

September 2017 Director's Report

Hi, everyone! Last month I was writing on my way back from Glacier and this month I'm writing from a big, (mostly) empty house. As August turned to September school started and, like many of you, my kids all went back to school. The biggest change at our house involved my son Matt, who just started at Iowa State. He joined his older sister Mary there, where they are both busy in the Iowa State University Cyclone Football "Varsity" Marching Band (the ISUCF'V'MB for short – I really had no idea the name was so long until Mary joined; up to that point I just called it "the band.") Erin started her junior year at Valley High School and surprised me yesterday by looking entirely beautiful and grown up for homecoming, and Dan started his senior year at Utah State and surprised me by texting a picture with his hair dyed blue. (He

is an art major.) Erin

wouldn't let me include a picture of her in her

homecoming dress and I'll spare

you the picture of Dan's long, blue locks, but the two band geeks came through with an action picture of them together.

Things may be quieter at home but there's plenty to keep busy with at the DOT. (We had so many items this month we had to hold some for next month!) Here's this month's report.

Traffic Enforcement Officer of the Year

I'm excited to share that Motor Vehicle Enforcement (MVE) Officer Senad Suljic was named Traffic Enforcement Officer of the Year by the Central Iowa Traffic Safety Task Force!

MVE Officer Senad Suljic accepts his recognition as Traffic Enforcement Officer of the Year.

Office Suljic was nominated by MVE Captain Robert Johnson. In his nomination, Johnson said, "Officer Suljic embodies what a good traffic officer is and should be. He is a self-starter and self-motivated. His traffic enforcement stats are always above the crew's average. He scores high in OWI, speed, and traffic enforcement. Officer Suljic has not had any complaints of misconduct and treats each person that he comes in contact with



Mary (piccolo) and Matt (trumpet) strike an inexplicable pose after the UNI game.



respect and courtesy.” Captain Johnson added that “Officer Suljic has a great work ethic and he understands how important it is to work traffic and he wants to affect traffic in the hopes of saving lives.”

This isn't the first MVE officer to receive this award. In 2014, Officer Joe Nickell also received this honor. It's a terrific recognition of how these officers, and all of our dedicated officers, help us deliver safe mobility every day. Thank you to all, and congratulations Senat!

Paul Trombino nominated to be FHWA administrator

Paul Trombino, who was our agency director from April, 2011, to November, 2016, has been nominated by President Trump to serve as administrator of the Federal Highway Administration. Paul's appointment is subject to approval by the U.S. Senate, and I don't expect any difficulty with that given the excitement I heard about his nomination in D.C. when I was there last week. I've always been very grateful to Paul for helping us more clearly articulate and pursue our vision, mission, and culture, all of which are things I am anxious to see continue, and I think we and other state DOTs will benefit as Paul applies his considerable experience and talent at the national level. Please join me in wishing Paul well on his appointment and new endeavor!

Speaking of D.C.

I had the chance in late August and early September to take two interesting trips to Washington, D.C., to talk about infrastructure funding. The first was on August 30th and was a White House “conversation” on infrastructure; the second was September 12th to 14th with our Transportation Commission. Here's more about each visit.

White House Conversation on Infrastructure. This meeting was an afternoon of presentations and interactive sessions with key leaders in President Trump's administration, including Elaine Chao, Secretary of Transportation; Mick Mulvaney, Director of the Office of Management & Budget; and DJ Gribbin, Special Assistant to the President on infrastructure. It included DOT leaders from across the country as well as other state and local leaders representing a broad spectrum of infrastructure, and was an opportunity to learn more about how the administration intends to deliver on the promise to invest \$1 trillion in new infrastructure spending over the next ten years.

At the outset, they are not yet ready to release the specifics of a federal infrastructure plan. It sounds like they would like to do so yet this fall, although that will be contingent upon (and to some extent complicated by) moving a number of issues first, including tax reform.

