

A Message from the Commissioner

Hello Team!

Last month, an incident occurred in the LaPorte District that serves to remind us of the importance of what we do – even when it ends in tragedy – and the value of being prepared.

On Aug. 15, two Hoosier Helpers were dispatched to eastbound I-80/94 in response to a report of a vehicle that may have been struck by a semitrailer tire. When Hoosier Helper Stephen Pavlinac arrived, an unconscious male victim was lying on the ground, visibly injured, and not breathing. Stephen checked his pulse then started CPR. Hoosier Helper Scott Brown soon arrived and retrieved the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) from his vehicle and cut away the victim's shirt. Together, they attached the AED pads, followed the device instructions, and Stephen continued CPR until Hammond Fire and Paramedics arrived.

Unfortunately, the victim of the accident later died. However, the actions of Stephen and Scott gave the motorist several more days of life and enabled his relatives time to gather and say their final farewells.

Steven Johnson, Incident Response Manager at the Borman TMC, called out the actions of his Hoosier Helpers: "Stephen and Scott have my gratitude in doing what they do, with no glitz or glamour."

"Hoosier Helpers may have to render first aid to a gunshot victim and, five minutes later, check on a motorist and change a tire, but they show up every day, wearing a smile and a willingness to put it on the line for the customers and INDOT," Johnson said. "It is for these reasons and many others that we should take each opportunity to show our gratitude to those who risk their lives to save lives daily."

I can't tell you the number of times that our Hoosier Helpers or truck drivers have been hailed for responding to a roadway emergency – whether it's to corral a wayward animal, respond to a vehicle crash or emergency bridge strike, or assist a stranded motorist. Everything they do matters.

It's vitally important that all of us – whether we work on the road or in the office – are prepared for every type of emergency. As public employees, being prepared is part of all our jobs.

We can't all be Hoosier Helper roadway heroes, but we all can prepare to be prepared. Take the time to learn CPR, basic first aid, and how to use an AED and to recognize the symptoms of a stroke or heart attack.

Each district and Central Office regularly offer CPR/first aid/AED courses, which often involve a mix of online and hands-on instruction. This training increases our agency's emergency preparedness. For example, all Seymour District and approximately 400 Greenfield District employees have taken these life-saving classes. If you haven't taken this training, I urge you to contact your office or district safety administrator.

At INDOT, we like to say that safety is our highest priority. This is true whether you're working on a jobsite, driving a truck, or meeting in a conference room. You can improve safety, on or off the job, by being prepared and ready for the unexpected.

We expect this every day from our Hoosier Helpers, and each of us should expect it from ourselves. Stay safe.

Mike

Office Workers Wrangle Vehicles in Non-CDL Roadeo

Think walking a mile in someone's shoes is tough? Try driving in their oversized vehicles.

2023 AGENCY GOAL SPOTLIGHT
Enhance Internal Services

Fort Wayne District office workers learned first-hand how difficult it is to maneuver INDOT trucks in the inaugural Fort Wayne District Non-CDL Roadeo in mid-September.

A [regular Roadeo](#) is a snowplow-driving competition, among district Winter Operations staffers, that mimics real conditions and uses barrels, cones, and other obstacles to test driving maneuvers.

“Creating a competition for non-CDL employees gave us a great opportunity to expand operational knowledge of the district,” said Fort Wayne Subdistrict Operations Manager Jason Bruce, who helped organize the event. “It enabled other departments to see the types of equipment that our Operations team uses and highlight the skills necessary for safe, effective execution of our work plan.”

Additionally, subject-matter experts were positioned at each competition station to give a general overview of the equipment while providing an opportunity for office workers to ask questions.

To make the competition more relevant to office employees, the Non-CDL Roadeo included more than just trucks. The four competitive stations were:

- **Plow Truck Diminishing Clearance:** Operate a single-axle dump truck with front plow by maneuvering it down a straight path through cones.
- **Plow Truck Backing:** At the end of the diminishing clearance course, back up to the start point without hitting the cones.
- **Sedan Alley Backing:** Back a state-issued car without hitting cones and come as close as possible to a barricade without hitting it.
- **Pre-trip Inspection of a Pool Vehicle:** Learn what a basic walk-around of a state-issued car entails.

The plow-truck competition was intimidating to most participants, but a CDL-issued INDOT employee was in the passenger seat to prep and coach each contestant. Also, the cones were placed slightly wider than those positioned in the regular Roadeos.

“I should have used the backup camera more instead of looking at the side mirrors,” said Fort Wayne Subdistrict Administrative Assistant Kathy Jackson. “I hit four barrels backing up. But I liked driving the truck. I can see how, if you drive it long enough, you can master it. This helped me be less intimidated by the truck.”

