

## **Director's Board Report**

### **August 2019**

Thank you Chairman Moad, and good morning members of the Idaho Transportation Board.

On July 1, the department held a ceremony in Canyon County dedicating U.S. 20 as Idaho's Medal of Honor Highway. Travis McGrath, ITD's Chief Operations Officer and a former Captain In the U.S. Army, was the Master of Ceremony. Board Member DeLorenzo and Governor Little both spoke at the event

Let's take a look at some of the media coverage. (video here)

Hosting this ceremony dedicating U.S. 20 as Idaho's Medal of Honor Highway was a proud moment for our department. I thank the Office of Communication and the Office of Governmental Affairs for making this ceremony an outstanding success we can all be proud of.

On July 11th, I testified in Washington D.C. before the Congressional Subcommittee on Research and Technology. They invited me to appear before them to address the

importance of transportation research and innovation at both the national and state level.

My testimony focused on three key points. **First**, transportation research and innovation helps state transportation departments stretch their transportation dollars, allowing them to purchase more steel, more concrete, and more asphalt than would otherwise be possible.

**Second**, research investments create long-term improvements that taxpayers can actually see and benefit from.

**And third**, Congressional reauthorization of the Fast Act should provide funding for state planning and research at the current level, plus inflation.

My testimony included several examples showing the value of research at the state level, including an ITD research project for a new concrete mix.

Our department developed a new mix called High Early Strength Concrete, for use in accelerated bridge construction to link bridge girders. Then we partnered on a

research project with the University of Idaho to see how well the product performs.

The study proved ITD's new mix can replace Ultra-High Performance Concrete. Our mix reduces the concrete cost from between **\$10,000 and \$15,000** per cubic yard, to **\$800** per cubic yard. A cost reduction of more than 90 percent.

I explained to the committee that research projects at the state and federal level often deliver a high return on investment, with significant benefits for commerce, and the traveling public.

I also stressed the need for continued funding for research and innovation programs to ensure a strong future for the nation's transportation network.

In her opening remarks, committee Chairwoman Haley Stevens, from Michigan, commented on the value of research funding. Here is some of what she had to say. (video here)

The new concrete mix that I highlighted in my testimony was the result of a team effort at ITD. The initial idea was proposed by Leonard Ruminsky

in our Bridge Section. In addition to Leonard, the project team includes Matt Farrar, Dan Gorley, and Ned Parrish from ITD, and Ed Miltner from the Federal Highway Administration's Idaho Division Office.

A research team from Idaho State University conducted the lab testing, computer modeling, and evaluations in the field. They estimate the cost savings for one project alone at approximately \$100,000. We are already using it in the field, as you can see in the photos of the Bear River Bridge project, west of Preston.

ITD's new concrete mix offers a number of benefits. The concrete and the fibers that strengthen it can be batched in a ready-mix plant, brought to the field in a mixing truck, and placed similar to conventional concrete. We are also using it to cast abutment and pier diaphragms. In addition to its high strength, the new concrete has several other advantages. Forms can be removed after one day, rather than four or more days as is required for the Ultra-High-Strength Concrete.

It achieves a strength of 5,000 PSI in only five days, and reaches its maximum strength of 8,500 PSI in 28 days.

The research project for ITD's new concrete was recognized in July at the AASHTO Research Advisory Committee Summer Meeting, as one of the "Sweet 16" research projects for 2019.

The Sweet 16 are recognized as the nation's highest value transportation research projects. Only four projects from each AASHTO region are selected.

The ITD concrete mix will also be recognized nationally at the AASHTO Annual Meeting in St. Louis in October. And the team will be asked to participate in a Sweet 16 session at the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in Washington D.C. in January, 2020.

While I was in Washington to present my Congressional Testimony, I also met with White House Staff. The purpose of the meeting was to follow up on the ITD Case Study they had requested, and to discuss:

- Two potential federal grants for Idaho
- Regulatory reform for transportation

- And impress upon them what Idaho would like to see in the federal reauthorization act, including maintaining formula funding.

After discussing those items, Nic Pottebaum, Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of White House Intergovernmental Affairs, brought up Governor Little's Red Tape Reduction Act.

It was interesting that he brought this up on his own, with no prompting from me. He said the White House was very impressed with what Governor Little is doing, and would like to use Idaho as a model for other governmental agencies at the state and federal level. Then he asked me to tell him about what we are doing at ITD to reduce regulations. Luckily, we have a great story to share.

