

JANUARY 2012

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2012

Happy new year!

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PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE

DIRECTOR PAUL TROMBINO III

Iowa Transportation 2012 – In Motion

Happy New Year!

The new year has begun and there are many transportation matters “in motion” – reports on transportation revenue and system needs, program efficiency savings, operations budget management, the federal transportation bill, and fiscal year (FY) 2012 program adjustment to name a few. In this month’s article, my focus will be to begin discussing our broad strategic goals and how all these items in motion fit well into our strategic efforts.

All quality organizations use broad strategic goals to guide services to success. As we begin 2012, I thought it important to lay out our strategic foundation.

Today, we face economic uncertainty, funding challenges and a weakening condition of our infrastructure – like many states. In reality, there is a tremendous opportunity before us all as transportation is critical to the economic vitality of the state and nation.

The transportation system is in demand 24/7, 365 days a year irrespective of the weather or other conditions. Iowa’s transportation system is an integral and essential part of society, serving commerce and daily functions of all Iowans. A high-quality transportation system serves as the artery for economic activity; and the condition of the infrastructure is a key element for our future growth opportunities.

Expectations and needs on the transportation system are changing fast and have significantly shifted in the last decade. Transportation information is as important as transportation infrastructure. I believe a large part of the future is recognizing that information about the system is as important as the infrastructure we build. People and businesses expect real-time information on system conditions, and measured, clear, nontechnical and easy-to-understand performance results on the transportation system.

Broadly, our emphasis will be on the delivery and operation of the transportation system focused on the following strategic pillars.

- **Modernization** – improvements centered on long-term serviceability and comprehensive asset management
- **Mobility** – maximizing opportunities for travel choices through modal development and real-time, accurate information on the transportation system
- **Innovation** – application of new techniques and processes across divisions that maximize efficiency
- **Prioritization** – tactical investments in the system at the right time, capitalizing the return across the transportation system
- **Economic development** – transportation powers the creation of wealth in our nation and state via programs, projects and processes that enhance opportunities for commerce
- **Cost accountability** – delivery of all projects and programs ahead of schedule and under budget

The department will implement these strategic pillars across the transportation system by setting expectations for system reliability, resiliency, predictability and safety.

We have already done much on many of the key transportation matters I mentioned in the beginning of this article. On the revenue front, with the newly enacted Congressional federal FY 2012 appropriations, the department has adjusted its federal funding projections and added \$128 million in projects to be let by June 2012. As the FY 2012 highway program currently stands, the bid letting value will likely be in excess of \$700 million and the largest value of work on the Primary Highway System in the history of the department. This is very good news for Iowa. Enhancing our cost accountability for all these highway projects will also be a priority.

As many of you may have heard or read, Governor Branstad has directed the department, in conjunction with the cities and counties, to begin an effort to identify and capture \$50 million in efficiency savings from the over \$1 billion in

Paul's Perspective, continued on page 9

WeatherView update

"Beefier" ... that's how Tina Greenfield of the Iowa DOT's Office of Maintenance describes the updated WeatherView website.

WeatherView, a Web staple for Iowa weather buffs around the state for the past decade, combines data from roadway weather information system (RWIS) sites, along with aviation weather observing system (AWOS) locations, and displays the data graphically on a map.

As always, layers for weather specifics such as air temperature, wind speed and direction can be turned on or off by the click of a mouse. Greenfield says while the public will see no functional difference in the system this year, behind the scenes WeatherView has been gradually updated over the years and was recently moved to a 64-bit server to better serve the public.

Field maintenance supervisors and other field staff will have access to new additions to WeatherView. A sign-in option allows access to information on maintenance crew status



using crew reports. Greenfield said, "Right now this layer shows when the crew from a garage is out. In the future, we plan to use global positioning system (GPS) information to 'see' specifically where a truck is at any given time. This will help supervisors manage their resources and handle trouble spots more efficiently."

The future holds promise of further updates to WeatherView. Greenfield says the menu system will continue to be refined. "The left menus have been updated and reorganized to add more space for expanded menu items," she said.



TOYS FOR TOTS

Central complex coat drive a success



Deanne Popp, 2011 Toys for Tots chairperson, sorts the nearly 200 toys, games, books and other items that were donated this year.



