



Vol. 27, No. 1 – June 2013

The Bridge



A quarterly newsletter from Michigan's Local Technical Assistance Program

Grand Traverse County Road Commission is among a growing number of public road agencies that use Facebook to communicate with road users. To help the road commission avoid potential pitfalls of social media, the Grand Traverse CRC board has adopted a formal social media policy, which includes goals for social media utilization; rules for what posts are considered appropriate; duties of site moderators; and other details.

Inside



Excellence in
Snow and Ice
Control
► Page 3



Operations
Showcase &
Facility Tour
► Page 3



Winners of the
Great Ideas
Challenge
► Page 5



Training Saves
Budget
► Page 6



Expanded Loan
Program
► Page 7

Back Page

Upcoming Events

Prizes Awarded for Surveys



Road Commissions “Like” Facebook

By Shaughn Kern, Technical Writer
Center for Technology & Training

Grand Traverse County Road Commission

This is the first article in a two-part series on how road commissions are using Facebook to enhance public relations efforts. This article covers general Facebook setup, policy, and legal information. The second part will be published in the next issue, and will include more detail about posting content, growing an audience, moderating conversations, and statistics about Facebook usage by local road agencies in Michigan.

This past February, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) posted an announcement on their Facebook page: rolling closures for pothole patching. In reply to this post, a resident reported an additional stretch of road that would benefit from patching. An RCOC employee from the pothole patching crew responded (using her personal Facebook account) to ask for further details about the road, and assured the resident that the potholes would be taken care of. The resident responded again to provide more information and also thanked the employee for their hard work. Later in the thread, a second resident joined the exchange, and received a short explanation about how potholes form. The result was positive all the way around—the residents were pleased because they were well taken care of; the employee felt good because she helped a couple of residents; and the road commission benefited from the productive exchange of information. See Page 4 for an abbreviated version of the “thread,” as it appears on Facebook.

Convenient Communication

Many people like Facebook—over a billion, in fact. Where social media such as twitter and RSS feeds

are common with tech-savvy crowds, Facebook is more widely used by the general public. For this reason local road agencies are increasingly creating and maintaining Facebook pages to keep in touch with the motoring public. A quick search of Facebook reveals that 27 county road commissions in Michigan have a presence there.

Linnea Rader, account clerk and Board of Public Works secretary for Van Buren County Road Commission (CRC) appreciates the convenience of using Facebook to communicate with residents. “Facebook has proven to be a great tool for the road commission,” Rader said. “It offers an opportunity to educate the public on what we do and why, and it also provides a convenient way for them to interact with us.” Rader receives alerts on her cell phone whenever a resident posts to the Van Buren CRC Facebook page; she spends up to three hours a week monitoring and maintaining the page. “Posting doesn’t take long, but it does require some thought to avoid misunderstanding,” she said.

Deb Hunt, clerk and office manager for Grand Traverse CRC, spends 30 to 40 minutes a day moderating her agency’s Facebook page. She says that the time invested is worthwhile given the number of views the page receives and the activity it generates.

Karl Hanson, County Highway Engineer for Wexford CRC, was initially opposed to having a Facebook page for his agency, but he has grown to appreciate the convenience of it. “It’s a great way to communicate general information quickly to a large number of people,” he said. “Seasonal activities like plowing snow, ditching, and blading gravel

► Facebook, Page 4

My Grandpa taught me how to tie a tie when I was a freshman in High School. He happened to be visiting one evening as I was getting ready for an event that required more than jeans and a t-shirt, and I was struggling mightily with an authentic necktie for the first time. Tying the thing wasn't a problem. My problem had to do with length; the darn thing either ended up dangling several inches below my belt or hanging way above my navel. I was frustrated. "C'mere Johnny," my Grandpa said. "I'll show you a couple of tricks."

Today, every time I flip up my shirt collar and drape a tie around my neck, I remember standing in front of the bathroom mirror with my Grandpa, following his lead as he explained the finer points of tie tying. Since then, I've taught many friends, my younger brothers, and my two oldest sons the same tricks. "Here, my Grandpa showed me this," I say every time I see someone struggling with a tie.

