

Hi, everyone! What a great time of year to live in Iowa – I just got back from a walk and it was perfect out – the same thing I could say about the football game I went to Friday night, the run I took Saturday morning, and the bike ride I took Sunday afternoon. I always claim that if we had September and October weather here year 'round, everyone would want to live here.



With Mitch on top of the Mackinac Bridge, 552 feet above the water.

in the air. Our journey with fellow DOT leaders took us from the inner depths of the anchor piers to the very top of the towers, 552 feet above the water (and up and through some extraordinarily tight ladders and port holes along the way). In a testament to the enduring vision needed for major transportation infrastructure, the bridge was first envisioned in the 1880s, opened in 1957, and today commands the attention of its own full-time bridge authority staff to keep it maintained and functioning. If you'd like to see our journey to the top of the bridge up close, check out [this YouTube video](#). (It's not us, but it's the same path we took.)

After we got back I was also treated to another rare experience – the return of my oldest son Dan, who came home from Utah for Labor Day weekend to celebrate his 23rd birthday with us, and all four of my kids together for a night of family dinner and a raucous game of Settlers of Catan (that twerp Matt won).

A number of us attended the MAASTO (Mid-American Association of State Transportation Officials) conference in Traverse City, Michigan, during the last week of August, and we were well represented there, with Iowa DOT staff involved in presentations and committee meetings throughout the conference. It's always gratifying to see how well received our people and work are by our peer states, and I appreciate all of the extra work and energy that entails. **Highway Division Director Mitch Dillavou** and I had an unusual opportunity during the conference – we had the opportunity to tour – not just outside but inside as well – the Mackinac Bridge. The Mackinac Bridge spans the Straits of Mackinac to connect the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan. Known sometimes as the Mighty Mac or Big Mac, it has a staggering shoreline to shoreline length of five miles and is the longest suspension bridge in the Western Hemisphere (and third longest in the world), with 7,400 feet (1.4 miles) of roadway suspended



The Mackinac Bridge from afar.

Dan surprised us all with a haircut (no pink!), which made his mother extraordinarily happy, although she reportedly did not recognize him and walked right by him when she met him at the airport. But she was pleasantly surprised when she finally recognized him!

Ok, enough of that. Here's my report for this month.

Former Commissioner Leonard Boswell passes away

I'm sure most of you have already heard the sad news, but I thought it was important to remember former Transportation Commissioner Leonard Boswell, who died August 17, 2018, at the age of 84 after a long battle with a rare form of cancer.

Although we fondly and appreciatively remember Leonard's service as a Commissioner from 2013 to 2017, Leonard's service to his community, state, and

country stretches far beyond that. Leonard was a decorated Vietnam War Veteran who served 12 years in the Iowa Senate, eventually rising to Senate President, and 16 years in the U.S. House. Leonard's extensive and diverse experience made him a tremendous asset to the Commission and to the Iowa DOT, but like many, I will remember Leonard most for his kind and gentlemanly demeanor. Sadly, Leonard's wife of nearly 63 years, Dody, passed away on the morning of his funeral, and both were honored together at an August 25th service at Graceland University in Lamoni.

You can read more about Leonard's life and legacy in [this Des Moines Register article](#). Please keep the Boswell family in your thoughts.

Sabula overflow bridge opens

In June I wrote extensively about our Sabula overflow bridge project, and the extraordinary efforts we undertook to establish a ferry service and maintain mobility for the town of Sabula – Iowa's only island town – when shifting subsoil conditions in the Mississippi River bottom caused a delay in completing the bridge that extended through the summer. At the time we predicted completing the project and reopening the overflow bridge before Labor Day, and I'm happy to report that in conjunction with our contractor, we did just that, reopening the bridge on Friday, August 31st.