From left, a representative from ACCESS; Iowa DOT Director Paul Trombino III; Vic Moss, Emergency Residence Project; Patti and John Nervig, Bethesda Coat Closet

The 2011 Toys for Tots campaign in the central complex and Motor Vehicle Division office in Ankeny provided a happy holiday season for many central Iowa kids. In Ames, 187 toys and \$7,793 was collected. In Ankeny, 62 toys and \$1,700 was turned over to the Marine Corps' annual campaign.

Ames complex event totals:

- \$3,552.50 – auction
- \$920 – baked goods/popcorn sales
- \$730 – soup lunch and popcorn sales
- \$495 – ornament and popcorn sales
- \$60 – cookbooks
- \$2,035.50 – CD sales and cash donations

Thank you to all the employees who donated their resources to these events. Your efforts truly make a difference to those less fortunate in our communities.

This year's Ames complex drive to collect gently used coats and winter gear provided the opportunity for three local service agencies to distribute more than 200 coats; 25 pairs of boots; and many sets of mittens, hats and scarves to those in need around Story County.

The coats were donated to the Emergency Residence Project, Assault Care Center Extending Shelter and Support (ACCESS), and Bethesda Coat Closet at Bethesda Lutheran Church.

In a thank you note to the Iowa DOT, Vic Moss, from the Emergency Residence Project, provided an update on his organization's work last year.

He wrote, "We were able to provide shelter for 644 people during our most recent year, the 26th since beginning operations. This was a record, but not one we were seeking. We also provided transitional, longer-stay housing in our family apartments for 44 individuals. Our nightly average was 55 people sheltered, about one-half of whom were children. Another 1,637 people in 624 households were helped to avoid evictions or secure another place to live after losing their homes. In some cases, help was given to avoid the loss of utilities. All told, more than 2,000 people were given critical assistance."

Thank you to all Iowa DOT employees statewide who participate in causes such as this coat drive to assist those who are in need.

Spirit of Giving

Family happenings

Design Judy Lensing



Michael Bennett, design technician specialist, and his girlfriend, Rachel Bicego, welcomed a daughter Nov. 7. Nina Kathryn Bennett was born at 9:20 p.m. weighing 7 pounds, 11 ounces and was 19.5 inches long. Mom and baby are doing great.



In memory



James Henry Kelly II's life ended much too soon in a fatal car crash Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2011.

He was born March 30, 1947, in Brooklyn, N.Y., to Joseph Sylvester and Rita (Heron) Kelly. His father's work as an attorney brought the family to Des Moines while Kelly was still a child. Kelly graduated from Dowling

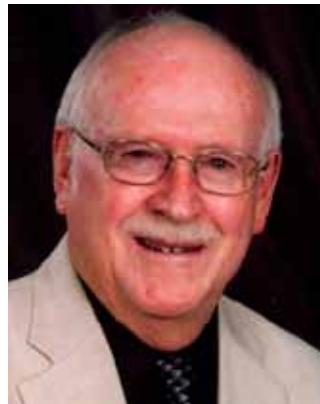
High School then Simpson College, later also taking classes at the Drake School of Law.

Though education was not his full-time career, Kelly's teaching degree allowed him to work as a substitute teacher for the Southeast Polk and Des Moines school districts. Like his grandfather, for whom he was named, Kelly worked for a time as a police officer, serving in the Norwalk and Des Moines police departments. He ultimately made his career for the last 26 years with the Iowa DOT as a compliance officer.

Kelly was a member of Lutheran Church of the Cross in Altoona. He was a frequent blood donor. He liked to watch New York Yankee's baseball and Iowa Hawkeye football. As an athlete himself, Kelly was a member of the Simpson College Football team, playing in the 1969 Mineral Water Bowl and was named to the 1969 All Conference team. More recently, he earned numerous gold medals in shot put and discus events at the Iowa Senior Olympic Games and Iowa Games.

Kelly enjoyed world travel, Irish music and classic movies. He will be remembered as a devoted family man who persistently tried his best and never gave up.

Those left to cherish Kelly's memory include his wife of 30 years, Lynn, and daughter, Jamie (Jason) White, all of Pleasant Hill; as well as two brothers, Joseph (Penny) Kelly and Gregory Kelly of Arizona.



Robert L. "Bob" Clites, 83, of New Hampton, died Wednesday, Nov. 23, at Mercy Medical Center, Mason City.

He was born April 5, 1928, in New Hampton, son of Leonard and Ora Jacobson Clites. He married Geraldine "Geri" Paulson Oct. 23, 1950, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, New Hampton. She died Sept. 10, 2002. He married

Diana Crooks-Reams Nov. 28, 2003, at Holy Family Parish – St. Joseph Center, New Hampton.

