

Director's Board Report July 2016

Thank you Chairman Whitehead. And good morning members of the Idaho Transportation Board.

I would like to thank Damon Allen and his staff for hosting the District 1 Director Visits.

And my first-ever Innovation Fair on Monday and Tuesday of this week.

In addition to learning about and discussing the new **2016 to 2020 five-year direction**, the employees shared several of their most important innovations with me.

I quickly learned that District 1 is an innovation machine.

They have "officially" submitted 17 innovations since late 2014.

But as you can see by the sticky notes on the wall, they shared a lot more than 17 ideas and innovations with me this week.

Their innovations are already saving money and time for ITD.

And more importantly, the citizens of Idaho.

Staff members told me that for years many of these innovations existed only in people's minds.

They weren't willing to bring them forward.

But now, as you can see, they are proudly putting them into action.

Here is a short video showing how a \$400 scanner has replaced the need for stacks of purchase receipts and reduced the time required to process them by several weeks.

After our morning meeting, we went out into the yard where District staff had set up demonstrations for nearly a dozen of their ideas.

And they were ready to proudly show them off.

What struck me about their innovations is how simple and effective they are.

I asked why they seem to be implementing these ideas so quickly.

The response over and over was that it's easy to implement ideas now, because they know they will not be told "**no**" or reprimanded for trying.

Speaking of a simple idea, foreman Shannon Thornton and Dave Freeman from the Athol shed showed of a 360-degree, remote-controlled spotlight they added to their work trucks.

The Athol crew came up with the idea after responding to an emergency during a heavy wind storm. They were concerned for their safety because they could only see what was right in front of headlights. After that night, the team brainstormed the problem and came up with a simple but effective solution. Their spotlight idea has made it much safer for crews responding to emergencies and accidents at night. Jerry Buckner from the Bonner's Ferry shed came up with a great way to clean Jersey barriers. The crews used to hold the hoses while walking along with the slowly moving trucks. Jerry manufactured some metal arms to hold four hoses in place on the truck. The new system can be used on both the right and left side of the road. It cleans both sides and the top of the barriers at one time, and successfully removes all salt in one pass. This job used to take four people and 240 hours. It now takes just two people, and only 36 hours. I think you will enjoy hearing the District 1 staff talk about the innovations in their own words. Please play the video. In addition to being simple, many of these innovations are designed to improve worker safety. The St. Marie's crew showed me they now preassemble their delineator posts. They do this by attaching snow poles to the posts at the shop. To do this, they created a special post pounder. They even built an adapter for the sheds that have gas-powered pounders. This means the crews no longer have to install snow poles while working alongside the highway. The new process is quicker, and they spend less time working in traffic. In most cases, it only takes one person.

In addition to the new way of installing posts, St. Marie's crew members Gareth Abell and Gary Haynes also developed this detachable chute made of repurposed material.

It is quite inexpensive to build the frames and bolt them to the back of the dump truck.

This allows crews to direct gravel or rock right to the shoulder of the road.

This is much better than the old way of dumping it right out the back of a truck into the middle of a lane.

The new process is much simpler.

And it allows crews to spend less time in traffic moving the rock to the shoulder.

It is safer for the workers.

And it keeps traffic moving smoothly.

And finally, I would like to show you one of my favorite District 1 innovations.

The Pennsylvania Bridge on is scheduled to be replaced in the year 2020.

But to last that long and remain in service, it needed to to have support girders installed.

Bridge and Building Program Foreman Gene Anderson invented a sliding girder installer.

It allowed District 1 staff to inexpensively install the bridge girders themselves, rather than contracting the job out.

This innovation reduced the time required to install the girders from several months——to only three weeks.

And it reduced the cost of the project from \$300,000 to only \$40,000.

These are the kinds of savings that are made possible by placing decision making closer to where the work is done.

And I could not be prouder of our employees across the state.

To date, their innovations have saved the department more than \$1.6 million dollars.

There are many reasons to be proud of the ITD workforce.

And here is a prime example.

On June 29, the department did something it has never done before.

It won two America's Transportation Awards in one year.

The awards are co-sponsored by the American Automobile Association (the Triple A), the United States Chamber of Commerce, and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, known as AASHTO.

Board member Coleman traveled to the **WASHTO Conference** in Laramie Wyoming to receive both awards on behalf of the department.

The first award was for the South Valley Connector project in Pocatello, in the **Quality of Life/Community Development** category.

This same project also earned two Project-of-the-Year awards this spring.

One from the **Intermountain Chapter of the Institute of Transportation Engineers**, and the other from the **Rocky Mountain Chapter of the American Public Works Association**.

The project created a long-anticipated connection to the south valley area of Pocatello.

It was opened to the public approximately seven months ago right before Christmas.

This project is a great example of what can happen when government agencies work well together.

Our department worked closely with the city of Pocatello to produce an award-winning project.

One that will greatly enhance mobility in the Pocatello area and increase economic opportunity for small business and industry.

The department earned its second 2016 America's Transportation Award for the GARVEE Program, in the **Under Budget, Large Project** category.

