

# INSIDE

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2005



## INSIDE INSIDE

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# ONE 2 ONE

WITH DIRECTOR NANCY RICHARDSON

**A**n early mentor of mine - the man who encouraged me to accept a job at DOT some 23 years ago - told me a person should change jobs every few years just "to keep the juices flowing." I have recently been reminded firsthand what he meant by that.

After a 30-day transition period, I have just completed my first two weeks as director of the DOT and, believe me, my proverbial juices are flowing. Even though I have been with the DOT for more than 23 years, the past few weeks have certainly been a learning experience for me.

I've learned how much I don't know! The flip side is I've also learned there are a lot of things I do know from 23 years of working here. That means I can focus on learning the new things I need to know.

I also realize that I don't need to know everything. The DOT is a team of 3,200 employees. I have a lot of help available from all of you. And I have a senior management team that is both knowledgeable and supportive.

I've also learned what a terrific "family" the DOT is. Since my appointment as director was announced, I have received dozens of calls, cards and e-mails from current and former DOT employees. It has been very gratifying to me to have so many of you congratulate me, wish me well and let me know you support me.

I've also been reminded recently that with a new department director come questions about what changes will be made. First, let me say I have no plans for major reorganization or overhaul of processes at the DOT. However, I think there will be opportunities to tweak things a bit to streamline, become more efficient or improve customer service. Examples of such tweaking are:

- my recent announcement of the merger of the Operations and Finance and Director's Staff divisions into a single division;
- increased consistency in our decision-making;
- a greater willingness to look at different ways of doing some things; and
- improved communications, both within the department and with those outside DOT.

As these opportunities arise, I'll discuss them with you in this column; but again, let me assure you I have no plans to make major changes in the way we work or are organized.

Back to the mentor I mentioned, he also told me he thought the DOT offered good opportunities for advancement for a hard-working, young woman. Some 23 years later, I guess he was right!! I look forward to being the DOT's director and working with you as a team ... together we can provide the citizens of Iowa with excellent transportation services.

# A new way to do your timesheet

**R**ecently a new option was added to the Operations and Finance (OpFin) Applications Menu that all DOT employees with computers should have on their desktops. When this new graphical user interface for payroll time and expense sheets was piloted and reviewed by several employees, they found the new method more user-friendly than completing timesheets in the old IDMS system. However, you will continue to have the choice of using whichever of these two time and expense sheet options you prefer. With either method, the information you enter runs through the same payroll program to generate pay warrants.

Besides the ease of entry for daily payroll information, the new program includes some interesting options. One tool is the gross-to-net calculator. If you go into your timesheet, the icon for this application appears on the timesheet toolbar and looks like a basketball net. This tool can help you see how changes to the number of hours you work, payroll tax withholding and other elements will affect gross and net pay. It is important to remember that this is just an estimate. Amounts calculated on this tool may not be the exact amounts that are paid, but they should be fairly close. To make any permanent changes to employee information, you will still need to contact either the Office of Finance or the Office of Employee Services (OES), depending on the items being changed.

The second tool being made available allows you to print your own pay stub. You will be able to print this stub on Wednesday, rather than waiting for the normal Friday delivery. This doesn't mean the money is in your account any faster, just that the stub is available sooner and can be printed from your own printer. You will also be able to print previous pay stubs for record-keeping purposes.

Detailed directions for accessing and using the timesheet through the OpFin Menu are available on the front page of DOTNET and can also be found on the training page of OES's DOTNET pages. Talk to your supervisor about questions regarding the content of the time or expense sheet. If you have questions about the IDMS or OpFin automated systems and how they work, contact Connie Haselhoff at 515-239-1238.

The screenshot shows the 'Payroll Time Sheet and Personal Expenses' application window. The title bar reads 'Payroll Time Sheet and Personal Expenses'. The menu bar includes 'File', 'Edit', 'View', 'Document', 'Navigation', 'Tools', 'Options', 'Windows', and 'Help'. The main window is titled 'Time Sheet Detail' and contains the following information:

- Summary:** A table with columns 'Week', 'Reg', 'Ovt', and 'Hrs'.
 

Week	Reg	Ovt	Hrs
1	40.0	0.0	0.0
2	40.0	0.0	0.0
- Employee Information:**
  - Name: Pancell, Lynne L.
  - Period: 10/9/05 To 10/20/05
  - Number: 0539390
  - Cost Center: 09020 - Office Media & Marketing Serv
  - Remarks:
- Approvals:**
  - Employee:
  - Office:
  - Supervisor:
  - Processing:
  - Status: Pending Employee Approval
- Calendar View:** A grid showing dates from 10/9/2005 to 10/20/2005. The 15th and 16th of October are marked with '0.0 Regular Time'.

The new way to enter payroll and expense information is getting rave reviews from employees.

