

June 2018 Director's Report

Ah, the vagaries of living in Iowa – the coldest April followed by the hottest May, and now I'm sitting on my porch in 94-degree heat and it's not quite yet summer (but it's almost officially here – June 21st!). I'll take it



Matt after his first 50-mile ride.

though – it's good to get feel the sun and breeze (and occasionally rain, I rode my bike for four hours in a steady downpour last weekend) and have plenty of light to enjoy the outdoors. I've been taking Matt on long bike rides to get ready for our RAGBRAI adventure next month, and I also built a pull-up bar in my back yard over Memorial Day weekend. (I was going to build an entire workout structure but this was about all Linda can tolerate. She let me do this in a fit of momentary weakness when I reminded her she sold the playset and cut off all the tree limbs I used to do pull-ups from.) I'm also enjoying Erin's returns from lifeguarding at the pool every evening. She gives us a nightly viewing of the Chaco tan lines on her feet, which are quite prominent and apparently very important to her.



Now this next part may surprise some of you that know my (mostly) healthy eating habits, but one of the things I love most about summer is ice cream – not just any ice cream, but soft-serve ice cream. And not just any soft-serve ice cream, but Dairy Queen soft-serve ice cream. I don't go crazy; rarely do I partake of the exotic Blizzard or the elegant Dilly Bar with its frosty, curled tip, but I'm very fond of small vanilla cones. Which brings me to the slight calamity that has tinged the start of the-soft-serve season – the absence of the mysterious but addictive substance known as crunch coat.

I like my vanilla cones covered in something known as crunch coat. I don't really know what's in it or exactly what it is (or even exactly how it's spelled or what it's called – some spell it "krunch kote" and apparently some refer to it as "twinkle topping," which I find a frivolous disservice) but whatever it is, I've learned that you shouldn't take it for granted – not only can you not get it at every Dairy Queen (I'm still disappointed in the state of Virginia), but for what seemed



My two helpers on the pull-up bar project.



The elusive crunch coat cone.

like an eternity this year I couldn't get it at *any* Dairy Queen. In May, my local pusher (which is what I call my favorite DQ at 4th and Grand in West Des Moines) informed me they had no crunch coat because the company that makes it (whatever it is) sold out to another company and there was going to be a two-month lull in production during the transition. (I immediately retreated to my back-up DQ, who said the same thing.)

I placated myself with butterscotch dip topping for several long weeks, but I was excited to find out (on Father's Day no less) that it was back earlier than expected. If you care to try it, I recommend my DQ at 4th and Grand as the best place to get a crunch coat cone, because they have what I call a crunch coat Ferris Wheel that rotates through the crunch coat and around the ice cream

cone to give you consistent, even, crunch coat distribution. Other places just sprinkle it on and leave gaps and lumps. I asked them one time why no one else used it and they told me the DQ corporation prohibited its use, for reasons I can only assume are health-related, but they kept using theirs to provide the quality and consistency I and my fellow crunch coat cultists demand. This has of course earned them my lifelong devotion.

Ok, now that we have these important matters addressed, it's time for my monthly report. Here you go!

Thank you, Commissioner Dan Huber

It's important for me to start this month with a special thank you to Commissioner Dan Huber. Commissioner Huber, who's from Davenport, joined our Transportation Commission in 2014 and served as the chair of the Commission from May 2016 to May 2017. Dan's term will end June 30, 2018 (we extended his term by a few months when we shifted the terms from a May to April basis to a July to June basis), and Dan made the difficult choice to not seek a second term so he could focus on demanding real estate development projects on the east side of the state. (As Dan's [bio](#) indicates, Dan, who has an extensive history in economic development, leads a number of hotel and restaurant interests throughout the state.)



Commissioner Dan Huber

We recognized and thanked Dan at the June Transportation Commission meeting last week, and it was a consistent observation that Dan has been an intelligent, thoughtful, and articulate advocate for the transportation needs of the entire state and for data-driven, evidenced based decisions and project prioritization. During Dan's tenure, the Commission accomplished significant program initiatives, including the programming of new revenue from the fuel tax increase in 2015 and programming of the new I-74 Mississippi bridge, which is under construction right now. As an agency, we thank Dan for all the time, energy, effort, and attention he gave to the important and complex work of the Commission, and on a personal level I thank him for helping me when I started as director – his leadership and insight helped me better understand the needs of the

Commission and my role with them, and set the tone for a terrific working relationship. Thank you, Dan, and best wishes for all your future endeavors!