GARVEE was the largest infrastructure program of any kind in Idaho's history, and it has proven to be highly successful.

The program invested \$857 million into the state's aging roads and bridges over a 10-year period.

The GARVEE Program delivered 59 projects on time and under budget.

These projects increased traffic capacity on some of the state's most heavily traveled highways.

They also dramatically improved safety.

In the GARVEE corridors where we have three-full years of after-construction data, they experienced an average 33 percent decrease in serious injuries and a 69 percent decrease in fatalities.

The GARVEE program created or sustained more than 15,000 jobs across the state, increasing economic opportunity for small business and industry.

The 59 projects were delivered at an accelerated pace, and at lower costs than anticipated.

And we were able to do it without additional personnel.

We added nearly 120 miles of road, and rebuilt or added 41 bridges and 14 interchanges.

At the same time, we were able to keep our regular maintenance and construction program going, which was a huge win for every driver in the state.

ITD completed the program without adding personnel, and without compromising or delaying ITD's regular construction program.

Borrowing money to pay for construction projects was a new concept in Idaho.

This video will show you some of the thoughts and perspectives that eventually paved the way for legislative approval of the program.

As I mentioned earlier, this is the first time Idaho has won multiple America's Transportation Awards in the same year.

And we were competing against much more highly funded states like Texas and California.

Winning two in one year shows that we are continuing to close in on our goal of becoming the best transportation department in the country.

These two awards were for the western region of the country, which includes 18 states.

These two projects are now eligible to compete against the other three regions for the nation's top transportation awards.

The Grand Prize and The People's Choice Award.

Both awards bring \$10,000 in prize money, which the winning state can use for an education grant in the transportation field, or to support a community project or charity.

This year, the Federal Highway Administration provided a total of \$3 million for job training grants.

And I am happy to report that Idaho is one of the eight states that were selected to share the grant money.

The funding is for what the FHWA calls **Ladders of Opportunity Grants**.

This is part of an ongoing federal effort to provide more apprenticeships and training opportunities.

The grants are to help underrepresented or disadvantaged people seeking careers in transportation, engineering, or construction.

Idaho will receive more than \$198,000 to provide five weeks of training for new heavy-equipment operators and other skilled personnel.

We were selected because of the quality of our on-the-job training program, which is acknowledged as one of the best in the nation.

According to the United States Department of Transportation, more than half of the current highway construction workforce is over the age of 45.

With upcoming retirements, people leaving the industry, and increasing construction needs, the U.S. DOT estimates that more than a half-million highway construction jobs will become available over the next decade.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said, and I quote:

“Providing individuals with the job-training opportunities they need is critical to keeping our highway system up and running.”

“Training programs like these create opportunities for workers in the short term, and ensure that the next generation is ready for the challenges that will face America’s transportation system in the years ahead.”

End quote.

The grants are designed to target specific workforce needs across the country, and are only given to a few states that have proven to have the best training programs in the country.

Thanks to the nationally recognized quality of ITD's training program, Idaho workers will soon be getting the training they need to seek careers in transportation, engineering, and construction.

While we are on the subject of training, I would like to ask Chief Human Resources Officer Brenda Williams to provide you with an update on the WASHTO Emerging Leaders Program.

Mr. Chairman and members of the board, The WASHTO Emerging Leaders program is designed to address the fact that most transportation departments are in the process of losing 50 percent of their workforce in a very short period of time.

Just as we are experiencing right now at ITD.

The purpose of the Emerging Leaders Program is to train people to replace the many highly experienced leaders who are retiring.

The program increases the leadership skills of high-performing employees who aspire to be the future high-level leaders in a transportation agency.

The program will promote professional growth, develop strong leadership skills, and provide networking opportunities.

This will allow them to work through tough issues in their organizations by consulting with emerging leaders in other states.

Participants are expected to apply their newly gained skills and knowledge in their current jobs, and to report progress to their supervisors.

Here is a brief overview of where the program is now, and where it is going in the near future.

The emerging leaders selected by their states met in Utah in October for their first training session.

When they returned to their states they were assigned reading projects and required to provide group presentations to WASHTO leadership on the personal-improvement book they read.

In June, the emerging leaders assembled in Laramie Wyoming for the 2016 WASHTO Conference.

At that time 15 of the 18 WASHTO states had nominated emerging leaders for the program.

At the opening session, they made a 90-minute presentation to the entire WASHTO audience.

This presentation was acknowledged as the most outstanding presentation of the entire four-day conference.

They stole the show.

The personal stories from each participant about how the Emerging Leaders program had impacted and improved them were so moving that by the end of the day, CEOs from all 18 states had pledged their support and participation in the program.

It was a rousing success!

Here are a few clips of the opening video for their WASHTO presentation, showing three of the Idaho participants.

The next phase of the program will involve all 18 states submitting pressing transportation problems for the emerging leaders to solve.

The 18 CEOs will select the most pressing problems for the emerging leaders to solve.

This will be the actual kick-off of their training.

In the coming year, the participants will work with mentors to develop solutions to the problems that were selected by WASHTO as the most important to solve.