The screenshot shows the 'Payroll Time Sheet and Personal Expenses' application window, displaying a detailed view for Friday, October 7, 2005. The title bar and menu bar are the same as in the previous screenshot. The main window is titled 'Time Sheet Detail' and contains the following information:

- Summary:** Same as the previous screenshot.
- Employee Information:** Same as the previous screenshot.
- Approvals:** Same as the previous screenshot.
- Calendar View:** A grid showing dates from 10/9/2005 to 10/20/2005. The 15th and 16th of October are marked with '0.0 Regular Time'.
- Work Time:**
  - Regular Time: 8.0
  - Overtime:
  - Comp Earned:
- Paid Time Off:**
  - Vacation:
  - Famil Care:
  - Furling:
  - Military:
  - Comp Taken:
  - Bank Hrs Trn:
  - Sick Leave:
  - Alcohol:
  - Injury:
  - Other Leave:
  - Not Comp Trn:
- Other Pay Items:**
  - Comp Time Pay:
  - Banked Hrs Pay:
  - Call Back Time:
  - Hld Comp Pay:
  - Standby Time:
- Non Pay Items:**
  - Dir Declined:
  - Work Comp:
  - Auth Leave:
  - Unauth Leave:
  - Tax Str Vth:
  - Medical Leave:
  - Catastrophic:
  - Suspension:

# Winter research underway

## Winter maintenance evaluation and research projects for 2005-2006



**1. Slush blades** - Maintenance garages in Bedford, Boone and Neola are testing and evaluating a slush blade attachment to the main plow. The goal of the slush blade is to remove any snow or ice left behind the front plow to allow cleaning closer to the roadway surface. This should help the roads to clear faster and assist in reducing deicing chemical use.



**2. Wedge-shaped brine tank** - Twelve maintenance garages around the state will test Iowa DOT-designed, 450-gallon brine tanks that fit into the back of a snowplow truck. These new tanks will provide heavy-duty trucks the ability to carry 900 gallons of

liquid brine during a winter storm while still carrying 6 to 7 tons of regular salt. These newly designed tanks were developed to maximize the amount of liquid and dry deicing materials that can be carried on a snowplow truck.

**3. Blade wear measurement** - On the drawing board is a device that can be used to measure wear on the carbide inserts that are used on plows to cut through snow and ice on the pavement. The cost of carbide inserts has increased 40 percent over the last year and is expected to continue to increase in the future. The goal of this project is to identify a laboratory or field method to measure the wear on the blades to help the department select the optimum blade for snow removal operations.

**4. Snowplow crashes** - The Office of Maintenance is conducting a thorough historical analysis of crashes involving snowplow trucks during snow removal operations. The goal of this analysis is to determine the main cause of crashes involving snowplow trucks and possible ways to help reduce them.

**5. Winter crash analysis** - The Center for Transportation Research and Education at Iowa State University is working with the DOT to gain a better understanding of winter crashes. This research will help identify locations, severity and causes of winter crashes, which may allow the department to implement simple solutions such as snow fences or turn-around points.

**6. Public relations radio message test** - Two winter safety radio messages will be recorded by representatives from each district this fall and winter. The messages will then be sent to radio stations within each district for airing before winter storms. The intent of this effort is to test effectiveness of localized winter safety radio messages.

**7. Geomelt 55** - This agricultural-based deicing product is made from beets. Staff in the New Hampton shop will test the product on U.S. 63 over the winter. The goal of this project is to evaluate the performance of this product in an actual field setting. The test will evaluate the product for frost treatments and as a prewetting liquid for salt.

**8. Sodium chloride/calcium chloride blend** - Six maintenance garages (Williams, Waterloo, Rockwell City, Neola, Martensdale and Independence) will be testing a blend of sodium chloride brine and calcium chloride brine in a solution for use as a prewetting liquid for regular salt. Sodium chloride brine works well at temperatures 15 degrees Fahrenheit and higher, while calcium chloride brine works well at temperatures above zero degrees Fahrenheit. Sodium chloride brine is made at maintenance shops and costs approximately 5 to 10 cents-per-gallon. Calcium chloride costs nearly 90 cents-per-gallon. The test will blend the two products at a ratio that will allow the mixture to be used at lower temperatures than straight sodium chloride brine, while keeping materials costs lower than using straight calcium chloride brine.

**Winter research**, go to page 8

## Iowa's rest areas and state-managed welcome centers now all wireless-equipped

**T**he Iowa DOT has successfully established the nation's first statewide wireless network allowing travelers to connect to the Internet at state-managed rest areas and welcome centers.

Travelers will have access to instantaneous travel information including weather and road conditions, construction updates, Amber Alerts and emergency notifications, along with the ability to check E-mail and surf the Web.

Iowa DOT Rest Area Administrator Steve McMenamin said, "We are excited to be able to provide this service to Iowans and those visiting our state... undoubtedly other states will be looking to us as a leader in traveler information services."

Travelers wishing to access the system need a wireless-enabled device (such as a personal digital assistant, portable computer or cell phone) that uses the industry-standard 802.11b protocol.

The service is free to travelers and provided at no cost to Iowa taxpayers through a partnership with I Spot Networks. This initiative is advertiser-supported through an interface called Blue Sign Plus, modeled after the familiar roadside signs. Blue Sign Plus assists travelers by helping them locate food, lodging, attractions, and travel services near the rest area where they have stopped, or at any upcoming interstate exit.

A recent example of wireless technology benefiting a traveler came from Greg Nunn, information technology manager for 3M's Columbia, Missouri, plant. Nunn said, "I had a teleconference scheduled one afternoon while traveling through Iowa. Shortly before the scheduled start time, I came upon a rest area sign which noted that it had wireless internet. I was able to set up in a very nice pavilion, plug my nearly dead mobile phone's charger into a weather-proof outlet on the pillar, and set up my notebook computer on the picnic table. It was the best

environment that I ever made a teleconference from — and yet I had all of the technology I needed to be effective! I don't know who had the foresight to put wireless internet in for travelers, but they also get a hearty 'thank you!'"

