

Director's Board Report March 2016

Thank you Chairman Whitehead.

Good morning members of the Idaho Transportation Board.

I would like to begin by commending District 2 for their excellent response to the landslide on Highway 14.

The citizens of Elk City will soon have their lives back in order, thanks to rapid action and a huge team effort on the part of District 2, the contractor community, and the Federal Highway Administration.

At the December Board meeting in Boise, member Kempton suggested I share my end-of-the-year board report with the House and Senate transportation committees.

I am pleased to report that we did share it with both committees.

This year the House and Senate elected not to meet together, so I made two separate presentations.

One to the Senate Transportation Committee on January 26th.

And one to the House Committee on Transportation and Defense on January 28th.

Chairman Whitehead attended both meetings and addressed the committee members prior to my presentations.

Stuart Davis, Executive Director of the Idaho Association of Highway Districts, sent a letter to Chairman Whitehead thanking him for his comments to the Senate about ITD's changed culture, and expressing his gratitude to the Chairmen for being a key part in this shift

So far I have given three presentations to the legislature addressing our budget request, our 2015 successes, and our new five-year strategic direction.

Mollie McCarty will be providing you more detail on legislative activities in her report later this morning.

In each of my legislative presentations, I highlighted the importance of the innovations developed by our employees, and the savings they create for taxpayers.

Here is an example of one of ITD's recent innovations.

Mike Reardon (**Rear Dun**) in District 1 developed a new drain valve for de-icer tanks that captures waste brine and run off, and a new coupling device that reduces the time required to refill the de-icer tanks during a storm from 30 minutes to five minutes.

The new system saves hours of down time, reduces waste caused by splashing, and saves the department thousands of dollars.

For just \$60, Mike Reardon's innovation allows an important task to be done much faster than before, which allows ITD to get de-icer trucks back out on the road more quickly during storms.

His innovations improve safety for drivers, create savings for the department, and are likely to be adopted for use by other transportation departments across the country.

Innovations like these are important to ITD's continuing success, and so is the ability to think outside the box.

Some quick thinking by District 6 Staff Engineer Ryan Day led to an agreement with Eastern Idaho Railroad that saved ITD \$350,000.

Ryan was working with Rocky Mountain Power officials on the Thornton Interchange project when they mentioned that it was unlikely Eastern Idaho Railroad would allow the power company to run their lines along the railroad tracks.

Ryan had worked with the railroad before on other projects, so he contacted them and helped convince them to grant the desired easement.

In preparation for constructing the Thornton Interchange, ITD had planned to pay two-thirds of the \$1.3 million cost of rerouting the power line.

With the railroad company's concession, the cost of moving the line was cut from \$1.3 million to \$800,000.

This reduced ITD's portion of the cost by \$350,000
——— a significant savings.

Ryan Day's actions in District 6 show the benefits of stakeholder involvement and the value of good business relationships.

It also demonstrates that the best decisions are made as close as possible to where the work is taking place.

While on the subject of District 6, I am pleased to announce that Jason Minzghor (**MINCE-gurr**), is the new District 6 Engineer.

Jason has been the District 1 operations manager in Coeur d'Alene since 2013.

He succeeds Kimbol Allen, who in January was named administrator of the Division of Engineering Products and Plans, and Chief Engineer for ITD.

Jason earned his engineering degree from the University of Idaho in 1997, and began his career with ITD in 1999.

He has held management positions in project development, construction, and maintenance operations.

Jason was born in Calgary, Canada, and raised in Coeur d'Alene. He and his wife, Amy, are the parents of eight children. They plan to move to Eastern Idaho this spring.

Before I move on from district information, I am pleased to report that Districts 1 and 2 have both received the National Weather Service designation of **Weather-Ready National Ambassador**.

This is different from the Storm Ready designations Districts 4, 5, and 6 have achieved. ITD is still the only transportation agency in the nation to have achieved the Storm-Ready designation.

The Ambassador designation earned by Districts 1 and 2 is, and I quote:

Designed to recognize partners who are improving the nation's readiness, responsiveness, and overall resilience to extreme weather events.

Ambassadors can encourage positive changes in their community and set an example by becoming weather-ready.

This includes making employee preparedness a priority and having a disaster plan, promoting “Weather-Ready Nation” key messages in all outreach activities, and providing incentives to constituents and stakeholders to also become more resilient and prepared.

End quote.

As a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador, Districts 1 and 2 will strengthen their partnership with the National Weather Service to improve the nation’s readiness against extreme weather conditions and maintain safe driving conditions throughout the year.

They will also help residents of north Idaho to be more aware of hazardous weather, and better prepared.

I have some good news from our headquarters office in Boise, where one of our employees has been awarded a prestigious AASHTO fellowship.

Kevin Sablan, ITD's State Design and Traffic Services Engineer, was awarded a 2016 AASHTO Transportation Management Fellowship and will spend the next year in Washington, D.C., working on engineering and transportation policy issues.

He will live and work in the nation's capital beginning on March 28.

Kevin is Idaho's first AASHTO Fellow in the 15-year history of the program.

He was interviewed in early February and selected as one of three AASHTO Fellows on Feb. 18.

The fellowship will give Kevin the opportunity to interact with engineers, transportation professionals, and policy-makers from across the country.

He will work with colleagues from other state DOTs, who will likely become invaluable resources for the rest of his career.

ITD will benefit from the knowledge he gains and the connections he makes during his year-long fellowship.

Kevin will gain a better understanding of AASHTO's inner workings, and AASHTO will benefit from Kevin's "front-line" expertise and practical experience in formulating technical documents and policy positions.