The sedan alley-backing station simulated real-world hazards in a controlled environment and proved vexing for some. Participants had to back up on a curve before trying to get as close to a “Road Closed” barricade without hitting it. Angola Unit Supervisor Bob Hamilton graded contestants by deducting points for hitting cones and repositioning the car. No points were deducted if the driver parked the vehicle within 6 inches of the barricade,



Fort Wayne District Operations Support Administrative Assistant Erin Hunter drives a snowplow down a straight path through cones.

but drivers were penalized for each 6-inch increment from that goal.

“I have a new respect for those who alley-back with a truck,” said Fort Wayne District Construction Engineer Adama Samba. “Even with a car, I thought that the path was too narrow. Luckily, I knocked down a bunch of cones and not people!”

The pre-trip inspection station was educational because most employees don’t pay attention to the details when picking up a state-issued vehicle.

Fort Wayne Subdistrict Equipment Leader Dave Aspy educated the non-CDL employees about the importance of checking fluids, lights, signals, wiper blades, interior gauges, tire bulges, dents, and more. Participants were given a flashlight for the 7-minute timed inspection and told that they would be given five bonus points for each of the four defects that they could find. The defects were a missing license plate, oil dipstick, and washer fluid cap, and a jack placed under a front tire.

View a [video](#) of Fort Wayne District Traffic Engineer Dana Plattner’s reaction to the missing oil dipstick, Fort Wayne District Logistics Director Eric Bass’ alley-backing performance, and the day’s other activities.

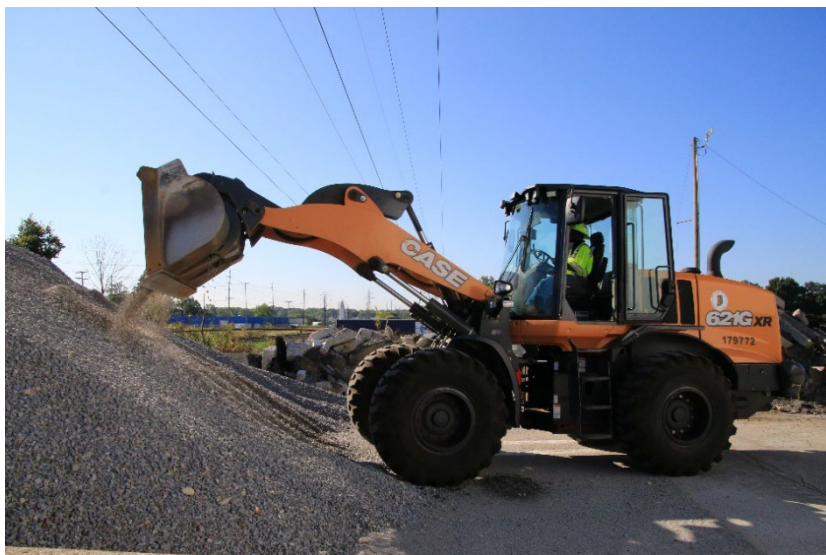
Technical Services Testing Engineer Daniel Jones was the overall winner with an average score of 95.75 for all four stations. Maintenance Highway Engineer Alex Zembala finished second at 92.5 followed by Bass at 92.25. The average score was 77.99. Zembala received the only perfect score for alley backing, six individuals had perfect scores for both plow truck categories (diminishing clearance and backing), and Zembala received the highest score for pre-trip inspection with 95.

District Director of Stakeholder Services Britt Salay (right photo) learns how to drive a loader; District Construction Engineer Adama Samba uses the loader to drop sand into a sandpile.



Besides the four competitions, employees could see what it’s like to drive a skid steer through a serpentine course and drive a loader to a pile of sand, lower the bucket to scoop sand and then dump the sand.

“I was a bundle of nerves and a ball of anxiety in the loader, even though I was driving it around 2 mph,” said Fort Wayne District Director of Stakeholder Services Britt Salay. “You’re up so high and there are so many buttons. I’m grateful that INDOT has skilled people to operate these pieces of equipment.”



Volunteers set up other equipment, as well, for non-CDL drivers to climb in to discover blind-spot visibility. Elsewhere at the district complex, INDOT vehicles and traffic barrels were set up to mimic an interstate work zone. This enabled onlookers to see how a taper works and witness how much space is between the work-zone vehicles and barrels. Crews had painted the yellow lines and the white skip lines in the lot just days before the competition; this area now can be used for training new personnel or putting on refresher courses for how to properly set up a work zone.

Nearby, the Traffic Division set up an open

house to educate others about panel signs, the inner workings of a traffic-signal cabinet, and how a paint truck works.

