



KS LTAP Newsletter

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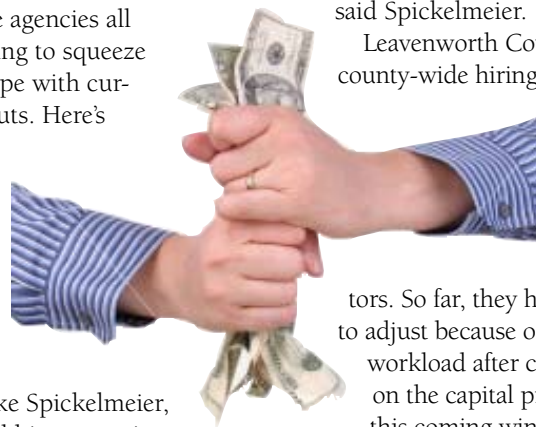
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Like blood from a turnip

By Lisa Harris

Local road and bridge agencies all over Kansas are having to squeeze their resources to cope with current or expected budget cuts. Here's how four counties are finding ways to eke out those extra pennies. And you'll also read about some things they specifically do not want to cut.



Leavenworth County. Mike Spickelmeier, public works director, said his agency is doing everything they can to avoid deferring road maintenance. "Otherwise we'll find ourselves behind an 8-ball, and we won't want to have to figure out how to get in front of it," he said.

His agency is adjusting to tighter funding by cutting back significantly on capital improvements. For example, three years ago, the county spent over \$1 million in capital improvements; this year it will be about \$200,000. "We expect to be very lean in capital improvements for several years to come,"

said Spickelmeier.

Leavenworth County started a county-wide hiring freeze in fall 2008, and that has left the agency short three equipment operators. So far, they have been able to adjust because of the lower workload after cutting back on the capital projects, but if this coming winter has a lot of snow events, they may be stretched thin. The agency re-worked its snow and ice control plan last fall, in anticipation of staff shortages.

Butler County. Darryl Lutz, public works director, describes his approach to saving money as an ongoing process. "You implement changes and you anticipate what further changes you might have to make," he said.

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Selling your budget

By Hank Lambert

In these difficult economic times, it is even more critical that you can successfully sell your public works budget to your elected officials and to the public. Here are a few tips from Hank Lambert, former director of the Vermont Local Roads Program (an LTAP Center), who developed a training program on budgeting for public works professionals.

Develop a concise summary of the budget

A concise summary and guide for informing the elected officials and involving the public is valuable. There is no set format. It may include a transmittal letter, a budget message, an executive summary, a budget-in-brief. At a minimum, a summary should do the following:

1. Summarize the major changes in priorities or service levels from the current year and the factors leading to those changes.
2. Articulate the priorities and key issues for the new budget period.

Continued on page 3



Saving money *Continued from page 1*

One thing his county has considered off-limits when looking for cuts is basic maintenance on asphalt and gravel roads. “It’s just too big of an investment that we’re trying to protect,” said Lutz. “When you look at roads as assets, we’re talking millions of dollars. We have to take care of them.”

To save money the county is cutting back on their frequency of right-of-way (ROW) mowing—down to one pass in the summer when they used to do two or three. At the end of the season, they mow one time more, back to the ROW line. Lutz said they have gotten some complaints, especially since this summer has been so wet and the vegetation has been especially thick. He noted the importance of being mindful of the safety aspects of mowing, related to visibility.

Butler County has a new policy to not allow road and bridge vehicles to idle. (An exception is the asphalt distributor.) This does not save a lot of money, said Lutz, but it puts everyone in the frame of mind to cut costs. Lutz said this awareness spills over into areas that might not be so obvious for saving money, such a tool loss and maintenance, and how much asphalt is used to fix a pothole. Lutz also said the public can get their arms around a simple cost-saving measure like road and bridge vehicles not idling. “Citizens don’t want their taxes raised, so it helps when they can see us taking a step to keep costs down,” he said.

Lutz is also using more recycled asphalt pavement (RAP) for asphalt maintenance. There is a source for RAP nearby. The county hauls it and provides traffic control. Lutz says that using a 50 percent RAP hot mix has saved the county several hundred thousand dollars over the past two years. The county also uses RAP in cold mix.

Lutz noted that this year his operational costs have been helped by the drop in fuel prices over what was budgeted



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None of the counties interviewed have had to resort to this (!)...but they did come up some other creative ways to save money.



when prices were higher. Commodity prices, however, have not fallen that much (asphalt, oil for chip seal, etc.).

The county also gained efficiency by going to four 10-hour days in the summer. “We increased productivity about 15 percent and had lower overtime and absentee rates,” said Lutz.

Lyon County. Chip Woods, county engineer, said his county is managing pretty well right now, with a few measures taken to reduce costs. “Our equipment is really taking it in the shorts right now,” he said. “We keep patching up our equipment so we can delay replacement.”

Lyon County Road and Bridge has not had to lay off employees or cut back hours, but they did lose a few positions through attrition that have not been re-filled. One is the road supervisor—and three people, including Woods, are sharing those duties.

Woods said that their road and bridge fund is actually higher than last year because the current county commissioners understood the need to invest in rock to bring the gravel roads up to a better standard. However, while the county usually stops applying rock in August, that is not possible this year because it’s been raining every few days there, all summer.

Lyon County does not often have a capital improvement project for pavement, but they do have a full-time in-house bridge crew that replaces four to five bridges a year. They have been able to maintain that work.

The county is one year behind in chip sealing, because the county could not afford to buy oil last year. They bought the rock instead, and they will buy the oil this year. That should still work with their 3-4 year sealing cycle, said Woods.

Ideas for cost savings

- Defer capital improvement projects
- Readjust operations if you must have fewer employees
- Cut back on mowing
- Don’t allow vehicles to idle
- Create a cost-saving “mindset” among employees
- Use recycled asphalt (RAP) for road maintenance
- Defer equipment replacement
- Use temporary summer-hires, but as few as possible
- Hire KansasWorks employees for building upkeep
- Contract-out asphalt overlays if costs are lower than doing the work in-house
- Work 4-day weeks in the summer for less overtime



Montgomery County.