Clites was a 1946 graduate of the New Hampton High School. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps as a corporal from 1946-48. He worked for the Iowa DOT from 1948 until retiring in 1992. He had served on the New Hampton City Council from 1986 until his death.

He is survived by his wife, Geri; three sons, Greg (Anne) of Ann Arbor, Mich., Dave (Paula) of Lakewood, Colo., and Dan (Deb) of Garner; a daughter, Cathy (David) Wylam of Waverly; three stepdaughters, Danette (Jim) Kukkendal of Charles City, Dawn (Jeff) Hawbaker and Dixie (Luke) Blickenderfer, both of Floyd; eight grandchildren, five step-grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and a step great-granddaughter; and three sisters, Lorraine (Neal) "Tucker" Flatjord of New Hampton, Lucille (Vernon) Johnson of Rochester, Minn., and Joan (Chuck) Vikdal of New Hampton.

Healthy eating, active lifestyle transforms DOTer

Jason Clausen is not about to sugar coat it, three years ago he was fat, obese to be more precise. It was not always that way. Clausen, a training specialist 2 in the Office of Employee Services was a military veteran, receiving his discharge in 1996, after seven years of service. "When I got out of the military, I went to college and my wife and I had kids. I became sedentary," he explained. By November 2008, Clausen had ballooned to 300 pounds. "I felt like garbage," he added. "My doctor said I had high blood pressure and that was a ticking time bomb for me."

In addition to the health risks of carrying extra weight, Clausen's lifestyle was being limited because he was so heavy. He said the last straw occurred when Clausen tried to go sledding with his children. "I made it up the sledding hill once, but couldn't make it up a second time," he said. "I wanted to be able to keep up with my kids, no matter what they were doing."

Jason Clausen says he is uncomfortable looking at his "before" photos, but he hopes the images below inspire others to make positive lifestyle changes.

JASON BEFORE

JASON TODAY



In December 2008, five months after joining the Iowa DOT, Clausen decided to start walking and counting calories. "I knew I needed a lifestyle change, not a diet," he said. Clausen researched popular weight loss websites and chose SparkPeople.com because it was free and appeared easy to use. He said, "I found it was more than just free, it is a multifaceted tool that was simple to use."

Clausen said, "The weight loss journey became an educational process. With the website, I enter everything I eat and all my activity. I can set goals and track my success. I love food, but with this site I started to understand the calorie content of the food I was putting in my body and how much it takes to work off any extra calories. That worked for me and I use the site to this day," he said. "It has become a habit for me to track my eating and exercise this way. Not only did I gain an understanding of caloric needs, but I learned what nutrients my body wanted put in it to feel good and operate optimally. When I ate better over a long period of time, I felt better."

Three years later, Clausen is healthy and active and wanting to help others with their fitness quest. He says setting goals is the key to success. "You start with short-term goals like taking the stairs once a day instead of the elevator," he said. "For me, that first step was walking every day. Then my goals expanded from walking into jogging, and then running or working out on an elliptical machine."

One of Clausen's larger goals was recently realized as well. "Three years ago, I had a dream of working as a part-time police officer, but I knew it was not realistic given my size," he said. "Last summer, with a lot of hard work, I was sworn in as a reserve deputy with the Dallas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO). Today, I am privileged to work and train with men and women of the DCSO. As I trained over the last three years, I focused on the high expectations the sheriff would have of every recruit. I kept in mind that every push up, sit up, and step I took on a jog was a step closer to my goal. When I hurt or sacrificed, I envisioned myself attaining that goal."

Clausen has a message for the friends and co-workers he mentors, "You have to want to get healthy for yourself and then find a way to get there," he said. "I'm convinced that living a healthy lifestyle is 90 percent mental. There are always lots of treats and other food around offices at the Iowa DOT. You just have to have the mental toughness to look past all that and stick to your goals. What may seem like a sacrifice now turns into a benefit later."



HyVee.

Nutrition Notes

with Amy Clark



A few months ago employees were asked to submit questions to Amy Clark, a dietician for Hy-Vee. Here is one of those questions:

“Fibromyalgia is a diagnosis I’ve lived with for more than 10 years. Within the past year, I was tested for food allergies and had a positive reaction to gluten. Eliminating foods I’m allergic to has subsided my fibromyalgia symptoms. Is there a link between fibromyalgia and food allergies?”