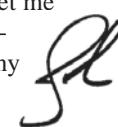
This past winter, my Dad stopped by as my sophomore-aged son dressed for a hockey game (my son's coach required every player to wear a shirt and tie to the rink on game days). I had already shown Johnny how to tie a tie, but he was struggling with getting his shirt tucked into his pants just right. "C'mere Johnny," my Dad said. "Let me show you a trick." After tucking his shirt tightly into his pants, my Dad put his fists together in front of his chest and lifted both elbows to his shoulders, which pulled his shirt out of his pants just enough to relieve the tightness around the shoulders. When he returned his arms to his sides, the shirt hung loosely without looking sloppy. Perfect.

In the locker room after the game, I saw Johnny showing one of his teammates the shirt-tucking trick, "My grandpa showed me this," he said. Soon, everyone on the team was doing it.

The official term for the dressing and grooming advice that has been passed from one generation to the next in the Ryynanen family is "knowledge transfer." Three things worked together to make it happen. First, the advisor and advisee had to spend time together. Had my grandpa not been there as I struggled to tie a tie 27 years go, who knows how much time I might have wasted doing it wrong between then and now? Same with my Dad's shirt-tucking advice to Johnny. Getting together is crucial. Second, the advisor has to be willing to engage. My Grandpa could have ignored my frustration, leaving me to figure it out on my own. Instead, he took notice and made a decision to help. Good thing! Finally, the advisee has to stop and listen. When my Dad offered to help, my son Johnny could have said, "I don't have time Grandpa. I really gotta run." Instead, he stopped, listened, and learned. And later, Johnny (like me) passed on what he learned. When done well, knowledge transfer keeps going and going.

In a family, where people naturally spend a lot of time together, the transfer of knowledge and experience happens without even thinking about it. But at a county road commission or in a municipal department of public works (where everybody already has too much to do), stopping to ask for help or to give advice can actually seem counter-productive. But it's not; it's the most productive, valuable thing you can do.

That's why Michigan's LTAP coordinated the first-ever Great Ideas Challenge this year (see page 5), and why we're scheduling a series of Operations Showcase & Facility Tour events (see page 3 and "Upcoming Events" on page 8). It's also why we put forth so much effort planning conferences, broadcasting webinars, and writing and publishing this newsletter. In part, we do it to facilitate the "C'mere, let me show you a trick," moments. When a moment like that happens, you'll never forget it. And you'll most likely find many opportunities to share it.



**Michigan's
Local Technical
Assistance Program**

The Center for Technology & Training is part of the Michigan Tech Transportation Institute at Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan. The mission of the CTT is to develop technology and software, coordinate training, and conduct research to support the agencies that manage public infrastructure. In support of this mission, the CTT houses Michigan's Local Technical Assistance Program, which is part of a national effort sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration to help local road agencies manage their roads and bridges. For more information, visit www.MichiganLTAP.org.

The Bridge

The Bridge is published quarterly by the Center for Technology & Training (CTT) through Michigan's Local Technical Assistance Program at Michigan Technological University. Subscriptions are free of charge. To request a subscription, contact the CTT.

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About LTAP

The Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) is a nationwide effort funded by the Federal Highway Administration and individual state departments of transportation. The goal of the LTAP effort is to foster a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound surface transportation system by improving skills and increasing knowledge of the transportation workforce and decision makers.

Steering Committee

The LTAP Steering Committee makes recommendations on, and evaluations of, the activities of Michigan's LTAP.

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(More) Excellence in Snow and Ice Control

John Rynnanen, Editor
Center for Technology & Training

For the second time in three years, a Michigan municipality has been recognized by the American Public Works Association (APWA) for exceptional winter maintenance practices. The City of Novi Department of Public Services (DPS) was presented the *Excellence in Snow and Ice Control Award* at the APWA North American Snow Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina in April. The award was established by the APWA to promote excellence in the management and administration of public works snow and ice operations, and to promote best practices in snow and ice removal while minimizing environmental impacts.

Matt Wiktorowski, Dean Reid, and Mark Schwartz accepted the award on behalf of the City of Novi DPS.

"I'm happy for my crew," Wiktorowski, field operations senior manager for the City of Novi DPS, said. "They worked hard to make big changes to our winter operations practices; it's great that their efforts have been recognized."

The award announcement from APWA specifically mentioned Novi's effective use of several different anti-icing materials; the fact that the materials are stored and handled in accordance with the State of Michigan's Part 5 Rules for salt and liquid brine storage; and Novi's use of GIS



City of Novi Department of Public Services employees Dean Reid (far left), Mark Schwartz (next to Reid), and Matt Wiktorowski (center) accepted an APWA Excellence in Snow and Ice Control Award at the North American Snow Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina in April.

