

Board Report

June 2018

Thank you Chairman Whitehead.

And good morning members of the Idaho Transportation Board.

On June 5th, The U.S. Department of Transportation announced nearly \$1.5 billion in proposed grants through the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America grant program.

Also known as the INFRA Grant Program.

These grants support the Administration's commitment to improving the nation's infrastructure by using innovative funding approaches and increasing accountability.

ITD submitted a project for consideration as an INFRA Grant Project.

And thanks to a focused effort involving our congressional delegation, the ITD Board, COMPASS, and ITD, the Interstate-**84 Karcher Interchange to Franklin Boulevard project** was selected to receive a proposed \$90.2 million dollars.

Director Ness was deeply involved in the grant process.

He played a key part in getting the grant approved.

And he worked every angle from here to the Whitehouse to make sure Idaho received the full \$90 million dollars.

The 2.8 mile section of Interstate 84 between Karcher and Franklin has nearly 100,000 vehicle trips per day.

A large portion of that is commercial trucks.

The project was approved for an INFRA Grant because of its innovative use of state and local matching funds, including funding from Canyon County and Caldwell.

The improvements include:

- Widening I-84 to three lanes in each direction
- Adding auxiliary lanes between ramps
- Replacing and widening an overpass and an under-sized canal structure

- Replacing two narrow bridges over a railroad and canal with a wider single-span structure
- Ramp improvements
- And reconstructing an interchange

By law, Congress has 60 days to review the grants before the awards can be made.

The Interstate 84 project will provide major benefits for commerce, motor carriers, and commuters by relieving congestion through Canyon County and the Treasure Valley.

And we thank the Idaho Transportation Board, COMPASS, Canyon County, the City of Caldwell, and our congressional delegation in Washington D.C. for working together to find the innovative financing and get this much-needed project selected for the INFRA Grant.

At about 11 p.m. Saturday night, seven vehicles were involved in a fatal crash under the Cloverdale Overpass on Interstate 84.

The Idaho State Police say a commercial vehicle and an SUV were driving east when they slowed for down for a construction zone with lane restrictions.

A second commercial vehicle hit the SUV and the other commercial vehicle from behind.

Four other vehicles were also involved in the crash, which created a large fire directly underneath the overpass.

The Idaho State Police have not yet completed their crash report.

Three of the people killed were Senior Airmen in the United States Airforce, they were based in Mountain Home.

The fourth victim has not yet been identified.

The fire caused major structural damage to the pre-stressed concrete girders in the overpass.

It will remain closed until the damaged section can be removed and replaced.

The Cloverdale Overpass carries an average of **14,500** vehicles per day.

Our bridge engineers began designing the necessary repairs within 24 hours of the crash.

In about two weeks we will know the estimated cost of the repairs, and the projected completion date.

Right now we expect the construction to take two to three months once it begins, but as I said, we will know more in about two weeks.

On May 31, 2018, the Federal Highway Administration officially repealed what was commonly referred to as the Greenhouse Gas Measure.

It required state transportation departments and metropolitan planning organizations to assess the percent of change in tailpipe CO2 emissions on the National Highway System.

This is a positive move by the FHWA, and a success for our five-state coalition that provided national leadership on this matter.

In fact, many of the comments our coalition provided were cited in the notice of the repeal.

The FHWA agreed with our coalition that there was no legal authority for the rule.

The actual law had several performance measures related to pavement and bridge condition.

But the measure regarding measuring tailpipe emissions was not included in the law.

It was merely an administrative action added after the fact.

Our five-state coalition pointed this out to the FHWA, and during their review, they agreed with us and repealed the requirement.

This is a rare reversal of views on authority, made possible by the work of our five-state coalition.

It should act as a deterrent to proposals to add even more performance-management requirements by rule.

Because the spirit of the repeal follows our argument that performance management requirements are limited to those described in the statute.

And that the greenhouse gas performance management rule was especially burdensome and awkward when applied to rural states.

I have several short items from the Division of Aeronautics that I would like to share with you.

First, on May 22 a pilot had to use the eastbound lane of Interstate 90 over Lookout Pass as an emergency landing strip.

No other vehicles were involved in the crash, and the pilot was able to walk away from the aircraft

The plane landed on the Montana side of the pass, but ITD crews responded within minutes to help the Montana Department of Transportation put up signs warning drivers of a wreck ahead.

ITD Foreman Dave Palmer said that when he first heard the call and then heard that his crew was on the way to the crash, he was worried that someone was hurt.

He said the first thing he wanted to know about was if the plane had collided with any drivers on the ground.

But thankfully that was not the case.

Dave said he had never heard of a plane crash-landing on Interstate 90 before, although his crew occasionally coordinates with helicopters from Life Flight to medevac injured drivers.

Pilot seminars: May 5 “Rusty Pilots”

The second item I would like to address is that the Division of Aeronautics staff joined with the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association to provide a “Rusty Pilots Ground School.”

37 local individuals attended the event.

Each of them were pilots at one time, but had let their certifications lapse.

There are over 500,000 pilots in the country who have stopped flying.

And programs like this are an easy way to help get them back in the cockpit.

Ex ITD board Member and current Idaho Senator Chuck Winder participated.

The third item is that the Division of Aeronautics has refurbished and reopened the Wapshilla backcountry airstrip.

It is located seven miles upstream from the confluence of the Salmon River and the Snake River.

The airstrip is now safe and open for business for both the public and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The Division of Aeronautics held the 27th annual ACE Academy this month.

ACE is our outreach program that introduces high school students to the many exciting careers in aviation.

And we had an all-time high of 35 students participate this year.