I had asked for a list of people that contributed to this unusual effort so I could thank them, and after looking at it again, I thought it would be good to share it here, just to remind us all how much the success of our work crosses not just offices but the entire Iowa DOT. Here it is, just as it was presented to me:



Dan, Erin, Matt and Mary on Dan's birthday.

Name	Office	Role
Steve Smithson	District 6 RCE	Overflow bridge construction project management and liaison to ferry project. Coordinate contractor placed signs and railroad protective fencing.
Jim Schnoebelen	District 6 Engineer	Project oversight and management, staffing coordination
Jeff Tjaden	District 6 DMM	Staff coordination and project management support
Fred Thede	District 6 Operations	Traffic control training for cities, site visits
Sam Shea	District 6 Planner	Lead author for ferry feasibility plan, researched potential ferry operators, project development and support
Mark Brandl	District 6 RCE	Overflow bridge construction project management and liaison to ferry project
Chad Lohrer	District 6 Traffic Tech	Traffic control sign placement/site visit
Richard Mull	Legal	Iowa and Illinois code review and legal advice
Deanne Popp	Local Systems	Drafted the intergovernmental agreements with both cities
Bob Younie	Maintenance	Project Manager, on-site presence, Iowa DOT point of contact (POC) with local elected official and municipal staff, overall project POC
Craig Bargfrede	Maintenance	Coordination with Iowa National Guard on military floating bridge option
Ken Morrow	Maintenance	Main point of contract with Calhoun ferry, project management and documentation, daily administration, ferry daily operations tracking
Tina Greenfield	Maintenance	Coordination with Calhoun Ferry Co., project administration
Ahmad Abu-Hawash	Bridges & Structures	Temporary bridge feasibility, temporary floating bridge feasibility
Dave Claman	Bridges & Structures	Floodplain and Sovereign Lands permitting support, Mississippi River flood stage forecasts
Jim Nelson	Bridges & Structures	Temporary bridge feasibility, temporary floating bridge feasibility
Ron Meyer	Bridges & Structures	Consultant coordination for design solutions to adapt design to accelerate construction
Scott Neubauer	Bridges & Structures	Evaluation of existing bridge condition post-settlement
Patricia Schwartz	Bridges & Structures	Temporary bridge feasibility
Bill Kaufman	Bridges & Structures	Bathymetric survey evaluation and Mississippi River flood stage forecasts
Jill Garton	Location & Environment	Environmental permitting, threatened and endangered species reviews, mussel reviews, and coordination with USFWS

Marc Solberg	Location & Environment	Lead - environmental permitting, stakeholder coordination with USACE and DNR. Assist with permit tracking, status, documentation, field review of ferry operations
Tammy Nicholson	Location & Environment	Project Management support, permitting, coordination, consultant contracting and management
Matt Donovan	Location & Environment	Cultural resources reviews
Brad Azeltine	Location & Environment	Regulated materials reviews
Bryan Bradley	Location & Environment	Utilities reviews
Jon Rees	Location & Environment	Public involvement support
Brad Hofer	Location & Environment	Public involvement support
Andy Lewis	Traffic Operations	Project oversight
Sinclair Stolle	Traffic Operations	511 app coordination, development of new ferry status event/feature, social media
Tim Simodynes	Traffic Operations	Intelligent work zone contract oversight, portable intelligent traffic systems locations
Bonnie Castillo	Traffic Operations (Traffic Management Center)	TMC procedures, dynamic message sign messaging, point of contact for ferry operations
Michael Volk	Traffic Operations Intern	Coordination with intelligent work zone contractor, device placement, site visit
Mark Muxfeldt	Project Management	Contracting for HDR consulting services
Deanna Maifield	Project Management	Contracting for HDR consulting services
Renee Shirley	Purchasing	Contract author and administrator for ferry services
Maria Hobbs	Rail	Railroad coordination issues in Savanna, including coordination with BNSF and Illinois Commerce Commission
Doug Sorem	Sign Shop	Extremely quick turnaround of new signing
Alan Foote	Sign Shop	Extremely quick turnaround of new signing
Shelton Strickler	Sign Shop	Extremely quick turnaround of new signing
Cory Anderson	Sign Shop	Extremely quick turnaround of new signing
Peggy Phipps	Sign Shop	Extremely quick turnaround of new signing
Chris Wirth	Sign Shop	Extremely quick turnaround of new signing
Andrea Henry	Strategic Communications	Development of public information plan, weekly talking points, FAQ, website updates, social media, messaging
Cherice Ogg	Strategic Communications	Public involvement support