Although they could not share specifics, they were able to share the principles of their plan and provide some useful detail and context around those principles. The principles they articulated are:

- Targeted federal investments for projects of significant national or regional impact.
- Incentives to increase state and local participation in infrastructure projects.

- Increased private sector participation.
- Streamlining of environmental permitting.

These principles underlie a proposed \$200 billion federal investment that is intended to leverage a total \$1 trillion investment in infrastructure over 10 years.

One thing that has not been apparent until now is that this infrastructure investment is intended to be in addition to usual infrastructure funding and programs. DJ Gribbin was perhaps most explicit about this, when he said that the infrastructure package will be on top of existing programs and will not eliminate existing programs, but will add to them by incentivizing additional state and local investment. His articulation of the general theme is that “if you invest additional resources, we will help you.” Mick Mulvaney echoed this by stressing that the package will be built around incentives that “leverage up” state and local investment – their intent is that each additional federal dollar invested will incentivize three to four additional dollars of state and local investment (which is what transforms \$200B to \$1T), and explained that they want to be what puts a project “over the top.” (As an example, he offered that if a \$200M project with a combination of state, local and private investment was \$20M short, federal funds would cover the shortfall to complete the funding and put the project “over the top.”) Elaine Chao also suggested that this approach will assure more rapid project delivery, under the premise that projects move faster when everyone has “skin in the game.” Mic Mulvaney articulated it this way – “if it was a really good project, you would be willing to put your own money in.”

Much of the concern has been what is meant by increased state and local and private sector participation, with the thought that this would in every instance require P3s (public/private participation) and tolling to gain access to these funds. DJ Gribbin emphasized that is not the case – he specifically stated that they are not tolling and privatizing everything. Although more privatization and tolling may be (from their perspective) a good thing and a consequence of the incentive portion of the package, it’s not the only thing that would create access to federal incentive funds. Rather, their emphasis is on injecting “new money” into infrastructure, which could be private investment, or could be new sources of state and local revenue. The definition of what constitutes “new” revenue is perhaps most concerning, as there is a recognition that a number of states (like Iowa) have recently increased their gas tax or taken other measures to increase the total state investment in infrastructure, and they don’t want to penalize those states for being proactive while rewarding states that waited. At the same time, they don’t want to go so far back that the concept of “new” money becomes meaningless. This is a point we will watch carefully and try to influence in terms of making sure the increases in taxes and fees that we achieved are recognized.

Concurrent with this is a recognition that rural states will have a more difficult time leveraging private investment because rural projects have less users and are harder to cash flow, and therefore a portion of the package needs to be targeted to rural states. The basic concept here is that rural states will be eligible to compete for inventive funds, but also eligible for direct funding set aside for rural states. The definition of

“rural” has not yet been determined, and although we should pay close attention to that issue as well, it would seem unlikely that it would be defined in such a way as to exclude Iowa. (One would think the definition would include something along the lines of, “for example, see Iowa.”) One part of this discussion that was particularly encouraging was a recognition of MAASTO’s (the Mid-American Association of State Transportation Officials, of which Iowa is a member) recent resolution regarding transportation infrastructure policy principles. That resolution was formalized at the annual MAASTO board meeting in Cleveland in July, and called for embracing the four key principles while also establishing a rural America infrastructure program. (You can see the full resolution at <http://www.maasto.net/docs/MAASTO-Reauthorization-Resolution.pdf>.) They gave Randy Blankenhorn, who is the Illinois DOT secretary and the immediate past-president of MAASTO, time to present that resolution and described it as the type of support and input they needed.

One thing that was not clear, at least to me, was the source of the federal investment, but it was at least clear that it was not going to be the Highway Trust Fund. Their position on the Highway Trust Fund is that it “is Congress’s mess, let them figure that out.” Likewise, they expect that it will continue to be necessary for Congress to continue to infuse infrastructure funding with general funds, and that because of that we should continue to expect volatility in federal highway funding and spikes of federal highway funding in the coming years, describing that as the “new norm.” (Note that this prediction does not implicate our operation funds, which are allocated from the state road use tax fund and primary road fund, but does implicate the five-year highway program, which is funded by a combination of state and federal moneys.) Their perspective is that increased local participation and leveraged federal dollars are the long-term hedges against this volatility.