The final aeronautics item is the kickoff of the \$350,000 Idaho State Aviation System Plan, funded by the Federal Aviation Administration.

This 1 ½ year research effort began this month,

It will guide aviation development in Idaho, and provide valuable data on the economic-impact of aviation in our state.

While it may not be as exciting as the ACE Academy or responding to a plane landing on an Interstate highway, the Craigmont crew in District 2 has come up with an innovation that makes it much easier for large farm equipment to travel on Highway 62.

While at the same time saving a lot of time for the operations crew.

Delineator posts are normally placed evenly along highways.

The Craigmont crew came up with a better idea, they are going to stagger the posts, as you can see on the screen.

That area of the state has farms that grow a wide variety of crops, from grain to garbanzo beans.

And local farmers often use the highway to move combines and other equipment.

Some of that equipment is nearly as wide as the two-lane highway.

And the delineator posts are often knocked down and left along the road.

Craigmont foreman Lee Linabary said that his crews go out once a month to pick up the posts.

He said if they waited to pick up the posts until after farming season, they would have to pick up hundreds of them.

He believes that staggering the posts will help solve the problem, because it will make it easier for large farm equipment to travel down the highway.

The drivers will be able to weave between the posts rather than trying to squeeze past them.

He does not expect any issues to arise, but he does hope the staggered spacing will reduce road hazards.

Speaking of weaving around obstacles, May and June are Equipment Rodeo season for ITD maintenance crews.

The rodeos are both fun and educational, but our maintenance people had something a little different to contend with this year.

State Coordinator Kelley Dick said that when he was setting up the rodeos last year, he wondered why attendance was dropping.

He heard people saying the equipment and the courses never change,

And that the old timers always win.

That did not set well with him, so he made some changes for this year's rodeos.

And with nearly 25 percent of ITD employees being hired in just the last two years, he was hoping for lots of new competitors.

For decades, the foremen have competed in a separate category from the transportation technicians.

This year, he made all of them compete together.

Also for the first time in rodeo history, the competitors had to use a 10-wheeler with a two-way plow.

Rather than a six-wheeler with a one-way plow.

That definitely set the bar higher.

And he added backhoes to the mix.

Here is a short video from the District 3 Rodeo.

Four winners from each of ITD's six districts competed in the state championship on June 19.

This year's **State Champions** are:

1st Place: **Ty Winter**, from District 2

2nd Place: **Trent Maupin**, from District 6

3rd Place: **Dalton Rice**, from District 6

Ty and Trent will represent ITD at the National Championship in Loveland, Colorado.

If any of you hunt big game or have close friends or relatives who do, you are probably know what a trail camera is.

They are triggered by movement, and hunters attach them to trees or rocks in strategic places to take pictures of big game animals.

The Division of Aeronautics has come up with a different use for them.

Senior Utility Craftsman Dan Conner is also a hunter, and he suggested placing them at ITD airstrips to record the number of landings and take-offs.

Since Idaho's 31 backcountry airstrips do not have control towers to monitor traffic, the division had no way to accurately record the number of planes using them.

Dan Conner's idea may just solve that problem.

The cameras may also provide valuable crash information, because statistics show that 68% of Idaho's general aviation accidents happen during takeoff or landing.

Now, every takeoff and landing can be recorded.

And the Division of Aeronautics can use the images to identify what kind of planes are using each airstrip.

Understanding aircraft types and use levels will help the division improve their safety program for pilots.

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District 2 developed an innovation that will improve safety across the state.

One of their transportation technicians injured his hand while trying to remove a rock that had become wedged in the tailgate of his truck.

The injury happened the day before the ITD leadership conference, and the story was shared among the foremen there.

It was a familiar story to one of them, Bud Converse, the Operations foreman in Moscow.

In the last 32 years, he has worked with three people who had the same thing happen to them, and he wondered why the problem had not been fixed.

Bud was still thinking about it after the conference, and he realized the source of the problem.

There is not a tool handy to help remove wedged rocks when needed.

And he came up with an idea.

He went to his crew with a possible solution, and within a few hours they had welded a pipe to a truck, painted it to match, and placed a bar in the newly attached pipe.

Bud's idea works.

The bar is within reach of the back of the truck, and easily removes wedged rocks from the tailgate without endangering anyone's fingers.

His crew named it the "Bud Bar."

And they had some fun making a video showing how it works.

Bud said, and I quote:

"I hope all districts take hold of this. After all, this year is the year of employee safety."

End quote.

The tool is simple and easy to use, and with a catchy name like "The Bud Bar," it probably has a long future at ITD.

I would like to close my board report with a letter Board Member Coleman received from Boundary County Road and Bridge Superintendent Clint Kimball.

Superintendent Kimball wrote, and I quote:

"Greetings all ITD Board Members,

I would like to pass on how pleased I was to be able to work with Matt Farrar.

I was so pleased upon reading the ratings and saw our Schoolhouse Rd has been awarded as a project.

As I recall it began with the ITD board listening to my ramblings and then acting by asking Matt Farrar to come visit and look at our needs and evaluate my concerns.

Matt met me at the old bridge in Naples to look at what had just recently been damaged.

It was not only a learning experience but we had fun brainstorming and sharing ideas.

The repairs and improvements to the bridge went well.

Next stop for Matt and I was Schoolhouse Road.

That was a good time also, more brainstorming

Very productive also.

It was a good learning experience for me also.

I picked up on some of ITD's perspectives of these projects.

I would like to express my appreciation to all of the ITD Board for listening to my concerns.

I also appreciate the ITD staff and how they are willing to help those of us who need their expertise.”

End Quote.

Mr. Chairman and members of the board.

This concludes my report.