Later, participants had the chance to buy lunch from four food trucks — the first time that food trucks had ever been offered in the district. Bruce informed the Indiana State Police (ISP) about the food trucks, and ISP personnel made the trip to enjoy the offerings.

“Not only did the Non-CDL Roadeo and food trucks open up doors across different departments in the Fort Wayne District, but it also opened doors with other state agencies,” said Bruce.

The committee that produced ideas for the activities consisted of Jason Caskey, Luke Wilson, Drew Pearson, Aubrea Jones, Josh Crider, Alex Zembala, and Bruce.

“The Non-CDL Roadeo is just one tool to break down organizational silos to create alignment and buy-in,” said Bruce. “Employees who are engaged in the workplace have increased job satisfaction. Also, this was a great opportunity to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes. When we can appreciate the perspective that the other person brings, then we can truly create an inclusive environment where everyone belongs and feels valued.”

To view more photos, click [here](#).

Talkin' 'Bout ~~My~~ Our Generation(s)

“A Baby Boomer, Gen Xer, and Millennial walk into an INDOT building” sounds like the setup line for a funny joke, but it’s simply the truth.

2023 AGENCY GOAL SPOTLIGHT
Enhance Internal Services

Every day, employees from different generations interact with one another at INDOT.

“For the first time ever, there are five generations in the workplace,” said Equity & Inclusion Program Director Kerrie Leonard. “Generations have different styles and strengths, and it’s important to bridge the gap to create an inclusive environment and successful multigenerational workplace.”

To that end, Leonard is leading Generational Differences workshops at Central Office that any INDOT employee may attend. Additionally, Leonard can present the 2½-hour seminar in the districts; simply visit the [Inclusion & Belonging webpage](#) to see all workshops available and fill out a request form. Workshops are capped at 12 attendees.

The five generations in the workplace are the Silent Generation (those born between 1928-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997-2010).

INDOT employees representing all but the Silent Generation attended Leonard’s session in late August. They learned a lot about the generations and one another.

The workshop began with an icebreaker exercise: Teams of three shared what was trendy when they were in high school. One of the threesomes was Communications Graphics & Video Coordinator Kieran Simmer, Communications Program Director Kevin Cole, and Environmental Manager Dawn Alexander. Simmer, from Generation Z, mentioned that Jordan sneakers were popular when he was in high school, prompting the other two Gen Xers in the group to point out that Jordans first become popular when they were in high school. Materials and Tests Highway Engineering Assistant Bernard Shepherd later chimed in that his daughter wears the newest Air Jordan model.



Kerrie Leonard (top photo) leads a Generational Differences workshop; attendees participate in an icebreaker exercise (bottom photo).



Such commonalities provide a shared baseline of knowledge and experiences for successful collaboration across generations. Leonard’s workshop provided tips on how to do that. First, though, she educated the audience about the characteristics of different generations and why they exist, areas of friction between generations, and strategies to resolve differences between generations and foster cooperation at work.

The workshop tied into INDOT’s vision and mission and featured plenty of audience interaction and breakout discussions. It touched on stereotypes and assumptions and how to bridge the gap between generations for an inclusive environment.

“The workshop helped remind me that, when working with folks who differ from me, not to stereotype people into certain groups,” said INDOT Attorney James Boyer. “People are individuals, and I must get to know people on an individual basis rather than based on any preconceived characteristics common to whatever generational group they may be in.”

Said Cole: “The workshop was a great way to get to interact with new people from around the agency, especially considering the wide range of ages. We all bring such different strengths to the agency, and it’s amazing how our differences can be such an advantage for us if we work together.”

Generation-Themed Session at Purdue Road School

At Purdue Road School in March, Highway Engineer Brian Shattuck teamed with Holli Buretta and Caroline Arnold of consultant Parsons to present the “Bridging the Generational Gap” technical session.

The trio conveyed similar concepts to those from Leonard’s workshop. Key takeaways were to not focus on stereotypes, respect coworkers’ preferred communication style, be flexible with communication, be willing to adapt, and think more about the individual instead of generational.

The Road School session featured plenty of laughter from the attendees. Shattuck (*photo, right*) explains:

“Mainly, I was upset because I was the one representing the older generation! Additionally, Holli and Caroline made a bet with a fellow employee on how many Gen Z terms that they could get me say. It was funny for the audience to watch a 50-year-old try and fit phrases like ‘Rizz,’ ‘Slaps,’ and ‘Glow Up’ into normal conversation.”



Football + Bowling = ITT Camaraderie

Maybe INDOT employees can't throw a football like Peyton Manning, but at least they tried.