Before Governor Little's Red Tape Reduction Act was even signed, ITD was in the process of closing out an 18-month project to consolidate administrative rules. Since July of 2018, ITD has reduced its rules from 80 to 60. A 25 percent reduction.

We are now working to remove an additional eight chapters, reducing our total number of rules down to 52. The goals of these reductions are to:

- Advance, support, and implement Governor Little’s Red Tape Reduction Act.
- Improve external customer service.
- And streamline internal processing.

ITD’s dedication and expertise in regulatory reform has been used to advise the Idaho Division of Financial Management on many rulemaking topics. At a press conference on July 19, Governor Little said, and I quote:

**“The eagerness shown by the Idaho Transportation Department for streamlining regulations moving forward demonstrates the collaborative nature of my executive order.”**

**“We are working closely with the agencies to better serve all Idahoans through safe and effective regulation.”**

Our regulatory reform efforts are led by Ramon Hobdey-Sanchez, the Office of Governmental Affairs’ Administrative Rules Coordinator.

Last week Chairman Moad and I attended a surprise ceremony. Governor Little awarded Ramon with ceremonial scissors in recognition his successful efforts to cut red tape and reduce bureaucracy for ITD customers.

Governor Little said, and I quote:

**“I have gotten a lot of credit lately for reducing bureaucracy . . .**

**“But it’s the agency staff who have truly rolled up their sleeves and done this incredible work.**

**“This effort will have big impact on Idahoans that will last for many years to come.”**

If I am not mistaken, Ramon will be making good use of the scissors Governor Little presented to him as he continues his efforts to cut unnecessary rules and regulations at ITD.

The department’s efforts to remove red tape, and to develop new and innovative products, such as ITD’s new concrete mix, highlight our agency’s commitment to serving the taxpayers and providing a safe and productive transportation system.



Engineering Innovations that improve our roads and bridges provide lasting safety and economic benefits for the public, but the results of transportation engineering can also provide valuable teaching aids for students.

For example, many public schools in Idaho host an annual STEAM event focused on real-life applications of **Science**, **Technology**, **Engineering**, **Art**, and **Mat**, also known as **STEAM**.

Filer Middle School asked the District 4 office if one of their engineers could participate in this year's STEAM event. Andrew Young stepped up to the plate, and provided a hands-on learning opportunity involving guardrails. The school representative stated that previous activities had focused on bridge design. But that anything focusing on engineering and mathematics would be well received.

Andrew wanted to teach the students something meaningful and interesting. He wanted his presentation to be a fun, hands-on experience that would give the students an idea of what ITD does improve safety on the highways. So he developed a presentation focused on guardrail education.

During the day of the event, he conducted 45-minute sessions for six different groups of students. He gave each group an overview of ITD and the various roles within the department. Then explained the basics of guardrail design, stressing the importance of proper planning and placement, with real-life examples.

The students then split into smaller groups, and the fun began. They used popsicle sticks and hot-melt glue to build their own guardrails. which were then crash tested for strength. The testing provided lots of educational fun for the students. Andrew said it was interesting to see the designs that the kids came up with, and he enjoyed seeing the excitement on their faces during the crash tests.

As you saw in the video, there was a lot of cheering and laughing. But more importantly, the students were learning that good engineering can not only produce good infrastructure, it can save lives. Those students will probably never look at guardrails the same again. And a few of them may even grow up to become civil engineers, designing our future roads and bridges.

One of the primary purposes of highway engineering is to improve safety for the traveling public. We all know that guardrails are designed to save lives. But so are seatbelts.

The challenge we face with seatbelts is getting everyone to wear them. Especially young drivers. Between 2013 and 2017, **55 percent** of teens killed in crashes were not wearing seatbelts.

To improve that percentage, and get more of Idaho's young drivers to wear seatbelts, the Office of Highway Safety enlisted the help of high school students across the state in the 2019 **Battle of the Belts Campaign**.

The goal is to promote safe driving habits by asking students to create public-service campaigns for their peers, showing their fellow students why it is important to wear seatbelts. The Battle of the Belts campaigns were judged on several criteria, including creativity and effectiveness.