Center for Technology & Training

technologies to plan work, track costs, and identify service deficiencies.

The practice of pre-wetting salt is an example of a change that yielded significant efficiency improvements for the City of Novi. Using pre-wet salt has enabled Wiktorowski's crew to reduce by 15 percent the average salt used per snow event, and they have cut the average labor costs per event by 55 percent.

Accepting the award, Wiktorowski thanked City Manager Pearson Clay and Director of Public Services Rob Hayes for creating a work environment in which edu-

cation is valued and continuous improvement is expected.

In addition to the City of Novi award, several employees of other Michigan road agencies presented at the snow conference. Among them: the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Cities of Farmington Hills, Wixom, and Troy.

The Department of Public Works for the City of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and the Ohio Department of Transportation were also presented *Excellence in Snow and Ice Control* awards at the conference. ■

Operations Showcase & Facility Tour

City of Novi Department of Public Services
26300 Lee BeGole Drive • Novi, MI 48375

June 20, 2013 — 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Join operators, mechanics, supervisors, and managers from road agencies across lower Michigan for a free tour of Novi's DPS facility. The tour will include presentations and Q&A about:

- Novi's winter maintenance advancement team
- Building operator-friendly plow trucks
- Blending to improve brine performance
- Refining your level of service policy
- Collaborating with neighboring agencies



This is a free event
(includes a pizza lunch at noon)

To register, call 906-487-2102

For more info: www.michiganltap.org/workshops/novi-tour



Plan to attend

the largest gathering of state, county, and municipal snow fighters in Michigan.

Michigan Winter Operations Conference

October 16-17, 2013

Treetops Resort
Gaylord, Michigan

www.MichiganLTAP.org/WinterOps

Facebook from Page 1

roads used to generate a slew of phone calls. Now we post our plans on Facebook and some residents go there with questions. In some cases, residents actually answer questions for each other. It's very convenient."

Many Facebook users express excitement when they first see their local agency appear on Facebook. Early user posts range from "Welcome to Facebook" to "This is a great means to address public questions, concerns, and debunk common myths. Keep up the great work!"

Topics addressed on local agency Facebook pages fall into familiar categories of safety, planning and zoning, road construction and closings, travel advisories, and updates on project/work crew activities. It is also common to see posts of community events, pictures, news from other local agencies, transportation-related news articles, and other content from organizations outside the agency.

As with any public medium, it can open a road agency to as much criticism and vilification as approval and praise. But with a well thought-out Facebook policy, and appropriate configuration of administrative tools these potential drawbacks can easily be mitigated or transformed in a way that allows a public agency to reach a large audience while still allowing for productive two-way communication that addresses specific concerns.

This Facebook thread about pothole patching in Oakland County includes comments that reflect personal opinions, official road commission policy, and technical details. It illustrates how social media can facilitate simple, quick, convenient communication with the motoring public.

while," explained Van Buren CRC's Rader, when asked about allowing users to create posts. "I love to have more people ask questions or create posts on our page; each one creates another opportunity to educate and share information with the public."

On the other hand, the board of Grand Traverse CRC decided that their agency's Facebook page should be configured to only allow users to comment on content that the road commission creates. Limiting comments in this fashion results in fewer posts for the road commission to respond to, and ensures that posts from users do not overshadow important road-commission posts such as travel advisories. However, trying to keep the public from posting

I love to have more people ask questions or create posts on our page; each one creates another opportunity to educate and share information with the public.

Linnea Rader – Van Buren County Road Commission

Configuration

Among Michigan road commissions with Facebook pages, Van Buren (941 Likes since September 2009) and Grand Traverse (1,324 Likes since May 2010) are two of the most active and well-established. However, they take different approaches in allowing the general public to post on their page.

Van Buren CRC's Facebook page is set up to allow any user to create a new post. This configuration encourages the public to become more involved on the page. "Conversations must be two-sided to be worth-

to a Facebook page does little to quell distracting posts, since a user with an axe to grind with the road commission may post in the "Recommendations" section of the Facebook page (see The Danger of Hidden Facebook Posts, on Page 5).