Why I ♥ Prezi

This is going to date me quite a bit, but remember when PowerPoint first came out? I remember being in a trial and one of the attorneys brought in a laptop and a projector and used a PowerPoint for his closing argument. I'd never seen it before, and I was blown away. I felt like "Unfrozen Caveman Lawyer," if any of you remember that old Saturday Night live skit. ("Ladies and gentlemen, I'm just a caveman. I know little of your modern world; the bright lights shining on opposing counsel's magic cave wall frighten and confuse me. My primitive mind can't grasp such things. But there is one thing I do know – the plaintiff's condition pre-existed this accident and the plaintiff should be awarded no damages.") But like most things technological, what was once magical and mind-blowing quickly became ubiquitous and sometimes overused, so much so that we coined a phrase for it – "death by PowerPoint."

Now, this really isn't a knock on PowerPoint – PowerPoint remains a very relevant and useful tool, and it continues to evolve and offer more compelling presentation options. But an agency that has diverse communication needs also needs diverse communication tools, and Prezi is a PowerPoint alternative that can be very effective in some circumstances. A number of us have been using Prezi for several years after prior Director Paul Trombino smartly made it an option, and I thought it would be helpful to explain what it is and why I like it.

Prezi is a web-based presentation tool, and much like PowerPoint it allows you to progress through a presentation in an ordered fashion and to interlace text, graphics, images, and videos. For me the compelling difference is a shift from slides (in the case of PowerPoint) to an open canvas, if you will, on which you can place and arrange frames to tell your story as you move through the presentation. Coupled with a zoom feature that allows you to drill into details that might get lost or be too hard to see in other formats, it creates a dynamic, motion-based presentation that can be very effective, especially when you have a big picture you're trying to get across, relationships you're trying to show, or details you want to highlight. It also allows you to add voice overs and music to transform your presentation into a video that anyone can watch anytime, and the presentations are easily shared as a link. And like PowerPoint you can collaborate and present remotely and view and present from mobile devices.

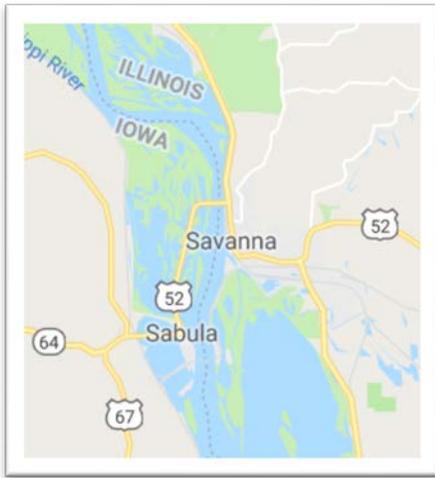


As an example, here's a Prezi that describes our transition from five to eight-year licenses that we turned into a video that won a communications award. You can watch it [here](#).

I'm not advocating everyone drop PowerPoint and start using Prezi exclusively. Far from it; as I said it remains relevant and useful and is often the right choice, and you can overuse Prezi just as much as you can overuse PowerPoint. But for those of us that make a lot of public or internal presentations or engage in training, I encourage you to add Prezi to your communications tool box. We just renewed our license for Prezi and upgraded to a version called "Prezi Next," and there are plenty of seats left for people that would like to use it. You can [watch this presentation](#) to learn more about Prezi Next, and if you want to request a seat you can do that through [Jolene Meyer](#) or [Barb Weigel](#). We also have an [online training session](#) you can watch to help you get started. Give it a try!

Sabula bridge project highlights importance of mobility

We have had many people working hard on mobility options for the town of Sabula, Iowa, and I thought it was important to share what we are doing there, both to recognize the excellent work that has been done and to highlight the importance of our mission. As many of you are aware, Sabula is an island town on the Mississippi between Clinton and Dubuque; it connects to Savanna, Illinois via US 52 and is served by two bridges – a main span over the main channel of the Mississippi, and an overflow bridge that connects the levee from the main span to Sabula.