Des Moines-based I Spot Networks installed and will be managing the wireless network, which includes 39 rest areas and seven welcome centers. I Spot Networks President Mark Wheeler said, "More than 18 million rest area visitors will now have access to the things they need while on the road. I'm very pleased that our company is helping Iowa lead the nation in wireless communications."

Based on a trial completed by the company for the Iowa DOT in 2004, I Spot Networks estimates that more than one out of six rest area visitors will use the system annually. The number is expected to climb as awareness among Iowa's traveling public grows. Last year, 18.5 million people traveled Iowa's interstate system.



## Road building as a Depression-era economic stimulus tool

**G**aining momentum in the 1920s, the road-building frenzy was actually a well-orchestrated and mutually beneficial endeavor for both the states and federal government.

A universal numbering system was being established. Since the country was just about twice as long (east to west) as it was wide (north to south), it made sense to establish an adjustable, simple pattern of north-south roads with odd numbers increasing from east to west, and east-west roads with even numbers increasing from north to south. Numbering by 10s from 10 to 90 would provide the nine principle east-west routes. Numbering by 11s and 5s (1, 5, 11, 15, etc. to 101) provided 20 base-route numbers for the north-south pattern.

With this pattern in mind, the task fell to the Bureau of Public Roads to gain the support of several existing highway associations. One of the best-represented groups was the Lincoln Highway Association. The federal and state governments worked with this group to keep the U.S. 30 designation on as much as possible of this roadway as it was built across the country. As they were the strongest of the associations, once they were on board with the numbering system, no other association disagreed to any great extent.

The first coast-to-coast road was completed in 1928. Phenomenal growth in the number of automobiles and their use provided a growing base of user revenue for the states.

Then came Black Tuesday--- Oct. 29, 1929. The stock market crash brought the nation's financial community to its knees. President Herbert Hoover called together the captains of industry to develop an extensive program of public works to keep the economy moving.

By the end of 1930 the entire program, some \$80 million allocated to federal-aid roads, was in place. It was expected that the whole program, including the states' money, would provide employment for 100,000 men.

Since the state coffers in most locations were depleted, a system of advancing money from the federal government to the states was devised. As a result, \$80 million was appropriated as an advance to be paid back out of future reauthorizations, and it could be used to match regular federal-aid funds.

Always the voice of reason, Thomas MacDonald, former Iowa chief engineer then in charge of the federal Bureau of Public Roads, advocated a need for planning surveys in all states as a means of providing legislators and the public with much-needed facts to make better decisions about road building.

According to an article from American Highways, the advanced

**National road system**, go to next page



**The completion of the Interstate Highway System celebrates 50 years in 2006. Each month for the next year INSIDE will highlight the history of this system of roads. Information for this article was derived from the Federal Highway Administration's Web site "infrastructure origins section" written by Lee Mertz and from the FHWA's Public Roads Web site. The next installment will cover the 1940s and 50s.**

### National road system,

continued from previous page

funds were to be repaid to the federal government over a period of 10 years commencing in 1938. The article voiced the concern that so much money was being advanced to the states that little would be left for construction in future years.

Adding to that concern was the inability of Congress to pass a reauthorization act that provided the initial funding for road construction. Each Congress since 1916 had provided a continuance of the federal-aid program for a two-year period, until the Congress that adjourned in 1933.

With no reauthorization to provide the bulk of federal aid, and most state road funds being diverted for other uses, the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) felt the work of the last 40 years was in jeopardy. They suggested a federal-aid authorization of not less than \$100 million for fiscal year 1935. This would balance the budget for fiscal year 1934, skip one year of reauthorization and at the same time, ensure a moderate 1935 construction program.

The record shows that \$400 million was actually delivered through the Bureau of Public Roads. Some of the rest of a \$3.3 billion package found its way to highways, delivered directly to municipalities, counties and other special entities. Lack of coordination caused a great deal of overlap and confusion.

Because many of the states saw the infusion of federal funding with no required match, they quickly diverted state road funds to other uses. At the same time, vast mileages of minor roads were transferred to the states without any revenue to go with them.



To turn the tide and convince the public and state legislatures of the need for non-federal funds for local roads, planning was hailed as the way to bring order to the chaos that had previously prevailed.

State highway engineers such as Frank T. Sheets of Illinois called for “rational planning, replacing the sentimental appeal of early good roads boosters with the highway economist armed with sound plans, fundamental facts regarding the dividend-producing aspects of improved highways, and convincing proof of the equity of

proposed highway tax collection and distribution.”

Iowa followed (and continues to follow) the steps outlined by Sheets in the mid-1930s, including the performance of traffic and economic studies, and formation of a commission to study the information and plan a future highway program.

By 1934 the nation’s hysteria had passed and the Hayden-Cartwright Act provided for a return to the regular program of state-federal cooperation in 1936.

## HMA perpetual pavement open house attracts crowd to Iowa



Some 90 people traveled to Ashton Oct. 5 to see Iowa's first perpetual pavement project and hear details of its design and construction. The group consisted of engineers from the state DOTs in Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. Those who attended heard presentations about the perpetual pavement design concept and construction-related issues. The perpetual pavement design software (PerRoad) was also presented.