On a different subject, I am pleased to report the Broadway Bridge project is well underway and continues to receive good press.

Earlier this week ITD hosted an opportunity for the media to enter the Broadway Bridge work zone where they could safely film the placing of the large girders used to make the bridge over the Boise River.

They were also given onsite access to representatives from the Boise Police Department, Boise Parks and Recreation Department, and Boise State University, who provided information on public safety near the work zone.

When the new bridge opens for traffic, it will have paved ramps from the greenbelt to Broadway Avenue, staircases leading to the road, and a new boat ramp for use by emergency responders needing quick access to the Boise River.

I have some good news from the Wood River Valley. On February 1st a new public transportation facility opened for business in the south end of the valley at Bellevue.

It will be operated by Mountain Rides, the second largest transit company in Idaho. They now have a major hub at each end of the valley.

More than 50 local, state, and federal officials attended the grand-opening ceremony for their new 6,300 square foot bus facility.

Planning for this project began nearly seven years ago.

The new, \$1.8 million facility will save Mountain Rides \$65,000 annually in rent and fuel costs.

Seventy percent of the \$1.8 million cost came from federal sources, and 30 percent from local matching funds

The new facility has a permanent docking station for up to six buses, a state-of-the art maintenance station, a public transportation office, a passenger stop, and a park-and-ride lot.

Mountain Rides expects it to provide public transportation service to the Wood River Valley for the next 50 years.

A few weeks ago I received a letter from Celia Gould, Director of the Idaho Department of Agriculture regarding a partnership we have with her agency.

Here is a portion of what she wrote:

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) would like to thank your agency and staff for your continued and invaluable involvement in Idaho's Invasive Species Program.

ISDA would specifically like to thank Stephanie Hale, Dan Gorley, and the many others of your department who assist with the watercraft inspection program.

This hard work is appreciated and helps to protect Idaho's economy and natural resources.

As you are aware, invasive species pose a serious threat to the economies and way of life to those states they infest, which is why your assistance in keeping quagga and zebra mussels out of Idaho is so greatly needed and appreciated.

Thank you again for your help protecting Idaho.

Invasive species cannot be kept out of Idaho without your ongoing support and never-ending vigilance.

End quote.

Our partnership with the Department of Agriculture is helping fight an invasive species, but we also do things to help Idaho's native species, such as osprey.

On January 25th, we installed four new aluminum platforms on a 1,500 foot bridge over Dworshak Reservoir on the North Fork of the Clearwater River here in District 2.

Inspectors needed to check the 45-year-old bridge, but could not inspect the top of the towers because of the nesting osprey, which are a federally protected species.

Crews had removed the nests to clear the area for inspection, only to have the ospreys return and rebuild the nests in the same spot.

The birds were building their nests over the saddles and obstructing inspections of the bridge, which must be performed every two years, so ITD came up with an environmentally responsible plan that accommodates the birds and the inspections.

Crews installed four new platforms three feet above the current nesting areas, at the bridge's crown, about 125 feet above the bridge's driving surface.

Each platform is approximately five feet wide by five feet long, and is engineered to hold up to 1,000 lbs.

ITD's Environmental Section, Bridge Section, and District 2 coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Clearwater County to install the platforms before the birds return in the spring.

They placed a small amount of the old nesting material to encourage the birds to start building their nests on the new platforms.

While we do not yet know if the osprey will like the new nesting platforms or not, we do know that driver's definitely like and appreciate our incident-response program.

ITD's Facebook account received a message from Casey Denham, who was driving on I-84 when his tire blew out.

He wrote the following:

"I just wanted to say thanks to your Incident-Response team.

On Jan. 8, at about 1 p.m., I blew a tire in my work van on the interstate between the Flying Wye and Eagle Road.

As I was getting out of my vehicle to change the tire, a motorist who had drifted off to the side of the road came within a couple inches of hitting me.

Naturally, that startled the holy daylights out of me.

I called ISP and asked if someone could come park behind me with their lights on while I changed my tire.

About 10 min later, a gentleman with Incident Response showed up.

He was very nice, and even replaced my tire for me, which I was not expecting.

It took him only a few minutes to get the job done, and I was on my way.

I do not remember the gentleman's name, but I am very grateful, and just wanted to say thank you for everything y'all do.

Thanks again."

End quote.

The gentleman he is thanking is Nick Jones, who has worked on ITD's Incident Response Team for 12 years.

Previous District 6 Engineer Kimbol Allen received the following message from **Idaho Falls Public Works Director** Chris Fredericksen, who wrote, and I quote:

Good Morning Kimbol,

I just wanted to drop a quick note to you.

I have lived in Eastern Idaho my entire life, and in that time I have never experienced better winter road conditions on ITD's system than this year.

I'm not sure what maintenance practices have changed, but I have been astounded with the level of service achieved.

These efforts have undoubtedly reduced accidents and created safer conditions for all drivers traveling through your district.

I applaud your efforts and those of your staff.

End quote.

Kimbol responded to Director Fredericksen with the following message:

Thanks, Chris!

I appreciate the note and will pass it on.

Applying salt, brine, pretreating, and being there when the snow starts has really moved us forward.

Five years ago there were 450 accidents in District 6, with snow and ice written as contributing conditions.

Last year there were less than 150.

End quote

Letters like these continue to illustrate that our employees get it.

They know their hard work contributes directly to the safety of the public and the state's economy, and they are continuing to improve both at what they do and how they do it.

And the public is recognizing that they are receiving better services each and every year.

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

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