Prizes for the winning schools and students were provided by State Farm Insurance, including grants for the winning schools, and scholarships for the winning students.

Here are some clips from one of the winning videos, which is too long to play in its entirety. The students wanted something their peers would pay attention to, and they used humor to get the point across.

Please play the video.

The kids who made this video will soon be going back to school. And the safety message they are communicating with their fellow students will hopefully get more of them to click their seatbelts whenever they get in a car.

Communication is an important tool that helps us improve safety for the public. It is also an important tool internally for our department. For example, prior to August, I held Director Visits with employees in Districts 2, 3, 4, and 6, and the Division of Administration.

This month I had director visits with employees in:

- District 1
- The Division of Motor Vehicles
- The Division of Aeronautics
- The Division of Highways
- The Division of Human Resources

- The Offices of Communication and Governmental Affairs
- Executive Management
- And legal

Which completes my Director Visits for 2019.

These visits allow me to communicate with everyone in the department, and give the employees an opportunity to share their successes and concerns with the director.

They know they can talk to me about anything they have on their minds, which is something I feel very strongly about.

I began the Director Visits when I first came to ITD. They have led to many changes and improvements in the way the department communicates with employees. And in the way we do business.

In my June Director's Report, I highlighted some of the changes we have made to the department in the last 10 years. The purpose of those changes was to improve the way the department operates. . .

And to help our employees find ways to do their jobs smarter and faster. I would like to share two recent examples showing the results of that change, and how quickly our crews can react to situations, or as we like to say “Move at the speed of business.”

On August 9<sup>th</sup> at about 10:30 p.m., a severe hail storm caused several mudslides in District 2.

The most severe slide happened on U.S. 95 about five miles north of Riggins, when Fiddle Creek swelled past its banks and created a new channel, sending mud, rocks, power lines, and two very confused pigs onto U.S. 95.

Approximately 200 feet of the highway was covered with debris four to five feet deep, which caused the district to close a 73-mile section of the highway between Grangeville and New Meadows.

The District 2 crew could not get to the south side of the slide, so they called Robin Freeman, the District 3 maintenance foreman for the Council and New Meadows area.

He brought his crew, and additional District 3 personnel from Garden City, Caldwell, and New Plymouth to work on the southern portion of the slide. With two crews in action,

they were able to begin removing debris from both the north and south ends of the slide, and had one lane of U.S. 95, Idaho's primary north/south highway , reopened within 20 hours.

Twelve hours later, the combined crews from Districts two and three and had both lanes opened to traffic. Then they began making repairs to the drainage ditches.

The Fiddle Creek slide was just one of many mud slides on U.S. 95 caused by the severe storm that rolled through the area. The Lewiston Tribune asked their readers to share how they were affected by the storm and the slides.

Here are a few comments from their readers that I would like to quote

DANIEL MCDUGALL said:

**“I had just passed that 15 to 20 minutes before it happened.**

**And I was worried I wouldn't be able to make it back to McCall on Monday for work.”**

**BREEZI KOHRMAN said:**

**“Went through this afternoon and it was cleared up.**

**I am thankful for such hard-working people who dedicated their time to clean it up.”**

**PRUDY EDWARDS said:**

**“My two daughters were in the middle of it.**

**Totally destroyed the car and shattered the front windshield.**

**They pulled into the side of a fruit stand just short of the mud and rock slide, barely missed it.”**

**MICKI HOLTHAUS said:**

**“After a week of camping in the McCall area and being evacuated from our Burgdorf campsite due to the fire, we packed up to head home Saturday morning and then we were notified the road was closed.**



**Spent the night in our camper in Valley Paving parking lot.**

**Thanks to Road District for getting it opened as quickly as they did.”**

District Engineer Doral Hoff was understandably proud of how quickly the crews from District 2 and District 3 were able to reopen the highway after such a major slide.

He said, and I quote:

**“It was so very inspiring to watch and hear the tremendous cooperation and collaboration that occurred, over the weekend, after this severe weather event.**

**Multiple crews from not only within District 2 but as well from our neighboring District 3 responded timely, professionally and unselfishly to focus on U.S. 95 . . .**

**Our vital North/South Idaho link, to get it opened as swiftly and safely as possible.**

**Job well done!”**

End quote.

Here is another example of ITD employees working at the speed of business. This time on the eastern side of the state.

