



# Quarterly



## Improving Relations With Public Officials

*Editor's Note: This article is reprinted, with permission, from the Fall 1999 Road Business, the newsletter of the New Hampshire Technology Transfer Center.*

We frequently hear of the benefits of good communication. One important benefit for road managers is to improve relationships with elected officials, boards of selectmen, city councils, town councils, or whomever. These strategies will help keep lines of communication open between the road manager and other officials:

- Keep elected officials informed
- Act as a team
- Help board members to look competent
- Stay out of campaigns
- Be friendly with board members
- Define departmental responsibilities

### Communication

**Keep Elected Officials Informed.** This is the first step to improve relationships with governing bodies. Sheldon Morgan, Public Works Director in Gilford, said, "I keep the board apprised of Public Works operations through attending their meetings and by supplying them with monthly progress reports on various projects. Keeping them informed is the best tactic to use."

James Wheeler of Berlin reinforced this idea; "It's our job to properly

educate elected officials so that they can make informed decisions. With that as the primary objective, we need to communicate facts with honesty, integrity, etc. Communication is key. You may not always be able to tell them what they want to hear. However, as long as it is honest and is backed up with facts, they will respect you. Respect is what you want. An elected official can respect you and still not like you. That situation is much better than the reverse."

**Act As a Team.** The highway manager and board of selectmen are a team, working together to improve their community. As with any good team, compromise is essential. Team members must often negotiate to a mutually agreeable outcome. When road managers and elected officials make joint decisions, they should stand together as a team when the decision is announced. They should determine together what the message should be. Road managers should allow the board to pass on good news to the citizens.

**Help board members to look competent.** Ensuring that board and council members look competent is critical to the road manager's

success. Highway managers can do this by keeping the board informed and by being available to answer questions. As elected officials, board members will be more supportive if they understand what the highway department is doing. Informed board and council members will be more apt to vote with the highway department.

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Elected officials dislike surprises, particularly when they find out about highway department actions from the public. They appear foolish and often blame the Road Agent or Public Works Director.

Highway managers should help all board and council members. Highway department managers look competent by supporting whole governing boards to do their job effectively. If there is a disagreement, disagree in private.

When an elected official turns over a complaint to the highway department, the manager must treat it with importance. When the complaint is resolved, the highway manager should let the referring official take the credit. If it cannot be resolved to the citizen's satisfaction, the highway manager should provide a thorough explanation.

**Stay out of political campaigns.** Whether appointed or elected, road managers are municipal employees and public servants. Traditionally, government officials remain neutral in elections. In addition, if the candidate the road manager lobbies for loses, they then end up working for the opponent.

**Be friendly with board members.** This helps to breakdown stereotypes of highway employees. Mike Bobinsky, the former Director of Community Services in Dover, said he "invites city officials to special events such as Public Works Week events, lunches, retirement parties, etc. The Council needs to see employees and officials of DPW in the same light as they would view a police or fire operation."

Department heads should invite elected officials to functions where they associate with managers and crews as people. Functions with family members are especially effective. Even if officials cannot attend, or stay for a very short period of time, they will appreciate the gesture.

**Define Department Responsibilities.** Clear department policies effectively define responsibilities.

When policies are established and followed, the board and public know what to expect from the highway department. If there is ever a question as to why something was done in a particular way, everyone, from a selectman to a part-time seasonal employee, can point at a policy as a standard of operation.

Policy development can itself improve relations with elected officials and the public. As a decision making tool, policy creation allows the focus to be on an issue rather than on a particular incident or person.

Established job descriptions provide the same benefits as having written policies. The board and employee know what is expected of them without any gray areas.

### Other Practical Advice

If a Road Manager is having difficulties with their board, these steps can change the situation. Clear two-way communication fixes many problems. Road managers should also talk to road managers in surrounding communities. They can often offer a few pointers to make life easier. The following are examples.