While long-life pavements are certainly nothing new — two sections of I-80 in Iowa-Johnson and Cedar counties were awarded an Asphalt Pavement Alliance “Perpetual Pavement” Award in 2002— only recently has attention been focused on intentionally designing the structure for extended life. This project is the first in Iowa to use the perpetual pavement design concept.

The 8-mile road project extends from one mile south of Ashton on U.S. 60 north toward Sibley. When completed in 2006, the project will use slightly more than 200,000 tons of hot-mix asphalt (HMA). “This is an area of the country where we have to deal with temperature extremes, both high and low,” said Mike Collins of Brower Construction, the company building the road. “We were able to design and build each layer of the road to deal with specific problems we have in this area. We felt like we were building the road of the future.”

Also known as long-life or extended-life, these pavement structures are intended to meet traffic needs for 50-plus years with only minimal surface replacement to maintain a good wearing surface. Perpetual pavements use multiple layers of durable asphalt to produce a safe, smooth, long-lasting road. The HMA design begins with a strong yet flexible bottom layer that resists tensile strain caused by traffic, and thus stops cracks from forming in the bottom of the pavement. A strong intermediate layer completes the permanent structural portion. A final layer of rut-resistant HMA yields a surface that lasts many years before scheduled restoration. Perpetual pavement provides a durable, safe, smooth, long-lasting roadway without expensive, time-consuming and traffic-disrupting reconstruction or major repair.

**Winter research**, continued from page 4

**9. Abrasive stockpile treatment** - Abrasives (sand) used in winter maintenance operations need to be treated with a deicer to keep the stockpile from freezing solid during the winter. For years the DOT used calcium chloride to treat stockpiles, but switched to rock salt several years ago to reduce costs. This year the Anamosa and Williamsburg maintenance garages will be mixing sodium chloride brine with a stockpile to determine if this will reduce costs even further, while keeping the stockpile pliable during the winter.

**10. Maintenance Decision Support System (MDSS) pooled fund test** - Several maintenance garages (Sheldon, Spirit Lake, Spencer, Alton, Ames, Grimes and Des Moines-north) will participate in the continued development of MDSS in this pooled-fund effort with South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Indiana, Kansas, Wyoming and Colorado. MDSS analyzes weather and road condition information and

then recommends maintenance actions to remove the snow and ice from the roadway. The system will recommend the timing, type and amount of deicing materials to use, along with recommending other practices such as plowing. The system also allows supervisors to do “what-if” scenarios to determine what will happen to the roadway if they choose another application rate or timing of the application.

**11. Weatherview** - The department's Weatherview Web site, dotweatherview.com, will be updated this year to provide the public with the same weather forecast information used by maintenance garages throughout the state. The goal of this project is to determine if city and county governments can use these customized weather forecasts in local decision-making for snow and ice removal. Making the forecasts available to the general public added no additional cost to the department.

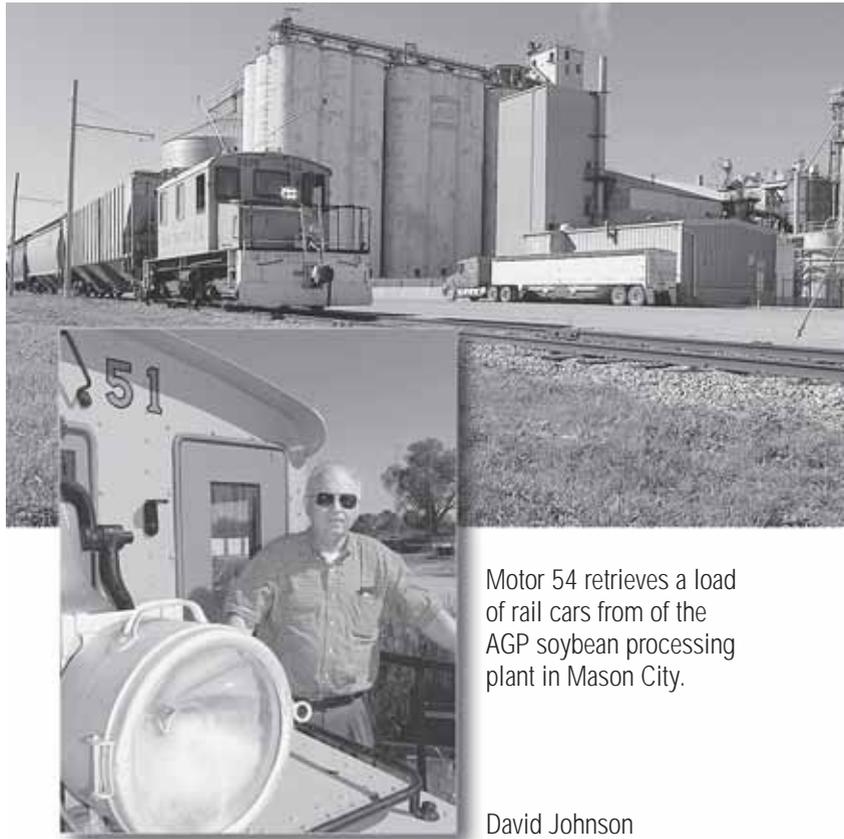
# Iowa's electric railroad

**W**ith overhead trolley lines running for nearly 10 miles, the Iowa Traction Railroad (IATR) in Mason City is thought to be the only remaining freight-hauling, 600-volt, DC-electric Class III railroad in the country. The railroad commenced operations in 1897 to carry tourists to Clear Lake and, uniquely, to also interchange freight with steam railroads. Several owners and operational changes later, the railroad was put up for abandonment and purchased in 1987 by David Johnson and a few stockholders. The son of a railroad telegrapher, Johnson had worked for railroads a good portion of his life. A mechanical engineer by training, Johnson set out to operate and restore this Iowa transportation treasure.

