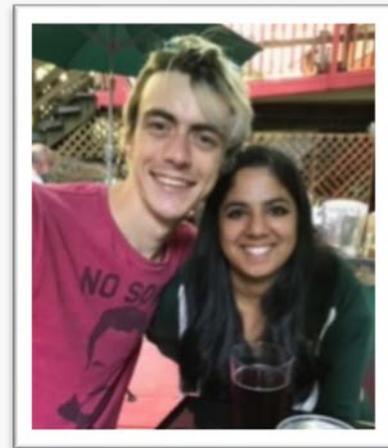


Hi, everybody! Another month has passed and so of course it's only natural that I should announce *another* Lowe child is engaged. Yes, I kid you not – Dan, my oldest, proposed to his girlfriend Petey (her full name is Pivitra Fletcher; Petey is from Salt Lake City and they met at Utah State) at the top of the Space Needle in Seattle. That brings us to three out of four (a healthy .750 batting average in baseball terms; good enough for the Hall of Fame) that have gotten engaged in the last year – Mary and Adam, who are going to be married January 3, 2020, and are living in Madison, Wisconsin; Matt and Alanna, who are entering their junior year at Iowa State and are targeting summer of 2021, and Dan and Petey, who both graduated from Utah State and are moving to Whitefish, Montana, at the end of August. Linda and I admit to a small amount of bemused shock (shock at how quickly and closely this all unfolded, bemusement because we thought we had worked hard to daily prove to them that marriage is an iffy proposition, and no one seems to be paying attention<sup>1</sup>), but mostly we're just super happy and excited. It's a great thing to see your kids happy and in good relationships with nice people that support them. But three is enough for now – Erin is getting ready to leave for her freshman year at Iowa State, and if I come back next month and write that a fourth child is engaged, it will be under heavy sedatives and a doctor's care.



*Dan and Petey. Special note to Andy Lewis -- Yes, that's a Seinfeld "Soup Nazi" shirt he's wearing. We raised him right.*



*Hector Torres-Cacho and Jim Armstrong greet RAGBRAI riders in Fairfield.*

In between proposals, I did manage to squeeze in a week of RAGBRAI, and that was great fun. It's a terrific way to experience everything that Iowa is, and what a testimony to transportation and mobility and all the people that work in both – in addition to all the riding on Iowa's roads and scenic byways, we benefited from law enforcement and traffic operations protection; maintenance staff keeping intersections clean and clear; transit services, sidewalks, and trails helping us move about every host town; and an armada

of service and support vehicles helping move us across the state. When you're in the middle of it, it feels like constant motion; continuous, living proof that movement and mobility drive personal and economic vitality. I was grateful and proud to be an Iowan and part of the Iowa DOT the entire week. And I was floored by the greeting I got from our Highway District 5 staff when I arrived in Fairfield. They braved the heat and humidity

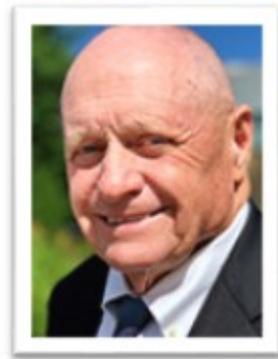


*Lisa Luko is festive in hardhat and utility flags.*

<sup>1</sup> Don't worry. This is an actual joke between us that made us laugh hard.

to come out to the camp site and welcome me and other riders as we rode in, and they let me stop by their offices to visit (and fill my water bottle) that afternoon, despite my rather bedraggled appearance and camp-wear. (They also gave me great directions to the laundromat and the Methodist church supper.) Thanks again, D5!

## Transportation Commission updates



*Commissioner Richard Arnold*

### Welcome Rich Arnold!

This month, we welcomed our newest Transportation Commissioner, Richard

Arnold, who (as we discussed last month) succeeded David Rose on the Transportation Commission. As many of you know, our Transportation Commission is a seven-person commission balanced by political affiliation and gender (no more than four Commissioners may be from one party or one gender) that is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa Senate, and that has oversight and responsibility for long range transportation planning, our five-year Iowa Transportation Improvement Program (see below

for Stu Anderson's update on our newly approved 2020-2024 five-year program), our administrative rules, and a number of grant and investment programs, including the RISE (Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy) Program, which promotes economic development in Iowa through the establishment, construction, and improvement of roads and streets at the county and city level, and the Railroad Revolving Loan & Grant Program, which provides financial assistance to improve rail facilities that will create jobs, spur economic activity and improve the rail transportation system in Iowa.

