on State Highway 14, cutting off all vehicle traffic to and from Elk City.

The residents no longer had access to groceries, fuel, health-care visits, or emergency services.

The landslide was enormous.

And so was the task of removing the debris, stabilizing the mountainside, and reopening the highway

ITD employees from all over the state swarmed to District 2 to help them repair the damage and get the highway open.

The cleanup took about six months, and cost nearly \$3.5 million in federal emergency-relief funds.

District 2 Engineering Manager Doral Hoff said, and I quote:

“We included and aligned all facets of district personnel, which included all workers and foremen alongside people from ITD’s Headquarters and the contractor West Construction Company, to make this effort successful.

The entire team worked safely and efficiently, with the people of Elk City in mind every step of the way.”

End quote.

For many of those working to reopen Highway 14, the scale of the work was a once-in-a-lifetime event.

And their success in dealing with the epic challenge earned them WASHTO's Award for Operational Excellence.

Board member Vasser accepted the award on behalf of ITD.

Another ITD project also received an Award from WASHTO.

The Thornton Interchange Project on U.S. 20 won an award for **Best Use of Technology and Innovation**.

This section of four-lane, divided highway was prone to vehicle crashes due to a series of at-grade intersections.

The Thornton Interchange was the last of seven new interchanges built to improve safety and traffic flow in a 34-mile section of U.S. 20 between Idaho Falls and Sugar City.

Even though traffic volumes more than doubled while the seven new interchanges were being built, the safety improvements decreased serious-injury crashes in the corridor by 75 percent.

And reduced fatalities to less than one per year.

The project earned the award for **Best Use of Technology and Innovation** because of its money-saving innovations and technological advances.

This includes:

- 3-D modeling
- Automated Machine Guidance
- Global Positioning Satellite technology to ensure proper elevations during construction.
- Bluetooth detection technology to maximize safe and efficient traffic flow during construction.
- And a 360-degree camera and three stationary cameras during construction to monitor progress.

These innovations allowed ITD to save at least \$450,000 on the project.

District 6 Engineering Manager Wade Allen said that providing a 3-D model for the Thornton Interchange and requiring the contractor to use automated grade control shortened the required construction time.

Technical Engineer Jesse Barrus from District 6 was in Juneau for the WASHTO Emerging Leaders Program and accepted the award on behalf of the department.

Of the 18 states attending this year's WASHTO Conference, Idaho and Colorado were the only states to win multiple awards.

And I commend the employees in Districts 2 and 6 for the honors they received and the excellent work that earned the awards.

Winning the regional awards from WASHTO places the Elk City and Thornton Interchange projects in contention for national awards, which will be announced in September at the 2017 AASHTO conference in Phoenix Arizona.

The Thornton project is earning national acclaim — and the kudos keep rolling in.

District 6 should be very proud of their accomplishments on the interchange and U.S. 20.

Government Technology Magazine is publishing an article on the Thornton Interchange's innovative and time-saving use of 3D development.

And **Pacific Builder and Engineer Magazine** wants to feature a cover article about the project later this summer.

The Thornton Interchange shows the excellence of ITD's new projects, but not all of our work is focused on new construction.

Much of what the districts do is focused on maintaining our existing infrastructure.

One of the techniques we use to reduce construction time and impacts to the public while extending the useful life of our infrastructure is hydro blasting.

During this construction season, just on Interstate 15 alone, we have 13 bridge projects using this technique.

Here is a short video showing some of that work.

Hydro blasting can reduce the cost of a paving project by as much as 60 to 80 percent, depending on the project.

These savings pay for additional projects across the state.

This allows ITD to advance projects that would have otherwise had to wait for funding.

Using innovative practices like this is what ITD is all about.

American Infrastructure Magazine recently published an article by Governor Butch Otter titled "Highway Innovation Underway in Idaho."

I am not sure if you can read it on screen, but the text immediately under the main headline should make anyone at ITD both excited and proud.

It reads:

"Idaho Transportation Department unleashes the power of innovation to tackle highway challenges."

In the article, Governor Otter discusses how ITD pioneered the use of A-JACKS mats in fast-moving water.

He also mentions our success with the now nationally recognized program we call Swarm the Storm.

I would like to share the first two sentences of the article with you.

Governor Otter wrote:

"Even before the Great Recession, Idaho's highways and bridges were struggling under the weight of a huge maintenance and repair backlog, and a serious long-term funding shortfall.

While I wrestled with legislators and stakeholders about how to address the challenges, the Idaho Transportation Department took the bull by the horns, adopting a more innovative and efficient approach to building and maintaining the state's transportation system."

End quote.

The governor's article states that ITD's employees are encouraged to act more creatively, putting aside entrenched practices to get to what matters—RESULTS.

That is what ITD is all about, and it is why we measure our outcomes.

It allows us to know how we are doing in each performance area, and to adjust as necessary to get the results we want.

If there is one thing I could add to Governor Otter's article about innovation at ITD, it would be that we have had great success so far, we are just getting started.

There is a lot more innovation coming our way, and I will be sharing some of the highlights with you in future board reports.

It is an exciting time to be working at ITD.

For example, we are continuing to plan for all the excitement and heavy traffic associated with next month's total eclipse of the sun.

This will be a major event for the state.

Because of our high elevation and dry weather, Idaho is recognized as one of the best viewing areas in the country.

And that is drawing a lot of people to the state who want the best view possible of the eclipse.

Here is a short video with **Captain Steve Davis** of the Idaho State Police.

He explains some of the impacts Idahoans may face when the crowds arrive.

ITD maintenance crews will be monitoring rest-areas and patrolling busy roads to assist emergency responders.