"I had worked briefly for the New York Central and Union Pacific from 1967 to 1979, and then as a systems analyst at Sperry Univac. When they closed down the unit I worked with, I decided to have a go at this full time. It's what I always wanted to do. One day I handed Kay the checkbook and said, 'I'm going railroading.' I needed to get a loan from the Iowa Rail Finance Authority (IRFA). To do that, I had to convince them I wasn't crazy," said Johnson. "I must have accomplished that, because the IRFA board gave me the loan."

The IATR now runs four engines, or "motors" as they are called in electric railroads. The oldest, #60, was built in 1917. The other three "50-series" motors were built in the 1920s. "The twenties were the heyday for electric railroads," said Johnson. "Keeping these motors in operation takes some innovation. The technology isn't complicated, but there aren't a lot of spare parts lying around. I have to remanufacture parts to keep the motors running. Seventy years from now you wouldn't be able to do that with the engines most railroads run now. The technology is just too complicated. For example, the computer control parts would be extremely difficult and time consuming to hand fabricate once discontinued."

When Johnson took over the IATR in 1987, the motors moved approximately 350 cars per year. By reinvesting back into the equipment and infrastructure, and using his flair for salesmanship, Johnson has increased car movement to more than 2,000 cars per year and added two full-time employees. His wife, Kay, continues to work part-time in the office, as she has since the beginning.



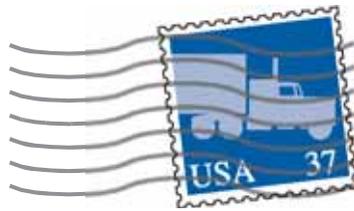
Motor 54 retrieves a load of rail cars from of the AGP soybean processing plant in Mason City.

David Johnson

To provide Mason City's exports to world markets, the IATR connects with the Iowa Chicago and Eastern (ICE) and Union Pacific. The railroad hauls a variety of agricultural goods including soybeans, soybean meal and oil, as well as fuel oil, ethanol, crop oil, farm fertilizer and scrap metal. "I'm trying to operate this like a 'real' railroader would," said Johnson. "So many of the railroads today have lost the sense of what this is all about. It's not about the bottom line; it's about getting out and offering a service that is useful to the customer. Done correctly, the bottom line will take care of itself."

Johnson says his current customers wouldn't have access to rail service if he didn't provide it. "With the cost of diesel fuel going up," he said, "I expect other companies will look into rail as a cost-effective alternative."

Because of the money he's put back into the infrastructure, the IATR is prepared for growth. "We received an infrastructure grant to upgrade rail weight and add ballast on our busy section a few years ago.



## Kudos!

*These are letters that have been submitted to the editor. They may have been edited for length and continuity.*

To: **Mark Wandro**

From: Daniel Friday, New Holland, Penn.

On Monday, June 27, 2005, my wife and I were on our way north on Interstate 380, pulling our travel trailer with a 2000 Ford Expedition. At mile post 37 our right rear tire on the Expedition went flat, and we stopped on the shoulder, called AAA for assistance and were informed that they would arrive in approximately one hour.

We are older people and changing the tire ourselves was not feasible. After nearly three hours, **Dale Peterson** of your DOT maintenance noticed our predicament and stopped to help. He immediately exchanged the flat wheel with the spare wheel, and advised us where to go to purchase a new tire.

My wife and I were very grateful for Dale's assistance and tried to give him a token gift. Dale refused any gifts, stating that he was just doing what he was paid to do, and it was a pleasure for him to aid people in distress. We highly recommend that you recognize Dale Peterson as a wonderful asset for your department, and hope that you officially commend him.

*(Editor's note: Dale Peterson is an equipment operator in the Urbana garage.)*

To: **Mike Winfrey,**

Director of Motor Vehicle Enforcement

From: Chuck Ill, Des Moines Sanitary Supply

I was detained for 30 minutes Friday, Sept. 30, while an officer of the DOT conducted a random safety check of a small truck owned by Des Moines Sanitary Supply Co. I am an infrequent driver of this vehicle, and while this stop in my business day was not expected, it was a rewarding experience and gave insight and direction to improve our delivery process in compliance with safety regulations.

Never have I had a more pleasant, professional, courteous, and thorough encounter with a law enforcement officer in my 37 years of owning a central Iowa business. And I might add 10 more years to that, including my early years of driving. May I compliment your officer through her supervisor.

**Officer Roquel Oldfield** conducted an encounter and an inspection, by standards of friendly communication, education, and explanation of the law, that reflect favorably on your department. During times when law enforcement appears to be at adversarial odds with all alleged perpetrators, this officer conducted herself with the highest degree of professionalism.

I am proud of our Iowa DOT. Her suggestions for safety and our action to correct the issue of our citation will be handled promptly. Also, I will be having more frequent meetings with our drivers on the matters of our deficiencies. Thank you, Officer Oldfield!

ps: I probably am not cut out to be a real truck driver, but part-timers need to know what is going on, too.