Policy

Another area where Grand Traverse and Van Buren differ is in official written policies. Grand Traverse CRC has a formal written policy governing their Facebook page, whereas Van Buren CRC puts much of the

Road Commission for Oakland County
February 15

9 am to 3 pm today: Rolling closure of right 2 lanes of southbound M-5 between Pontiac Trail & I-275 for pothole patching

Like Comment Share 4 2 23 1

Linda Baldwin rd stretch Great Lakes Crossing Outlets **please&thankyou**
February 15 at 9:58am via mobile Like 4 1

Denise Who does that belong to county or city all the way from 75 to walton Blvd . It is bad
February 15 at 6:03pm via mobile Like

Denise Linda they dont get back with ya by Tues let me know
February 15 at 6:05pm via mobile Like 4 1

Linda Thanks Denise. I also would like to add Maybee to the list. Maybee between Baldwin and Rohr heading west (toward Clarkston). Huge holes!! 😊
February 15 at 6:26pm via mobile Like

Denise I know lol its so to keep up with em all . My for arms are like Rock
February 15 at 6:52pm via mobile Like 4 1

Linda You amaze me. I appreciate all that ya'll do. It has got to be hard work! -thank you 😊
February 15 at 7:00pm via mobile Like 4 1

Denise Just remember we drive these roads too and thank you
February 15 at 7:02pm via mobile Like 4 1

Michelle Denise! You're a pot hole fixer upper?! Too cool! Thanks for what you do, we appreciate you!!!!
February 15 at 10:53pm via mobile Like 4 1

Denise There's a bunch of us in fact all of us this time of year and thank you always appreciated 😊
February 15 at 11:03pm via mobile Like

Michelle There is a load pot holes this year! Is it just me or are there more than last year?
February 15 at 11:06pm via mobile Like

Denise To put it simple when the temp goes up and down so does the road . Some roads are just pretty much beyond repair and ya do what you can do with what ya got . A cpl of yrs ago they were really bad . But the longer/older the worn out road gets the worse it'll be .
February 15 at 11:10pm via mobile Like

Denise But I'm no expert
February 15 at 11:11pm via mobile Like 4 1

Michelle Grrrrreeeeeat!
February 15 at 11:11pm via mobile Like

Michelle You know more than I do!! LOL
February 15 at 11:14pm via mobile Like 4 1

Denise And the material we use this time of yr is not meant to really last like asphalt would . But sometimes it stays put real good and maybe a blade on a plow truck might pull it back out if its to high
February 15 at 11:15pm via mobile Like 4 1

responsibility for the page in the judgment of the moderator. In the case of Grand Traverse CRC, configuration of the Facebook page regarding user comments is board policy, and not in the hands of the moderator. The board for Grand Traverse CRC also drafted a document that specifically establishes guidelines for using social media. The guidelines include

► next page

“Great Ideas” Recognized



the goal of social media utilization; rules for what posts are considered appropriate; duties of the page's moderator; and other details. Anyone within the road commission can read the document to understand the overall goals and protocol of the Facebook page. (Grand Traverse CRC's social media policy is available at www.michiganltap.org/bridge_27-1).

Van Buren CRC does not have a specific written policy, but rather places much of the decision-making in the hands of their Facebook moderator. Rader's directive from her supervisor is to “respectfully educate” public audiences. Explaining how she responds to posts, she said, “If they are an easy fix, a misconception or issue, I handle it myself, but if it's a more difficult or hostile post, I'll draft the response and share it with my superiors for approval.” This ensures that the moderator is free to use their judgment in dealing with common posts, and that responses to difficult topics are collectively decided upon.

Opportunity

No matter what a local agency's Facebook policy is, it's important to recognize that local agencies' Facebook pages are considered a type of public forum. Therefore, a user's

comment or post is protected by First Amendment rights in the same way they apply in any other public forum/medium. However, Facebook's community standards (www.facebook.com/communitystandards) do not permit things such as threats, harassment, hate speech, graphic content, or any other content considered inappropriate in a public forum. Material that falls into these categories can be deleted. Nonetheless, a local agency should not remove posts just because they are critical, ill informed, or negative; instead, they should respond to the posts in a productive manner, which makes each post – no matter how critical – a springboard for educating the public about local agency policies or procedures.

So, what happens after the Facebook page and its policies are set in place? How does a public agency grow their Facebook audience? How does a moderator turn a mean-spirited post into a teachable moment? The second part of this article (scheduled for publication in the next issue of *The Bridge*) will go into detail about what types of content a local agency should post to its Facebook page, and how to respond to posts from the public. ■

The Danger of Hidden Facebook Posts

MCL Chapter 691 states, in summary, that if a government agency has knowledge of road defects – including those reported by the public – they must be addressed within a certain time frame to avoid liability from injury. So what happens when a user reports a problem using Facebook? Mark Jahnke, President of Specialty Claims Services, Inc. and an administrator for the Michigan County Road Commission Self-Insurance Pool (MCRCSIP), recommends that Facebook communication be treated the same way as phone calls, emails and other notifications.