On May 13, District 6 received an e-mail from KIDK, a television station in Idaho Falls. A member of the public had contacted the station with concerns about the Canyon Creek bridge on Idaho 33, between Newdale and Clementsville.

He included a photo showing a large amount of erosion around the pillar footings. When Maintenance Foreman Lucas Richins received the e-mail and photo, he quickly contacted a bridge inspector at ITD headquarters in Boise, then drove to the bridge to measure the depth of the erosion.

The situation was worse than it looked in the photo, and he immediately began making plans for damage control. The following morning the bridge-inspection crew from Boise arrived, and concluded that the bridge was safe for the traveling public, but that the erosion problem needed to be fixed to keep the bridge from further damage.

Immediately after the inspection, Lucas and his crew began moving equipment and materials to the site so they could

make the needed repairs. In less than two days, they had used fill material to improve water drainage, built up the shoulders on both sides of Idaho 33, and laid new asphalt from the shoulder of the highway to the old bridge drain to improve water flow.

The ability of Lucas Richins and his highway crew to take quick action, and move at the speed of business shows the importance of empowering employees to make decisions as close as possible to where the work occurs, and the operations are taking place

Our focus on empowering our employees and improving safety, mobility, and economic opportunity is being noticed nationwide. So are our efforts to share our successes and safety messages with the public.

Last month, two of ITD's video productions earned national Awards of Distinction in the 2019 Videographer awards. There were 1,500 videos submitted for the competition. Each entry was judged by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals. The Videographer Award of Excellence recognizes individuals whose ability to capture an event or communicate a message is exceptional.

Bill Kotowski in the Office of Highway Safety received the 2019 Safety Award for a video about biking to school, featuring Ryan McDaniel from ITD and dozens of school-age kids at Galileo Elementary in Eagle.

The second award was for a project Bill Kotowski and Rik Hinton in the Office of Communication worked on together. They turned the printed ITD Annual Report, which you see on screen, into a video for use on our website.

Their video earned the Award of Distinction in the **Government** category. Here are a few highlights from both videos.

One week after winning the Videographer Award of Excellence, the ITD Annual Report video earned another national award. This time from AASHTO's Communication Subcommittee, who gave the video the 2019 AASHTO **Transcom Award for Long-Form Video Production.**

I like to think our Annual Report Video earned these national awards not just for the quality of the overall product, but also for the outstanding employee-driven accomplishments highlighted in the 2018 Annual Report.

Governor Little and I received a letter from Zach Tudor. The Associate Laboratory Director for National and Homeland Security Science and Technology at the Idaho National Laboratory. He wrote, and I quote:

**“On behalf of Idaho National Laboratory, I want to personally thank you for your team’s efforts during a recent event held at our facilities in Idaho Falls.**

**On June 22, 2019 we hosted an employee open house for more than 4,500 lab employees, family members, and community leaders to celebrate our laboratory's 70th anniversary.**

**As part of this event, we invited soldiers from the Idaho National Guard to attend and display a U.S. Army M1A1 Abrams tank.**

**The Guard's presence was significant because Idaho National Laboratory has manufactured the armor packages for the Abrams tank for 35 years.**

**I understand moving a 70-ton tank across the state is no small task.**

**There are permits that must be filed, bridges that must be modeled, and road construction crews that must be alerted.**

**As we worked closely with the Idaho National Guard to fulfill this request, your public affairs team was particularly helpful in relaying important information and updates to our event planning staff.**

**It means a great deal to me personally, and to our entire leadership team, that your organization made such a willing and concerted effort to ensure the success of our event.**

**As you may know, our laboratory works each day to change the world's energy future and secure our critical infrastructures.**

**These efforts cannot be accomplished alone.**

**It takes strong relationships and engagement from dedicated employees, community leaders, and organizations like yours.**

**Thanks again for the work you do and the efforts of your entire team.”**

Board Member DeLorenzo received the following voice-mail message about Theresa Vawter, District 3's new community outreach coordinator. The great and often award-winning work of our employees, as I have highlighted in this Director's Report, and the dedication to providing excellent customer service, as exemplified by Theresa Vawter in District 3, will one day make ITD the best transportation department in the country.

Mr. Chairman and members of the board, this concludes my Director's report for August, 2019.

I would now like to introduce Chief Deputy Scott Stokes for his portion of the Director's Report.