VIA E-mail

To: **Governor Tom Vilsack**

From: Dr. Craig Hooper

Whoever designed the I-80 rest areas deserves a medal! I've been driving from Massachusetts, wondering "why don't more states have wireless access at rest areas...", when, to my surprise, I saw "wireless access" on the list of Iowa rest stop amenities. So now, I'm sitting at a delightful picnic area hutch, writing this letter and watching several other people use their computers nearby. And the restrooms were spotless, too, by the way.

As a former Iowa resident—and a former state employee—I love seeing Iowa beat other states in making these tiny improvements that make it a great place to live .... Your step has really made Iowa a much more friendly place for travellers. Keep up the good work in showing the best of Iowa to visitors.

To: **Mark Wandro**

From: Chris Fox, Dubuque

On July 14, 2005, I was headed to Oskaloosa and then to Iowa City for a cancer check up. As I left Dubuque, I began to have vehicle problems and stopped near the Cascade exit. I had a flat tire. I was going to see if I could get my car into Cascade, so I took the exit ramp from U.S. 20. As I started off, a tractor with a mower came up out of the ditch area. **John Tasker** changed my tire for me and got me on my way. People like John are one in a million. He will never know how much it meant to me that the Lord put him in my path. Please share this story with others. I can't thank him enough. Tell him he will always be in my prayers, as will his son who is serving in the war.

*(Editor's note: John Tasker is an equipment operator in the Anamosa garage.)*

**Electric railroad,**

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“Last year we replaced about 900 ties, added ballast, and straightened and leveled two miles of track. This year we changed 700 ties, rehabilitated the U.S. 65 crossing, and will straighten and level another two miles of track.”

A few years ago Johnson bought an interurban passenger car he’s been working on restoring. “Insurance costs won’t allow us to charge for rides, but donations are welcome from groups who want to take excursions,” he said. “We’ve had a few groups take a ride. That’s a project I’ll be working on for a while.”

“When I bought this railroad there were two possible outcomes,” said Johnson. “If I went broke people would say I was crazy. If I made money, they’d say I was a visionary. Neither was really correct. It seems if you give customers good service at reasonable rates you are rewarded with growth.”

## Christy to lead combined Operations and Finance and Director’s Staff divisions



Christy

and then as division director. Richardson had previously been director of the Operations and Finance Division before being named DOT director effective Oct. 1.

DOT Director Nancy Richardson has named Mary Christy to head the merged Director’s Staff and Operations and Finance divisions. Christy, a 32-year veteran of the department, has been with the Director’s Staff Division for the past 15 years, first as director of the Bureau of Policy and Information (now the Office of Media and Marketing Services)

## Kudos!

VIA E-mail

To: **Director Mark Wandro**

From: Julie Beitz, Western Springs, Ill.

On July 22, 2005, I accidentally left my camera behind at the Council Bluffs rest area. By the time I noticed this, I was too far to turn back. I was unable to contact the Iowa DOT until the following Monday. The woman I spoke with took all my information and told me she would check with the maintenance crew.

I had very little hope that my camera would be found. However, not 10 minutes later the woman called back saying that they did in fact have my camera! The gentleman who had it would be calling me soon to work out how to get the camera back to me. I spoke with him soon after and we arranged to have him ship the camera to my home in Illinois.

He was so kind and helpful, as was the woman who originally answered the phone. I arrived home two and a half weeks later and my camera and all its contents were there, having arrived safely after the careful packaging done by the wonderful people at the Iowa DOT.

I guess my four-year-old daughter was right. All the adults were saying how the camera would never be there, someone probably took it etc... and she piped up from the back seat that there are nice people in the world.

Thank you again for your help and kindness. I hope to have the opportunity to travel through your state again!

## Benefits open enrollment until Nov. 28

During the enrollment and change period, you can accomplish the following:

- review your family’s health, dental and life insurance needs;
- change your health insurance carrier;
- enroll in Dependent Care Flexible Spending; and
- enroll in Health Flexible Spending.

Take advantage of this month-long change period, as this may be the only time you can sign up for certain benefit programs. Changes will be effective Jan. 1, 2006.

Contact the benefits coordinator in the Office of Employee Services at 515-239-1239 for further information.

# Family Happenings

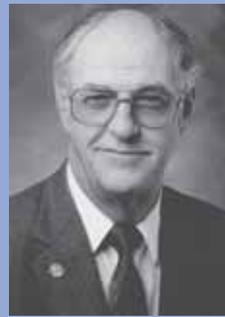
## District 1

Lori Morris



The I-235 office in Des Moines celebrated the Iowa-Iowa State football game in a special way this year. Before the game, staff wrote projected scores on the white board in the conference room. The Wednesday following the big game at a staff meeting with DOT and contractors, Iowa State (winner) cake was served to Cyclone fans and Herky droppings (raisins) were served to those supporting the black and gold. About 90 percent of the room claimed to be Cyclone fans that day!

## In memory



Martin Boston, 65, of Washington, Iowa, died Sept. 27. Boston retired as an engineering office technician from the District 5-Mount Pleasant field office in January 2002, after 43 years of service. Martin enjoyed visiting with people and was always ready with his dry wit to give someone a smile. He enjoyed golfing, playing bridge and watching car races and professional basketball. He especially enjoyed spending time with his family and his two cats. After his retirement he enjoyed going for coffee and volunteering at his church. He is survived by his wife, Linda; and two sons, Brian and wife Stacie of Grimes, and Terry and wife Leesa of Johnston. The Bostons have five grandchildren: Brock, Bryce, Derek, Dylan and Terra.