Chis Andersen	Strategic Communications	Public involvement support
Steve Gent	Traffic and Safety	Traffic control planning
Tim Crouch	Traffic & Safety	Traffic control plan review, static signage design and fabrication
Willy Sorenson	Traffic & Safety	Traffic control plan and ITS device review
Dave Matulac	Traffic & Safety	Designed and ordered signs
Brent Paulsen	Transit	Lead - Transit - coordination with Federal Transit Administration, establish bus service and stop locations/signing, last mile options
Doug McDonald	District 6 Office	Coordination with overflow bridge construction project scope schedule.
Scott Marler	Operations Bureau	Management support of mobility effort
Charlie Purcell	Project Delivery Bureau	Mostly just stayed out of the way and supported his staff in making this this project a priority

Now, whenever we make lists, we run the risk of leaving someone out, so please let me know if we did. I will want to add them to the thank you list. But in the meantime, I think this is a great testament to the concept that leadership and success don't happen in silos, they are collaborative and cut broadly across the Iowa DOT, and to the concept that we succeed as One Team. (I also love the entry for **Project Delivery Bureau Director Charlie Purcell**, which – if you missed it – says, “Mostly just stayed out of the way and supported his staff in making this this project a priority.” Often one of the best things we can do as leaders is to trust in your abilities, give you authority to do your work, and get out of your way. Well done, Charlie!).

As I said in June, I couldn't be more proud or appreciative of our staff or our capability, and I gratefully thank everyone that has been involved in this.

We need the champions!

(If you've already read my email about this, feel free to skip. But it was important enough that I thought it was a good idea to repeat it here.) If you've been following my reports and our blog posts, you know we're implementing **#Engage**, a long-term program to drive and sustain a culture of engagement at the Iowa DOT. And in a nod to Queen's 1977 classic, we need the champions, my friends.

#Engage is our commitment to creating a work culture that helps us all be involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to our work – a culture that not only drives productivity and innovation, but makes our workplaces energizing, fulfilling, and good places to be. Although we use surveys to see where we're at and how we're doing over time, it's much more than a survey – it's an ongoing program of improvement that's driven by all of us together. Using survey results and resources provided by Gallup, you and your team will work together to assess the state of your team and to develop objectives and strategies you choose to foster engagement in your work. (You can find more information about **#Engage** at [https://iowadot.gov/EmployeeEngagement/.](https://iowadot.gov/EmployeeEngagement/))

We can't, however, just utter the words “#Engage” and expect engagement to magically happen. Like anything worth doing, it will take training, coaching, and work over time to help us succeed. And that's where you come in – **to help teams do this well, we need *engagement champions* – people that will promote engagement and provide ongoing support and coaching to leaders, managers, and teams.**

Based on our size, we need about 25 engagement champions to support engagement efforts throughout the Iowa DOT. Our workforce coordinators will all be serving as champions, so that will cover eight positions, but that means we still need 17 more champions. Our goal is to draw people from throughout the state to serve as champions, so we have trained resources that are accessible and have a relationship with you and your team wherever you are.

If you're interested in serving as an engagement champion, please contact David Putz at david.putz@iowadot.us by Monday, September 24. We need to confirm final selections for engagement champions by October 1st to finalize and personalize the training materials. Training will be led by Gallup on October 18 and 19 at the Gateway Center and Ames.