Running through this is a strong theme of state and local control – the concept is that we know best what to do, and their role is to help us. They did not detail all of the ways, beyond incentivized financing, that they will try to achieve this, but in general expect statutory, regulatory, policy, and cultural changes. The incentivized funding approach is influenced strongly by the assessment that it aligns with what customers want and are willing to do – their assessment is that customers want improved infrastructure and are willing to pay more for it, but are much more willing to make that investment and trust in the decision-making at the state and local level, rather than at the federal level.

There was a great deal of discussion about federal permitting, particularly within EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers, and the focus there could really be described as one of process improvement – cutting through layers of unaligned approvals and years of delay to get to a single and concerted federal decision within a reasonably defined period of time, as outlined in the recent executive order on permitting. Other topics they indicated were on the table included rest area privatization and the elimination of tolling restrictions on the interstate system. There are clearly a lot of details that have yet to be determined, but it was helpful to get a better sense of where they are going with this important initiative and gratifying to hear they will continue to share the details of the proposal as they become more clear.



From left: Commissioners Tom Rielly, Kathy Fehrman, Charese Yanney; Senator Joni Ernst; Commissioners Nancy Maher, David Rose, and John Putney; me. My hair was a little wind-blown.

Commission trip to D.C. The Transportation Commission's trip to D.C. is an annual trip to visit our congressional delegation to discuss issues important to highway infrastructure projects and funding in Iowa. This year's trip came at a particularly good time, as it gave us a chance to share some of the details I had just learned from the administration and emphasize points that were important for Iowa. Commissioners John Putney, Kathy Fehrman, Charese Yanney, Nancy Maher, Tom Rielly, and David Rose attended, along with Administrative Services Division (more on that name in a bit) director Lee Wilkinson, legislative liaison Mikel Derby, and executive assistant Lori Pflughaupt.

Our trip included a trip to the headquarters of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) to discuss the current status of federal highway funding and highway funding strategies; visits to the offices and staff of our entire delegation, including personal meetings with Congressman Loeb sack, Senator Ernst, Senator Grassley, and Congressman Young; and a visit with Doug Hoelscher, deputy director of intergovernmental affairs for the White House, who gave the Commission more direct information regarding the administration's approach to infrastructure funding. Although our conversations were broad and varied, we consistently touched on the need to maintain stability and certainty in our five -highway program by reauthorizing the FAST Act beyond the end of federal fiscal year 2020 (September 30, 2020), give states as much flexibility as possible in the use of federal highway funds, and support a direct rural program and recognition of Iowa's gas tax increase as new revenue in the administration's infrastructure program. We also discussed the importance of the lock and dam system on the Mississippi River and updated them on our efforts to create a port authority that will leverage increased state and private investment in that infrastructure. It was a long week of travel with lots of movement and hurrying to make all our meetings, and I greatly appreciate the time, effort, and energy of all of our Commissioners gave to support transportation in Iowa.

Rail Safety Week

The first annual Rail Safety Week starts September 24th. Operation Lifesaver, Inc. is working with the U.S. DOT and other organizations to use this week to raise awareness and empower all of us to be safe near highway-railroad crossings and railroad rights-of-way. The good news is vehicle-train collisions have decreased by 83% in the last 40 years. But even with that drastic reduction, there is still work to do –safety data shows there are still more than 2,000 vehicle-train collisions annually across the U.S., and last year saw more than 900 injuries and

fatalities to people walking, playing or taking photos on train tracks. On average a person or vehicle is hit by a train in the U.S. about every three hours.