Answer:

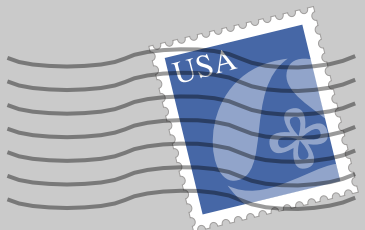
Let’s first define fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia is a widespread musculoskeletal pain disorder accompanied by fatigue, sleep disturbances, memory and mood issues. Symptoms can begin after physical trauma, surgery, infection and extensive stress. Other times, symptoms accumulate gradually over time. Other symptoms that occur with fibromyalgia include irritable bowel syndrome, chronic headaches, painful trigger points, anxiety and depression. Fibromyalgia affects an estimated 10 million adults, with prevalence much higher in females. Unfortunately, there is no cure for this disorder and it is recommended to see a healthcare professional to receive proper diagnosis and treatment.

Now let’s define food allergies. Food allergies occur when the body’s immune system creates disease-fighting antibodies (immunoglobulin E) upon first exposure to a food protein. When that food protein is eaten again, it triggers the release of antibodies, causing release of inflammatory mediators that act on body tissues, producing symptoms.

Symptoms include rash, hives, nausea, stomach pain, diarrhea, itchy skin and fatigue. Symptoms of a severe reaction include shortness of breath, tightening of chest, swelling of the airway, loss of consciousness or even death. Symptoms can occur within several minutes to several hours after exposure to the offending food. The only way to live safely with a food allergy is to completely avoid the food that causes the problem, so label reading is important. Food manufacturers in the United States are required by law to list the ingredients of prepared foods and disclose whether their products contain (or may contain) any of the top eight common allergens: egg, milk, peanut, tree nuts, soy, wheat, shellfish and fish. Recent studies have shown that approximately one in 25 adults is allergic to at least one food. There are several ways to diagnose food allergies and it’s recommended to consult with a healthcare professional.

At this time, there is no clear evidence to prove that fibromyalgia and food allergies have a direct link. However, some fibromyalgia patients’ earliest symptoms include digestive tract issues, which can be characteristic of food allergies and food sensitivities. Furthermore, there are food allergy symptoms that are not digestive tract-related, specifically fatigue, which is a symptom of fibromyalgia. At this time scientific evidence is not available to determine the appropriate dietary treatments for fibromyalgia. In this case where eliminating the offending food, such as gluten, was successful in relieving symptoms of fibromyalgia, food allergies could have been the underlying trigger of symptoms; however, determining this link is crucial under the supervision of a healthcare professional.





Kudos!

These are letters that have been submitted to the editor. They may have been edited for length and continuity.

To: Office of Motor Vehicle Enforcement
From: Joe Peska, 7G Distributing, LLC, Cedar Rapids

I just wanted to say how much I appreciated Motor Vehicle Officer Chris Boswell for coming to our locations and talking to our delivery drivers about their responsibility as CDL holders. Officer Boswell did a great job of explaining what a driver needs to know about pretrip and post-trip truck inspections, and what they can expect if ever pulled over by a DOT officer. I believe the information he provided was very worthwhile for our employees. It was great for our drivers to gain additional knowledge of Iowa laws and what they can do to prevent accidents while on the road.

As our company's training manager, I can talk to the delivery team day in and day out, but when the information is presented from an actual DOT officer it seems to sink in better.

With that said, Officer Boswell did an outstanding job of representing the Iowa DOT office and presenting the information. I would highly recommend other wholesalers and businesses that employ delivery drivers to do the same type of training.

To: Office of Driver Services
From: Lori Boley Hebler and Jared Boley

I would sincerely like to commend your employee, Debbie Blackford, for her consistent and extraordinary customer service with regard to helping my son, Jared Boley, with his endeavors in obtaining his Iowa driver's license after an OWI conviction.

Blackford has been patient, upbeat and unbelievably helpful in answering his e-mail questions. She has been prompt in her responses and always gave correct information, plus she has a great attitude.

In today's world this is quite an uncommon occurrence and it has been so appreciated! Our experiences with other organizations through this "mess" has not been pleasant or helpful - she was the only exception and deserves to be commended for her efforts.

(Editor's note: Debbie Blackford is an administrative assistant 2 in the Office of Driver Services' information center.)

