

Director's Board Report

August 2017

Thank you Chairman Whitehead.

And good morning members of the Idaho Transportation Board.

I would like to thank Damon Allen and the District 1 employees for hosting the Director visit this week.

(Ad lib about the visit . . .)

District 1 had their hands full this spring, with a section of Idaho 5 that was closed in early March due to severe weather-related damage.

With the assistance of Jack Buell Trucking, they were able to make a quick but temporary repair that allowed one lane of the highway to be reopened to traffic.

Following the board decision in July to allocate funding for a permanent repair, the district began the design process and hopes to have the project out for bid by September 1st.

I am happy to report that the repairs to the damaged section of Interstate 84 in Canyon County are now complete.

The pavement in that area was already in rough condition.

Then the harsh winter of 2017 arrived and caused even more damage.

District 3's plan to repair the highway was a major success.

All made possible through a partnership with the Idaho Association of General Contractors, and Idaho Materials and Construction, who served as the contractor.

They completed the \$9.6 million paving project on one of Idaho's most heavily traveled sections of interstate in just four weekends.

A project of this scale would normally take months to complete.

And the crews would have had to work alongside heavy traffic.

District 3 came up with a better solution.

And one that was much safer.

Rather than requiring repair crews to work alongside traffic, they used a crossover to route traffic to the other side of the highway.

During the work week, all lanes of the highway were kept open.

But on the weekends the crossover allowed the crews to route all traffic to one side of Interstate 84 so they could work around the clock on the other side of the highway, away from traffic.

This was a good solution to a difficult problem.

It kept traffic flowing even on the weekends, and allowed the project to be completed quicker, and with much greater safety.

Here are a few of the written comments we have received from the public about the project.

Karol wrote:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people at the Idaho Transportation Department for all they do.

Thank You.

A pleased driver named Liz wrote:

You all did a wonderful job!!

I think the way you closed down lanes and worked at night was an amazing idea.

Great job!!!

Double Exclamation Mark.

David and Sheila wrote:

It turned out great!

Thank you so much.

End quote.

While construction was underway, ITD provided up-to-date information to the public via news bulletins and e-mails.

When the repairs were complete, and the last construction sign was removed, we sent out an e-mail thanking drivers for their understanding during the repair project.

The e-mail said, and I quote:

The Idaho Transportation Department thanks drivers, residents and businesses for their patience during I-84 paving between Nampa and Caldwell this summer.

ITD appreciates everyone who adjusted their travel plans during the four weekend directional crossovers this summer.

In response to that e-mail, Kate wrote, and I quote:

What a great e-mail to send out!

Your e-mail notices were very helpful!!

Double exclamation mark.

End quote.

Larry in Boise Wrote:

We travel the I-84 corridor between Boise and Ontario quite often, and I'd just like to say THANK YOU to all those involved with this project.

It was way past due, and having it done without too much interruption was wonderful.

Jon, a Risk Manager for Westpoint Transportation wrote:

Please pass on my appreciation of the wonderful job the crews did on the Canyon County repaving project on Interstate 84.

The surface is a joy to drive on.

End Quote.

Everyone who works for District 3, the Idaho Association of General Contractors, and Idaho Materials and Construction, can be proud of the major repairs they were able to accomplish in such a short time frame.

This is the kind of outstanding project that continues to inspire confidence in ITD, and our partners in the contracting industry.

Here is another accomplishment we can be proud of.

The department is facilitating a pilot program providing job training for much-needed heavy-equipment operators.

Businesses are having a hard time finding enough skilled people who can operate heavy equipment like excavators, graders, and bulldozers.

ITD's compliance Officer, Russ Rivera, had an idea on how to change that.

He secured federal grants to fund a three-and-a-half-week crash course to train heavy equipment operators.

Please play the video.

This was all funded by federal dollars, and if Russ is successful in finding more federal funding, he will expand the program to include other kinds of equipment.

The ITD bridge-inspection crew developed the nation's first "element-level" inspection program for overhead structures, such as signs and traffic signals.

This unique program improves safety, reduces lane closures, and saves more than \$300,000 per year in inspection costs.