Sabula, Iowa – Iowa's only island town.

Last year we opened a new main span over the main channel (that was a project led by Illinois as a border bridges project) and this year we were scheduled to replace the overflow bridge, with an opening before Memorial Day. Earlier this year (in late February) we ran into project delays – to avoid disrupting businesses and homes we had to build the new bridge in alignment with the existing bridge, meaning that we were setting the new piers outside and in alignment with the existing piers, and planned a short closure to remove the old bridge and install the new deck before reopening. This went awry when we ran into unexpected and shifting subsoil conditions that caused the existing

piers on the end of the overflow bridge closest to Sabula to sink six to ten inches. Because of that we had to close the existing bridge earlier than expected, and it has also extended the length of the project – to deal with the subsoil conditions we encountered, we will have to sink the last two piers 150 feet to hit bedrock and had to bring much larger equipment in to do the job. (We encountered further delay due to high waters in May that precluded construction work). We currently expect to complete the project by Labor Day.

The closing cuts off Sabula from the main span and quick access to Savanna and Illinois; the detour route to the nearest crossing is to the bridge in Clinton, which is about 36 miles and 50 minutes. This is a big deal to the businesses and residents of Sabula, as Sabula derives much of its economic activity from people traveling to and through Sabula during the summer. In addition, many people live in one community and work in the other. As it became apparent that we were not going to be able to complete the project before the end of the summer

season, several of us traveled to Sabula on May 17 to meet with city officials, business leaders, and the public to discuss ways we could mitigate the impact to commuters and the economic impact to Sabula businesses caused by a lack of traffic through town. We left with an agreement that we should move as quickly as possible to establish a vehicle ferry service between Sabula and Savannah, and a commitment to consider any other reasonable options to mitigate the closing.

Following that meeting, we immediately asked **Bob Younie, Director of our Office of Maintenance**, to take the lead in securing a vehicle ferry service, and to also explore the viability of other options, which included a passenger-only ferry, transit services, a temporary bridge, and military or civilian floating bridge. Thanks to the excellent preparatory work done by **District 6 Transportation Planner Sam Shea** and others, Bob immediately hit the ground running and became a near resident of Sabula and Savannah over the next few weeks. Bob worked with several key folks in District 6, including **District Engineer Jim Schnoebelen** and Sam Shea, the HDR engineering firm, and countless other folks in the offices of Traffic Operations, Maintenance, Strategic Communications & Policy, Location & Environment, and Purchasing, all of whom worked tirelessly, urgently, and effectively to get the ferry service in place and to vet the other options.

Thanks to everyone's hard and excellent work, we started the vehicle ferry service, which operates 12 hours a day and can carry up to 15 noncommercial vehicles plus up to 79 passengers on each crossing, on June 12. We also added a transit service that runs between the communities and stops at key businesses to try to mitigate transportation costs for commuters and other travelers. Both services run seven days a week and are offered at no cost to the public. (The ferry is making 15 to 16 round trips every day).

We've had to rule out the other options for a variety of reasons -- a passenger-only ferry because there simply are no operators available; a temporary bridge because it generates the same foundation issues we're solving for the permanent bridge (and also because it will take longer to get the materials and equipment than it will take to complete the current project); a military bridge both because it's not possible to muster one and it would not be a safe option for civilian drivers in any event, and a floating civilian bridge because it would take almost as long as it will take to complete the permanent bridge to establish one properly and safely. But I want to focus on what success looks like here – knowing what we can't do, and why, is just as important as what we can do – it helps us make informed decision and focus our efforts and resources confidently in the right direction.



Bob Younie and state Rep. Andy McKean on the ferry's inaugural voyage. Bob has acquired some new admiralty-related nicknames, including "The Commodore" and "The Captain."

Our staff and partners did a fantastic job exploring, analyzing, and explaining all the options, and they also did a fantastic job of working through all the complexity of establishing a ferry service – although it may sound simple to get a boat and start crossing the river, this is no pontoon boat – we had to work through and coordinate (or should I say navigate) innumerable details including landing places; staging areas; traffic plans, traffic control, and traffic signing; traveler information; river conditions and currents; coordination with the cities, Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers; and public information; as well as the unusual task of finding an available ferry service provider and did so with great urgency and efficiency.