Rich is a life-long Iowan who grew up on a farm near Russell, Iowa. He graduated from Russell High School and Iowa State University with a degree in animal science. Rich continues to farm the family farm and drives part-time for Hy-Vee Inc. He has traveled to nearly all the Hy-Vee stores in Iowa, by way of both interstate 80 and 35 and most of our state highways, so he has an up-close and personal sense of our primary highway system. Rich is married to Cheryl, a retired Hy-Vee distribution manager, and they have been blessed with five children and 11 grandchildren.

Rich has been an active public servant for many years. He is a Republican who served eighteen years in the Iowa legislature before retiring in 2012. During his time in the legislature he was assigned to both the Transportation and Natural Resources committees for two terms. Rich also served six years, two of those years as chair, on the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission. He has also been active in local government, serving on the Russell City Council and two terms on the Lucas County Board of Supervisors.



*Lisa Luko, Jim Armstrong, Tammy Hamilton, and Diana Upton show their RAGBRAI spirit.*



*Commissioner Kathy Fehrman*

**Thank you, Kathy Fehrman!** Kathy served as Chair of the Transportation Commission for the last year, a term that just ended at the Commission's July business meeting in Council Bluffs. We owe Kathy a big thanks – Kathy has been a committed and engaged chair that helped us grow in our work and in our relationship and effectiveness with the Commission. Among her many accomplishments were improvements in the delivery and review of Commission agendas and materials by the Commission; improvements in the consistency and content of regular presentations to the Commission; and development of a Transportation Commission Guidebook that helps new and existing Commissioners understand their roles, responsibilities, and authority, the organization and function of the Iowa DOT, the programs they administer, sources and distribution of transportation funding, ethics and public meeting requirements, and other relevant information. Kathy also focused on enhancing the process and tools the Commission uses to develop the Five-Year Iowa Transportation Improvement Program. Important work in that area included a workshop in which the Commission developed their prioritization criteria and weighting for improvement projects for use in a new project prioritization tool developed by Highway's Locations & Environment Bureau, an effort that helps the Commission's prioritization values be assessed more consistently throughout the program development process.

Although we can't thank Kathy enough for her energetic and impactful work over the past year, we were pleased to present her with a unique memento of her service – at the July business meeting, newly-elected Chair Tom Rielly presented to Kathy a ceremonial gavel. Although the presentation of a gavel is not unusual, this one offered some unusual attributes -- it was handcrafted by former Commissioner (and current Iowa Department of Revenue Director) Craig Paulsen using reclaimed wood from an Iowa DOT renovation project. Just another testament to the many and varied skills, talents, and experience our Transportation Commissioners bring to the Commission and the Iowa DOT.

**Congratulations to Tom Rielly and Nancy Maher!** Finally, congratulations to Commissioners Tom Rielly and Nancy Maher. As the previous paragraph suggests, Tom, who is from Oskaloosa and served as Vice-Chair of the Commission in the past year, was elected as Chair of the Commission, and Nancy, who is from Shenandoah, was elected as Vice-Chair. Their terms will run from July 2019 through June 2020 and the next election of officers at the July 2020 business meeting. Tom and Nancy are likewise engaged and energetic members of the Commission that I know are committed to the continued improvement of our collective work, and we're excited to work with them during the coming year.



*Commissioner Tom Rielly*



*Commissioner Nancy Maher*

## Nothing Compares to the Iowa State Fair



*Andrea Henry, Strategic Communications & Policy Director, Strategic Performance Division*

It's time for the Iowa State Fair (August 8-18, 2019) and all things food on a stick. My go to favorite at the fair is the big pork leg from Campbell's Concessions and a good old-fashioned funnel cake. (None of those crazy toppings are necessary, just bring on the powdered sugar.) Although this year I'm expanding my pork horizons and decided I'm quite smitten with the pork belly burnt ends over a pile of onion rings, something I had the chance to enjoy as I helped open our annual state fair booth this year.

Our Iowa DOT booth is in the Varied Industries building in spaces 762-764, along the south wall (right across from the University of Iowa). This year, we are featuring two distinct topics - virtual reality and REAL ID.

We featured virtual reality last year, and it was so well received we decided to do it again this year with two new simulations. Our first simulation, *Impaired Driving*, puts you in the passenger seat of a car with a drunk driver...spoiler alert – it doesn't end well. The second simulation, *Move Over or Slow Down*, helps educate people about the move over or slow down law and shows the viewer what it's like to be on the side of the road as a tow truck driver with a car whizzing past you – something I'm sure much of our maintenance staff is all too familiar with. These simulations support our mission of getting you there safely, and we hope the experience stays with people as they make life or death decisions behind the wheel.