2023 AGENCY GOAL SPOTLIGHT
Intentional Partnership

Nine staffers tapped their inner Manning during a team-building exercise as part of the Indiana Transportation Team (ITT) in late August. The ITT Greenfield District summer social took place at the Fowling Warehouse, east of downtown Indianapolis. Fowling is a mashup of football and bowling.

At the event, the nine INDOT workers and 56 consultants and contractors mingled over appetizers before entering a large, netted area that featured eight fowling "lanes." Twosomes competed against other duos.



Roland Fegan (from left) throws a football while teammate Rob Goldner watches during the fowling team-building event.

In fowling, wooden platforms with 10 bowling pins are situated 32 feet downfield from the players. Each twosome throws a regulation-size football and attempts to knock down all 10 pins. Like bowling, each match is broken down into frames. In match play, one frame is completed when all pins are knocked down on either lane. The team that accomplishes this first wins the frame. The game is over when a team wins two of three frames.

Accuracy in getting the football to hit the pins was an issue for many of the "fowlers," especially when just three pins or less remained.

"Most of my coworkers know that I'm a big Green Bay Packers fan, and until this season, the Packers had been quarterbacked by Brett Favre and Aaron Rodgers for the past 30 years," said Greenfield District Highway Engineer Supervisor Rob Goldner. "Let's just say that, after participating in this fowling event, I have a new respect for

the accuracy of Favre and Rodgers. In defense of my effort, though, Favre and Rodgers weren't throwing to 15-inch-tall receivers."

To watch a fun, NFL-themed video of the fowling event, click [here](#).

The ITT was collaboratively created in 2019 by INDOT, the American Council of Engineering Companies Indiana, and the Indiana Constructors Inc. to identify opportunities and collectively improve how they serve the citizens of Indiana. Besides an annual statewide partnering conference, there are seven regional steering committees that meet several times each year to monitor deliverables and create new tasks. In addition to these meetings, the ITT features social events for members to get to know their regional team in a friendly, relaxed setting. Social events support the final item on the ITT charter: Enjoying professional relationships and having fun.

Other social events in August were the Fort Wayne and LaPorte regional teams attending minor-league baseball games in Fort Wayne and South Bend, respectively. In November, the ITT Vincennes team will attend a minor-league hockey game in Evansville.



Sarah Reese (from left) and teammate Patrick Patterson watch a football hit a pin.

Participating in the fowling event were the Greenfield District's James Colonis, Kurt Courtney, Goldner, Sean Hendrickson, Cameron Maschino, Patrick Patterson, Sarah Reese, and Fielding Tipton, as well as Deputy Commissioner of Construction Roland Fegan.

"These events are just a great time to socialize and network with our industry partners when we are not directly discussing a problem," said Fegan. "Most of the time in my role, when I am involved in a project, it is to solve a large problem, meaning that we are not having much fun. I have had opportunities this year with these ITT events to enjoy our industry people more."

Among the contractor/consultant employees at the event were former INDOT employees Tom Carrow, Jim Earl, Kevin Hetrick, and Trevor Mills.



The view from behind Roland Fegan throwing a football at the pins.

Throughout the two-hour event, twosomes mixed and matched during their fowling competitions. INDOT's Fegan and Goldner teamed up early to take on Carrow and Mills, but later Goldner and Carrow formed a team.

E&B Paving Material Sales Representative Robb Melson started his position in July.

"Because I am new to the ITT, I found the fowling social event to be highly beneficial," he said. "I made industry contacts in a fun, informal

setting, which enabled me to get to know them as people, not just as job contacts. That is huge in this industry."

The ITT statewide partnering conference, attended by more than 600 members, has taken place in January at the Indiana Convention Center the past two years. This year, the event will take place Dec. 21 at the Indiana Convention Center. Registration for that event is likely to open in early October.

In the Mist of His Memory, INDOT Worker Recalls His Pet Gorilla

Whenever INDOT’s Adama Samba enjoys a banana, the years peel away. Suddenly, Samba is transported to his youth in Central Africa, where he had a pet gorilla named Mark.

“To this day, I think about Mark every time I eat a banana,” said Samba, a Fort Wayne District Construction Engineer. “One time while he was in his cage, I cut a banana and gave him a smaller portion. Being smart, Mark stared at me with his arms crossed, which made me feel sorry for him, so I attempted to trade my bigger portion for his smaller portion. He reached his arm through the cage and took my piece!”

Sept. 24 was World Gorilla Day, which prompted Samba to reflect on owning Mark as a pet while growing up in the country of Gabon. Samba was 2½ years old when his father impulsively purchased Mark from someone in a nearby village.