If you want to see more information about this project, including live web cams of the ferry service and the construction, check out our [Sabula bridge construction project site](#). In the meantime, I'll close this discussion with a reflection on how this effort demonstrates principles that are important to us – when we have problems, our best focus is always on solving the problem, not pointing fingers; our mission of mobility – of “getting you there” daily affects personal and economic vitality and we have an enormous responsibility to pursue it well and urgently; and leadership is the work of many people. On that note, I couldn't be more proud or appreciative of our staff or our capability, and I gratefully thank everyone that has been, and continues to be, involved in this.

Respecting and protecting the culture of Iowa

This spring I had the chance to travel and spend some time with **Tammy Nicholson, Director of our Office of Location & Environment, and Brennan Dolan, who serves as a resident archaeologist in the cultural resources management section** of that office. The Office of Location & Environment does some very interesting and important things for us – it combines expertise from the engineering, environmental, historical, and scientific fields to help design road projects; helps us promote environmental stewardship; and balance the needs of the public and the environment while ensuring environmental regulatory compliance as we do so.

Tammy and Brennan reminded me that, although we often focus on the impact our projects will have on mobility, it's also important to consider the impact our projects have on the people and land around them, and to design them as thoughtfully and respectfully as we can to minimize negative impacts to both.

Brennan is an interesting fellow to visit with – as an archaeologist that's been involved with projects all over the state, he has a broad knowledge of the state and its geography and geology, as well as a deep knowledge of the history of its people, including the Native American people that lived here before us and the cultural artifacts they left behind. After visiting with Brennan, I asked him to share his thoughts on his work in this area and he provided the following:

Recently, I attended a project review with a number of Native American representatives; on site were members of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, the Upper Sioux Community, and the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa (Meskwaki). Many names of places in Iowa, like Mahaska County (Iowa Tribe), Pottawattamie County, Dakota City, Wapheton, and Tama County (Meskwaki), derive their names from various Native American languages. These names are of no surprise to folks who are of Native American ancestry, but this

diversity may not be as well known to many of our staff. Beyond the place-names, many of these Tribes and Nations connect their deep history to the state; this connection can include village sites, camp sites, burial sites, and other places like prayer sites and historic trails.

Regularly, we reach out to, and consult with, approximately twenty different Tribes and Nations on various levels for Iowa DOT projects. Many of these tribes no longer reside in Iowa, but they know and understand the deep connection to many Iowa places. Sometimes these interactions focus on planning efforts and other times they are focused on design and construction efforts to avoid impacts to certain places. Iowa, and specifically the Iowa DOT, has a well-documented history with these kinds of efforts, and Iowa led the nation with the 1976 passing of our statewide burials law (where a road project was at the center of controversy). This legislation later became the blueprint for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990. Since the 1970s we have worked to be a leader in building these relationships and working to respectfully treat various significant places across the state. That work continues today as we plan for the future of transportation in Iowa, and do so hand-in-hand with Tribes and Nations whose history runs deep across and under the transportation system.

Our U.S Highway 20 modernization project is a terrific example of the way in which our work can intersect with and reveal Native American culture and the careful and respectful work we do to preserve it – work in the Correctionville area revealed a host of significant and unique findings, including geoglyphs – V-shaped trenches carved into the earth in the shape of animals, including one in the shape of a buffalo that measured fifty feet from tip to tail. We created a video titled “Landscapes that Shape Us” that documents the cultural artifacts we found and the careful work we did to protect and preserve them while advancing the project; you can find it [here](#). Brennan has been showing this video to interested groups across the state to help Iowans understand the work we do to honor our cultural heritage. It’s well done – it recently took first place in the documentary category *and* won best of show at the 12th Annual Elkhorn Valley Film and Media Conference Festival. Great job by everyone involved with this video, but even more importantly, great job by everyone involved in the important work it documents. You’ve helped us assure the future doesn’t come at the expense of our past.



Title screen from the award-winning “Landscapes that Shape Us” video.