Before bringing a proposal before a board or council, the road manager

should consider the likelihood of it passing. If slim, they should use the time to lay the groundwork. For example, they can take board members into the field to see problems. If this isn't possible, they can take slides or a video to show the board. Pictures can help to make a case. They can invite "experts" to speak in favor of the proposal. A concerned citizen or salesperson can be a strong ally.

Managers should be aware of the public perception of the highway department. Richard Lee, the Road Agent in New London and Selectman in Milan, suggests that equipment is kept clean and employees look busy. He said, "citizens like it when you care for your equipment and it doesn't look good to allow employees to lean on shovels." Also to maintain a good relationship with New London Selectmen, he keeps them informed of happenings in the highway department. He keeps paperwork up to date so he can answer questions as they arise.

Chum Cleverly, the Director of Public Works in Bow, said, "Don't take anything a Selectman says personally. Try to look at things from their point of view whether you agree or not. Try to have all your ducks in a row, and keep them informed."

Chum writes a lot of memos to his board. Then, when a citizen questions a board member, the board member is informed. This makes them look good and they appreciate it. He also suggests being specific when explaining needs of the highway department. Explain the costs of repairs and how doing something will benefit the town. Also, he suggests that road managers write and maintain good notes.

# National Transportation Week

## May 13-19, 2001

National Transportation Week (NTW) provides an opportunity for the transportation community to join together for greater awareness about the importance of transportation. NTW also focuses on making youth aware of transportation-related careers.

**For more information on NTW and its associated activities, visit their web site at [www.ntweek.org](http://www.ntweek.org).**

*In recognition of the importance of our Nation's transportation system to our national security and economic health, and in honor of the many dedicated men and women who have ensured its continued excellence through the years, the United States Congress, by joint resolution approved May 16, 1957 (36 U.S.C. 120), has designated the third Friday in May of each year as "National Defense Transportation Day" and, by joint resolution approved May 14, 1962 (36 U.S.C. 133), declared that the week during which that Friday falls be designated "National Transportation Week."*

—Proclamation of President William J. Clinton  
May 15, 2000

### ***National Transportation Asset Management Workshop — Sept. 23–25, 2001, Madison, WI***

“*Taking the Next Step in Asset Management*” will be the focus of the 4th National Transportation Asset Management Workshop, September 23–25, 2001, in Madison, Wisconsin. The workshop will be open for the first time to county and municipal officials, academic researchers, consultants and transit agency professionals, as well as to state DOT and federal agency officials. The program has been structured to address key issues and facilitate interaction across modes and agency types.

Attendees will participate in the process of setting the research agenda and planning the development of educational curricula in transportation asset management.

They will share lessons learned by state Departments Of Transportation, local governments and transit agencies. They will also hear the latest findings and recommendations of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Transportation Research Board (TRB) asset management task forces. The workshop will provide attendees with resources and techniques for overcoming obstacles and taking the next step in implementing an asset management program.

Transportation Asset Management is a systematic process of operating, maintaining, and upgrading physical assets cost-effectively. It com-

bines engineering and mathematical analyses with sound business practice and economic theory. Transportation asset management systems are goal-driven and, like the traditional planning process, include components for data collection, strategy evaluation, program selection, and feedback. This asset management model explicitly addresses integration of decisions made across all program areas. Its purpose is simple – to maximize benefits of a transportation program to its customers and users, based on well-defined goals within available resources.

The workshop is sponsored by AASHTO, Federal Highway Administration, National Association of County Engineers, American Public Transit Association, Midwest Transportation Consortium and the Midwest Regional University Transportation Center (MRUTC). For information contact Ernie Wittwer, Director, MRUTC, at [wittwer@enr.wisc.edu](mailto:wittwer@enr.wisc.edu).

