

**EMPLOYEE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
SUMMARY**

Wednesday, August 6, 2014, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Njord Conference Room, Rampton Complex

PRESENT: Carlos Braceras, Executive Director
Shane Marshall, Deputy Director
Becky Hjelm, Project Development
Boyd Humphreys, Region Three
Cherissa Wood, Operations
Cindy Manchego, Administration
Denece Sheppick, Region Two
Donna Beagley, Region Four
Ivan Hartle, Project Development
Jake Brown, Region Two
Keith Oman, Region One
Kristy Urry, Program Development
Liz Olschewski, Administration
Mike Cole, Region Three
Nick Kenczka, Program Development
Ree Schena, Region Four
Ryan Halverson, Region One
Tawnya Lang, Operations
Diane Josie, Executive Assistant

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m. Carlos thanked everyone for their attendance.

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING PERFORMANCE AWARDS

Shane led this discussion. He mentioned the KSL story about performance awards given to State employees. He said the question was regarding the decision to give the awards to the high level managers.

Shane said the performance awards are important and they want to continue giving them in a fair way. Over the past six months, the leaders have reviewed the \$250 limit on the awards. That limit has been removed because they want employees able to get any amount they deserve within the State limit.

The KSL article said that seven of the people that got awards made up one-half of the total amount. The reason those people received the awards was because they are in high-level, appointed positions that are difficult to recruit and retain and the employees not eligible for any other increases. Carlos explained that appointed people are non merit and give up overtime. He explained that these positions are at-will.

One EAC member asked when the performance award amount was changed. Shane said the limit was changed about six months ago. The change was discussed in Technical Committee.

An EAC member asked where the money for these awards comes from. Carlos said it comes from the respective group's budget. It was clarified that the money comes out of the org budget, such as a specific shed.

One employee said it's unfortunate that the article didn't include information about the high awards being given to the appointed positions. Carlos said he thinks the article helped us get to a better place.

An EAC member mentioned a discussion at a previous EAC meeting about getting the numbers of those who got performance awards. Carlos would like to discuss how to communicate this during the communication discussion later in this meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Carlos Rodriguez to follow up with providing that information.

Carlos offered to talk to employees one-on-one.

One employee said a lot of the employees don't know about the changes to the performance awards. He thinks it will be good for the employees to know.

Another employee asked how often the awards can be given to employees. Carlos said there is a percentage amount that limits the awards. He doesn't want to be the State agency that gives out the most awards. Shane said the amount is six percent of the employees. He said they need to review the budget again on the number limit since the dollar amount limit has been removed.

Carlos said performance awards are easier to give than ASIs. Performance awards are one-time expense. ASIs require continual money to fund them year after year. Shane said each group spent their full budget last year for ASIs.

The approval level for a performance award is the Region Director or Group Leader. ASIs need to be approved by the Region Director or Group Leader, the Comptroller, and the Deputy Director. ASIs are to reward performance, not correct inequities. Shane reviews the salary history and the employee's performance before approving an ASI.

One EAC member asked about the opportunity to change the percentage limit on an ASI if money is available. They asked if the minimum could be at least 50 cents regardless of the percentage amount to make the increase meaningful. Currently, the limit is 2.5 percent. Are the leaders planning to consider adjusting that limit? Shane said they haven't discussed that idea and he would take a look at it. Carlos said it would mean that fewer people would get ASIs.

ACTION ITEM: Carlos and Shane will review addressing the percentage limit on ASIs.

An EAC member asked about the criteria for the performance awards. The nominator could list the ways the employee benefits the Department. He thinks that will help morale.

One employee said some of the employees in her area talked to her about discretionary increase. They heard about the money and the criteria, and then they didn't hear anything else. It would be good to let the employees know that the money was given, but not include the names of the employees who received it. Possibly a list of how many were given in each area.

ACTION ITEM: Carlos Rodriguez will provide a list of numbers in the Groups and Regions that received the discretionary increase.

Carlos said there has been a focused effort to address employee compensation. There are concerns about compression and turn over. He believes a focus area in the Governor's budget will be employee compensation.

Shane asked for feedback from the employees about the New Employee Orientation. One EAC member said the employees in the maintenance station loved it. They enjoyed the opportunity to talk with Carlos and Shane. Carlos mentioned the "Strength Finder" book. He said it's given to the new employees to help them identify their strengths.

2. RECOGNIZING RETIRING EMPLOYEES

Shane said one of the EAC members had a question about employees receiving plaques when they retire. He said he discussed it with the Group Leaders and Region Directors. They have decided they will do this consistently and provide a plaque to every employee when they retire.

One of the EAC members asked about the funds to provide the plaques. Carlos suggested asking their Administrative Services Managers or the Comptroller's Office. The employee mentioned the maintenance stations in his Region don't utilize the money for the retirement celebrations.

One EAC member clarified that employees who retire can choose a gift from the OC Tanner catalogue or \$200. The employee mentioned the lapel pin employees used to receive. She said one employee offered to pay for the pin. They are available if the employees want it. Another employee mentioned charms as well.

