

Are we doing enough?

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Welcome to Boise, Idaho. I see a lot of faces here that I recognize as being from Boise, Idaho. And to you, thank you for being my neighbors and to all of you from other parts of our great nation and from Canada – “Welcome”. Idaho is a great state and we have a lot of great people. I was pleased to read your program section entitled, *About the Area*, on page 2. I hope that you will have the opportunity to go out and enjoy some of the things in our community and around our area. There are a lot of great things in this State.

I know you are here to talk about ITS transportation, operations and those types of things. I looked at the program and you are going to have some very good speakers who are going to talk about important subjects. So I really don't want to overwhelm you with my lack of knowledge in any of these areas. However, I would like to touch on a few things that I think are important.

I do have a few overheads [in addition to a PowerPoint presentation] and I will try to run through them quickly. It looks like we may be running just a little behind on our schedule, and I don't want to get you too far behind. ITS has to do with keeping people on time and on-schedule!

Safer more efficient travel. When we are talking about operations and looking at the national level, and when you think in terms of moving forward in the reauthorization and the kind of discussions that are going on at the national level, those two words are something that we are going to see a lot of. And, obviously safety is an arena that a great deal can be done through ITS (I am not here to quote statistics, but I think that we know that the federal rate on rural two-lane roads is somewhat like twice or three times what it is on major interstate routes). So when you think in terms of safety, and you think in terms

of the fatal rate on rural two-lane roads, and you talk about rural ITS, I hope that safety is one of those pieces that we can clearly put in there and make a significant improvement in for our citizens.

Efficiency is currently something that we are called upon [to practice] all the time in our Department. All of you where you work, the vendors who we just listened to, Federal Highways and everyone else – we need to be more efficient! And there are a lot of ways to become more efficient. One of them is to do things more quickly, to do them with better information, and to get it right the first time. This fits into the whole area of quality – get it right and get it right the first time. I think that we have a lot of opportunities there.

On this slide, I think that there is one thing missing, and I think it may be somewhat missing on all of our slides. September 11th something happened to the world, and we are part of that. It has to do with security and the role that we are going to be called upon to play, I believe, in an ever-increasing way. How are we in transportation (and I use the broader term of transportation) [affecting security]? What role can we play to make sure that we, our citizens, our employees, and everyone else have more security and that they are, in fact, more secure?

Anyone of you that work in a DOT right now or work in Federal Highways knows that we are all being called upon to put together security plans for any number of areas. Our Governors and our national leaders already call us upon to put together disaster recovery plans. I find that we are, while very knowledgeable, probably better in disaster recovery (as there are a lot of pieces already in place) than we are on the security side. How do you avert those kinds of things? How do we play a role in security? I really believe and the reason I'll mention it here today,

I feel that ITS and many of the components that you know about and some of the things that I listened to from the vendors have not really been integrated into a role that says; “How can we provide better security to our public that’s part of our transportation system?”

I know that you are all probably running through your minds right now, “I don’t know”, and I’ll just throw this out....How many of you have gone out and done real analysis on strategic bridges? Strategic to mobility, strategic to an area of space, strategic to the nation – you know we have Strong Net(?) which is a National Defense System. What have you done to try and make that (and I’ll just isolate it to a bridge) have a higher level of security? What kinds of things have you done? We have taken our bridges pretty much for granted. We have done a great job on bridge inspection. We know when it is cracked. We know when it’s deficiency rating goes below fifty. We know all this stuff from a foundation and structural component, but we have not done a great deal on how safe is that bridge in today’s environment with what is going on in our world. So I urge you to be thinking about these sorts of things.

I believe very strongly that we are going to be called upon more and more to be smarter in how we use technology to help us in this whole effort. We know the President has said this war is going to take quite a while. We don’t know what its going to be; or how its going to be, or what role we are playing. But I do know that we have a very critical component in this overall effort to make sure that we provide the highest level of security that we can without impeding upon our freedoms for our citizens and our commercial transport of materials and all of the other things that need to be out there – running and operating – on our highways. To those of you who have aviation within your department (which we do in Idaho) what do we need to do with the aviation side? There a whole lot of other features that go on around airports, airstrips, public airfields, private airstrips, crop dusters and on and on that we need to know more about. How can we make a difference there?

When I prepared the comments that I wanted to make today, September 11th was not on my radar screen so I have diverged. But I think that it is a critical issue. It is one that we need to rise to the occasion for...we need to do the job. I believe that the people in this room and the kinds of things we are talking about from an operations standpoint – because that is what we want to talk about – rural and operations are going to have to play a major and important role. I’ll get off of that, but I think that it is an important piece and I would have felt totally uncomfortable if I had not mentioned that; because I believe that may be the number one item on our list today among all the other things we are doing that are very important.