Here in Iowa, Governor Kim Reynolds is signing a Rail Safety Week proclamation Monday, September 25th. To keep our own employees safer around trains, our Rail Transportation office has provided safety training for more than 2,000 employees over the past few years. This first-in-the-nation training is for any employees who might have occasion to come in contact with a train, whether on a construction project or other Iowa DOT function.

Want to do your part? Remember these five tips, and share them with others whenever you can:

1. Look and listen for a train as you approach all railroad crossings - obey all signs, warning lights and gates.
2. Trains are quieter and faster than you think - never try to beat a train.
3. Because of their size and weight, it can take a mile or more to stop a train.
4. Always expect a train on any track; avoid distractions when you approach a crossing.
5. Railroad property is private property. Walking (or hiking, running, playing, or taking photos) on the tracks is illegal and dangerous.

You can learn more and find rail safety resources at <https://oli.org/about-us/news/rail-safety-week-2017>.

Rail Safety week is another reminder that all modes of transportation are intertwined. We're privileged at the Iowa DOT to influence safe mobility across all of them!

Bright lights, big savings

(Sorry – the 1980s in me couldn't resist the reference to the 1984 novel "Bright Lights, Big City.")

I admit that I'm still new to the sheer size of our operations and responsibilities, and the numbers associated with them often surprise me (even though they shouldn't). For instance, did you know we maintain and operate 8,500 lights across the state at rural intersections, ramp terminals, and along urban interstates? I didn't until I learned about our effort to convert all of our lights to LED fixtures, and then I was startled by even bigger numbers.

In June, we began the process of converting all of our lights by replacing old high pressure sodium fixtures with LED (light-emitting diode) fixtures. LED fixtures consume less energy and last longer, and the combination will add up to big savings – an estimated \$5 million dollars in energy savings over ten years, and a replacement cycle that is more than twice as long as our current fixtures – 10 to 12 years for the new LED fixtures versus four to six years for the old sodium fixtures. That gives our maintenance professionals more time to spend on higher value tasks important to our transportation system, and less time changing fixtures. In addition, they will reduce our carbon emissions/footprint and make our roadways safer. This is a bright (sorry, I couldn't resist) idea that embodies smarter, simpler, and customer driven.

A division (or office) by any other name . . .

This is something I announced earlier by email, but I thought it was worth repeating for anyone that may have missed it. As I indicated, we have made some small changes for better organizational alignment.

Again, the first two are just name changes for two of our divisions. Although a name will never matter as much as the actual work that we do, names convey information externally and internally that can set expectations about what we do or what role the division plays within our collective mission, and when names overlap or aren't quite aligned correctly, they can create confusing or incorrect expectations. To better align our functions and naming structure, we're making two name changes:

- The **Operations & Finance Division** is now the **Administrative Services Division**. We think this will better reflect their commitment to core administrative services that benefit the entire agency, and avoid confusion with our continued focus on traffic operations. Lee Wilkinson continues to serve as director of this division.
- The **Performance & Technology Division** is now the **Strategic Performance Division**. We think this will better align reflect their focus on cross-divisional activities and initiatives that strategically support and enhance the performance of the entire agency, and avoid confusion with technology responsibilities of the Information Technology Division. John Selmer remains the director of this division.

In addition, we're merging our state and federal relations team and policy staff that have been part of the Operations & Finance Division (now the Administrative Services Division) with our strategic communications team in the new Strategic Performance Division. It's very much been my belief and experience that policy, as a guiding expression of what, how, and why we do things, is another form of strategic communication, and by bringing these two areas together we think we will improve awareness, alignment, and collaboration between and across these areas and ultimately help us better communicate (both internally and externally), manage, and achieve key legislative and policy initiatives that impact us.

These teams will be joined in the **Office of Strategic Communications**, which is being renamed **Strategic Communications & Policy** to represent this merger. Andrea Henry will continue as its director; the policy staff that are involved in this move are:

- **Tracy George**, who is our rules administrator;
- **Steve Bowman**, who is our policy coordinator;
- **Mike Raab**, who is our reviewing officer and serves as my designee for administrative decisions;
- **Renee Jerman**, who is our legislative analyst; and
- **Mikel Derby**, who is our legislative liaison.