“Mark was a wild gorilla that was young and growing,” said Samba. “We treated him like a pet. He was kept in a 15-foot-long, 10-foot-wide, 4-foot-high cage much of the day to ensure that he wouldn’t destroy everything he touched. He was so smart. He knew his name; he would jump and make noises whenever I said it.”



Adama Samba’s pet gorilla was approximately this age and size during the one year the family kept it.

Samba grew up in an urban environment, but his parents’ house was situated on 3 acres of land. The spacious yard enabled the family to feel comfortable about letting Mark out of the cage to play. The family had found out the hard way that indoor “monkey business” was not wise.



Adama Samba

“When we let him out to play in the living room, he was so wild,” said Samba. “He couldn’t help himself from jumping everywhere and tearing things apart. He would grab the TV remote and just run away with it.”

Although Samba had siblings, he was the only family member who played with Mark in the yard — mostly “go-fetch and ‘fight’ games,” he said. Samba estimated that Mark was allowed to be out of the cage about two to four hours a day.

“Mark was so wild and free when out of the cage,” said Samba. “He knew when it was time to go back in the cage; every time I would start the process to corral him, he would try to run away.”

Samba’s friends had dogs, roosters, and ducks as pets. It is quite unusual to have a pet gorilla, according to Crawfordsville District Construction Project Manager Bernard Nartey, who grew up in the West African country of Ghana.

“It’s a very expensive and rigorous undertaking and may require a license,” said Nartey, noting that some adult gorillas consume 40 or more pounds of vegetation daily.

In 2001, less than a year after they purchased Mark, Samba's parents figured out that owning the gorilla was no longer sustainable.

"They realized that he was growing too fast and getting huge," said Samba. "We gave him away so that he could eventually be put back in the wild."

In 2014, Samba came to Fort Wayne to get a better education as well as more opportunities and experience in civil engineering. He secured a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Purdue University Fort Wayne. After two years as a civil engineer for the city of Fort Wayne, he arrived at INDOT in May 2022.

"Looking back, I appreciate my dad for getting Mark, but I am glad that he was placed back in the wild," said Samba. "I also wish that I had photos of Mark. Back in 2000 and 2001, we didn't have a phone with cameras. All I have are my memories."

A full-grown gorilla eats approximately 40 pounds of vegetation a day, including plants and fruit.



INDOT Employees Achieve Important Milestones

Every month, INDOT employees achieve certifications, licenses, and academic degrees through the INDOT tuition and license reimbursement program, which reimburses workers up to \$5,250 per calendar year for these expenses.

INDOT's tuition and license reimbursement program directly supports an agency goal to take INDOT to the next level by developing INDOT's 21st century workforce. All tuition and license reimbursements require preapproval by Talent Management. For more details, click [here](#).

These employees worked hard to achieve their career milestones, which were realized in August 2023. Be sure to congratulate them!

Name: Amber Marshall

Location/Position: Central Office, Real Estate Specialist

Milestone: Notary public license

In Her Own Words: I have always wanted to get my notary license but was not sure where to start because the process seemed to be confusing. Truthfully, I lacked the push to just do it. When INDOT hired me, acquiring the notary license was part of my job requirements, so I had to figure it out.

Once my team walked me through the process, I realized that it was not confusing at all. OOPS! The class was short and sweet, just how I like my trainings. I do like having the ability to help around the office when needed and help others, if asked, to notarize documents.

I am glad that INDOT gave me the push to “just do it.”

Congratulate Amber: Send Amber your best wishes for this achievement by clicking [here](#).



Name: Chase Schneider

Location/Position: Central Office, Major Projects Delivery Project Manager

Milestone: Project Management Professional (PMP)

In His Own Words: Obtaining the PMP was a bit of a gauntlet. I took the test in September 2020, which was the older version of the test. The current version, from what I understand, now focuses on “agile” versus “waterfall” project methodologies. When I took the test, it focused on the five domains: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring/controlling, and closing.

When I studied for the exam, I threw myself into every available study method that I could find. I signed up for a Joseph Phillips course on Udemy (which is still relevant for the new exam), referenced the Project Management Body of Knowledge guide, made notecards, downloaded apps on my phone, took practice tests, etc. Then every night, I'd study for around an hour to two. One thing to note is that I failed nearly all the practice tests, but even though I was failing them, I was still figuring out the testing style and the type of questions that I would be facing on the actual test.

I found that the best motivating factor for convincing myself to study was scheduling the test. I scheduled a date for the test and told myself, “OK, you've paid money for this now, you're invested, you have to pass.” Until



I actually set the date, I could never find the motivation, or I would never be consistent about learning the material. Once the date was set, it became very real, and I was determined to pass.