“A persuasive argument could be made to a court that the road authority has been placed ‘on notice’ of the highway defect when the post is made on Facebook,” said Jahnke. However, he points out that adding a disclaimer to the Facebook page could provide some defense for a road agency if a post were buried and not addressed in time.

To help protect road agencies from such posts, the Institute for Local Government, which is a non-profit research affiliate of the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities, recommends some variation of the following disclaimer for road agency Facebook pages:

This [agency name] page is for general public information only. Posts on this Facebook page do not constitute proper notice to the road authority. If you require a response from the agency or if you wish to request agency services, you must contact the agency at [email address, website URL, or phone number].

While this language does not necessarily absolve the road authority of being “on notice,” it could help guide users to reporting defects through other media. An agency can also add language to the disclaimer that outlines expected conduct for users, which in turn gives the local agency more justification for deleting profane, slanderous or irrelevant material.

Daniel Gard, a mechanic at the City of Wyoming Department of Public Works, found it difficult to detect hydraulic fluid leaks on his plow trucks, especially when they were covered with ice and snow. Working with his oil supplier, J.H. Oil Company in Wyoming, Gard found a mineral-based blue dye that he could add to his hydraulic fluid to make leaks obvious to the naked eye. “I chose blue because other colors could be confused with other fluids,” he explained.

“With the dye, hydraulic leaks are much easier to spot, which speeds up problem diagnosis and also simplifies the pre- and post-trip checks for drivers,” Gard explained. “We've used it for three years and we've had no problems.”

Gard's idea was chosen as the first place winner from among 15 entries in the first annual Michigan LTAP Great Ideas Challenge. As first-place winner, he was awarded an engraved plaque, \$600 toward the registration fee or travel costs for any transportation-related national conference, and a \$200 LTAP Bucks certificate. His entry will also be submitted to the Build a Better Mousetrap National Competition, which is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) LTAP/TTAP Clearinghouse. The national winner will be announced at the National LTAP Conference in Boise, ID in July 2013.

Second place was awarded to David Foster, mechanic at the Lenawee County Road Commission, for remote control devices that he created to mimic the air and electrical systems on trailers.

Judges for the challenge included Mark Jahnke, President of Specialty Claims Services, Inc.; Bruce Kadzban, P.E., Manager of MDOT LAP Rural & Enhancement Program; Jeff Silagy, Transportation Specialist at Michigan DEQ; Ron Young, P.E., retired Engineer-Manager from Alcona County Road Commission; and Kurt Zachary, P.E., Construction Program Manager for FHWA Michigan Division.

For more information about the challenge, including summaries of all entries, please visit www.MichiganLTAP.org/GreatIdeas. ■



Proof: Training Saves Budget

Don Bruey, Public Works Director (retired)
City of South Jordan, Utah



Steve Sutton, technical support specialist at AIS Equipment in Lansing, teaches a variety of mechanics' workshops for Michigan's LTAP. "Training the crew in the shop is always a good investment," Sutton says. "These men and women are responsible for some of the most expensive equipment on the road; proper training is critical."

This article originally appeared in the March 2013 issue of APWA Reporter. Reprinted with permission.

As public works managers we are always seeking ways to save money and improve our levels of service. This is the story of how one city, in the face of budget restrictions, funded training that successfully achieved both goals. Yes, the City of South Jordan, Utah, found a way to keep training going with a reduced overall budget, saved money and increased its service levels. How did they do it?

First, it began with the introduction of an award-winning safety program. Why safety first? There were three good reasons. The program saved money by reducing costly equipment damage and loss. This resulted in the savings of over ten thousand dollars alone in the first year. Next, it reduced the number of lost workdays due to personal injuries. In fact, in the first year of the program they saved the equivalent in lost man-hours of two full-time positions.

Another major benefit derived from this program was an increase in employee morale. The program was coached in a way that said, "This organization cares about you and your well-being." That created an instant understanding and bonding between employees and leadership. By including employees in the process as part of a Safety Council, it bought buy-in and cooperation.