The second component of our booth is REAL ID – admittedly not as interactive as virtual reality, but very important, especially if you plan to fly after Oct. 1, 2020, and don't have a gold star in the upper right corner of your driver's license. We are encouraging people to check for the gold star on their license or ID, explaining what a REAL ID is and why you may need one, and helping them determine what documents they need to bring in to an issuance location to get their very own REAL ID gold star if they don't already have one. In addition, we'll be giving away some cool swag – a tattoo featuring the sloth from our REAL ID promotional materials and the REAL ID website.



*The image for our REAL ID sloth tattoo*

If you're at the fair, stop by, say hi, and check out our booth. (And get a tat!)

**Mark's note:** It may seem silly, but I'm super excited about adding temporary tattoos this year. If you've been to the fair you know people of all ages love them, and it's a fun way to engage people on a topic that can seem stiff and bureaucratic. I think it's a great example of how we can shed the old-government props of pamphlets and posters and use a little fun and cool to be more human and accessible to our customers and more effective in our communications. Great add!

## Friends & Family Day at the DOT

We had our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Friends & Family Day July 16, and it was very well attended – we welcomed more than 150 guests to the Ames complex and the Motor Vehicle Division building in Ankeny. The committee in charge of the event (**Leilah Armstrong, Michelle Barger, Tracey Bramble, Brennan Dolan, Mark Dell, Angela Johnson** and **Allison Smythe** in Ames and **Kayla Burkett** in Ankeny) lined up several science, technology, engineering and math related activities for kids of all ages.

This year the event in Ames put a sharper focus on the Materials Lab and some of the things they do to ensure the quality of the materials used to build our roads. That focus also gave employees who haven't explored the lab the opportunity to talk to the lab folks about the work they do every day. That's one of the main goals of Friends & Family Day – to explore parts of the agency we may not have a chance to interact with regularly and see how the work they do connects to other functions.

**Amanda Martin**, who's in our Rail Transportation Bureau, brought her 11-year-old son Dalton to work with her. Dalton had this to say about his experience, "This was in the top 10 best days ever." Dalton's favorite part was getting to sit in the automated vehicles on display from the University of Iowa.

In Ankeny, the event highlighted some of the work done within the Motor Vehicle Division. They had a foam cutout design of our driver's license where kids could get their picture printed for their very own copy of a driver's license, there was a "design your own plate" station where kids could design their own Iowa license plate, and family members took quizzes to test their Iowa road sign skills. The Bureau of Investigation & Identity Protection had a variety of fraud examples to illustrate types of fraud they find, and the highlight of the day was to let the kids handcuff their parents. (I'm assuming they let them go on a case-by-case basis.)

The turnout in both locations was great and I encourage all Iowa DOT locations to find ways to participate in the event next year. You can view and download photos from the event here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/iowadot/albums/72157709701833946>



*Participants enjoy the virtual reality demonstration.*



*The Material Lab demonstrates testing the pH of a liquid and shows how its color changes as the acidity/base in the liquid changes.*

## Sounding off for safety



**Scott Marler,**  
*Operations Division  
Director, Highway  
Administration*

You would think a huge orange truck, or multiple huge orange trucks, with bright lights flashing would be enough to catch a driver's attention. For drivers who are paying attention and devoting their energy to the task of driving, seeing the trucks and lights is more than enough to warn them that something's going on ahead. But we've all seen those drivers who are paying more attention to their dinner, phone, or passengers than to the road. That's dangerous for all of us.

In 2017, our maintenance forces built and tested a cool safety idea they picked up from the Missouri DOT – audible attenuators. The central repair shop designed and built their own a system on an attenuator to flash bright lights and emit loud warning sounds when a driver gets too close to a DOT vehicle. (Attenuators are warning trailers towed behind a truck intended to provide advanced warning to and separation from following and passing vehicles.) The test units were used on paint trains in Districts 1 and 6, whose staff immediately deemed them effective.



*An attenuator in action*

In 2017 and 2018, Iowa DOT staff built 10 more units to be used in painting operations around the state. This year there are 16 more under construction to be used on other operations. The cost for each unit is \$7,000, which is less than half the cost of replacing an attenuator and attached sign board (and is of course way less than the immeasurable value we hold for our maintenance staff).