“Finding the motivation” is a bad way to put that. I would describe it better as creating a habit. Because to be honest, this material is very dry. It’s nearly impossible to motivate yourself to read the Project Manager Book of Knowledge or listen to Joseph Phillips for any extended period. So, you have to just make it a habit.

The actual test was a bit of a mind game. The questions were designed to test applied knowledge by describing situations and then applying the most relevant project process or sub-process. The length of the test and the time limit erode your confidence in what you know. So, when you happen upon questions that you’re not sure about, mark them and come back to them later. Many of the questions could be solved by process of elimination.

For anyone taking the test, make a habit of studying, be confident in yourself, and be sure to eat a good breakfast!

Congratulate Chase: Send Chase your best wishes for this achievement by clicking [here](#).

Tuition and License Reimbursement Requests

Tuition Reimbursement: Full-time employees with at least 12 months of continuous employment with the state of Indiana may be eligible for tuition reimbursement up to \$5,250 per calendar year! INDOT’s ITAP application enables eligible employees to submit their tuition reimbursement requests, upload required documentation, and track reimbursement progress entirely online. Launch the application by logging into your [ITAP](#) account and scrolling to the Human Resources section. For questions about submitting your reimbursement application or the tuition reimbursement policy, visit the [Tuition Reimbursement SharePoint page](#).

License Reimbursement: Full- and part-time employees with at least six months of employment with the state of Indiana may be eligible for the license reimbursement program, up to \$1,000 per calendar year. All submissions go through the [ITAP](#) application. Information on submitting a license reimbursement request or viewing the guidelines are available on the [License Reimbursement SharePoint page](#).

Construction's New Initiative to Build Trust and Accountability

2023 AGENCY GOAL SPOTLIGHT

Excellence in Core Service Delivery

With continuous record-setting years in construction, INDOT has been working toward improving its ability to deliver high-quality projects on time and on budget. To achieve this, the Construction Division established the [Construction Operations Improvement Program](#) earlier this year to implement a series of continuous improvement initiatives centered around developing people, utilizing technology, and optimizing processes.

As part of the Construction Operations Improvement Program, Construction is embarking on a targeted initiative to establish a culture of trust, accountability, and continuous improvement within the division.

This initiative kicked off in August and includes a comprehensive assessment of the current working norms, management practices, and behaviors within Construction. This initiative includes a culture survey, focus groups, and interviews with a cross-section of individuals inside and outside Construction. The results of the assessment will be the identification and implementation of tangible outcomes. These outcomes will drive meaningful change to our day-to-day experience.

Individuals who are asked to participate in these items will be provided with additional information in separate communications. We highly encourage participation; your feedback will serve as the basis for change and help us deliver the best outcomes for INDOT.

INDOT Construction Operations Improvement Program

Operating Model Continuous Improvement Progress

- 1 Be **scalable** to meet increasing project delivery requirements
- 2 Enable **proactive risk management** of the capital program

To meet the above goals, leadership has established the INDOT Construction Operations Improvement Program to **invest in our people, improve project delivery, and enhance our technology.**

Recent Accomplishments

- HT Onboarding Guide
- Certified Tech Program Teaching Material Platform
- "Quick Win" Testing & Inspection Recommendations
- USP for Pilot Non-Destructive Testing
- Proposals for restructuring roles and levels
- Action Items focusing on updating: Take Home Vehicle Policy, Employee Recognition, & Snow Plowing Communications

Culture Planning & Roadmap

Construction's planned initiatives / action items for 2023 will make structural changes; however, **Construction recognizes the need to also focus on its behaviors** to help maximize the long-term impact of its efforts.



In order to encourage the right behaviors, leadership will be performing a targeted assessment on INDOT's Culture to evaluate **ways of working** which will be used to form a roadmap to **enable change.**

What to expect

The assessment is expected to start this summer. We will be reaching out to solicit you and your team's **honest feedback**

- Culture Survey**
 - Targeted questions
 - Broader audience to capture trend & insights
- One-on-One Interviews**
 - Focused conversations on unique perspectives
 - Select Individuals based on roles & functions
- Focus Groups**
 - Conversations to gain a variety of perspectives
 - Groups of employees based on roles
- Roadmap**
 - Leverage data from surveys and interviews
 - Initiatives focused on improving culture

INDOT Construction Operations Improvement Program

Background

As the number, size, and complexity of projects continues to increase, **INDOT Construction needs to be able to scale its capacity to continue delivering high-quality projects on time and on budget.** INDOT leadership is prepared to make the necessary investments to change the way the Construction division operates and enable its employees to achieve success without burning out. KPMG was engaged to perform an assessment to identify improvement opportunities through interviews with stakeholders across the organization including DCDs, design engineers, highway technicians, area engineers, and more. The results of the assessment highlighted several opportunities to improve as the organization seeks to scale and grow.