Ed Fletcher, 60, of Diagonal, died Sept. 7. He retired from the DOT an engineering office technician in the District 4-Creston field office in June 2005, after nearly 40 years of service. Ed was involved with community functions such as alumni banquets and various dinner theaters, and helped whenever help was needed. He enjoyed dancing, karaoke and puttering around on his small farm. He is survived by his wife, Bonnie; and daughter Shawna and her husband Roy Davenport of Diagonal, and son Britt and his wife Lisa of Sundance, Wyo. Also grieving for Ed are his four grandchildren; his mother, Alice, and several brothers, sisters and other relatives.

Charles "Chuck" Ping, 79, of Onawa died Aug. 17 at his home. Ping, a 26-year DOT employee, retired in 1987 as highway maintenance supervisor at the Onawa shop. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Mary; a daughter, Christy, and her husband Larry Anderson; and a son, Randy, and his wife Valerie, all of Onawa. The Pings have four grandchildren and a great-grandson.



## Trophy Case

### Recent Awards



The **U.S. 20 Iowa River Bridge** was recently awarded a National Partnership for Highway Quality's National Achievement Award. The bridge, located near Steamboat Rock, was completed in 2003.

friend run in last year's Des Moines marathon. After that she trained for about 700 miles for the September race. Christy's husband, **Paul**, also information technology specialist 5, was there to cheer her on to the finish.



The Iowa DOT's logo for the Des Moines metro area's intelligent transportation system, tripGuide, was awarded top honors in the "visual arts/images – logo design" category at AASHTO's National Transportation Public Affairs Workshop hosted by the Delaware DOT at Rehoboth Beach. The Iowa DOT took home a first-place award for the tripGuide logo, which **Lynn Purcell** created.



**Christy Varnum**, information technology specialist 5, completed her first full marathon Sept. 18 in Des Moines. Varnum's finishing time was 6:00:55 for the 26.2-mile course. Christy, who had not run in nearly 10 years, went to see a



Purcell

office would like to thank **Jari Mohs** in graphics for her excellent



Mohs

In all, the Iowa DOT presented entries in 10 categories. Gray-Fisher says the Iowa entries looked great and her work in preparing all 10 entry boards and her cheerful and helpful attitude in accomplishing this on a tight timeline.

## SERVICE AWARDS

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for November 2005.

### 35-Years

**Dennis Bovee**, Design; **Terry Dilocker**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Linda McBride**, Traffic and Safety.

### 30 Years

**Richard Linderwell**, Manchester construction; **Clare Wilson**, Traffic and Safety.

### 25 Years

**Peggy Baer**, Rail Transportation; **Pamella Lee**, Public Transit; **Ned Lewis**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement.

### 20 Years

**Gordon Accola**, Procurement and Distribution; **William Austin Jr.**, Manchester construction; **LuVerne Birt**, Sac City garage; **Larry Coffman**, Osceola garage; **Steven Cornelison**, Altoona garage; **Richard Dewey**, Sioux City-Leeds garage; **Max Gibson**, De Soto garage; **Randy Kuhl**, Davenport-interstate garage; **Carey Lewis**, Manchester construction; **Mark Lloyd**, Grinnell garage; **Robert Martin**, District 5 maintenance; **Norman McDonald**, Bridges and Structures; **Miguel Moreno**, Pacific Junction garage; **Alvin Vetter**, Procurement and Distribution.

### 15 Years

**Michael Dukes**, Shenandoah garage; **Shirley Kent**, Right-of-Way; **Kelly Meyer**, Waverly garage; **Cindy Pachtinger**, Anamosa garage; **Dale Pierce**, Rockwell City garage; **Gary Schroeder**, Red Oak garage; **Scott Smyth**, Des Moines maintenance.

### 10 Years

**Terry L. Davis**, Motor Carrier Services; **Tom Dibble**, Sioux City construction; **Robert Doty**, Altoona garage; **Celeste Hall**, Burlington DL station; **Cary Huston**, District 5 Office; **Phillip Maas**, Williamsburg garage; **Tim McQuillen**, Dubuque garage; **Kirk Montange**, Sioux City-Leeds garage; **Randy Moore**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Sandra Ross**, Ottumwa DL station; **Ross Rusch**, Denison garage; **Loren Waterman**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Jeffrey Weir**, Ames garage.

### 5 Years

**David Bare**, Bridges and Structures; **Pamela Cook**, Motor Carrier Services; **Frank Grove**, Grimes garage; **David Harless**, Grimes garage; **Steven Hill**, Grimes garage; **Kevin Huss**, Highway Helper; **Lionel Miller**, Cedar Rapids garage; **Ronald Schwebke**, Highway Helper; **Craig Tigges**, Carroll garage; **Michael Todd**, Washington garage; **Donald Trenkamp**, Dubuque garage; **Wendell Wanek**, Tipton-interstate garage; **Michael Winters**, Washington garage.

## PERSONNEL UPDATES

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for Aug. 26 to Sept. 22, 2005.

### New Hires

**Deborah Kerns**, information technology specialist 4, Information Technology Division; **Roger Mortvedt**, information technology specialist 2, Information Technology Division; **Jeffrey Mumm**, transportation engineer intern, Design; **Staci Nelson**, driver's license clerk, Des Moines DL station; **Christina Rains**, driver's license clerk, Des Moines DL station; **Georgnia Stone**, driver's license clerk, Des Moines DL station; **David Thies**, planning aide 1, Transportation Data; **Patti Tyler**, driver's license clerk, Des Moines DL station.