Robert Bever, public works director, said his agency's strategies for cost saving have evolved over time. "Everything helps," he said. They have found a variety of ways to save money.

The county has changed how it does asphalt overlays. In the past, county crews did the work themselves, at a cost of \$60.00 per ton. This year Bever put the work out for bid, and they were able to get 14 miles paved for \$50.26 per ton. Besides the cost savings, this freed county staff and equipment for working on gravel roads and ditching and trimming trees.

Montgomery County also saves money by hiring people to work just for the summer. They hire 5-6 people to operate equipment—mostly retired construction workers and farmers who are seeking part time work. They are paid

Butler and Leavenworth counties have made a point not to cut basic maintenance of asphalt and gravel roads.

a flat rate, with no benefits, and they work four days a week. The county also hires summer employees from the KansasWorks program. This is a state program designed to provide job training to economically disadvantaged individuals and assistance for other individuals facing serious barriers to productive employment. (To learn more,

go to <http://www.kansasworks.com>, and click on "Summer Youth Jobs" or "Contact.") Bever hires KansasWorks employees to paint and maintain his shop facilities.

For more information about the cost-saving measures used by these counties, contact: Mike Spickelmeier, Leavenworth County, (913) 684-0470; Chip Woods, Lyon County, (620) 340-8220; Robert Bever, Montgomery County (620) 330-1170. Darryl Lutz, Butler County, (316) 322-4101. [Email lharris@ku.edu for Lutz's cost spreadsheet for using recycled asphalt.] ■

Selling your budget *Continued from page 1*

3. Identify and summarize major financial factors and trends affecting the budget, such as economic factors; long-range outlook; significant changes in revenue collections, tax rates, or other changes; current and future debt obligations; and significant use of or increase in fund balance or retrained earnings.

4. Provide financial summary data on revenues, other resources, and expenditures for at least a three-year period,

including prior year actual, current year budget and/or estimated current year actual and proposed budget.

Source: Lambert, Hank, "Selling your Public Works Budget to Your Elected Officials and the Public," Technology Transfer, Connecticut Technology Transfer Center, Spring 2009, pg. 3. Adapted with permission. ■

Tips for presenting the budget to your elected officials and to the public

Ask yourself first: "Have I fully involved my staff in developing the department's budget?"

- Tailor your presentation to the situation, and what you want your commissioners (and the public) to decide. Begin with an overview of the presentation.
- **Revenue section**
 - a. Explain key assumptions in developing revenue projections.
 - b. Show anticipated revenues by source.
- **Expenditure section**
 - a. Explain key assumptions: inflation rates, staff turnover, anticipated increases.
 - b. Show expenditures by program.
 - c. Project changes in salaries and fringe benefits.
- **Program Section**
 - a. Briefly explain new requirements.
 - b. Give status reports on programs and success of new initiatives.
 - c. Explain proposed new program initiatives and justification, such as pay for itself, will improve efficiency; will improve performance/safety/liability. Stress benefits to be achieved.
- Focus on what is of interest to the members of the audience (support existing programs, new programs, effect on property taxes, and staffing).
- Discuss implications of the budget (facilities, taxes, debt); show benefits if passed; explain the consequences if the budget is cut.





Tips and Resources for Effectively Working With Your Latino Employees

By Lisa Harris

In the Midwest, the Hispanic population is expected to increase 35 percent by the year 2025. Labor-intensive jobs are expected to experience a greater percentage increase of its Hispanic population.

Many public works agencies in Kansas have Latino employees, and some agencies struggle with communication with those employees, both in terms of language and cultural understanding. Patricia Smitherman has compiled the following tips that provide general cultural observations that may be helpful to you in working more effectively with your Latino employees, especially those who are new to the United States. Smitherman is president of Communicata Language Services, LLC (CLS), which provides language training services as well as cultural consulting and translation services.]

Check out these tips to better understand how to create an inclusive and supportive workplace that will enhance productivity and employee success.

What supervisors need to know about Hispanic workers

First, a disclaimer: Smitherman cautions that cultural information is always general and may not relate to every person in that social, ethnic or racial group.

Respect for authority. Questioning a superior would be seen as disrespectful by most Latinos, as would challenging or criticizing a manager, because that person by his or her position earns respect. Make sure any trainers you use are individuals your Latino employees respect. Also, Spanish-speaking workers want to be treated with respect themselves. If you treat your employees in a respectful and culturally sensitive way, you will inspire loyalty.

Importance of the family. Hispanics really live family values! Family often takes precedence over job and career. Employees may turn down a promotion that will



Generally speaking, loyalty and team goals are important to many Latinos, making them great team players.



change where they live or their work hours because of family considerations. They may also go back to the home country for extended periods if there are health issues for family members there. This pattern is probably slowing because of border security and the difficulty of retuning to job and family in the U.S. If so, the affected employee may be under great stress but may not (because of a lack of English skills) let you know. To successfully manage the Latino workforce you will want to connect with your employees by asking about and getting to know about your employees' families.

Communicating on the job. Asking yes/no questions on the job can be misleading because Hispanics may smile and respond with an affirmative head nod just to be polite. Also, be careful of gestures as a means of communication. A male executive of large American corporation was sued for sexual harassment on the job by a female executive from Latin America. He used a common and acceptable gesture in the US to indicate "come here" which is offensive to many Spanish-speakers.

Fatalism. ¡Qué será, será! Many Spanish-speakers believe that there is not much

control over a person's destiny. Therefore it is important to do safety training and insurance explanations in a way that connects on an emotional and personal level. Find an interpreter for insurance open enrollment meetings, preferably not another employee. The employees' supervisor should watch this process to see if the Latino employees are responding positively to the interpreter or not.

Importance of the group. Latinos generally feel that the best interest of the group is more important than that of the individual. Because of this cultural tendency, loyalty and team goals are very important to Hispanics, making them great team members. This may make it difficult to get a valuable employee to agree to be promoted and thus be more powerful than others in their group or team. It is also unwise to try to promote competition on an individual basis because of the importance of the group.

What type of training works best?