I heard Steve talking about communication between states, finding partnerships as we work toward understanding each other and getting that information and getting it right and doing the right thing. I think that was in your [Steve’s] introductory remarks. It made me think of a story I heard. It has been a few years ago and some of you may have heard it, but one night at sea there was a captain on ship that was proceeding along and he sees some light in the distance and assumes that its another ship and its heading straight toward him. So he gets his signal out and signals to the other ship, “shift your course 10 degrees east”. Pretty soon he gets a signal back, “no you shift your course 10 degrees to the west”. The captain comes back on and says; :I don’t think you understand, I’m a captain and this is a battleship.” The person on the other end says; “I don’t think you understand, I’m a seaman and this is a lighthouse.”

All that data was okay until we really found out what all the facts were. And then, I’m sure – I don’t know the rest of the story – but I’m sure that the captain went 10 degrees (if he was smart). So, having that ability to communicate, share with each other, and understand the partnerships [is crucial].

I am going to run through just a couple of things that I believe all of you in this room know and know really well. I just want to make a couple of points. We all know that congestion is an

issue. And we know that congestion – and perhaps, Steve, this is what you were alluding to – in large urban areas throughout the world and in this nation is a real big topic of conversation. We know that there are increases in VMT, there are increases in the number of registered vehicles, etc. And obviously that comes with growth, it comes with prosperity, it comes with our ability to have mobility. Idaho is no exception. That is all I am trying to say, we have experienced at least average growth in almost all cases, and above average growth in population and registered vehicles. All of those things are happening to us. But we are also a rural state; and when we talk about some of the ways we are going to manage traffic for mobility, it seems to me that more often than not we start talking about those urban mobility issues. I just want to make sure that I'm on record as stating...when I hear people saying that our nation's transportation system is mature (Have you heard that being said around the world?) I want to tell you its not mature in Idaho, and its probably not mature in a lot of the states that I see listed in this symposium today. And so, we need to continue to think in terms of "How do we provide mobility by all the things we have available to us?" And so much of that, I believe, can be in wants.

We still do not have an [electrical] transportation system, it relates to safety, it relates back to a whole other number of items. Is mass transit going to play a bigger role? Oh sure it is, I can't imagine that it's not. But, on the other hand, if I am in Challis and I want to go to Salmon (that would be two cities in Idaho about fifty miles apart), the chances of being in the mass transit system are just right between slim to none. I need mobility, I need safety, and we have the responsibility to provide it. We can help by managing with technology to make it a safer, more efficient journey, and I know that is what you are going to be talking about here today. My point in this slide is there are three legs in this stool and we don't want to loose sight of any one of those legs. They look to the future and how we are going to provide for our citizens, for our public, and our mobility. You can read the three legs of the stool right up there. I believe those are our future, and we need to

consider all three and make sure that none of them are being left behind.

I have a few slides of things that I think all of you that work in this (commercial vehicle electronic screening) [will relate to]. I believe that somewhere in this picture is a security element that isn't on my slide that we are going to see coming up in the future and how we deal with hazardous materials, how we deal with CVO and how we deal with who's going where and what are they carrying and what are they're motives. So that is an important piece and that is ITS.

CVISN [is] another area that we have been working on, and Steve, I think you've had a role in that. We have been working with obviously all of the ports – we have two now in Idaho – and will continue to work on that. Part of my observations, and its only an observation and I don't know if there is someone here in the room that can speak to is more directly, is I don't think we've got the benefit that is possible out of our automated ports. CVISN, weigh in motion, transponders, I think that we have somehow been able to really work hard on the technology side and probably work some on what does work and doesn't work, but I'm not sure that we have gotten all the players in this thing where they understand the benefits and that's really the second part that Steve described. That's an effort that goes beyond just understanding technology, but its about understanding who your customers are and finding ways to make your customer understand that there's value added for them and there's value added for you. And it's a win-win.

Now, I don't remember the breadth of membership for this conference, but I think that it went down to Arizona. I know that Flagstaff gets snow. Carol Sanger is here. Carol where are you? She is one of your speakers a little later on from Arizona. So not to pretend to poke fun at places I like to go in the wintertime, but [regarding] ice and snow...How do we deal with those areas and what can technology do for us? I've been around a while (you heard that from the bio that Steve read), and I can remember when our maintenance people and maybe our

state police were the only people out there who had communication and they had radios. In mountain environments, they all knew where they had to go – some little point on a ridge along the road somewhere – where they could communicate. And they were excited about it because it really helped in their work. We've come so far since then. Radios are better (we still use radios) cell phones [have improved], and we are moving into GPS now and a whole bunch of other ways of helping.