# South Carolina's Highways

**Editor's Note:** The data on this page are from "Transportation Facts" published by the South Carolina Transportation Policy and Research Council

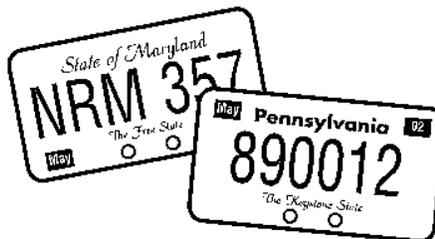


## Did you know?

- SC has the 4<sup>th</sup> largest state maintained system in the nation.
- SCDOT maintains 41,962 miles, 65% of the state's highways, compared with the national average of 21%.
- 23% of the bridges are substandard and in need of repair.
- 30% of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition.
- Highways should be resurfaced every 12-15 years. SC can only afford to resurface every 40 years.
- SC motorists spend approximately \$178/year in extra vehicle repairs because of potholes and roads in need of repair.
- SC has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest highway fatality rate in the nation.
- 77% of accidents occur annually on 2-lane roads.
- Widening a road 1 foot can reduce accidents by 12%..
- Widening road shoulders reduces fatalities by 20%.
- The SCDOT maintenance budget currently has no money for resurfacing of secondary roads.
- 60% of SC state roads do not qualify for federal funds.

State	Revenues/ Mile	State Maintained Miles	Maint. Funding/ Mile	Fatalities/ 100 Million Miles
AL	\$68,067	10,862	\$14,597	1.940
FL	359,668	11,927	35,563	2.054
GA	92,829	17,797	7,536	1.617
KY	42,272	27,418	6,995	1.842
LA	82,695	16,670	9,029	2.286
MS	57,873	10,636	6,864	2.771
NC	30,279	77,882	7,155	1.871
<b>SC</b>	<b>17,783</b>	<b>41,525</b>	<b>3,445</b>	<b>2.340</b>
TN	83,690	13,752	15,493	1.944
VA	39,001	57,232	11,785	1.323
WV	27,234	32,207	8,296	1.896
PA	85,951	40,162	27,029	1.482
<b>National Avg.</b>	<b>83,359</b>	<b>16,260</b>	<b>14,071</b>	<b>1.580</b>

## 100 Years of License Plates



Back in 1901, New York was the first state to require cars to have license plates. But, says Jonathon Upton of the Automobile License Plate Collectors Association (ALPCA), the state didn't issue plates, so motorists had to make their own. They used wood, leather, rubber, and other materials. Massachusetts was the first state to issue plates, in 1903. They were made of heavy steel, coated with blue porcelain enamel and white numbers.



## **SC APWA Conference & Equipment Show July 11–14, 2001 in Myrtle Beach**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual South Carolina American Public Works Association Conference and Equipment Show is scheduled for July 11–14, 2001 at the Ocean Dunes/Sand Dunes Resort Hotel in Myrtle Beach, SC. The conference will include technical sessions, an exhibit area/equipment show, the finals of the state backhoe competition, the annual business luncheon, and the annual banquet.

For questions concerning the conference agenda, contact Robert Anderson, at 803-733-8204. For registration information, contact Wanda Dunn by phone: 803-733-8458, fax: 803-733-8648, or e-mail: [projadm@columbiasc.net](mailto:projadm@columbiasc.net). Hotel information can be obtained by calling 800-845-0635. The cutoff date for the conference guest room rate is June 8, 2000.

*We look forward to seeing you in Myrtle Beach on July 11<sup>th</sup>!*

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### **ARTS Offers Seminar on Recycled Fill Materials**

*by Wendy Franzese, Administrative Assistant*

A series of three one-day seminars is being offered by the Asphalt Rubber Technology Service to introduce the basics of using waste tires in civil engineering applications. The first seminar was held the second week of April in Greenville, and introduced *The Basics of Rubberized Asphalt*. The topic of the May seminar is *Civil Engineering Applications for Crumb Rubber*. ARTS is pleased to have Dr. Dana Humphrey, Chair of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Maine, as a guest speaker for this event. Professor Humphrey teaches courses in Ground Improvement Techniques, Thermal Soil Mechanics, Foundation Engineering, and Advanced Soil Mechanics. His research in using tire chips as lightweight fill, retaining wall backfill, and thermal insulation has received national attention.