A recent study by the National Concrete Pavement Technology Center, performed by CTRE and sponsored the Iowa DOT, tested a new approach for delivering training to road construction crews with Hispanic workers as well as their non-Hispanic supervisors and coworkers in the state of Iowa. The research assessed the effects on communication, safety, work environment, and productivity as a result of the training. The training was found to be more effective than language training alone.

Contents of the course. The researchers created the "Toolbox Integration Course for Hispanic Workers and American Supervisors" (TICHA). TICHA offers the following features:

- Topics that go beyond language learning to address larger issues of cultural differences and safety.
- Survival phrases that immediately help participants communicate at the job site.
- Flashcards with pictures of vehicles and equipment and quick references,



including English and Spanish spelling and pronunciation.

- A design that minimizes disruptions in the daily operations of work crews.
- Customizable material for specific projects and crew needs.

During daily operations throughout the construction season, contractors can use TICHA to train their workers once a week for 30 minutes before the working day starts or during lunchtime. It is recommended that the course instructor be a worker in the crew, preferably a bilingual Hispanic worker and include a leader known as a “link” person who is trained in course goals and evaluation.

Key findings. The study found that:

- Eighty-three percent of construction personnel surveyed feel that “language” and “little time available” are the two primary barriers to training.
- The course focus should be integration instruction (cultural awareness, safety standards, improved relationships, and language instruction), rather than simply language training.
- Each session should last no longer than 45 minutes to avoid disrupting the day’s operations.
- American supervisors prefer their workers to receive the training 30 minutes before the day’s operations begin or during lunch time.
- During the initial sessions, American supervisors found TICHA useless while Hispanic workers looked forward to the course. However, by the end both American supervisors and Hispanic workers found the course extremely useful and rewarding.
- The classroom version of TICHA should be taught immediately before the construction season begins to help the participants to retain the knowledge.
- The integration approach of TICHA has proven successful in achieving its goals.

For more information on this type of training, contact Ed Jaselskis at ejaselsk@iastate.edu.

English/Spanish resources

OSHA dictionary. OSHA has a Web page with frequently used construction industry terms in Spanish and English. Go to http://www.osha.gov/dcsfp/compliance_assistance/spanish/osha_construction_terms_ensp_freq.html.

Multiple generations: Clash or asset?

In the February 2009 issue of the *APWA Reporter*, Rosemary Baltcha wrote an article about the different generations in the workforce today. She described some of their characteristics and some of the benefits and challenges of having generational diversity in the workplace. Baltcha is recently retired as personnel manager for Fresno County Public Works and Planning Department, and she is co-chair of APWA’s Subcommittee on Generational Issues, along with our own Mike Fraser, public works director for Salina, Kansas.

Baltcha describes the characteristics of the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X individuals, and Generation Y Millennials and what motivates them at work. She describes how different generations can and should learn from each other, and how more seasoned supervisors need to work with the characteristics of younger workers, and embrace what they have to offer the organization, because they are our future.

To read the article, go to <http://www.apwa.net> and search for “Generational Issues: Do you have them?”

ARTBA resources. The American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) has two publications to aid communication with Spanish speaking workers. The pocket-sized *Spanish-English Dictionary*, priced at \$13.00, has nearly 1,500 words and terms frequently used on construction job sites. A companion publication selling for \$28.00, *Spanish-English Construction Communication* contains thousands of words broken into lists of safety terms, related slang and common sentences tied to each phase of construction. More information or copies of both publications can be obtained by contacting ARTBA at (888) 821-9653. The publications can also be purchased online at www.artbastore.org.

Culture lesson: Which term is proper: Latino or Hispanic?

This article uses both terms, but is one of them considered “correct?” A brief report from the Pew Hispanic Center offers some interesting background. Here’s one section:

Q. How do Hispanics themselves feel about the labels “Hispanic” and “Latino”?

A. The labels are not universally embraced by the community that has been labeled. A 2006 survey by the Pew Hispanic Center found that 48 percent of Latino adults generally describe them-

selves by their country of origin first; 26 percent generally use the terms Latino or Hispanic first; and 24 percent generally call themselves American on first reference. As for a preference between “Hispanic” and “Latino,” a 2008 Center survey found that 36 percent of respondents prefer the term “Hispanic,” 21 percent prefer the term “Latino” and the rest have no preference.

Latino-related session coming up

The MINK local roads conference October 13-14, 2009 will feature a presentation on working with Latino employees by Duane Anderson of the Pearl Group. See page 14 for information about MINK.

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Small City has Big Question about Street Name Signs

By Lisa Harris

Does my city really need to replace all its street name signs? That was a question asked recently by Alan Brown, City of Riley public works director (population under 700). The question refers to new federal regulations for increasing the size of street name signs on two lane streets.

All of the street-name signs in the City of Riley are 4 inches high, and the speed limit on local roads is 30 mph. The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD), SECTION 2D.38, says that lettering on ground-mounted street name signs should be at least 6 inches high in capital letters, or 6 inch upper-case letters with 4.5 inch lower-case letters. It goes on to give an

exception, saying that, for local roads with speed limits of 25 mph or less, the lettering height may be a 4 inches or higher. (The compliance date is January 2012.)

So does Riley need to replace all its street name signs? The answer is not necessarily. The MUTCD language for this uses the word “should” rather than “shall,” so changing the size

of the signs is recommended, but not mandated. However, Kansas LTAP’s Tom Mulinazzi, who has served many times as an expert witness in road-related liability lawsuits, says, “If you deviate from ‘should’ recommendations, you’d better have good reasons.”

Mulinazzi thinks there are good reasons in the case of Riley and other small cities, and it’s important to document them. He suggests having the city commission adopt a policy, and keep it in a file, that states that the city’s policy is to use 4-inch street signs along local streets for the following reasons:

- Drivers typically travel at 25 mph or less, even though the



The MUTCD recommends increasing the size of street signs for streets posted higher than 25 mph.



posted speed is higher;

- Drivers are primarily local residents and are familiar with their environment;
- Traffic volumes are very low.

However, if there are parts of a city where vehicles do travel at 30 mph or higher, or traffic volumes are generally higher than residential streets (like a commercial area or on a state road passing through the city), Mulinazzi suggests changing signs along those streets to the larger size.