To: Iowa DOT
From: Tom Moore, Grinnell

My wife and I travel I-35 north quite a bit, visiting relatives in Minnesota. Two rest areas we frequent are the ones on the west side at Dows and just north of Ames.

Yesterday, about 4 p.m., we needed a break and stopped at the one north of Ames. Just a chance to stretch, go to the bathroom and pick up some hot coffee from the machine. It was a raw day and gray.

I want to commend the staff working there. The place was spotless. Because our experiences are generally very positive, it has convinced us that from now on we will decouple gas stops and potty breaks when we are in Iowa. Finding a clean restroom in Iowa gas stations is dicey; depending on one at one of these rest areas is completely a given.

To: Iowa DOT
From: Bill Freidbert, Cedar Falls

I thought I would (for a change) send the DOT a compliment, instead of always a complaint about something. My compliment is about the quietness of your new paving. In years past, Iowa had some of the noisiest highways in the Midwest ... concrete that shrieked and howled at you.

But, now, you've apparently discovered a pattern that you scratch into the surface of the concrete that makes it really quiet driving! It works great. Now, your concrete is the quietest that I drive on anywhere! Good job.

(Editor's note: Since 1999, the Iowa DOT has been using longitudinal tining as opposed to the more traditional transverse tining on our concrete pavements.)

To: District 3 Office
From: Mary Habben, Sioux City

Sending many thanks to the Iowa DOT and crews for keeping the highways and interstates in the Sioux City-Salix area in good condition during the early December snowstorm. Also, the traffic cameras are wonderful. We were able to see the condition of the road and adjust our travel plans and delivery service accordingly. Again, thanks for keeping us all safe.

Top tips for keeping your New Year's resolutions

Chances are, at some time in your life, you've made a New Year's resolution – and then broken it. This year, stop the cycle of resolving to make change, but then not following through. Here are 10 tips to help get you started.

Be realistic. The surest way to fall short of your goal is to make your goal unattainable. Strive for a goal that is attainable.

Outline your plan. Decide how you will deal with the temptation to skip that exercise class or have one more cigarette. This could include calling on a friend for help, practicing positive thinking and self-talk, or reminding yourself how your bad habit affects your situation.

Talk about it. Don't keep your resolution a secret. Tell friends and family members who will be there to support your resolve to change yourself for the better or improve your health. The best case scenario is to find yourself a buddy who shares your New Year's resolution and motivate each other.

Reward yourself. This doesn't mean that you can eat an entire box of chocolates if your resolution is to diet. Instead, celebrate your success by treating yourself to something that you enjoy that does not contradict your resolution. If you've been sticking to your promise to eat better, for example, perhaps your reward could be going to a movie with a friend.

Track your progress. Keep track of each small success you make toward reaching your larger goal. Short-term goals are easier to keep, and small accomplishments will help keep you motivated. Instead of focusing on losing 30 pounds, say, focus on losing that first five. Keeping a food diary or symptom journal may help you stay on track.

Don't beat yourself up. Obsessing over the occasional slip will not help you achieve your goal. Do the best you can each day, and take each day one at a time.

Stick to it. Experts say it takes about 21 days for a new activity, such as exercising, to become a habit, and six months for it to become part of your personality. Your new healthful habits will become second-nature in no time.

Keep trying. If your resolution has totally run out of steam by mid-February, don't despair. Start over again! There's no reason you can't make a "New Year's resolution" any time of year.

Top four resolutions:

1. Increase exercise
2. Be more conscientious about work or school
3. Develop better eating habits
4. Stop smoking, drinking or using drugs (including caffeine)

Source: Schwarz, Joel. "How to keep up with those New Year's resolutions, researchers find commitment is the secret of success." University of Washington. 27 Dec 2010.

Paul's Perspective, continued from page 2

revenue provided to the Iowa DOT, cities and counties for the public roadway system. The department's Management Team has been working collectively to review opportunities and held initial meetings with the cities and counties to gather input and ideas. We will have more detail on our proposals for efficiency savings toward the latter part of January.

In addition, all divisions have begun to implement Lean process improvements to find efficiencies in our everyday procedures. The key element for these efforts comes directly from the people working to deliver services everyday – you. Please take the time to participate and bring forward ideas for your team, office, division, and our agency to improve the many processes we undertake to deliver our services. The efficiency savings from Lean events go well beyond dollars and yield substantially to unity in mission delivery and improved customer service.