They will be communicating with them by radio as needed.

Our crews will employ electronic message signs where necessary to inform motorists of road conditions and traffic flow.

For instance, here in District 6, there is concern that exit 119 in Idaho Falls may become congested, so crews will place electronic message boards ahead of the exit if necessary.

During the event, we will be coordinating with local, state, and federal jurisdictions on traffic control and other issues as they arise.

The current estimate is that anywhere from 92,000 to 370,000 people will drive to Idaho to view the eclipse.

This does not include international or fly-in visitors.

The Great American Eclipse website says that to imagine the impact to the nation, imagine 20 Woodstock Festivals happening simultaneously.

And all the activity will be happening in a narrow, 70-mile wide band, which travels right through Idaho.

No one knows for sure how many people will travel to Idaho to view the eclipse, but if you take the following factors into consideration, the number is likely to be very large.

One.

Most American families have it within their means to take a short driving vacation to the nearest state where the eclipse will be visible.

Two.

August is an ideal month for a vacation.

Three.

On August 21st, most schools have not yet begun their fall session, and some schools near the path of totality are scheduling a late start.

And Four.

Social media will have a huge impact on how many people decide at the last moment to drive somewhere to see the eclipse.

This is exactly the type of event guaranteed to go viral on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Many people will see the excitement on social media, and may decide on short notice to take a drive to see the last eclipse that will occur in their lifetime.

Next month's board meeting is scheduled right before the eclipse, and I will share our finalized plans to manage what may be a massive influx of people and traffic.

It is likely to be a busy event for our maintenance crews, and I am sure they will be glad when the crowds leave and they can get back to working on our roads and bridges.

The quality of the work they do is no secret to anyone at ITD, and it is also well known around the country.

That includes our neighboring state of Utah.

Yesterday, six representatives from the Utah Department of Transportation traveled to Boise to meet with members of our staff at headquarters.

They were interested in learning more about our Innovate ITD program.

Including:

- The Innovate ITD process
- Who the Innovation Stewards are, and what they do
- How ideas are collected and processed
- Success stories
- The Lessons we have learned along the way
- And how to improve employee involvement

After yesterday's meeting, they planned to stop at District 4 or 5 on their way back to Utah to find out more about how we:

- encourage innovation
- engage the innovation stewards
- and encourage staff to develop and submit innovations that save time and money.

The money-saving innovations our employees develop allow ITD to fund more highway and bridge projects.

This helps us address the ongoing funding shortfall identified by the Governor's Task Force on Transportation Funding.

Making sure we have enough state and federal revenue to maintain the State Highway System is important to the department.

As a rural state, we have unique issues that more populous states do not have to address.

Those issues are important to the citizens of Idaho, and to the citizens of all rural states who face the same issues.

They are also important to the nation.

We have worked closely with our federal partners to promote the needs of rural states.

And ITD's ideas and solutions are now being discussed in Washington D.C.

We were recently contacted by the White House to provide input on the new transportation bill, and address funding for rural states.

Transportation funding is a major topic in all 50 states, and in July, so is national pride and patriotism.

On the day before the 4th of July, the nation's most patriotic holiday, ITD hosted a ceremony to unveil new signs identifying Interstate 84 as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.

The signs are our way of acknowledging the Idahoans who served their country in Vietnam.

More than 44,000 Idahoans served in that war.

More than 1,000 were wounded.

217 were killed in action.

Eight are still unaccounted for and remain missing in action.

Approximately 36 percent of the veterans now living in Idaho served in Vietnam.

Many of them came to see the new signs unveiled on the day before the 4th of July.

Several people from ITD also traveled to the event, held at the rest area one mile east of the Snake River Bridge outside of Ontario.

That includes Chief Operations Officer Travis McGrath, Board Member Julie DeLorenzo, as well as General Manning.

In addition to his extensive career in the U.S. Military, General Manning also served as ITD Director and as Idaho Transportation Board Chairman.

The event was well attended by members of the military, Vietnam veterans, and the media.

Here is one of the news stories showing some of the highlights.

I received a letter that I would like to share with you about a District 3 employee Kyle Wright.

It reads, and I quote:

"I'm writing to thank you for the help you provided to us after a blowout on our motorhome during rush hour on I-84 yesterday afternoon.

Kyle responded within minutes of our call and encouraged us to get off the shoulder and to a nearby Walmart parking lot where he changed out our inside rear dually tire which is a very difficult thing to do.

It was a scorcher of a day which made it an even tougher job.

He was professional, reassuring and friendly and it made a bad situation much better.

Thank you,

thank you,

thank you!

Dory and Bill Johnson

Richardson, Texas"

End quote.

Dan Bryant, District 3's maintenance coordinator also received a letter about Kyle.

It reads, and I quote:

"Mr. Bryant,

I would like to tell you how wonderful Kyle Wright is!

Exclamation Mark

He helped me yesterday replacing a blown tire on the interstate.

I have a new car and didn't even know where the spare was or anything.

Kyle was very helpful and took the spare out and helped me with the tire.

He was calm and friendly and could tell I was stressed and just kept saying he could fix things, and he did!

He is a great addition to ITD.

Please send my sincere thanks again to him for his help."

The letter was signed by Tim McMurtrey of Meridian.

When people are broke down on the freeway, seeing the ITD Incident Response truck pulling in behind them can really make someone's day.

Kyle and his teammates are good at what they do.

They enjoy their jobs, are quick to help, and they make us all look good.

I would now like to Introduce Chief Deputy, Scott Stokes, for his July report.

Mr. Chairman and members of the board, this concludes my Director's report for July.