Another idea is to change the speed limit to 25 mph on roads drivers are traveling at that speed anyway. Since speed limits are appropriately set at the 85th percentile speed, if the assumption of traffic moving at 25 mph for the most part is correct, that ought to be the speed limit anyway.

In any case, as you replace your 4-inch street signs over time, consider replacing them with the larger signs, which are easier to read for your older residents.

For more information, consult Section 2D.38 of the MUTCD online at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/HTM/2003r1/part2/part2d2.htm>, or contact Tom Mulinazzi at (785) 864-2928 or email tomm@ku.edu.

If you deviate from “should” recommendations in the MUTCD, you’d better have good reasons.

Shop Talk

By Richard Basore

Here are a few more tips from Richard Basore of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. See also his article “Stormwater Made Simple” in the Fall 2008 KUTC Newsletter.

Besides the construction stormwater issues discussed in my previous article, a couple of other common areas concerning water quality and pollution often come up with public works departments on a local level.

Industrial stormwater permits

An industrial stormwater permit may be needed for permanent facilities such as maintenance shops. Any concrete or asphalt plant will require a KDHE air pollution permit, and may require a KDHE NPDES permit for any discharge of water, including stormwater.

Storage of fuel and chemicals

As with construction sites, how are the fuel and lubricants, used oil, herbicides

and other chemicals and any hazardous materials that are used in and around your maintenance shop(s) and equipment and materials storage areas handled? You need to have spill prevention (and reporting) measures and information in place for the shop(s) and fueling locations.

Remember that putting vehicle fluids or chemicals of any kind down a floor drain that is connected to a septic tank, perforated pipe, lateral field, dry



well, or seepage pit is not permitted (it constitutes a Class V, Underground Injection Control Well). If you have a question about this, ask your local County Sanitarian or contact KDHE.

Sand and salt storage

Salt and sand/salt mixtures need to be covered to prevent precipitation from dissolving the salt and having it run off the property. (Not to mention the mix is less effective because you lost the salt portion of it!) Place your storage away from drains, curbs and ditches. Route any run-on drain water away from or around the storage pile to keep it from dissolving the salt and carrying it off-site.

For more information, contact Richard Basore at (316) 337-6014 or rbasore@kdhe.state.ks.us



Richard Basore

Avoid exposed outside storage of sand/salt material.



Building Sidewalks with Federal Dollars Comes With Duty to Ensure Winter Maintenance

By Lisa Harris



When federal funds are used to build sidewalks in your community, those funds come with strings attached, regarding maintenance of those sidewalks. Federal law requires that the sidewalks be maintained for safe pedestrian passage, and that includes being cleared of ice and snow in the winter.

A memorandum issued by Butch Wlaschin, Director of FHWA's Office of Asset Management, spells this out. Issued last August to the FHWA division offices, the memo discussed two provisions that provide FHWA with the authority to require snow removal on pedestrian facilities constructed with federal funds.

One of the provisions concerns maintaining accessibility. The other, 23 U.S.C & 116, requires a State DOT to maintain projects constructed with federal-aid funding or enter into a maintenance agreement with the appropriate

local official where such projects are located.

That's where you come in. According to Eric Deitcher of KDOT's Bureau of Local Projects, KDOT does have maintenance agreements with locals on federal aid projects. So the responsibility for maintenance falls to the local government. However, local governments have the ability to create ordinances to pass along the maintenance and snow removal responsibilities to the owners of the properties.

The upshot: If you have sidewalks in your community that have been built with federal funds, and you have an ordinance delegating responsibility for sidewalk maintenance, you are all set. If not, be aware that, legally, your government is responsible to "ensure that **reasonable** snow removal efforts are provided to make facilities safe and traversable, considering local conditions," per FHWA.

We're especially interested in areas that get a lot of pedestrian traffic. This is a risk management issue for the local government. Federal law stipulates a duty to maintain the sidewalks for safety.
—David LaRoche, FHWA





A Leg Up

More safety for them, more risk for you?

By Matthew Barnett

A look at whether participating in the Safe Routes to School Program increases liability.

For anyone interested in implementing the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in their community, liability is certainly an issue that will need to be talked about. A recent SRTS Liability Webinar is a helpful resource for considering the legal implications of the program.¹

One of the first questions that come to mind is, “Does liability increase with SRTS?” Programs like SRTS that promote student walking and biking over riding in cars or busses to school put more children near traffic. The Webinar suggests that, overall, SRTS does not increase liability, but that every situation is unique and, for each stakeholder in the program, the answer is closer to a maybe.

The Federal Highway Administration and their legal staff believe that SRTS redistributes liability among the stakeholders involved—schools, transportation/public works departments, and some nonprofit organizations—but it doesn’t necessarily increase it overall. All transportation modes have inherent risks and potential liability. SRTS, however, provides an opportunity to evaluate the entire student travel “system” of environment, policies, and travel modes.

The SRTS program has several key stakeholders as mentioned above, and each has unique liability issues that will vary depending on the role of the agency or organization. It is suggested that each entity address their own specific liability issues to cover all bases.

One common allegation in issues of

liability is the failure to make capital improvements for reasonable accommodation of the traveling public. Some communities are finding that doing nothing is a good way to get

¹The presenter, Jakob Helmboldt of the Virginia Dept. of Transportation, is quick to point out he is not a lawyer and advises to always seek the advice of your agency’s legal counsel for specific issues in your situation.



Safe Routes to Schools is designed to make walking and biking to school safer and more appealing.



sued. Helmboldt also warns that, “Failure to provide transportation choices and accommodations for all users increases the likelihood of settlements of judgments in favor of those who are excluded.”

Strategies and tools to reduce potential liability

The National Center for SRTS has developed these tips to reduce your agency’s potential liabilities:

- **Work with your school district’s administrative and legal staff to understand the relevant liability issues and to develop appropriate policies.** Be aware of local laws, regulations, and school policies.
- **Take steps to fix problems.** Bike/walk-ability audits are a good way to determine the potential hazards and needed improvements along a walking or biking route. Road safety assessments (RSAs) can be used to identify potential roadway safety problems and propose measures to eliminate or mitigate them. Multi-disciplinary teams conduct RSAs, so several points of view are considered, not just the engineering. (See page 14 for information on upcoming RSA workshops in Kansas.)
- **Document your efforts.** Keep records of potential problems and steps made to fix them.