However, let me tell you, if you are on State Highway 12 and you are in an accident and you need that emergency vehicle and that emergency response team, chances are the only way anyone is going to find that you need help is if some maintenance person, or ISP person or maybe another motorist who has a communication device (they may have a cell phone, but there is no cell coverage there) [comes along]. The way you are going to get help is through a radio or through the ISP radio system. Think about that. You know that minutes make a big difference in people's lives when they are hurt. We can do more to help those kinds of situations. And again it is in fitting in with ITS. There are a lot of statistics on that, what do we spend, how many accidents are there, as we deal with winter maintenance and winter conditions. I believe you are going to hear more about in the course of the next couple of days.

At the bottom is an important statement. Research indicates travelers want more timely and accurate information. We have done a lot in road-weather information system(s) around the world and around the country. We have some installations that we've put in. I believe they have helped us a great, great deal in communicating with not only the public, but with our own people. [We are being] timelier in our responses, understanding better what is going on out there. This is ITS, now you might say Boise is urban – and it is for us – but most of these [solutions/applications] are really rural and I will show you a couple of others. These are the kinds of systems that provide the information that we can expand on significantly and help communicate with the public.

Avalanches, now not every state has avalanches, but we have one section of highway (its on State Highway 21) on that section there are 54 avalanches. They really don't care a whole lot about the fact that the road is there, or timing, or any of those kinds of issues. They just do what they want to do. You never know which one is going to do it or how they are going to do it. Having the data and information and communication of what is actually happening in that area is extremely important to our maintenance people for two reasons:

- 1) We need to know when to close the road (we try to close the road before the avalanches happens). Now that can get you in a lot of trouble with the public, particularly if you close the road and nothing happens. That's not good.
- 2) The other thing is you have, and we have, employees who we value who are out there working in those conditions. An avalanche is deadly, people can get killed, the public as well as our own employees.

So the more we can do in providing information, be it putting in weather stations, knowing more about the conditions (wind, temperature, etc.), very localized weather forecasts, etc., the more efficiently we can keep the road opened, keep it closed when it needs to be closed and make sure we stay out of harms way. So those are again efforts in a very, very rural area, quite frankly, but are critical to us and we have done a lot in that area.

I am going just mention it here in a minute, but "smart traveler, smart tourist". This is a great area for us in ITS and in communication to the citizens. To provide them with accurate information improves the effectiveness of not only our own traffic managers, but it improves the ability of people to know and determine whether to travel or not. How do we get out all this information? Now, this sign over here on the right, that is not very "ITSy", I know that. Two wooden posts, with a grayed piece of wood between. But it is in fact, part of what travelers want to know. They want to know where they are, what happened here, what are some

important pieces of information/history that have happened? We have made a real effort in Idaho, and I think it is excellent, (but I can take no credit for) in putting out these types of signs with very valuable information on them with turnouts so people can find out more about them. And there is nothing that says this couldn't be ITS. But that is where we are at in the State today.

Idaho road/weather report. We have had an unbelievable increase in the number of calls into our toll-free number wanting to know about road/weather conditions in our state. However, this system is no better from a communication system standpoint than the information that we get back from everyone else all around the state who feeds into it. You've got to get it right. But it's communication technology that allows you to communicate and collect all that and put it onto the website. We still have not done much on 511.

Carol [Sanger] is going to talk about CANAMEX. I think that CANAMEX, for those of you that are not aware, is an effort of the states of Montana, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and Arizona. Primarily on the I-15 Corridor until you get down to the Hoover Dam area. It partners with Mexico and Canada (Alberta). I hope, Carol, that you are going to talk about this SMART Corridor, because I think that the SMART Corridor is a really key feature of what we can accomplish (this is primarily a rural corridor). But what can we do, not only as pilot projects/demonstration, but to make a difference? I participated in this so I am a little bit biased. I was one of two individuals appointed by our Governor to participate in this, as did all the other states. I think that there were some really good things that came out of it. The infrastructure we need is still to come, but I think it is a great plan.

I'm going to quit with that. I have another hour, but...truly, welcome to Idaho, thank you for coming and I'm sure that you will share a great deal of pertinent information with each other. And I hope you'll leave here saying; "I can really go back home and do better things than I was because of this symposium." I want to

thank the organizers and everyone else for brining this to our State. Thank you very much.