This program required internal training and time with minimal costs but was well worth the efforts. As an unexpected bonus, the City received the lowest increase in annual insurance rates in the entire State of Utah, saving tens of thousands of dollars! The safety program won the American Public Works

Association (APWA) Safety Program Award two years running.

Public works then developed a career path program that required the attainment of advanced certifications, training, and skills for each step from basic maintenance worker through the leadership staff. The program was presented to the City Manager with the projection that the training would produce additional savings and increased levels of service. The program was funded from part of the savings generated from the safety program and insurance cost savings. The program was approved and implemented in the next budget year. An annual training plan that included managerial and leadership programs as well as technical training was created and implemented with near immediate positive results.

division calibrated their salt spreaders. That reduced the cost of salting during snow events from \$3.48 cents per lane mile to \$2.53 cents. He also learned about mixing red and white salts to work more effectively based on weather conditions. That also improved service level by improving efficiency and effectiveness of road salting.

Second, the employee learned about the advantages of pre-wetting roads with salt brine. He and his coworkers presented a proposal to build and utilize a brine system. When the numbers were crunched, they were given the go-ahead to design and build the system and dispensers. This program further reduced the cost of salting from \$2.53 cents per lane mile to \$1.15 cents. The mixing,

An annual training plan that included managerial and leadership programs as well as technical training was created and implemented with near immediate positive results.

First, the employee responsible for the streets sign program attended a class on a computerized sign-making machine. He did his homework and brought a plan forward to purchase the computer program and bring sign-making capabilities in-house. By implementing his plan, South Jordan saved nearly 25 percent of the annual sign budget including the startup costs that first year and is now replacing signs in a matter of hours rather than weeks.

Next, they sent a streets lead-worker to the annual APWA Snow Conference. He came back with multiple ideas. First, the

storage and pumping plant was constructed in-house as were the dispensing systems for mounting on multi-use hook trucks that replaced limited-use 10-wheelers and bobtails (a plan developed by the Fleet Division to reduce fleet costs and improve usability of fleet assets). For the cost of less than \$40,000, the City will save more than that annually.

Another idea came from the concrete crew. Rather than tearing out and replacing damaged sidewalks, they proposed to purchase a pumper that raised sunken sidewalks. The cost was \$15,000 to start up

► continued on next page

Training

and allowed a two-man crew to repair more sidewalk in a week than a full crew of six could replace in a month for a fraction of the cost. This idea came forward after attending a local training session on concrete care and replacement.

Their latest program came in the form of building a dispenser for GSB-88. In the never-ending struggle to keep roads in good repair, the City has a treatment program designed to extend the service life of its roads. Part of the program calls for treating roads with regenerating agents. A bid was let for GSB-88 that came in at 11 cents per square foot. When the Streets Division manager and his staff came up with the plan to build their own dispenser and put the numbers to it they determined that they could do the treatment for 4.3 cents per square foot and build the dispenser for \$6,000 to be used on the same hook truck as the brine dispenser. They saved more than the cost of the system on their first job.

I give great credit to the right-headed thinking of the South Jordan leadership to continue to invest in training that has proven to pay continuing dividends in cost-effective and service level improvements in the face of tough budget decisions. I also give great credit and thanks to the young men and women that have taken that training and put it to great use. The benefits will be realized by the residents of South Jordan for years to come. It pays to train! ■

Need more proof?

In March 2004, Harvard Business Review® published the results of a real-life investment experiment that compared the performance of the S&P 500 market index to three different stock portfolios made up of companies that spent aggressively for employee development. Over a 25-month period, the three portfolios of development-oriented companies outperformed the S&P 500 by 17 to 35 percent. The coordinators of the experiment concluded that "... organizations that make extraordinary investments in people often enjoy extraordinary performance on a variety of indicators, including shareholder return." (see <http://hbr.org/2004/03/hows-your-return-on-people/ar/1>).

LTAP Expands Loan Program

Belle Wirtanen, Technical Writer/Business Associate
Center for Technology & Training

It's not practical to purchase an expensive tool if you only use it once in a while—especially when you're working within the constraints of a tight road agency budget. Tool rental is a feasible option, but even that has a related expense. When the opportunity arises, borrowing tools is quite attractive. This is why Michigan's Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) has expanded its loan program to include a RetroSign GR3 retroreflectometer—a "Safety Edge" paving shoe, and several expensive engineering and design manuals.