SRTS’s proactive approach helps identify travel safety issues that might otherwise remain unknown or unaddressed.





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The National Center for Safe Routes to School was established in May 2006, and it has been assisting children, schools, and communities to achieve better settings for children to safely walk and bike to school. The national center highlights multiple Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programs, which all attempt to increase safety, reduce traffic congestion, and improve health and environment.

Training is offered through the national center, and SRTS Coaching Action Network Webinars are just one of the options. The National Center for Safe Routes to School partners with America Walks to offer a series, 21 to be exact, of SRTS-related Webinars. These 21 different Webinars aim to educate individuals and organizations on a range of topics to assist with successful outreach efforts.

- **Be uniform, systematic, and consistent in undertaking safety improvements.** Having consistently enforced policies is a must, because failure to enforce policies or laws that contribute to student safety can create safety problems and risk for your government entity.
- **Develop a plan.** Use qualified and knowledgeable people in putting together your SRTS plan. It seems like an obvious precaution, but many people dealing with SRTS issues may not be aware of current best practices, guidelines, etc, relating to bicycle and pedestrian safety education, planning, engineering, and accessibility accommodations. Decreased safety and subsequently increased liability can result from people assuming what is “safe.”
- **Employ the five E’s (Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation).** Doing so will help ensure your programs are comprehensive and provide a complete set of tools and solutions to preempt potential problems.
- **Show safer routes on a map.** Depict sidewalks, crosswalks, stop signs, speed limits, etc. Using this map will allow

parents and students to make an informed choice on which routes to use.

- **Inform and involve parents.** Encourage the parents to form walking school buses and bike trains. These can be formal or informal adult-supervised walking or biking groups of students, but when they are formally organized, it is a good idea for schools to get background checks for participating adults. For more information on walking school busses, visit <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org>.

Officially-sponsored walking or bicycling activities such as a walking school bus or bike train, come with greater responsibilities. Just like other school-sponsored forms of transportation. To avoid liability for negligence, exercise “reasonable care”. SRTS-recommended procedures for a walking school bus are outlined in the National Center for SRTS publication, *The Walking School Bus: Combining Safety, Fun and the Walk to School* (http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/walking_school_bus/index.cfm).

- **Provide training.** Training for crossing guards and employees is helpful in keeping school liability at a minimum. Your agency could consider sharing some expertise in a presentation.

Conclusion

Safe Routes to Schools programs could increase liability, but usually just redistributes it among the stakeholders in the program—the school, local government, and sometimes nonprofit agencies. In fact, SRTS programs have the potential to decrease overall liability through identifying and addressing problems in the student travel environment. It’s important to remember that all travel modes have inherent dangers and liabilities, and the entire process and environment in which students travel to and from school needs to be evaluated and addressed.

Always question the basis for declaring that kids walking and biking is “unsafe.” It may uncover an assumption or identify an issue that can be addressed. Remember to consult with your agency’s legal counsel to discuss specific concerns because issues of liability can rarely be answered in absolute terms. It is often addressed through a mix of laws addressing specific entities. ■



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Kansas experiences with ARRA funding

By Lisa Harris

Recently, Kansas saw an influx of stimulus funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The timing for submitting applications was tight, and required a lot scrambling on the part of those involved. Read below for some experiences with the process in Kansas.

Some local agencies that applied for ARRA funding:



Barton County. Clark Rusco, county engineer, said the ARRA “shovel-ready” requirements narrowed what kinds of projects they could apply for. None of their high-priority bridge projects were far enough along. Rusco gave his commissioners a list of other projects to consider, and one rose to the top: a 2.5 mile, 4-lane asphalt overlay from the city limits to the county’s industrial park. Rusco said that road receives more traffic than the nearby 56 Highway. Several businesses are located at the industrial park, including Fuller Brush with about 400 employees, an hydraulic cylinder manufacturer, a steel tank manufacturer, a bridge contractor, plus the airport. The project did not need right-of-way purchased or utilities moved. “It was basically ready to go,” said Rusco.

Commissioners gave the go-ahead for the application, with a 20 percent local match. The project was funded, and letting will start this fall.

Rusco is especially glad this project was chosen because the outside lanes of the road were deteriorating, and the county would have had to do something soon to address that. Their solution would not have been as effective as the funded overlay though, because of the county’s limited resources.

Barton County received \$560,000 in ARRA funding from KDOT towards the \$700,000 project. The county has KDOT-certified inspectors who will inspect the project, which provided a

\$25,000 reduction to their local match.



Ellis County. Mike Graf, public works administrator, said that when the word “stimulus” started to become a buzz word, he kept in regular touch with KDOT’s Bureau of Local Projects to try keep up to date on what might be coming down the pike. So when the application period was announced, Ellis County applied for a bridge project and a few paving projects. The bridge project was accepted for funding with a 20 percent local match.

The bridge is a low sufficiency bridge, and facture-critical. The project had been on Ellis County’s 5-Year Plan but they had requested it be removed from the schedule since 5-Year Plan funding was not available until 2014. The county chose to go ahead and complete the design and all the permit requirements, so when the bridge was approved as a “stimulus” project, everything was 95 percent complete.

Ellis County will have the contractor do the reporting for the project, including the monthly report of number of people working on the various aspects of the project. (Employment stimulus is a major goal of the ARRA.)



Cloud County. Not all communities that submitted projects were funded. Cloud County is one that missed out. Andy Asch, highways administrator, said that nearby City of Concordia got a project funded, but the overlay work he submitted did not make the cut. Asch hired a consultant to prepare the application, so there was not a whole lot of work on the county’s part, but there were some costs associated with the effort.

Asch is not happy they were not chosen, but understands that there was only so much money to go around.

“For awhile we thought the money might be divided evenly among the (KDOT) districts,” he said. But in the end,

KDOT decided to use their typical federal aid formula ARRA funds allocation.



KDOT’s experience with ARRA funding for local roads

ARRA brought a lot of money into the state for local roads and bridges, but not without a lot work on the part of everyone involved. That includes the staff at KDOT’s Bureau of Local Projects.