Carlos said they should communicate to employees what is available for the retirements. One member suggested having some of the items on-hand. Carlos said that's difficult because we have run into problems with stock piling items.

3. EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Carlos reviewed the following list of communication tools currently being used in the Department.

- Blog - This probably provides the most detailed information for employees. It includes stories about the Department and items pertinent to their jobs.

- Facebook
- Twitter – There are over 12,000 followers on the UDOT Twitter account. Each Region has its own Twitter account. Carlos said he tweets about what he’s doing as well.
- YouTube – Carlos envisions it being more used in the Department including posting more tutorials to help employees.
- Flickr – Photos are posted on this account.
- Google+
- UDOT website
- Newsletters – There are 12 newsletters in the Department.
- Department-wide email – Carlos said they try not to send too many of these emails.

Carlos mentioned his visits to the Regions. He is scheduled to meet with employees in the different groups at the Complex as well.

He asked the group for their input. How do they think our employees want to be kept up to speed on what’s happening at UDOT.

One EAC member said the biggest issue is the face-to-face communication within a specific group. Supervisors need to be open to employees and give them reasons why something is being done. Employees need to be able to understand why. He thinks the problem is on the smaller group level, not the Department-wide level.

Another member said he knows when he speaks with his employees, sometimes they don’t have all the information available to answer the employees’ questions. They are trying to do what the leaders want, but they don’t have all the information they need.

Another member said she thinks the communication breakdown is in the smaller groups.

Shane mentioned the idea of having a log in page in SharePoint for all employees. The page would list the hot topics for the Department, assignments from supervisors, news for employees, etc.

Shane mentioned they are working on an “Ask Carlos” type of discussion forum. Employees could share ideas and ask questions. He asked the group if they thought employees would want to have this available to them. Several of the employees thought this would be a good idea and suggested setting it up as a community of practice. Carlos asked if employees would consider this just another place they had to check every day. One member said she thinks this would be a good place to collaborate with other Groups/Regions. Several members agreed that it is good to have multiple options for employees to communicate and collaborate.

Carlos asked the group if they need to do a better job of training the managers and mid-managers about the importance of communication. One member agreed. He said it is hard for the people in the maintenance stations to get the information because they can’t all check their email.

One member said visibility of leaders is important to employees. Another member agreed that employees want to feel like there is an open line of communication to the leaders.

Carlos said UDOT leadership will keep working to make communication to employees as good as possible.

4. LOSING FTES – DOING MORE WITH LESS

Carlos began this discussion. He asked if anyone wants to expand on the issues or concerns. One member said he thinks there was a perception that employees were retiring and their positions not being refilled. He said consultants are hired to fill some of the vacant positions. It causes a morale problem.

Another member said the problem has migrated to different areas in the Department. There are areas that are working with fewer employees, especially in maintenance. Carlos said the Department is doing more with less. He doesn't believe FTEs will be added in the future. We will keep adding to the highway system and keep the same number of employees. We currently try to maintain some vacancies because we did not want to lay off employees. The Department absorbed the budget cuts by not purchasing equipment. Carlos said we outsource 70 to 90 percent of our design. We maintain a core competency of employees who can find the proper consultants. We have to become more efficient because we will not be adding more employees.

One member said he has only two people in his maintenance station right now. He doesn't have enough employees to do the work and can't afford to hire a contractor to do the work. He said sometimes the Department is paying contractors almost double for what the employees could do it for. Another employee mentioned the sheds feel like they can't do the work like they would be able to. Carlos said this will probably force the leaders to figure out priorities and collaborate with other stations to get the work done. He said we don't have enough money to address safety, mobility, and preservation. Shane said the leaders have not done a good job of letting the maintenance stations know they can't get everything done. He asked for feedback from the maintenance stations. Carlos said their input might change how budgets are allocated. One member said the employees in the stations don't want to complain, they just want to do their jobs. The group discussed getting more funding for equipment. Carlos mentioned the Governor's SUCCESS Framework Program. He hopes this will address the problems with funding for equipment.

Carlos said he can't tell anyone he hopes the Department gets more FTEs. The legislature and governor do not want to add FTEs.

5. FUTURE DISCUSSION ITEMS

Carlos asked the group for input regarding future discussion items.

One member mentioned the Complex Cafeteria in connection with the wellness push. She mentioned the wasted space in the cafeteria. She would like to meet with Carlos and Becky to discuss this issue. Carlos felt this discussion did not belong in the EAC and he asked for a meeting outside of the EAC to discuss the issue.

FUTURE ITEM: Overtime.

- Complaints from contractors because UDOT employees work have to work split shifts and the contractors don't have the consistency of inspectors.
- Compensation for unscheduled weekend work versus weekend work.

FUTURE ITEM: Team building discussion and morale issues.

FUTURE ITEM: Flexible schedules.

FUTURE ITEM: Training and conferences.

FUTURE ITEM: Learning from different states.

The meeting ended at 12:05 p.m.