Their capstone project will be to make presentations to the entire WASHTO assembly showcasing the solutions they develop.

The program will continue to move forward, and states will nominate participants every three years as the previous class completes their training.

Director Ness has agreed to be the sponsor for the first three three years of the program.

The emerging leaders nominated for the program are already getting promoted and being recognized nationally.

Matthew Swift from Oklahoma, will take over as WASHTO Treasurer when the current treasurer finishes his term.

Our own Jesse Barrus, who you saw in the video clip, was recently promoted to District 6's Operations Engineer.

And, even though she is not an ITD employee, we are very proud of one of the other emerging leaders in the program.

Brandie Neeman from the Nebraska DOT earned WASHTO's most prestigious award, The Hewes Award, which is accompanied by a check for \$10,000.

She was selected by the WASHTO Board of Directors as the person who made the most outstanding contribution to the highway development program in the 18 western states in 2016.

We will be following Brandie, Matthew, Jesse, and the other emerging leaders in their careers, and are excited to see where they go in the future.

I will now turn the microphone back over to Director Ness.

Thank You Brenda!

Mr. Chairman and members of the board, if you have ever worked on a farm or around livestock, you know how difficult it is to pull fence posts out of the ground.

It is usually a two-person job involving a chain and a hoist, sometimes even a front-end loader.

It is not a safe operation for the person holding the chain, and it is easy to bend or break the posts.

The same is true for ITD maintenance workers when removing steel highway posts, or snow and right-of-way fencing.

D.J. Price in District 4's Sublett Maintenance Area had an idea that would allow the posts to be removed safely by one person.

He designed and manufactured a post-puller using existing equipment and some materials he had on-hand.

Here is a short video showing how it works.

D.J. has made several post pullers for other foreman areas in District 4.

He said the next step is to find ways to improve on the design and to make it work with other types of posts.

As he said in the video, **"you want to work smarter, not harder."**

Speaking of hard work, the landslide cleanup on Highway 14 near Elk City is continuing, and on schedule.

However, thanks to having more hours of daylight in mid-summer, District 2 has added up to 10 working hours per week on the project.

If everything continues to go as scheduled, this may move the completion date from late-August up to the middle of August.

The contractor is currently removing up to 200 truckloads of material from the site each day.

To date, they have removed approximately 160,000 cubic yards of dirt and rock from the slide area.

Construction on the Broadway Bridge is continuing through the summer months.

The project should be finished in late summer or early fall.

We placed this video on YouTube to keep the public up to date on traffic impacts, Greenbelt changes, and river floating.

The Office of Highway Safety and KBOI Channel 2 television worked together to produce a short, but very powerful video.

It has generated the most activity we have ever seen for an un-promoted Office of Highway Safety Public Service Announcement.

Since June 22nd, it been viewed more than 14,000 times on ITD's main website alone.

And that number continues to grow.

The video titled, "**Driving Toward Zero on Idaho Highways,**" is also playing on the Idaho Statesman's website.

Let's take a look.

The 100 days of summer are typically the most dangerous days of the year on Idaho's roads.

The office of Highway safety thanks everyone involved in making the public service announcement, which is dedicated to the 86 lives lost on Idaho highways last summer.

On June 10, staff in District 1 received a call from a driver named Lawrence Blakely from Sandpoint.

He was concerned about a no-passing zone on Idaho 200 near Trestle Creek.

Three short days later, District 1 had already reviewed the area and arranged to have new signs installed by June 16.

In the meantime, Mr. Blakely had also contacted his State Senator Shawn Keough about the issue.

When she contacted Damon Allen to see what was being done to resolve the issue, he was able to tell her the new signs were already in place.

The speedy response to resolve the issue was applauded by Mr. Blakely in the Letters to the Editor section of the Bonner County Daily Bee.

Mr. Blakely wrote, and I quote:

"Thank you, Senator Shawn Keough, for getting the no passing zone signs installed on Highway 200 in the Trestle Creek area.

This area has a turn-lane only zone in the middle of the road with solid yellow lines.

Most drivers understand what this means, a turn lane only.

Some near-disasters have happened recently when drivers, irritated by their wait at construction zones, use this turn lane to pass.

Senator Keough requested and pursued this additional signage.

In addition, thank you to Idaho State Police and the Bonner County Sheriff's Office for increased patrols, and Idaho Transportation Department for hearing and listening to our pleas for more signage."

End quote.

Steve James, of J. U. B. Engineers in Coeur d'Alene, sent the following letter to Damon Allen in District 1.

He wrote, and I quote:

"I just wanted to express appreciation for the job your folks do every day.

As an example, I was going to the Silver Valley around 4:15 p.m. on June 14th. and saw a pickup flipped upside down in the center median by the Mullan Trail Exit.

By the time I returned at 7:30 p.m. your crews had repaired or replaced the center median as if nothing had happened.

In talking with Ken Sorensen, he said this was a normal part of your day, something few people are even aware of.

I was very impressed and gained a new appreciation for what ITD does for us every day.

Keep up the great work!"

End quote.

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I would now like to turn the microphone over to Chief Deputy Scott Stokes, for his July Report.

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