What training will you receive?

If you volunteer and are selected as an engagement champion, you'll go through Gallup's two-day program called *Creating an Engaging Workplace for Champions*. During this training, you'll learn how to integrate employee engagement principles to positively influence our engagement and performance by:

- **promoting and advocating for workplace engagement**
- guiding managers through the engagement process over time
- providing ongoing support to managers throughout the year
- empowering managers to take the necessary steps to create engaging teams
- providing developmental and consulting conversations.

I hope you'll give this opportunity serious consideration and volunteer if it calls to you. We need you and your commitment – a great team of champions can help move our theme song from “We are the Champions” to “We will Rock You”! (Sorry, couldn't resist. Not even the second time around. 😊)

Getting there your way

Over the past year and a half, our Office of Public Transit (in the Planning, Programming & Modal Division) and Driver & Identification Services (in our Motor Vehicle Division) have collaborated on a project to enhance the customer experience of people needing mobility assistance. Recognizing that “getting there” is essential for economic and social vitality, and that quality transportation options are critical, the project focuses on customers who are in a transitional period where driving themselves isn't an option (think aging drivers, driving-related revocations, medical conditions, or not being able to afford a personal vehicle) and addressing their mobility needs (whatever they may be). The emphasis of the project is on giving our customers personalized information to help them get where they need to go, in ways convenient for them.

At this year's MAASTO Conference in Traverse City, Michigan, **Jeremy Johnson-Miller** (Office of Public Transit) and **Mindi Nguyen** (Motor Vehicle Division) were invited to present their research and project efforts. They shared that the initial focus is to create a centralized hub of information that welcomes our customers to the worlds of driver's license-related information and alternative transportation options. Our [511 website](#), has been selected to house this hub as a convenient, frequently used, and popular destination for our customers. You can see more information at [the Get There Your Way home page](#).

Additional project phases presented at the conference include creating customizable 'toolkits' – packets of information specific to customer needs - that include both driving-related eligibility information and alternative transportation options available to them during their transition. These 'toolkits' will be utilized by the Driver's License Service Centers throughout our state and as a part of continued community outreach efforts.

Jeremy and Mindi are also fostering collaborative partnerships with other Iowa agencies and organizations like the Department of Corrections, Bureau of Refugee Services, Iowa Workforce Development, Department on Aging, and health-related organizations to customize information specific to the needs of these communities. As these phases are completed, internal and external awareness and education will be developed and shared.

MAASTO attendees expressed their interest in hearing about the project as it is finalized and "goes live," and many shared their appreciation for focusing on the customer perspective and providing solutions. I join them – I'm excited to see this develop and grow. It brings to life one of my favorite sayings, which is that we're not the Department of *Driving*, we're the Department of *Transportation*, and as a Department of Transportation we recognize that everyone needs mobility and that mobility demands a focus on accessibility to systems and services. Well done!



The Getting There Your Way home page.

Song of the month

You might think, with my trip to the top of the bridge, that I would have had the Simon & Garfunkel classic "Bridge Over Troubled Water" in my head. I did have a Simon & Garfunkel song in my head when I was standing on the Mackinac Bridge, but it was another guitar favorite of mine, "America" released in 1968, and I'm going with that as this month's song of the month. I'll let those of you that know the lyrics guess why this was running through my head. (And it's not the part about counting the cars on the New Jersey Turnpike, although that does have a transportation connection.)

Wellness tip

Here's an interesting one to follow the song of the month – listening or playing music has wellness benefits, including improving mood, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving cognition and memory. (You can read more about the links between music and wellness [here](#).) And it's such an easy thing to do – with streaming we have millions of songs just a finger touch away. Turn off the TV, turn on some tunes, and make a playlist for your own wellness.

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Well, my friends, we have reached the end of another report. As always, be safe and well in all you do, and thank you for everything you do for us. Talk to you next month!

Best,

Mark