Virtual Reality is really real

As I mentioned last month, I toured the Office of Design and saw some of the cool things they are doing there. One of the things I got to see was the work we are doing with virtual reality (VR). I've had a chance to experience it before, particularly because **Kimball Olson and Annette Jeffers in the Office of Bridges & Structures** did such a great job of developing and promoting a virtualization of the I-74 bridge project that lets you drive (or fly) through the new design and take a dive under the surface of the Mississippi to walk the river bottom and experience what we did to mitigate damage to the mussel population in the area. (The virtualization continues its hit tour through the Quad City area as we speak.) But when I was taking my tour of the Office of Design they let me sit in the virtual (yet literal) driver's seat of VR, and I was so taken with what we are doing I asked **Mike Kennerly, Director of the Office of Design**, to put together some information I could share with all of you. Here's what Mike said:

We just completed a project with ISU to create a VR model of the 30/35 interchange project that we demonstrated for Mark. The project was initiated after I became aware that drivers on the eastbound US 30 to northbound I-35 loop ramp might have a restricted view of northbound traffic on I-35 due to the abutment and piers associated with the new flyover ramp. We started by creating an animation showing the maneuver, however we felt that a virtual reality model would give us a better opportunity to validate our concern because we could more accurately recreate the driving experience. The key is a driver on the ramp is steering their car to the right to stay on the ramp while looking over their right shoulder between piers and the abutment to find a gap.

It can be a difficult maneuver when there are no obstacles and we felt virtual reality was the best tool to help us evaluate how difficult the maneuver would be with obstacles. With the model that has been created we can have someone sit in a driving simulator and have them put on the virtual reality goggles that immediately immerses them in a virtual representation of the interchange that they can now drive and we can monitor on a screen. We can create an attention map which is essentially a map of their eye movements which is a valuable tool for not only determining potential problems, but evaluating the effectiveness of potential solutions. In addition to looking for future opportunities to collaborate with both ISU and the U of I on virtual reality projects, we are also evaluating the changes that would be necessary in our current workflow so that we can create virtual reality models on a wider variety of projects.

The other tool that we demonstrated for Mark is a tablet-based tool that would allow us to use it as a window into a virtual representation of a project. In other words, you could hold the tablet in your hands and move it around and see what the project would look like from that vantage point displayed on the screen. We think this has the potential to truly transform how we communicate with the public, especially through right-of-way negotiations and public meetings.

We put Mark in the simulator and let him drive the US 30/ I-35 interchange. There are rumors that the former Director of the Motor Vehicle Division intentionally crashed his vehicle into another one to see

how it would feel. Unfortunately, all video devices were mysteriously turned off at the time of this alleged incident and therefore no evidence exists to either confirm or deny the rumor. As is, it falls into the category of Urban Legend.



That's me "driving" the US 30/I-35 interchange. I couldn't find the cup holder for my coffee.

I was very impressed by how we're shifting the use of this technology from not just letting people "walk" a project we've designed, which is powerful in itself, but to also test designs and adjust or mitigate before we initiate or complete construction. It also has enormous capacity for training and communication. Mike's response included an invitation to demonstrate what they are doing. If you are interested in learning more about how you might use VR in your work, I encourage you to contact Mike and take him up on it.

As an aside, and as a nod to the communicative power of VR, we're going to be showcasing two VR visualizations at the State Fair this year to help the public understand the importance of driver behavior and decisions on driving safety. We're working with the University of Iowa and Iowa State University to create them. The University of Iowa visualization will feature scenarios related to wearing your seatbelt, and the Iowa State visualization demonstrates the negative impact distractions inside and outside the vehicle can have when navigating a work zone. We'll talk more about these as we get closer to the State Fair and I of course hope you will stop by if you're at the State Fair to check them out,

but in the meantime, I offer that if a picture is worth a thousand words, VR may be worth a million.

Vehicle registration and titling goes electric

When Bob Dylan went electric at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, the loud snarl of electric guitar he sent over the crowd sparked displeasure, dismay, and a controversy that's been replayed in untold articles and even books. By comparison, our own release of an electronic vehicle titling and registration system 43 years later (43 years exactly on June 25th) has been quiet, but like electric guitars, ultimately very cool.