### Promotions

**Bonnie Castillo**, from engineering office assistant 1, Storm Lake maintenance to executive officer 1, District 3 maintenance; **William Gurnett**, from assistant soil party chief to soil party chief, Design; **Mark Hempt**, from information technology specialist 4 to information technology specialist 5 within the Information Technology Division; **Scott Loge**, from engineering operations technician, District 2 Office to highway maintenance supervisor, Algona garage; **Rick Taylor**, from equipment operator to equipment operator senior, Oskaloosa garage.

### Transfers

**Chad Fiderlein**, from equipment operator, Oakdale garage to Tipton interstate garage; **Jason Maahs**, motor vehicle officer within the Office of Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Ryan Ridout**, motor vehicle officer within the Office of Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Kameron Shugar**, motor vehicle officer within the Office of Motor Vehicle Enforcement.

### Retirements

**Ronald Otto**, public service executive 5, Office of Right-of-Way.

**35 YEARS**  Iowa Department of Transportation



Dennis Bovee, Design

# A north Iowa holiday tradition

**A**fter 17 years, Noe Villarreal, equipment operator in the Swea City shop, still isn't tired of making tacos. Villarreal's 18<sup>th</sup> annual "Tacos for Tots" event will be held Nov. 21 at the VFW hall in Algona from 5-8 p.m. All proceeds will go to benefit children who might not otherwise have gifts this Christmas.

Villarreal says he plans to take a day of vacation and start cooking 160 pounds of ground beef at around 3 a.m. That's enough meat for 1,600 tacos. His wife, Monica, and several friends are there to help, and at the end of the day, Villarreal knows this

year will be as great as each of the past 17.

For more information contact Villarreal at 515-272-4295 or 515-272-4751.



Mmmm, tacos!

# Thank you

To all those involved with my party – a sincere Thank You. Friends, food, gifts and fun – It doesn't get any better. Thanks for six wonderful years and I look forward to crossing paths.

Mark Wandro



Judy McDonald, Office of Location and Environment (center), and Tom Reis, specifications section (left of McDonald), were two of many well-wishers at former Director Mark Wandro's send-off Sept. 28 in Ames.



**INSIDE** is developed to help keep all Iowa DOT employees informed about critical issues affecting them, recognize DOT employees for their excellent service, and share interesting aspects in the lives of our coworkers. For more information, contact Tracey Bramble, Office of Media and Marketing Services, 515-239-1314 or e-mail [tracey.bramble@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:tracey.bramble@dot.iowa.gov).

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On the cover: Motor 60 of the Iowa Traction Railroad

## Military Order of the Purple Heart Highway signs unveiled

Sometimes a lifetime can be defined in a single moment. A battle injury and subsequent awarding of the Purple Heart while serving in the Marine Corps in Korea held that defining moment for Lowell Lein of West Des Moines. Lein, a retiree from the federal government, has been working for nearly 15 years to gain recognition for the more than 2,000 Purple Heart recipients in Iowa. The recognition now includes a Purple Heart Highway designation for U.S. 65 from Interstate 80 around the beltway to Iowa 5, and continuing to Interstate 35.

"Back in 1990 or so I called the DOT in Ames to see how I could go about getting this designation," said Lein. "I started working with Dwight Stevens in the District 1 Office. He was so kind and helpful and walked me through exactly what I needed to do. It wasn't an easy process, but I had time on my hands after retirement. With the help of Dwight and many others at the DOT, we got it done. When I first came up to Ames to look at the sign design, I didn't expect a lot. I thought they would probably be small and plain. I was surprised and happy with the wonderful design that was presented. It just looks great."

When the first section of highway was opened in 1995, the Military Order of the Purple Heart group was able to raise funds for four signs on that section.



When the second section was completed earlier this year, the group was out of money, so Lein decided to pay for the new signs himself.

"Before I pass on I wanted to see the project completed," he said. "I talked to Steve Gent in the Office of Traffic and Safety. He told me there was no money for the signs. I asked him how much they cost. He told me and I sent in a check."

In addition to Stevens and Gent, others involved in helping Lein see his dream fulfilled included Bob Rye, District 1 field services coordinator, and Doug Sorem in the sign shop. Carlisle garage employees Jim Weeks, Kenny Kincaid, Pete Djordjevic, and Rich Hughes, along with Kelly Morris and Larry Letze from the Altoona garage, helped with sign installation.

Lein says he knows of several bridges and other structures designated to honor Purple Heart veterans, but this is one of only a handful of significant stretches of highway to carry the moniker.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart is the only congressionally chartered veteran's organization exclusively for combat-wounded veterans. The single bond that unites the members is that each has sustained a wound inflicted by an enemy in combat. Membership is open to anyone that has been awarded the Purple Heart medal by the government of the United States of America. Lineal descendants of Purple Heart recipients are eligible for associate membership.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart is compiling a list of all Purple Heart recipients in Iowa. If you have been awarded the Purple Heart (or know of someone who has received the award), contact Al Flyer at 515-278-5928.

Lowell Lein (inset) led this group of the Military Order of the Purple Heart in an effort to designate a section of highway to honor combat-injured veterans.