Finally, I have had a number of opportunities to provide short speeches and presentations to various groups over the last seven months. These opportunities have been wonderful occasions to meet and hear Iowans' perspectives on transportation. Most often, I hear what a wonderful job the team at the Iowa DOT does in providing front-line customer service every day. Iowans greatly appreciate all of the service you do, every one of you with the Iowa DOT is important and all of us on the department's Management Team thank you for 2011, and look forward to a great 2012.

Please be safe in all that you do.

Paul



Personnel updates

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for Oct. 28 to Dec. 8, 2011

New hires

Brittany Biermann, program planner 3, Motor Vehicle Division; **Terry Hasse**, construction technician senior, Davenport construction; **Hugh Holak**, transportation engineer manager, Manchester construction

Promotions

Ricky Fiedler, from design technician, District 5 Office to engineering technician senior, District 5 field staff; **Jay Ridlen**, from garage operations assistant to highway maintenance supervisor, Ottumwa garage; **Rick Skinner**, from right-of-way agent 3 to right-of-way agent 4, Right of Way; **Mark Van Dyke**, from transportation engineer, Mount Pleasant construction to transportation engineer specialist, District 5 Office; **David Wells**, from engineering technician supervisor, Construction to construction technician supervisor, Marshalltown construction

Transfers

Neil Daniels, motor vehicle officer, within Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Stephen Rauch**, from highway technician to equipment operator senior, Coralville garage; **Paul Strecker**, motor vehicle officer, within Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Todd Tielbur**, highway technician associate, from Spirit Lake garage to Grimes garage; **Blake Whittrock**, motor vehicle officer, within Motor Vehicle Enforcement

Retirements

Richard Ferguson, equipment operator senior, Jefferson garage

Service awards

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for January 2012

35 years

Larry Franke, Sioux City-Hamilton garage

30 years

Randy Delagardelle, Independence garage; **Paul Jensen**, Traffic and Safety; **Patricia Simons**, Right of Way; **Mark Spear**, Support Services; **Cheryl Watson**, Right of Way; **Sonya Willis**, Driver Services

25 years

Steven Bowman, Policy and Legislative Services; **Keith Hawkins**, Finance; **Thomas Samson**, Information Technology Division

20 years

Rodney Adams, Osceola garage; **David Fox**, Grimes garage

15 years

James Berger, Materials; **Constance Haselhoff**, Finance; **Marsha Johnson**, Driver Services; **Amy Koppenhaver**, Cedar Rapids DL station; **Kelly Queener**, Driver Services; **Scott Robinson**, Ames garage; **Jeremy Rydl**, Boone garage; **Mari Schott Goeke**, Cedar Rapids DL station; **Kathy Skogerboe**, Support Services; **Michael Walker**, Ames garage; **Joseph Watters**, Information Technology Division

10 years

Tracy Barker, Motor Vehicle Enforcement

5 years

Scott Anderson, Finance; **Jason Boisen**, Newhall garage; **Brenda Bradford**, Des Moines DL station; **Michael Davidson**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Drew Donscheski**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Mark Erke**, Leon garage; **David Frances**, Altoona garage; **Randy Hylar**, Location and Environment; **Chris Litscher**, Tipton garage; **Michael Lubben**, Davenport garage; **Bruce Mehlert**, Urbana garage; **Richard Sammons**, Oskaloosa garage; **William Yaddof**, Davenport garage

Research and Technology Bureau offers new web-based subscription service

The Research and Technology Bureau has launched an information subscription service to provide employees with the latest information on research and technology activities conducted by the Iowa DOT and others. The Research and Technology Bureau frequently receives research reports and information in numerous technical focus areas. Through this subscription service, the bureau will be able to better direct the information to specific employee interests. To access the service, log on to the web address to the right for e-mail notifications of information on various research projects. Several categories are available to customize the information.

Subscribers will be able to modify or cancel a subscription at any time, either by clicking on the links at the bottom of each informational e-mail, or by going to the bureau's DOTNET page.

<http://dotnet/research/ResearchDOTNETHome.htm>

Note: This is different than the Transportation Research Board (TRB) newsletter subscription service already available through the bureau's DOTNET page.



e-file your tax returns for the fastest refund

Receive your Iowa income tax refund in 10 days or less when you electronically file your tax return. You can e-file through the Iowa Department of Revenue (IDR) website, file through a tax professional or purchase income tax software. Last year, 85 percent of Iowa income tax returns were e-filed.