There are nearly 2,000 overhead structures on the state highway system.

We inspect about a quarter of them, or about 500, each year.

In the 2005 contract, we paid an average of about \$1,200 per structure.

In our most recent contract, we reduced the cost to an average of \$400 per structure.

This creates a savings of nearly \$320,000 per year.

The benefits of this innovative program are not limited to monetary savings and efficiency.

It also improves safety for travelers on the State Highway System, and for our inspection crews.

The program employs some innovative inspection and traffic-control techniques, like using high-powered binoculars and climbing structures.

That makes it safer for our workers, and reduces the need for lane closures.

This is one more example of the many great ideas coming from ITD's Innovation Program.

Our employees continue to find new and innovative ways to improve the way they work, and reduce costs for the taxpayers.

Not all great ideas reduce costs though.

Some improve our communication with the public

Here is an idea that was developed at the spur of the moment in response to unique circumstances.

Members of the Office of Highway Safety recently attended the annual conference of the **Association of Idaho Cities**, also known as AIC.

The AIC's nearly 1,000 members include Idaho Mayors, town managers, City Council representatives, elected officials, and others.

ITD's Office of Highway Safety is partnering with them to help spread safety messages using the AIC's vast membership database.

This will allow the Office of Highway Safety to streamline and target messaging to the entire state, specific regions, or to a sole municipality.

While they were attending the AIC conference, our highway safety staff suddenly realized they had a large number of elected officials in one location, and decided to film several of them for a public-service announcement.

It was a spur-of-the-moment idea that took advantage of a unique situation.

The video you are about to see features several Idaho mayors thanking the public for responsible driving behaviors.

You will notice they are pointing out the positive habits of drivers, rather than wagging their fingers at bad driving behavior.

Please play the video.

Taking traffic safety messages to the local jurisdictions spreads the word that safety is not just an Idaho Transportation Department issue.

It affects everyone in Idaho, at all levels.

And as you can see from their participation in the video, the leaders of the **Idaho Association of Cities** are happy to help spread the message to their communities.

Several of those communities are about to experience a once in a lifetime event.

On Monday, the eclipse we have been preparing for over the last three months will finally be here.

The good news is that our crews are ready.

Our partners are ready.

And our plans to handle what may be a large influx of people from out of state are ready to be put into action.

Here is a brief overview of what we are doing.

- We have placed a banner on the ITD 511 website with information about the eclipse.
- ITD personnel will be helping the Office of Emergency Management at the Gowen Field Command Center.

The Idaho State Police will have extra patrols on the road, with officers from north Idaho coming down to help.

- ITD has mowed the rights of way to reduce fire danger.
- And to help improve traffic flow, we have suspended certain types of commercial vehicle permits and work-zone activities for the days immediately around the eclipse.

In addition to our communication and public outreach on Twitter and Facebook, we have also developed an In-Motion video to inform the public about the eclipse.

And prepare them for the potential traffic issues that may arise.

Please play the video.

This is likely to be a major event for the state.

Beginning today, we are counting traffic entering Idaho from surrounding states.

We will analyze the information gained from 20 traffic counters.

And beginning tomorrow, will provide the public with up-to-date information on the amount of traffic in key locations via the ITD website and social media.

This will help people make more informed decisions and possibly avoid the highest concentrations of traffic.

This information will also help ITD and our partners in other agencies make this a safe and enjoyable time for everyone traveling to see the eclipse.

I received a letter about some help Lan Smith of the **Local Highway Technical Assistance Council** received in District 5 a couple of weeks ago.

He wrote, and I quote:

I just wanted to express my appreciation for a couple of your staff members in District 5.

Chris Peirsol (Peer Soll) and Corey Krantz stopped to help me with a flat tire recently.

While there may be some expectation to use the emergency flashers and cones for safety, they jumped in and helped get the tire off and when it was found the spare was flat, they drove me into town to get air.

Once I was up and running, they followed me to the airport to make sure I got there safely.

I am so proud to work with partners like these.

They are an asset to your organization.

Signed: Lan Smith.

Local Highway Technical Assistance Council.

Mr. Chairman, I would now like to introduce _____, for his August Report.

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