Audible attenuators are now available commercially, but we're finding our self-designed and built units are more cost effective and better serve our needs. Currently, the systems in place are operated manually, but we're looking into automating the lights and sounds to fire off when a vehicle gets too close.

**Denny Howe, assistant District 1 maintenance manager,** did a great job explaining the system to KCCI reporter Cynthia Fodor in early July – check it out here: <https://www.kcci.com/article/iowa-dot-workers-build-siren-system-to-keep-workers-safe/28341709>.

**Mark's note:** I love this for a couple of reasons. One, it shows that leadership and innovation comes from all levels of our organization – this isn't something we as a management team thought of, it's something our operations and maintenance staff brought to us and championed. Two, it reflects the value we put on safety – something you will continue to hear and learn is that our desired culture is one that's *safe and engaged*, and safe includes the premise that we make our physical safety a high priority and focus on sending everyone home safe at the end of every day. Thank you to everyone that made this happen!

## Iowa license plates are back in black



*Melissa Spiegel,  
Motor Vehicle  
Division Director*

In July we started issuing cool new “blackout” license plates – an-all black plate with white lettering. The blackout plates are specialty license plates that were established and authorized by the Iowa legislature during the past legislative sessions. The blackout plate plates are available to any Iowa vehicle owner – you can get them as a standard alpha-numeric plate or you can personalize the plate with your own (seven characters or less) message.

The plates are proving to be a very popular option – the legislators that championed this thought they would be cool, and they were right – people seem to like them for their sleek, cool, and even retro appearance (we say retro because Iowa has offered white-on-black plates a

number of times in the past, going all the way back to 1912 and continuing in 1914, 1924, 1942, 1946, 1949, 1952, 1956, 1957, and 1963). Through July 31 we received over 8,000 orders for blackout plates, and we continue to receive 200+ orders for blackout plates nearly every day. So far, a little over half are for personalized plates and the rest are standard alpha-numeric plates. The initial plate cost is \$35 for a standard alpha-numeric plate and an additional \$25 (for a total of \$60) for a personalized plate. Funds collected for the blackout plate go to the Road Use Tax Fund (the RUTF, which supports road and bridge infrastructure throughout the state and is distributed 47.5% for the primary/state system, 32.5% for the county system, and 20% for the city system). Based on the order numbers, we estimate about \$380,000 of additional revenue has already been collected that will go to the RUTF, and that number will only increase as customers continue to purchase and use these plates, as the plates also carry with them additional annual registration fees of \$10 for the blackout plate and \$5 for personalization.

To put the numbers in perspective, we have over 4.5 million registered vehicles and of those, nearly 95% (4.27 million) have county standard plates. In its' short first month of life, the blackout plate is already our fourth most popular specialty plate out of the 70 plus offered, behind only the University the University of Iowa (31,118 current vehicles), Iowa State



*Screenshot from an Instagram post promoting the new blackout plates*

University (19,853 current vehicles), and the Iowa DNR goldfinch plate (16,715 current vehicles). Will the blackout plate beat out University of Iowa? Time will tell.

You can order both [online](#), or by completing [this form](#) and mailing it to the Iowa DOT's Vehicle & Motor Carrier Services Bureau. Iowa Prison Industries will make the plates and ship them to your county treasurer's office, who will let you know when they are ready to pick up. Please remember to bring the plates you are replacing in to your county treasurer's office to turn them in when you pick up your new plates.

**Mark's note:** This is another place where we lost the stuffy and brought the cool, as the Instagram post above shows. I especially loved the promotional video we released, which had a very AC/DC look, feel, and sound. You can check it out [here](#). Terrific example of recognizing that we have products, our products have customers, and we can (and should) reach and market to them like other businesses do. Good stuff!

## Commission Adopts 2020-2024 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program



*Stu Anderson, Planning,  
Programming & Modal  
Division Director*

On June 11, the Iowa Transportation Commission (Commission) adopted the [2020-2024 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program](#) (Program). This was the culmination of over six months of Commission work with the department and extensive public input. While the Program includes summary information on the Commission's many awards for various funding programs, the key component of the Program is identification of over \$3.5 billion of highway and bridge construction projects on the state system over the 2020-2025 five-year period.

The Commission adoption of the Program is one of the two primary responsibilities required of the Commission in Iowa Code. The other is their development and adoption of the [state's long-range transportation plan](#) which provides the guidance and direction for their subsequent development and approval of the Program.

