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Tony Dorsey
tdorsey@ashto.org 202-624-3690

National Awards Recognize Outstanding State DOT Leadership and Innovation

WASHINGTON D.C. – Exceptional leadership, innovation, and creativity helped 14 state departments of transportation earn national awards from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). The awards will be presented November 18, during the AASHTO Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh.

The annual President's Transportation Awards recognize individuals, programs, or teams for improving environmental conditions, utilizing technology, implementing excellent executive management skills, increasing efficiencies, and making effective use of taxpayer dollars.

In addition, AASHTO announces the 2012 recipients of the prestigious Alfred E. Johnson, Thomas H. McDonald, Francis B. Francois, and George S. Bartlett awards.

"Leading the selection process is one of the most difficult and rewarding tasks assigned to AASHTO's President each year," said AASHTO President Kirk Steudle. "These honorees represent just a small fraction of the many talented and dedicated individuals, projects, and programs making travel safer, faster, and less costly, across America."

Recipients of the President's Transportation Awards were selected by Steudle and the Presidents of the four regional associations of state highway and transportation officials. The Johnson, McDonald, and Francois award winners were chosen by select committees. The recipient of the Bartlett Award was selected by AASHTO, The American Road and Transportation Builders Association, and the Transportation Research Board.

Louisiana – Alfred E. Johnson Award – Department of Transportation and Development, District Administrator Michael J. Stack: Stack's commitment to Louisiana's recovery after Hurricane Katrina is considered to be a model for other transportation professionals. Stack used his knowledge and expertise to develop repair methods after the levees failed in his district following the hurricane. His technique was adopted by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers to prevent and repair levee breaches. He exhibits personal commitment, initiative thinking, and exemplary performance.

North Carolina – Thomas H. McDonald Award – Transportation Secretary Gene Conti: Secretary Conti has demonstrated an outstanding career-long commitment to improve transportation on the federal, state, and local levels. His knowledge, drive, and innovative solutions to the transportation challenges in his state and throughout the country are an example to other transportation officials.

Texas – Francis B. Francois Award – Department of Transportation CRASH Program: TxDOT's Crash Reporting and Analysis for Safer Highways program is an internet-based application that allows law enforcement officials to electronically send accident reports to TxDOT. The agency uses the data to improve road safety and maximize reporting efficiency, saving lives, time, and taxpayer dollars.

Utah – George S. Bartlett Award – Department of Transportation Executive Director John Njord: Director Njord is a dedicated transportation professional who is being recognized for his outstanding leadership of the 95% complete, I-15 CORE Improvement Project. This \$1.75 billion project, which is under budget and ahead of schedule, demonstrates Njord's exceptional contribution to highway development and innovation.

The President's Award Recipients (category):

New York (Administration) – Department of Transportation's Comprehensive Asset Management/Capital Investment Team: The team worked to address New York's urgent need to replace the state's aging infrastructure with limited resources. The "Forward Four" process was established to ensure consistency and accountability to New York's capital program and asset management framework, saving time and precious resources.

Kansas (Aviation) – Department of Transportation's Division of Aviation: The Division of Aviation utilized 21st century technology to develop the Kansas Airspace Awareness Tool which utilized Google Earth to display a 3D map of Kansas airspace. The team also worked with law enforcement through the Law Enforcement Operations on Airports Program to teach non-airport police how to respond to airport situations.

Hawaii (Environment) – Department of Transportation's Christopher A. Dacus, Landscape Architect and Arborist: Dacus's Statewide Noxious Invasive Pest Program (SNIPP) set out to combat invasive plants and animals along highway rights of way. The program has decreased the cost of removing invasive species by 80 percent since SNIPP's implementation. His efforts will ensure Hawaii's beautiful landscape along its highways remain intact for future generations.

North Carolina (Highways) – Turnpike Authority Team: North Carolina's \$1 billion Triangle Expressway project delivered the state's first modern toll road and the nation's first expressway to use all electronic tolling. Public support for the popular expressway is high, with 12,000 more transponder sales than original estimates during the first year of operation.

Nevada (Highway Traffic Safety) – Senior Safety Engineer Jaime Tuddao: Nevada has moved closer to its ambitious goal of zero fatalities under the leadership of Tuddao. His dedication to improving road safety is demonstrated through his various projects from the Strategic Highway Safety Plan to a \$1 million public awareness campaign which enhanced roadway and pedestrian safety across the state.

Illinois (Intermodal Transportation) – High-Speed Rail Bureau Chief Mike Garcia (Retired): The Illinois High-Speed Rail project is expected to launch 110 mph service this fall. Garcia is credited with building strong relationships between state agencies, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Union Pacific Railroad for this project, which will deliver an important high-speed rail network to the region.

Indiana (Performance Excellence) – Department of Transportation’s (INDOT) DamageWise Program: INDOT developed the DamageWise program to be an effective and innovative solution to financial burdens associated with replacing damaged right-of-way. The program increased the amount of money INDOT recoups for crash-related infrastructure repairs.

Maryland (Public Transportation) – Transit Administration Chief Operating Officer Michael Davis: Davis implemented a strategic vision to improve Maryland Transit Administration’s efficiency, reliability, and environmental sustainability. Davis set standards and delivered positive results in transit operation safety, efficiency, and human resource management.

Michigan (Rail Transportation) – Office of Rail Director Timothy H. Hoeffner: Hoeffner’s commitment to improving rail service in Michigan is evident through his accomplishments. His vision for Michigan’s rail system enhances mobility for travelers and goods which support economic development and environmental sustainability.

South Carolina (Research) – Department of Transportation Technical Applications Director Dipak Patel: Patel utilized INRIX technology, a tool used to examine traffic flow and average speed data, to produce an entire year’s worth of traffic information in a single image. His innovative tool saves money and other resources by providing accurate traffic information for future highway improvement projects.

Washington State (Water Transportation) – Ferries Engineer Mark Nitchman, Captain John Tullis, and Captain Bill Chapple: Nitchman, Tullis, and Chapple worked together to identify a method to save fuel without sacrificing on-time performance for their largest vessel, the 202-car/2,500-passenger *Puyallup* on the Kingston/Edmonds route. Their efforts saved 15,000 gallons of fuel per month or 180,000 gallons per year.

The presentation of these awards is one of many important events taking place at the AASHTO Annual Meeting at the Westin Convention Center in Pittsburgh, November 15–19. For more information about this meeting, visit aashtoannualmeeting.org.

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The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is the “Voice of Transportation” representing State Departments of Transportation in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. AASHTO is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association serving as a catalyst for excellence in transportation. Follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/aashtospeaks>.