“Basically, our work load doubled,” said Eric Deitcher, local liaison for KDOT’s Bureau of Local Projects (BLP). BLP reviewed over 400 applications and 105 were funded—78 for local governments and 27 for the MPOs in Kansas City and Wichita.

The application deadline was March 13—“Friday the 13th, I’ll always remember that,” said Deitcher—and KDOT made the selections just one week later. (KDOT compressed their time-frame to allow as much to as possible to locals to complete their applications.) The funding decisions were made at the KDOT district level, with BLP staff on hand to answer questions.

For ARRA-funded projects, the reporting requirements are incredibly rigorous, Deitcher said. “FHWA is going to be all over those reports, because they want to show value for the effort. The term they are using is ‘transparency’ in how dollars are being spent, and they are going to be bringing in people from Washington, DC to touch every project twice—first at the construction stage, and then post-completion.”

Deitcher said he is proud to have been part of this effort because so many people at BLP and KDOT district offices and MPOs and local agencies and consulting firms stepped up to do a lot of work in a very short time. As a result, local infrastructure in Kansas will be improved to the tune of \$70 million.

For more information on ARRA projects in Kansas, contact Eric Deitcher at (785) 296-0413. Thanks to Eric for the idea for this article. ■



APWA Can Help You Improve Operations

By Lisa Harris

Want to increase professionalism and efficiency at your agency? Here's a look at a program designed with that in mind.

Public works agencies differ from one another in a variety of ways, from the number of staff or size of jurisdiction, to the size of the agency's budget. Despite their differences, public works agencies also have many common challenges. The American Public Works Association (APWA) has a flexible program that allows agencies of all types to improve their efficiency and competence.

The APWA's Accreditation and Self-Assessment program gives public works agencies the opportunity to evaluate their operations and find areas of potential improvement. If the agency can make these improvements, as well as prove their level of overall achievement, they can be eligible for national APWA accreditation.

The purposes of APWA's accreditation program are to:

- Improve operations and raise standards
- Improved the agency's performance and services
- Recognize good performance
- Motivate employees to maintain performance
- Increase professionalism
- Instill pride among staff, elected officials and the community

Read below how the program works, as well as the benefits of the program as described by cities in Kansas that have become accredited.

What the process looks like

The process starts with a **self-review** in which the agency documents and reports current practices being used in its everyday working environment. Agencies examine those in light of practices recommended in the APWA's *Public Works Management Practices Manual*.

It is important to note that APWA's practices are not seen as standards. Rather, each agency is understood to have policies, procedures and practices that are best suited for the agency and its community.

The purpose of the self-review is to identify potential problem areas or areas of improvement. Because of the communication and cooperation necessary within an agency to thoroughly complete the self-assessment, APWA says you will see immediate benefits and further your staff's understanding of your agency's practices. [That was certainly echoed by the local agencies in Kansas we interviewed who have conducted self-reviews.]

The time period for the self-review is flexible, so the agency can devote resources to it on its own schedule. Costs are flexible, as well, so that a smaller agency would have



Writing down operational practices is particularly valuable when people retire—something many Kansas agencies will face in the coming decade.



lower costs than a major metropolitan public works agency.

After the self-review has been completed, and improvements and changes have been incorporated into the agency's practices, the agency schedules an on-site review conducted by a group of APWA members. The group consists of peers recruited and trained by APWA, and in most cases they evaluate agencies that are similar in size and scope to their own. After the on-site evaluation, the agency will receive notice of either approval or denial of APWA accreditation.

Accreditation status is granted for a four-year period. After the initial accreditation, an agency may seek reaccreditation.

Accreditation success stories from Kansas

Four cities in Kansas have been accredited to date, and each is very enthusiastic about the process and the results for their agency. Below are the benefits, as they see them.



Benefits for Topeka. Topeka was accredited in 2005 and is in the process of being re-accredited. Mike McGee, deputy director of public works, said every agency's reasons for seeking accreditation are a little different, but these were Topeka's main reasons:

1. Careful examination of relevance and effectiveness of agency policies and procedures. McGee said the process really forces agencies to look at all policies and procedures

Continued on next page



and make sure they are current. Does this policy fulfill its intent? Does it meet the requirements for our community? McGee said APWA recommends having certain policies and procedures, but does not tell how to do it. “Through the process, YOU define how you are going to do business. You understand why you do what you do, and you become better able to communicate that to your customers,” he said.

2. Morale. When Topeka was seeking accreditation, the department took special steps to inform every staff member about the effort. Banners were hung in facilities to announce the program. Some facilities had countdown clocks to show progress towards the inspection date. Each staff member received a brochure about the program, describing why the department was doing this. “This created real buy-in and ownership in the program,” said McGee.

3. Improved public image for the profession. “We wanted to make a statement to the community that we are a professionally-run organization, and that we’re trying to do things right... it means something to a community to say you are nationally accredited,” said McGee.

4. Improved customer service. The evaluation process uncovered some needed improvements. Two in particular were customer service with utilities customers and communicating with the public about traffic and transportation engineering. Regarding the latter, McGee said, “The public always has lots of concerns, especially if the project includes roundabouts, traffic signals, or taking parking off streets. We’ve made significant progress with customer interaction and how we communicate things, but there is still room for improvement.”

McGee also noted that they hope future benefits will materialize down the road for accredited cities like theirs, such as lower insurance premiums and better grant opportunities. “As more cities become accredited, we hope organizations that work with public works agencies will see the benefit of the designation and provide additional value for the effort.”



Benefits for Overland Park. Overland Park was accredited in 2004 and re-accredited earlier this year. Mike Miller, assistant to the public works director, identified these benefits:

1. Long-term effect on the department. One of the greatest benefits for Overland Park was the process itself, Miller said. He noted that accreditation is not a one-time milestone—rather, it represents a commitment to continuous review and improvement. “The guidelines from APWA are really best practices for how to run an organization, and many of them would apply to any type of organization—financial controls, strategic planning, risk management, etc. You examine how your policies and operations fit with the city and county. It’s really a top-to-bottom review,” he said.