Beginning in mid-January, the IDR website (www.iowa.gov/tax) will feature links to software companies offering online filing of income tax returns. File your federal and Iowa income tax returns together from the IDR website.

To better serve our customers, the IDR will expand telephone and e-mail customer service hours during the month of January. During January, IDR's taxpayer service section will assist customers by phone and e-mail from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Walk-in customers will contin-

ue to be served from 8 a.m. to 4:30, Monday through Friday. IDR staff will resume their regular 8 am to 4:30 p.m. schedule beginning Feb. 1, 2012.

Rent reimbursement volunteer help needed

The IDR is also looking for volunteers interested in assisting elderly and disabled individuals to file Iowa Rent Reimbursement Claims during January 2012. To volunteer, contact Greg Stokke at 515-281-5769 or greg.stokke@iowa.gov.



INSIDE

INSIDE is developed to help keep all Iowa DOT employees informed about critical issues affecting them, recognize DOT employees for their excellent service and share interesting aspects in the lives of our co-workers. For more information, contact Tracey Bramble, Office of Public Affairs, at 515-239-1314 or e-mail tracey.bramble@dot.iowa.gov.

Paul Trombino III, Director

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Federal and state laws prohibit employment and/or public accommodation discrimination on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, gender identity, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or veteran's status. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission at 800-457-4416 or Iowa Department of Transportation's affirmative action officer. If you need accommodations because of a disability to access the Iowa Department of Transportation's services, contact the agency's affirmative action officer at 800-262-0003.

On the cover: Winter returns to Iowa, or is it France?

January I-Spy clue: A famous landmark moves close to home.

December I-Spy solution: There is a snowman about to be rolled on the lower right side of the photo.

Recycling your outdated computer

Some Iowa DOTers may have spent time at home over the holidays setting up a new laptop or desktop computer. Instead of pitching your old machine, consider the following ideas from www.crucial.com.

Throwing away an outdated PC is a waste of good machinery. Computer hardware is designed to last well beyond the stage where it becomes obsolete, and many applications and programs can be run on an old computer, if it is refitted to perform a specific function.

For example, you may be running an old PC with just 512 MB of RAM, dual-core Pentium processor, DVD drive and dedicated graphics card. That computer probably will not be able to get much done. However, putting just \$200 or less into the same computer can have significant results. With that small investment, users can retrofit the computer to complete a dedicated purpose, such as acting as a Blu-ray player or surfing the Internet.

Turning the old computer into a Blu-ray player

By spending less than \$30 you can add 2 GB of RAM. Another \$50 will let you add a high-definition-ready graphics card with between 512 MB and 1 GB of video RAM; just make sure you find a card that matches the expansion slot on your old computer's motherboard. If the computer is only a few years old, it probably has a PCI Express slot, but it may have an AGP or basic PCI slot, which will limit your card selection. Quality Blu-ray drives can be purchased for less than \$110. While your old computer may not be able to perform all of the tasks you want it to because its hardware is limited, making a few smart upgrades and dedicating to a single purpose can turn it into a decent Blu-ray player.

Equip the device for a child's use

If you have a child or teenager in the family without a computer of their own, upgrading an old machine can be an ideal solution. In this case, you would probably not want to focus as much on the video card or disk drive because media would not be the device's primary purpose. Instead, start by making the same \$30 upgrade on the RAM to improve overall performance. A computer designed for a child or teenager should also have plenty of storage for documents, photos, video and any other media that could be part of a school presentation or support social interaction. Therefore, consider an investment in a solid-state drive (SSD).

The SSD can support the present hard disk drive and provide a major performance boost for around \$140. The last \$30 dollars in the upgrade would be well used on a wireless adaptor, making sure your child can access the internet if there is not a phone line in his or her room. By making these three key upgrades, you can drastically improve the old computer's performance and turn it into an ideal academic tool for your child and teenager.

Using the old computer to experiment

If you or anybody in your family has an interest in computers or wants to learn how to build, upgrade and modify devices, an old computer that nobody depends on can be a perfect tool. The device can be freely taken apart and put back together until the user has a complete understanding of computer hardware, understands the different port types and can build a new computer from scratch. This will let him or her build new computers from scratch, purchasing hardware directly from manufacturers and saving significant amounts of money over the course of a lifetime.

Turning an old computer into a Blu-ray player, academic device or test machine are just a few ways you can take advantage of an older machine's capabilities. Most old hardware can still perform well enough to manage a single dedicated task with just a few upgrades.