One of the significant things we do is maintain the statewide system for vehicle registration and titling. In partnership with Iowa's county treasurers, who perform all the front-line transactions for vehicle title and registration, our Vehicle & Motor Carrier Services office is responsible for titling and registering approximately 4.4 million vehicles and collection of annual revenue of just under \$900 million in the form of fees for new registration and annual registration fees. These fees are an important part of sustaining our statewide transportation system, as together they comprise more than half – about 55% – of the \$1.65 billion annual revenue that flows to our state road funding through the Road Use Tax Fund and the TIME-21 Fund. (Fees for

new registration are about 21% of state road funding at approximately \$340 million annually, and annual registration fees are about 34% of state road funding at approximately \$550 million annually).

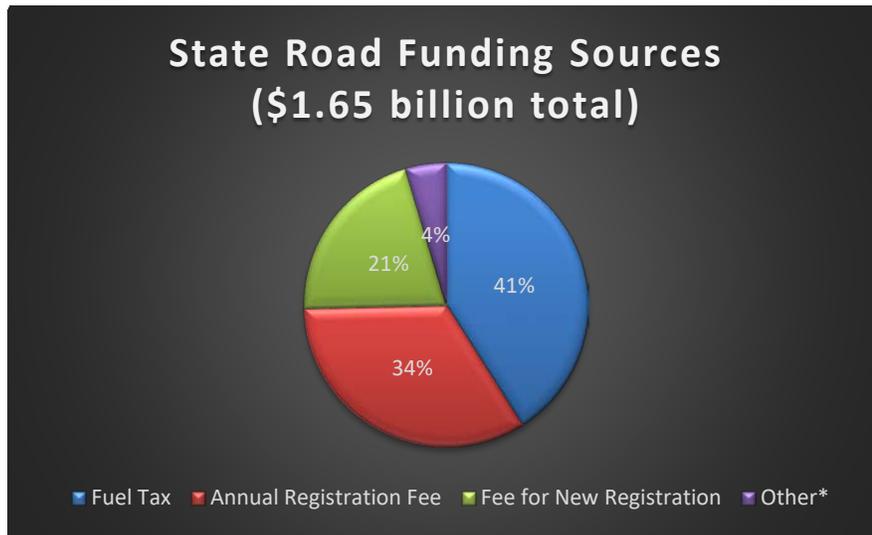


Chart showing the sources of state road funding on a percentage basis. The red and green portions of the pie together cover revenue generated by fees for new registration and annual registration, and account for more than half of all state road funding.

*Other corresponds to driver's license fees, trailer and registration fees, and other miscellaneous fees.

Our county treasurer partners have done a great job of bringing convenience and efficiency to the process for paying annual registration fees by establishing and maintaining online payment services for many years. But the process for submitting new applications for title and registration (which includes the fee for new registration) has remained paper-driven, in part because it required documents from multiple parties (buyers and sellers/dealers) and the federal odometer statement regulations for many years favored “wet” signatures on paper documents.

Maintaining a paper driven process adds a significant amount of expense, time, and movement to the process, as it requires individuals and dealers to fill in paper applications and make physical trips to a treasurer's office to submit the documents and fees, where treasurers and their staff must re-enter the information into our title and registration system to complete the process and accept the fees. This can be particularly time-consuming for motor vehicle dealers, who often complete and submit multiple title and registration applications in a single day.

During the 2016 legislative session, however, the legislature gave us clear authority and impetus to improve the efficiency of this process and make it electronic, by passing a bill that required us to begin a program for electronic registration and title (ERT) by January 1, 2018. To implement this, Vehicle & Motor Carrier Services partnered with Iowa's county treasurers and auto dealers to develop and implement the program, starting in January 2018 with a pilot that allowed title and registration applications and fees for new vehicles sold by Willis Auto Group to residents of Polk County to be submitted to the Polk County Treasurer electronically. After initial testing, we expanded the pilot to include one of the top selling new car dealers in the state, Bob Brown Auto Group.

During this pilot, hundreds of transactions have been submitted through the new ERT system, and the pilot has been an overall success. As with any pilot, we've identified a few bugs that needed to be fixed and

enhancements that should be made, but it's going very well and we're currently working on enhancing and finalizing the functionality of the system before expanding the program statewide. To give us time to do that, the legislature this year moved the statewide implementation date back to July 1, 2019.