The review captures procedures in a document that others can find and understand. “It institutionalizes knowledge that tends to sit in people’s heads,” Miller said. “The review helps answers questions like: Could someone replicate what we are doing? If something changed (change in personnel, new regulations), could we easily understand how that

Public Works Management Practices Manual, 6th Edition

*Not ready to jump in with both feet?
Try doing just the self-review,
using APWA's manual. It will be
eye opening.*

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affected operations so we could respond?” Miller said his kind of information is particularly invaluable when people in upper level positions retire—something many Kansas agencies will face in the next decade. Overland Park now has an operations manual and a library of documents, and everyone knows where to find them.

Re-accreditation prompts an agency to look at all of its policies again and make sure they are up to date. “With periodic evaluation you can better respond to changes in technology, new laws that affect hiring, new demands from citizens, etc. In the long run, you become more efficient, and you save money,” said Miller.

Miller said the accreditation process also helps public works staff see a big-picture view; not just from the vantage point of their particular jobs. They better understand how public works fits with other departments in the city.

2. Improved ability to “tell our story.” “We were pretty confident we were meeting our mission,” said Miller, “but it was hard to articulate what we were doing because we were focused on RESULTS, rather than the story behind the results.” Miller said they were particularly interested in improving the analysis and information used by the city manager and others, and being able to look deeper into programs. This level of information helped them with presentations to the government body about some of their programs.

3. Improved morale and understanding of how all the jobs in the department fit together. An organizational



review helps the employees have a better understanding of their part in a bigger effort. “Accreditation helps an organization better establish benchmarks for service delivery.. We can better explain the need for resources, supported by hard data. You get wider involvement from staff, more ownership in the department’s achievement. This is much more valuable than a plaque on a wall,” Miller said.

4. Tremendously helpful networking and professional support. Miller said they are fortunate to be in close proximity to two other accredited cities, Olathe and Lenexa, because their staffs provide a lot of mutual cooperation and support. “It’s like that Verizon commercial with the guy with all the people behind him,” he said. “It feels like that.”

Miller also said they are lucky that they are so close to APWA’s headquarters in Kansas City. “You couldn’t ask for a better and more knowledgeable person to help you through the process than Ann Daniels (APWA’s credentialing director),” said Miller.



Benefits for Lenexa. Melanie Irwin, public works administrator for the City of Lenexa, cited these benefits:

1) Opportunity to examine and memorialize what you do. “Really, the most important part of the process was looking at APWA’s best practices and seeing IF we do them, and HOW we do them. APWA does not tell you how to do things; they ask you to articulate how you do things. In the process, you ask yourself WHY you are doing things that way, and that can lead to improvements,” said Irwin.

2) Opened up lines of communication in the public works department. “This whole process gets people talking—including people from different divisions who don’t communicate as much as they should. It’s eye-opening. This work is really important for when people are retiring. New employees can understand how to do things and why.”

3) Helped uncover things that were falling through the cracks. Through re-accreditation Lenexa found a couple of pockets of things that were overlooked with changes in personnel. One was the maintenance of parking lots. The new facilities management manager did not realize that his division was responsible for that, rather than the streets division. “We were able to review the parking lot maintenance plan and work with the facilities manager to identify a new work plan,” said Irwin.

Another example was having a designated staff member assigned to be in charge of the emergency management plan. The person in charge of that task left, and no one picked up the assignment. “Now we have a team responsible for that. Irwin said it’s little things like that, sometimes with significant consequences, that you can miss. Making and re-visiting policies and procedures is well worth it, said Irwin.



Benefits for Olathe. Rick Biery, public works director, City of Olathe, said the following aspects of accreditation were particularly helpful:

1) Opportunity to step back and review how we do

business, and make improvements. The first benefit to the review, said Biery, is improving the organization so it runs better and operates more efficiently. Accreditation is a major undertaking, but it has a lot of benefits. It pays for itself in improved efficiency.

2) Improved communication with commissioners and the public. Secondary benefits (but also important) are recognition by Council members and customers, and staff pride.

3) Better management of capital improvement projects.

Olathe has improved its management of capital improvement projects as a result of the first accreditation. They changed how they do public meetings, and they improved reporting so that it better communicates accountability. “We provide regular status report on projects so stakeholders and the public can stay informed, said Biery. “We have upwards of 100 projects going at any one time, so this helps us keep them on schedule and on budget.”

4) More effective building maintenance.

Biery said Olathe is doing a better job of managing this process with schedules and procedures for work orders.

5) Improved safety training. “We used to be kind of hit or miss before on this, and now it’s an integral part of our department. We track attendance was well as subjects covered,” Biery said.

“You get wider involvement from staff [and] more ownership in the department’s achievements. This is much more valuable than a plaque on a wall.”



Would your agency be improved by some of the benefits experienced by your Kansas peers?

If yes, go to <http://www.apwa.net/About/Accreditation/>. Learn how to obtain a copy of the *Public Works Management Practices Manual*, as well as software that can assist in conducting the self-review phase.

To assist agencies interested in the accreditation process, APWA offers a variety of resources, including training for the personnel that will be conducting the self-review. Contact Ann Daniels at (816) 472-6100 or adaniels@apwa.net.

Sources

APWA Accreditation Web page. <http://www.apwa.net/documents/accreditation/07AccreQA.pdf>

APWA Accreditation Facts. <http://www.apwa.net/About/Accreditation/>



WHAT'S NEW

By Lisa Harris

LOCAL ROLES IN INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Provides strategies and action steps to help foster the integration of land use planning with transportation that both reflects local interests and advances regional goals. Includes case studies from Minnesota, Oregon and Colorado. *National League of Cities Action Guide*, November 2008. 4 pages.

COMMUNICATING WITH CITIZENS AND THE MEDIA

Suggests ways to develop a two-way dialogue whereby the public assists in setting government priorities and outcomes indicators, helps evaluate services, and understands whether results are being achieved. Contains examples from several communities, and tips for getting objective media coverage. 8 pages.

LOCAL ROADS MATTER! NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This excellent brochure is part of a new collection of materials by the National Association of County Engineers designed to promote the local roads system. It provides facts and statistics to back up the claim that local roads are vital to the U.S. economy and quality of life. Useful for education and advocacy. NACE, 2009. 10 pages.