Retroreflectometer



A retroreflectometer provides agencies the means to accurately and consistently assess the condition of signs; it removes the subjectivity of visual sign inspection. A major drawback to using a retroreflectometer is the high initial investment. The purchase price of a new one is \$8,000 to \$15,000, depending on optional features.

The RetroSign GR3 retroreflectometer can help agencies meet sign retroreflectivity requirements set by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The device is equipped with features that allow for easy measurement and data collection, such as an extension pole for tall signs; GPS for tracking sign locations; and memory storage for data collection.

The retroreflectometer is available on loan to Michigan road agencies for two weeks at a time. Users must complete a short training presentation prior to receiving the equipment. The training covers storage, care, operation, and managing collected data. Borrowing agencies are responsible for shipping costs, and are advised to purchase shipping insurance due to the high value of the equipment. For all details, see www.michiganltap.org/retroreflectometer-loan-program.

Safety Edge



The Shoulder Wedge Maker™ (SWM) manufactured by TransTech Systems, attaches to a paving screed to create a 30-degree

tapered edge on new pavement. The tapered edge, referred to as a Safety Edge™, allows vehicles to safely transition from the roadway shoulder back to the paved surface. (For information about the implementation of the Safety Edge by local agencies in Michigan, see Issues 25.2 and 26.3 of *The Bridge*).

Michigan's LTAP received an SWM through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Technology Partnership Program. The SWM is available for use by Michigan agencies, free of charge. The only expense is for shipping. For details, please call the CTT office at 906-487-2102.

Publications and Video Library



The Highway Safety Manual (HSM), first edition is a recent addition to the LTAP publications and Video library. Developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), this three volume manual details scientific tools, methods and procedures that can help agencies identify high risk crash areas, quantify the potential benefits of improvements, and predict the safety impact that a possible design change would have on a road system.

The safety benefits of implementing the HSM approach to traffic safety planning far outweigh the book's purchase price (\$390 for the paperback version). However, agencies can borrow a copy of the HSM free of charge before making the commitment to purchase.

The HSM and several other publications and videos can be loaned to Michigan agencies for a period of up to three weeks. The only expense is for return shipping.

For a complete list of available publications, please see www.michiganltap.org/publication-list. For a list of available videos, see www.michiganltap.org/video-library. ■

The Bridge

Bridging the gap between research and practice since 1986

Vol. 27, No. 1 – June 2013

- Road Commissions “Like” **Facebook**
- Excellence in Snow and Ice Control
- Operations Showcase & Facility Tour
- Winners of the Great Ideas Challenge
- Training Saves Budget
- LTAP Expands Loan Program



Michigan's Local Technical Assistance Program

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Houghton, MI 49931-1295
906-487-2102

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49931

Upcoming Events

(details at www.MichiganLTAP.org)

Workshops and Conferences

Every Day Counts Exchange - Session 4
Traffic Incident Management

June 19 – Dimondale

Operations Showcase and Facility Tour

June 20 – City of Novi Department of Public Services

July 17 – Jackson County Department of Transportation

2013 Asset Management Conference

Oct 24 – Escanaba

2013 Michigan Winter Operations Conference

Oct 16-17 – Gaylord

Webinars

Presentation Skills

July 30 – 10:00 to 11:00 AM

Aug 1 – 1:00 to 2:00 PM

Prizes Awarded for Survey Participation



As administrators of Michigan's Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), we depend heavily on user feedback to help shape the direction of training events, technical assistance efforts, and other technology transfer activities. Your advice and comments are extremely valuable to us, which is why we are willing to pay for them.

Four people earned “LTAP Bucks” certificates for participating in recent training development surveys conducted by the Center for Technology & Training.

Jim Compton (Hydrology Engineer – City of Marquette) won a \$50.00 certificate for submitting a suggestion for a presentation to be delivered at the 2014 Michigan Bridge Conference. Compton was chosen by random drawing from among 27 people.

Alan Flak (Project Engineer – Tetra Tech), **Rita Levine** (Engineer – Michigan Department of Transportation), and **Doug Mills** (Engineer/Manager – Baraga County Road Commission) each earned \$75.00 certificates for responding to a survey about the Michigan Bridge Load Rating Program. Flak, Levine, and Mills were chosen by random drawing from among 43 entrants.

LTAP Bucks certificates can be used to cover part or all of the registration fee for any training event sponsored by the CTT or Michigan's LTAP.

If you would like to offer your expertise and opinions for future surveys, please call or email the CTT at 906-487-2102 or ctt@mtu.edu.