Please note that none of these changes will result in any layoffs or loss in positions. These are merely internal shifts in alignment and reporting structure.

All of these changes became effective September 8. I appreciate all of the work and accommodation everyone involved has undertaken to make this happen, thank you to all!

And speaking of operations

If you have heard someone say “Tizz-Mo” over the last two or three years, it’s not someone mispronouncing “gizmo” or trying to sound Shakespearean (as in, “Hark, tis Mo approaching!”). They’re referring to TSMO -- Transportation Systems Management and Operations.

TSMO is a significant part of why we decided to change the name of the Operations & Finance Division to the Administrative Services Division. As we continue to become better and more mature at TSMO, our focus on and the importance of operations as a function and discipline of the transportation system continues to increase.

So what is TSMO? According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), TSMO is "an integrated program to optimize the performance of existing multimodal infrastructure through implementation of systems, services, and projects to preserve capacity and improve the security, safety, and reliability of our transportation system." Have that memorized? If not, think about it this way – TSMO is a concerted and proactive effort to operate the system at its highest and best capacity. It rests on a framework formed by the intersection of road weather management, traffic control, traffic incident management, and work zone management, and touches almost everything we do – from design, to field maintenance, to how we clear crashes and obstructions, and to how we help stranded motorists. TSMO is an essential part of delivering safe mobility, and when done well it reduces crashes and increases flow and capacity without adding lane miles of roads.

Although we’re still early in our TSMO development, I’m proud to say we have been an early adopter of TSMO principles and a national TSMO leader in TSMO implementation. You can see that reflected in our TSMO home page, <https://iowadot.gov/tsmo>, which includes links to our TSMO strategic plan, program plan, and service layer plans, and is the product of the hard work of many people across all aspects of the DOT.

Our TSMO efforts are formally led by our TSMO steering committee, a group of about 20 DOT team members from across the agency. This group recently compiled it’s third TMSO Accomplishment plan, which sets out more than 20 goals to be accomplished in fiscal year 2018. I won’t list them all here, but it includes a lot of impactful and cool things, like audible warning systems to avoid crashes with maintenance and paint vehicles; safety and mobility mitigation strategies in work zones like intelligent work zone technology, work zone traffic incident management plans and alternative closures; TSMO, traffic incident management, and emergency response training; autonomous vehicle projects; intelligent wrong way driver technologies; and virtual weight scale technologies. One or more of those goals likely impacts something you do every day. If you’re interested in what the group is doing and want to see the FY2018 Accomplishment Plan or any other TSMO documents, you can go to the group’s SharePoint site – <http://portal/xdiv/TSMO/SitePages/Home.aspx>. TSMO – it’s what we do!

Song of the month

All week I've been intending to go with "September" by Earth, Wind, & Fire. In my book you can never go wrong with that song, and as an aside I think they have the greatest Beatles cover ever with their version of "Got to Get You Into My Life." (Dan and I have talked about this, and we both agree on this point. So that's settled.) But in a nod to my two marching band geeks, I'm going to pull out an old and somewhat obscure Fleetwood Mack song, "Tusk," which is uniquely backed by the USC marching band (they probably have some long, official name as well, but I'm too lazy at this point to look it up). But suffice it to say that this song has a surprising groove and a great crescendo, as only a marching band can deliver. Give it a listen at your next tailgate!

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It's getting late, my friends, and my latest health effort is to get at least seven hours of sleep a night. I've always been great at eating and exercising right, but it's one that many of us shortcut in our effort to do more and keep up. So, to that point, I will end it here and say, as always, thank you for all you do, and stay safe in all that you do. (And get plenty of rest yourself – we never owe our work our health! In fact it's the other way around.)

Best,

Mark