Right now, our focus has been on new vehicle sales by new motor vehicle dealers, as they comprise a steady and regular source of new title and registration applications, and also provide consistent customer profiles we can work with, without the complication of documenting prior ownership. At a high level, the program authorizes third-party ERT providers who contract their services to motor vehicle dealers to connect motor vehicle dealers' systems with our title and registration system so they can transmit the application information and documents to our system, and from there the electronic application is routed to the appropriate county treasurer's office, which uses our system to review the application for approval and complete the title and registration process. (County treasurers can still deny an application that has errors or is for some reason improper.) Fees are transmitted electronically to the appropriate county treasurer via an ACH (automated clearing house) process.

The electronic system offers many savings and efficiencies over the paper process. In addition to eliminating time and travel to physically transmit paper applications to a county treasurer's office, the electronic system when fully implemented will:

- Cut down on transposition of information at the dealership.
- Allow dealers to easily and consistently submit applications to any county treasurer office in the state.
- Cut down on errors in the application process by preventing applications from being submitted with missing or incorrect information.
- Allow county treasurers to electronically communicate errors that do happen back to the dealer to be corrected electronically, without physically returning and resubmitting the application.
- Cut down on fraud by preventing paper documents from being altered or forged after the transaction has been completed and before submission to the county treasurer.
- Provide a time and place stamp for transactions.
- Eliminate the need for county treasurers to transpose information from forms into the system.
- Eliminate cash and check handling.

The electronic system also facilitates what we call secure temporary tags, which are the paper registration cards the dealer places on vehicles while the owner waits for delivery of the new license plates. Traditionally these have been handwritten cards the dealer completes that have no reference in our system and cannot be connected to the vehicle by law enforcement, and as such are subject to misuse. Within the new electronic system these are generated by the system and printed at the dealership, and are assigned a registration number that is connected to the vehicle and can be searched by law enforcement.

Vehicle & Motor Carrier Services will continue to work to expand the ERT pilot to include additional car dealerships who sell new vehicles in other areas around the state, and anticipate enrolling more than one-third of all new-car dealerships by the end of summer. They are also focusing on training, as there are over 800 county treasurer staff throughout the state that process vehicle transactions. Training has been underway since

April, and they anticipate all county treasurer staff that handle vehicle transactions will be trained in ERT processing by the end of this summer.

The next step for the ERT program is to develop the system to handle used car transactions. These transactions are a little more complicated because the vehicle comes with a history of previous ownership that must be documented, but that can be solved. Vehicle & Motor Carrier Services, the Motor Vehicle IT support team, and our county and dealership partners will be working on that this fall, and will also invite additional third-party ERT providers to participate in the program to expand access points for Iowa auto dealers and other entities (like car rental companies) that regularly submit motor vehicle title and registration applications. They're well on their way to making ERT a standard business practice for most motor vehicle title and registration transactions by the end of 2019, which will be a terrific step forward for service and efficiency. This is another great example of how working through complexity delivers solutions that for our customers are smarter, simpler, and customer driven. Many thanks to everyone involved – keep it going!

Motorcycle Safety Forum revs up awareness

In conjunction with Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, we hosted the 15th Motorcycle Safety Forum on May 11 at the airport Holiday Inn in Des Moines. The Motorcycle Safety Forum has been a nearly annual event that we lead in collaboration with the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau and various other motorcycle safety-minded groups, including ABATE of Iowa and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. I had the chance to attend this year and found it to be very engaging, interesting, and informative.

This year's theme was "Building a Foundation One Rider at a Time," and was led by the same dynamic duo that did such a great job with the driver education conference I talked about last month, **Kala Shipley, our driver education program manager, and Kathleen Meradith-Eyers, our driver education administrative assistant.**

They once again did a terrific job organizing and leading another first-for-them conference.



MVE opens the forum with the presentation of colors.

Like the driver education conference, this year's forum pulled on the talents and expertise from people across the Iowa DOT, including Driver & Identification Services, Traffic & Safety, and Traffic Operations. This year's forum included presentations on what we are doing to keep our roadways safe, how new on-bike technology improves rider safety, information on our new interactive motorcycle crash data tool, and information on the foundations of Motorcycle Rider Education developed by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation.