The Commission's primary investment objective for the development of the Program remains stewardship (i.e. safety, maintenance, and modernization) of Iowa's existing highway system. Over \$2.0 billion is programmed in FY 2020 through FY 2024 for modernization of Iowa's existing highway system and for enhanced highway safety features.

The Program includes over \$1.0 billion of investments in Iowa's state-owned bridges, which continues the Commission's objective to improve the condition of Iowa's bridges. Over the last few years, the number of structurally deficient bridges on the state highway system has been reduced from 256 in 2006 to 43 in 2018 as a result of this emphasis.

The Commission was also able to add several significant multi-year projects to the Program that address safety and operational needs, and these include U.S. 30 Missouri Valley Bypass in Harrison County, the last unprogrammed stretch of U.S. 61 in Louisa County from 0.5 miles north of Iowa 78 to 2.0 miles

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south of Iowa 92, U.S. 63 Oskaloosa Bypass in Mahaska County, and U.S. 218 in Bremer County from Janesville to Waverly. The Iowa 9 Mississippi River bridge replacement project was also added.

Because a significant portion of Iowa's highway system serves interstate and national systems and interests, a large part of funding available for highway programming comes from the federal government. The current federal authorization bill, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, expires on September 30, 2020, which is before the second year of the FY 2020- 2024 Highway Program. Therefore, there is significant uncertainty about federal funding after this date. Members of the Commission and I met with Iowa's Congressional delegation in late June to advocate for a long-term solution to our transportation needs.

Related to the expiration of the FAST Act, the revenues to the federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF) are not enough to meet current federal transportation funding levels much beyond September 2020. If this is not addressed by Congress, drastic cuts to the federal highway program are possible with the potential to reduce funding for highway and bridge projects in this Program by approximately \$500 million. If this occurs, the Commission will have to make significant changes to the Program in FY 2021 and beyond.

Considering statewide equity, length of time a project has been considered for programming, how many times a project has been rescheduled, purpose of a project, whether the project is already underway, local efforts to move forward on a project, and current conditions and need for a project, the Commission has identified projects in this Program that could be impacted if the HTF issue is not addressed.

While the Program was recently adopted, the Commission and department are already thinking about the development of the 2021-2025 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program. In fact, there will be a discussion with the Commission at their August workshop on how the Program development process can continue to evolve and improve using the recently developed project prioritization tool and transportation asset management practices.

**Mark's note:** Developing the Transportation Improvement Program is truly one of the Iowa DOT's great accomplishments, and it's one we repeat every single year. As Stu notes it encompasses \$3.5B worth of investments and involves extensive input from and work by our Commission and many, many people within the Iowa DOT. I hope everyone involved in it takes a moment to step back from our sense of business as usual and recognize it for the significant accomplishment that it is and the profound impact it has on the mobility and personal and economic vitality of the citizens of Iowa. Thank you to everyone who works so hard and so well to bring this to life every year!

## Song of the month

As I'm writing this, Erin, our youngest (and as she frequently tells the older three our favorite – much to the chagrin of my other children Erin gave Linda a coffee mug with her picture on it that says "Mom's favorite") is leaving for college (Iowa State) in four days. So, my choice this month is the Beatles' "She's Leaving Home," first released in 1967 on their transformative "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" album. (I remember getting this album for my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday and playing it over and over for days.) I

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admit it's a bit maudlin – she's not sneaking out like the girl in the song – but our house will seem a little too empty and quiet without her and we will miss her. Truly the start of a new chapter for us!

### Wellness tip

We often mention that wellness is not just physical fitness and physical activity. “Mind, body, and spirit” are all important to your overall wellness, so it's important to care for our emotional well-being and to help ourselves with things that may impair both our mind and spirit. One of the ways I have been doing that is through guided meditation (check out the “Calm” app if you're interested in a very accessible option for that), and in that I came upon a concept I thought was both revelatory and powerful – blame of others is just an expression of pain, and forgiveness is something you give yourself, not the other person. How often, whether personally or professionally, do we carry slights and hurts and let them take more prominence in our thoughts (and do more damage to our mind and spirit) than we should? Extending forgiveness and letting go doesn't mean you're sacrificing yourself for the benefit of the other person, it means you're giving yourself the gift of letting that pain go and improving your mind, spirit, and wellness. Admittedly forgiveness is a tricky and sometimes complex thing but knowing it's something you can and should do for yourself can help set you on the path.

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Well, my friends, we have reached the end of another report. As always, stay safe and well in all that you do, whether at work or home!

Best,

*Mark*