LOW-COST SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS FOR STOP-CONTROLLED AND SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS

Presents information on effective, low-cost intersection countermeasures developed using safety-research results and input from an intersection safety expert panel. These countermeasures can be applied to a large number of intersections with a high frequency of crashes using a systematic approach. Low-cost countermeasures are those ranging from \$1,000 to \$50,000 per intersection. FHWA, May 2009. 20 pages.

CALENDAR

Visit our Web site for even more training calendar listings and to register for workshops. Go to www.ksltap.org and click on "View the LTAP Calendar."

ASSET MANAGEMENT AND COST ACCOUNTING ▲M

October 7 in Great Bend
October 8 in Wichita
October 9 in Emporia

SNOW AND ICE CONTROL ▲T

October 13 in Garden City
October 14 in Great Bend
October 15 in Wichita
October 16 in Topeka

MINK 2009 LOCAL ROADS MEETING

October 13-14 in St. Joseph, MO
Call Lisa Harris at KS LTAP, 785/864-2590

CONCRETE ROAD AND STREET MAINTENANCE ▲T

October 21 in Great Bend
October 23 in Topeka

BRIDGE MAINTENANCE

November 3 in Hays
November 4 in Wichita
November 5 in Chanute
November 6 in Lawrence

MOTOR GRADER TRAINING

November 6 in Kansas City, MO
Call MO LTAP at (866) MO-ROADS

ROAD SAFETY ASSESSMENT ▲M

(This is an *elective* course for the Master Road Scholar)
October 27 in Garden City
October 28 in Colby
October 29 in Great Bend

RISK AND LIABILITY ISSUES ▲M

November 17 in Salina
December 1 in Wichita

SAFETY EFFECTS OF GEOMETRIC DESIGN FEATURES OF TWO-LANE RURAL HIGHWAYS ▲M

(This is an *elective* course for the Master Road Scholar)
December 9 in Salina, 1-4 PM

APWA CLICK LISTEN AND LEARN

<http://www.apwa.net/Education/cli/>

- Performance Measures for Winter Maintenance—October 1
- Sign Retroreflectivity—October 15
- Retroreflectivity, Part 2—November 5
- BMPs for NPDES Compliance—Nov. 19
- Asphalt Pavement Preservation—Dec. 3
- Understanding your Agency's Carbon Footprint—December 17

KANSAS TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING CONFERENCE

April 13-14, 2010 in Manhattan
(785) 532-5569

NACE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

April 25-29, 2010 in Forth Worth, TX
<http://www.countyengineers.org>

KANSAS COUNTY HIGHWAY ASSOCIATION SPRING CONFERENCE

May 10-12, 2010 in Hutchinson

APWA KANSAS CHAPTER SPRING CONFERENCE

May 12-14, 2010 in Hays

For information on calendar items or to suggest a topic for an LTAP workshop, contact: Kristin Kelly, LTAP Training Coordinator, 785/864-2594, kbkelly@ku.edu.

▲T = KS Road Scholar Program Level 1 — Technical skills required course.

▲S = KS Road Scholar Program Level 2 — Supervisory skills courses are provided by the Kansas Association of Counties. Go to <http://www.kansascounties.org> and click on "Education Program."

▲M = KS Road Scholar Program Level 3 — Master Road Scholar required course.



TAKE A STEP TOWARD GREATER SAFETY ON YOUR ROADS

Kansas LTAP will offer its course on road safety assessment in three locations this fall. See above. The course has been updated to be a one-day course. It is an elective Level 3 Road Scholar course. Sign up!

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FREE ROAD & BRIDGE RESOURCES

Check off your selections, fill in the bottom portion, and return this form to:
Kansas LTAP Materials Request, 1530 W. 15th St., Room 2160, Lawrence, Kansas 66045 or fax to 785/864-3199



TRAINING GUIDES & REPORTS

You are free to keep these unless otherwise noted.
Or you can download at the links provided.

Local Roles in Integrating Transportation and Land Use

4 pages. See description on page 14. Download at:
http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/B7D87836FB984D5F9907D4291861B07B/TransportLandUse_08.pdf
or request hard copy

Communicating with Citizens and the Media

8 pages. See description on page 14. Download at:
<http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/B5F747547F844427B39735D122E252F7/ActionGuide09.pdf>
or request hard copy

Local Roads Matter! Needs Assessment Brochure

10 pages. See description on page 14. Download at:
http://countyengineers.org/LRM/downloads/needs-assessment-brochure_WEB.pdf
or request hard copy

Low-Cost Safety Enhancements for Stop-Controlled and Signalized Intersections

20 pages. See description on page 14. Access online at
<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/resources/fhwa-sa09020/>
or request hard copy



EQUIPMENT

We offer turning movement counter boards for loan to local highway agencies. Call us at (785) 864-5658 to arrange a loan. There could be a waiting list for these items.

Turning Movement Counter Board DB-400, Jamar Technologies, Inc.

A basic model for recording turning movements at intersections. The board is is lightweight and comes with its own case.

Turning Movement Counter Board TDC-8, Jamar Technologies, Inc.

Can be used to do turning movement counts, classification counts, gap studies, stop-delay studies, speed studies, and travel time studies. The board is light weight and comes with its own case.

Our resource catalog of reports and training videos is searchable online. Visit www.ksltap.org



REQUEST FORM

send materials indicated address correction add to newsletter mail list send 2009 Resource Catalog

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The Kansas Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) is an educational, research and service program of the Kansas University Transportation Center (KUTC), under the umbrella of the KU transportation Research Institute (TRI). Its purpose is to provide information to local and county highway agencies and transportation personnel by translating into understandable terms the latest technologies in the areas of roads, highways and bridges.

The *Kansas LTAP Newsletter* is one of the KUTC's educational and technology transfer activities. Published quarterly, the newsletter is free to counties, cities, townships, tribal governments, road districts and others with transportation responsibilities. Editorial decisions are made by Kansas LTAP. Engineering practices and procedures set forth in this newsletter shall be implemented by or under the supervision of a licensed professional engineer in accordance with Kansas state statutes dealing with the technical professions.

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