Continuous Improvement Mindset

Construction leadership worked together with input around the state to identify **initiatives that would change processes and policies to take advantage of these opportunities.** These initiatives were then grouped into three programs focusing on how the organization develops people, uses technology, and executes processes to deliver projects (see right side of page). **The programs will allow INDOT Construction to adopt a continuous improvement mindset in order to address both current and future challenges.**

Next Steps

With the support of the Executive Team, a group of leaders within **INDOT Construction has formed a Steering Committee to guide the design, execution, and delivery of initiatives that will improve the organization.** The implementation of the first two initiatives started in Fall of 2022 with more initiatives to come as momentum builds. The first initiatives will focus on enhancing the training program through fit-for-purpose training and using a risk-based approach for testing and inspections to increase capacity and reduce risk.

Operating Model Continuous Improvement Programs:

Program #1

Investing in Our People

Program #2

Enhancing Our Technology

Program #3

Improving Our Project Delivery & Management

Central Office Employee Engagement Day Debuts

Nobody dropped down on one knee, popped the question, or slipped a ring on someone’s finger. But for more than 190 Central Office employees, engagement was top of mind on Sept. 6.

2023 AGENCY GOAL SPOTLIGHT

Enhance Internal Services

The inaugural Central Office Employee Engagement Day, at Fort Harrison State Park’s Garrison Inn in Indianapolis, was a huge success. Staff members mingled, learned more about one another, met new contacts, played games, shared lunch together, and left the four-hour event feeling closer than ever to their workmates and more cohesive as an overall group.

“This was a much-needed event for Central Office,” said Contract Administration Compliance Investigator Joan Widdifield, a 35-year INDOT employee. “This put us all together in the same room, and as Commissioner Mike Smith says, ‘We’re better together.’ I enjoyed conversing with coworkers who I have known for years and meeting new ones, including someone on their second day at INDOT.”

Inspired by the employee appreciation events in the districts each fall, Deputy Commissioner of Capital Program Management Lyndsay Quist spearheaded the inaugural Central Office event, but she had lots of help. Deputy Commissioner of People Services Angela Roosa, Executive Administrative Assistant Jenny Ziemer, and dozens of other volunteers planned and worked hard to make this a success.



Commissioner Mike Smith (far right) and some of the volunteers: Michelle Rogers (from left), Kerrie Leonard, Leigh Robison, Dan Dye, Lyndsay Quist, Angela Roosa, and Jenny Ziemer.

Upon entering the Garrison, employees could spin a prize wheel to win water bottles, hardhat-shaped stress balls, and more. Then, they could bid on several gift baskets, donated by Central Office departments and executive staff, during a silent auction. All proceeds went to the Central Office Employee Benefit Fund for next year’s event.

Jim Lesh (from left) and DJ Shaw win the euchre event.



A single-elimination euchre tournament took place in the Garrison’s ballroom. With skill and luck, Bridge Design Team Leader Jim Lesh and Bridge Engineer DJ Shaw emerged victorious in the friendly competition, which was organized by Construction Field Engineer John Ritter. Employees not competing in the tournament played other card games.

A golf scramble between four foursomes in the park’s Fort Golf Course resulted in four achievements: a first-place finish for Engineering Services’ Jon Paauwe, Utilities & Railroad’s Rodger Keller, Hydraulics’ Alex Schwingamer, and Management Information Systems’ Brad Crowe; a second-place finish for

Innovation and Process Improvements' Andy Brelage, Transportation Planning's Brandon Burgoa, Construction's Roland Fegan, and Local Grant Administration's Michael Cales; a longest-drive distinction for Innovation and Process Improvement's Todd May; and closest-to-the-pin award for Finance's Tracey Fuller. Right-of-Way Services Managing Director Jim Stark and Fegan organized the event.

"I'd say that Jon was the MVP of our team, but we would have had fun even if we hadn't won," said Keller.

Site Assessment & Management Team Lead Peter Washburn said: "I want to thank the organizers for a great time. I'd love to participate in the next golf scramble but only if Traffic Safety's Tom Ford isn't on my team again. We had too many laughs and distractions! Just kidding, of course."



Six employees tried their hand at fishing in a pond on the Fort Harrison State Park premises. Ecology and Waterway Permitting Office (EWPO) Seymour District Specialist Jacob Burskey (*photo, left*) caught the largest fish, a 12½-inch largemouth bass. EWPO Permit Specialist Taylor Davis (*photo, right*) checked in with the most fish caught at seven. The fishing team-building exercise was organized by Managing Director of Engineering Mark Bailey.