The *Civil Engineering Applications for Crumb Rubber* seminar will be held:

- **Charleston** – **May 15**, Radisson Inn Charleston Airport
- **Columbia** – **May 16**, Ramada Plaza Hotel
- **Greenville** – **May 17**, Holiday Inn Augusta Road

**It's not too late to register. Call the ARTS office, 864-656-6799, to register today!**

The third seminar in the series will be November 27-29, in the same locations, and will review the projects underway. Approved projects to-date include: paving for the South Carolina Botanical Garden, paving for selected sites at Pickens County Schools, and a rubber recycling project with Anderson County. Each of these projects will be covered in detail.

If you would like to be added to the ARTS mailing list, please contact Wendy Franzese, 864-656-6799, or visit the web site at [www.ces.clemson.edu/arts](http://www.ces.clemson.edu/arts) for more information.

## Video Tapes Available



These videos are available free for loan to individuals employed by any city or county government agency in South Carolina. Complete the form on page 7, and fax it to us.

**Loader-Backhoe Safety Series.** Talus Resources, 40 minutes.

**Tape 1: Operator Safety.** This tape is designed specifically for operators. It covers the most common mistakes and accidents involving these machines, as well as loading, transporting, utility dangers, and roll over accidents.

**Tape 2: Workers Safety.** This tape addresses the urgent need for a set of practical guidelines for the many other trades that work around the loader-backhoe on a daily basis.

**Trenchers: Stay Alert, Stay Alive.** Talus Resources, 13 minutes. This tape addresses the safety methods and correct practices for trenching machinery operation.

**One Too Many?** 18 minutes. This tape stresses the importance of zero tolerance with injuries and how to accomplish these goals. Stresses that any injury is one too many.

## Upcoming T<sup>3</sup>S Workshops

### Crack Sealing, with Demonstrations

Sept. 12 – Charleston  
Sept. 13 – Columbia

### Design, Construction and Recycling of Pavement Base

Oct. 16 – Charleston  
Oct. 17 – Columbia

### Asphalt Construction Fundamentals

Nov. – 12 Charleston  
Nov. – 13 Columbia

## Man vs Machine?

One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man.  
— *Elbert Hubbard*

Take away my people but leave my factories, and soon grass will grow on the factory floors. Take away my factories but leave my people, and soon we will have a new and better factory.  
— *Andrew Carnegie*

A pro is someone who can do great work when he doesn't feel like it.  
— *Alistair Cook*

## Languages of the World

There are approximately 3,000 existing languages worldwide. Based on population figures, the most commonly spoken language is Chinese Mandarin, followed by Spanish, English, and Bengali. Some other language facts:

- 🌐 More than 1,000 languages are spoken in Africa; more than 80 languages are spoken in New York City.
- 🌐 English is the only language that capitalizes its first person pronoun, I.
- 🌐 In the Hebrew alphabet, every letter also has a numerical value.
- 🌐 In Chinese, the ideograph that translates as “trouble” represents two women under one roof.
- 🌐 In most languages, the word for “mother” begins with “m.”



# Information Request and Address Change Form

To order any of the publications, videos, or other materials listed in this or other issues of *T<sup>3</sup>S Quarterly*, complete this form and mail it or fax it to **Sandra Priddy** at the address or phone number shown below.

**Transportation Technology Transfer Service  
Civil Engineering Department  
Clemson University, Box 340911  
Clemson, SC 29634-0911**

**Phone: 888.414.3069 (toll free)  
864.656.1456  
Fax: 864.656.2670**

## Videos

- Loader-Backhoe Safety Series — Tape 1: Operator Safety
- Loader-Backhoe Safety Series — Tape 2: Workers Safety
- Trenchers: Stay Alert, Stay Alive
- One Too Many?

## Other

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***This is a new address***

***Please add my name to your mailing list***

## Suggestions for Possible Future Workshop Topics

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**SPEED BUMP**

**Dave Coverly**



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