Steve Stonehocker of Driver & Identification Services (second from left) participates in the panel of riders discussing rider education.

The forum also included two interactive panel discussions. The first was a panel of riders of different ages and experiences who recently took a Motorcycle Rider Education course. They discussed the techniques they learned and have used and the benefits they derived from the training to foster a discussion on the importance of rider training, both for new and experienced riders. The second panel included members from law enforcement, EMS, motorcycle riders, and attorneys to facilitate conversation between and understanding among these groups on what to do during traffic stops and when approaching EMS vehicles and construction zones.

I thought the focus on motorcycle safety awareness was very timely and important. In addition to May being Motorcycle Safety Awareness month, May marks the beginning of the peak season for motorcycle crashes – almost 75 percent of all crashes for the period 2015 to 2017 happened between May and September, with the most crashes happening in June. And we know that motorcyclists are disproportionately represented in highway fatalities – although motorcyclists account for only .44 percent of all vehicles miles traveled in the state (that's forty-four *hundredths* of one percent, not forty-four percent), they represent 14 percent of all traffic fatalities.



Bonnie Castillo, who leads our Traffic Management Center, presents the motorcycle crash data tool.

The interactive Motorcycle Data Tool we unveiled at the forum has proven to be very useful and insightful. It was developed by Skylar Knickerbocker from the Institute for Transportation at Iowa State University, in conjunction with the transportation data Reactor, CTRE (the Center for Transportation Research & Education), and the Iowa DOT. You can check it out [here](#), but in the meantime, you may find the following information interesting. Between 2015 and 2017, there were 3,067 motorcycle crashes in Iowa. Of those crashes:

- 48.6% were single-vehicle crashes, 48.1% involved another vehicle not a motorcycle, and 3.3% involved another motorcycle.
- 56% of crashes were between Friday and Sunday (with the most occurring on Saturdays).
- 33% of crashes were between 3 pm and 6 pm.
- 65% of the crashes were in urban areas, with 41% of the crashes on urban municipal roads.
- More than 85% of the crashes happened on straight roads and with dry conditions.

We know that we need to continue promote safe driving strategies for all motorists that encourage awareness of and respect for motorcycle riders, as well as sober, alert, non-distracted driving to protect motorcyclists. But

because we know that almost half of all motorcycle crashes are single-vehicles crashes (and because we know that a significant number of motorcycle fatalities involve a rider that does not have a license), we continue to promote rider training and education, both for new and experienced riders, not just during these forums but throughout the year. I highly encourage anyone who is a rider (or wants to be) to attend a Motorcycle Rider Education course, and I hope you will likewise encourage any riders or potential riders you know. You can find a list of course providers throughout the state [here](#). As I often hear at these events, ride bright, ride right! (Works for us cyclists too.)

Song of the month

In honor of Bob Younie, our very own “Commodore” and “Captain,” I offer *two* songs this month – The *Commodores*’ 1979 hit “Sail On,” and The *Captain* and Tenille’s “1976 cover hit “Shop Around” (for proper credit, it was written by Smokey Robinson and Berry Gordy and was a top-ten hit for The Miracles in 1960, and for embarrassing admission, this was my favorite song in 5th grade).

Wellness tip

I’ve talked before about yoga as a wellness option, and while I immediately appreciated the physical benefits you get from yoga – improved balance, flexibility, and strength among them, what I’ve come to appreciate is that yoga is in fact one of many forms of meditation. And meditation has its own benefits, whether pursued within or without yoga. At its simplest, meditation is simply finding time to relax your mind and focus your attention to eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. Meditation can give you a sense of peace and calm that continues through your day, and can benefit both your emotional well-being and overall health. Best of all, you don’t need any special equipment or place to do it – you can do it almost anywhere, even at work. (Forbes reports that companies like Google, Apple, and Target have all worked time for meditation into their schedules.) The [Mayo Clinic](#) has an excellent article that explains the benefits of meditation and the many ways in which it can be practiced. Give it some thought!

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Well, my friends, we have reached the end of another report. I hope you enjoy the start of your summer and have a great and safe 4th of July. As always, thank you for all that you do, and stay safe in all that you do.

Mark