"It feels great to be at the top of the INDOT fishing rodeo podium. This is the culmination of almost 40 years of blood, sweat, and tears. I'd like to thank my wife, Ashley, for continuing to support me for the past 20 years in all my fishing trips and seemingly senseless gear purchases. We finally made it, honey! We're champions!" said Burskey in tongue-on-cheek style.

Gift cards for event winners were provided by the executive team. Lunch highlights included large hamburgers and thick lemon bars.

Smith spoke passionately to the crowd after lunch.

"This is a day that has been a long time coming," said Smith. "You all do important work. You're delivering, making people's lives better, and I want to sincerely thank you for all that you do."

Smith outlined the [agency's goals](#) and updated the crowd on how we're achieving them. He encouraged attendees to interact with one another.

"Find at least three or four people in the room who you don't normally interact with on a regular basis, and get to know them," said Smith. "Those are the types of relationships that you never knew you needed until you need them."

Mission accomplished, according to Widdifield.

"Those at my lunch table had conversations about food, restaurants, vacations, agency goals, our job roles, and so much more," she said. "The Central Office Employee Engagement Day was a big success."

For more photos, click [here](#).



After Deputy Commissioner of Operations J.D. Brooks (left) said a few words, Commissioner Mike Smith talks to the crowd.

LaPorte Project Manager Rises to the Challenge: 45 Tacos!

National Taco Day is Oct. 4, and perhaps no other INDOT employee loves tacos more than LaPorte District Capital Program Management Project Manager David Solorzano.

A Mexican native, he set a taco-eating record at a local restaurant by once crunching his way through nearly four dozen tacos in one sitting.

Solorzano, who graduated from Brigham Young University before moving to northern Indiana, began working for INDOT two years ago.



Here is his story:

My name is David Solorzano, and I am a taco eater. I was born and raised in Mexico, and even though I became an American citizen this year, I will always carry the culture and traditions that I learned growing up. I am proud and happy to share my roots and experiences with everyone.

David Solorzano today (right photo) and after the 2013 taco-eating contest (bottom photo).



One of the most peculiar stories I had when I was younger is that I set a taco-eating record in a taco restaurant in 2013, when I was 19 years old. Growing up, I always considered myself someone who likes funny challenges that would create experiences and good memories. I learned of this place called “Taqueria las Brazitas,” which is well known for selling each al pastor taco for 10 cents each (since then, they had the nerve to increase the price to 15 cents per taco).

The restaurant, located in Morelia, Michoacan, had a challenge in which if you ate more than 35 tacos, you did not have to pay for your tacos and got a photo taken of you to place on one of their walls. For this challenge, I had to train day and night (not really, more like going to the taqueria once or twice a week) for three months, which enabled me to devise a strategy to win the challenge. After many tacos, Coca-Colas, and Pepto-Bismol doses, I accepted the challenge to eat more than 35 tacos.



After fasting for an entire day, I sat at the restaurant, ready to face the challenge that would change my life. After 1½ hours, three bottles of soda, many napkins, and some anti-heartburn liquid, I was able to complete my challenge by eating **45** tacos (each taco had one tortilla, al pastor meat, onion, cilantro, pineapple, and a little bit of salsa).

Even though I would like to say this challenge changed my life and taught me so many things, it only gave me gastritis. Maybe I’m being a little dramatic, but I also get to tell this fun story even now, 10 years after that challenge. If I ever return to the restaurant, I’d eat about 10 tacos, but never again 45.

I also learned that, just two weeks after I achieved this amazing feat, my record got beaten by someone who ate 57 tacos (I was as impressed as you guys probably are). I might never eat as many tacos as I did that day, not even half as many, but I will always be happy to eat and enjoy them, as they are possibly my favorite and most beloved food.

Video Series Puts Employees in Touch with INDOT Leaders

In this month's executive staff video, Chief Legal Counsel Kate Shelby dives into explaining some changes to INDOT's Information Technology (previously MIS) Department.



*Chief Legal Counsel
Kate Shelby.*

Supported by ideas and suggestions generated by employee feedback during design thinking sessions earlier this year, these changes will help INDOT use technology better to fulfill our mission and meet agency goals.

At a high level, IT now will be divided into two departments: An IT Department, which includes traditional IT, GIS, and Data Science and Architecture, and a new Digital Transformation Department, which is charged with working with program leaders to improve data and technology services. Each program area now has an assigned Systems Analyst to deeply understand program areas and needs and to design tech and data solutions to help our teams work better. These new changes are already paying off.

Since November 2020, INDOT executive staff has been using video chats to better communicate to our workers statewide.

To watch Shelby's video message, or the entire executive video series, click [here](#).