



Pancheri: Getting serious about public involvement

Editor's Note: The Pancheri Drive overpass project exemplifies ITD's commitment to public involvement and furthers the agency's missions of safety, mobility and economic opportunity.

District 6's emphasis on public participation increased significantly in 2006 with a plan for involving citizens on replacing the bridge over Interstate 15 on Pancheri Drive in Idaho Falls. Designers in Project Development as well as newly hired

Alvarez, Burke fill new positions



David Alvarez is the new project development engineer, filling the position left open when Ben Burke took a job in Utah. David previously

was traffic engineer. He joined District 6 last year after working a year in District 5.

Before joining ITD, David worked for years at the Utah and Virginia Departments of Transportation and for different consulting firms. In 2001, he worked for the Federal Highway Administration as an area engineer.



Ben Burke has rejoined District 6 as the new traffic engineer. Before leaving for Utah last fall, he served two years as project development

engineer. He first joined ITD in 2006 as a staff engineer in design. He previously worked five years for Tacoma Power and Washington DOT in the Northwest.

project managers Eric Verner and Troy Williams helped implement the plan, which was necessary because proposals to replace the aging overpass had an unsuccessful history:

1990. Idaho Falls proposed replacing the two-lane overpass with a full interchange, but the Federal Highway Administration objected to an interchange within one-half mile of Exit 118 on I-15.

1998. ITD recommended replacing the Pancheri overpass in 2004 but funding didn't materialize.

2004. ITD again proposed replacing the Pancheri overpass in 2009, with the same result.

2009. ITD, with help from Idaho Falls and the Bonneville Metropolitan Planning Organization (BMPO), identified funding to replace the overpass in 2012.

Replacement was part of a larger plan by BMPO, Idaho Falls and Bonneville County to improve Pancheri Drive between Yellowstone Highway and Bellin Road. Plans included constructing a wide bridge just south of the existing one, with two lanes of traffic and a bike/pedestrian path in each direction.

The plan also included reconstructing approaches to the new overpass between Blue Sky Drive and a point near Utah Avenue, a distance of just under a mile.

Implementation

First was planning an open house for adjoining property/business owners to

introduce the project and identify issues to be addressed in its design.

A public involvement team set June 1, 2006, as the date of the first open house, which was attended by about 20 people. These owners and operators of property next to the project provided helpful input.

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Construction . . .

This is the ninth in a series of articles on how to complete a highway project.

Bring on the heavy equipment. We are finally ready to build. We've planned, sampled, evaluated, determined, designed, acquired, contracted and announced.

Constructing a road or bridge involves spectacular operations with lots of people and machines over months. But the construction process itself comprises simple steps:

- "Clear and grub" – remove trees and bushes.
- Excavate – remove topsoil and dig trenches.
- Install – place road base or structural foundation.
- Build – lay pavement or erect structure.
- Restore – clean and landscape grounds.

Posting signs and positioning markers along the roadway to safely guide motorists through the construction zone accompanies each step, as needed. Effective traffic control underlies safety, mobility and economic opportunity, which are key ITD missions.

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Photo courtesy of Troy Williams



104 employees attend Christmas luncheon on Dec. 19 in Rigby's maintenance building



Creative Christmas lighting

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Team members planned a second meeting in the fall of that year, but budget decisions by ITD Headquarters in Boise put the project on hold.

When funding was secured to replace the overpass in 2012, designers in Project Development resumed design in 2009. The public involvement team proceeded with a second open house for the general public on June 30, 2009.

Feedback

“It’s about time!” Ted Milton declared at the open house at Eagle Rock Junior High School on 2020 Pancheri Drive in Idaho Falls.

“This project is long overdue.” Alan Udy affirmed.

George Clarke wrote, “This should have happened a long time ago.”

Sixty-nine people attended the open house, all eager for a new overpass. Many had traversed the narrow, bumpy bridge with no sidewalk for decades.

Strong feelings surfaced, giving ITD officials a true view of the project from the people it most affected.

Neil Hutten summed up things: “The current Pancheri overpass is the absolute worst bridge I have ever crossed over an interstate. It is extremely dangerous to cross on foot or by bicycle. It’s even a little scary to drive over in a car on nice summer days, and very bad in the winter. Everyone I know shares this concern. It will be wonderful to have this bridge replaced!”

Jo Deurbrouck offered this gem: “I have ridden my bike across the Pancheri bridge hundreds of times and never once without adrenaline tingling in my fingertips and my teeth gritted. Please design the replacement so that crossing [on bicycle] is pleasant instead of life threatening.”

District 6 received 46 written comments during and after the open house.

Skip Cline wrote, “Drainage in the area must be addressed. The inter-

section at Skyline [and Pancheri] always floods [during rainstorms], and the ditch east of Skyline and south of Pancheri is a mess!”

Jackie Stephens commented, “I am pleased that pedestrian/bike paths will be included on both sides of the new bridge.” The planned bike/ pedestrian paths were a hit.

“Routing Pioneer Road under the east end of the new bridge to connect with Milligan Road is wonderful,” said Kittie Sieh, a South Pioneer Road resident.

Public outreach and response furthered mutual understanding, advancing



the project. District officials implemented every suggestion possible.

Fortunately, the team arranged for two sets of displays so more visitors could study information simultaneously.

The district provided project literature and stationed subject matter experts at various locations to offer orientation, field questions and foster discussion.

Visual displays at the first open house were conceptual, intended to depict possible impacts to properties outside of the existing road right of way and impacts to local street access and travel patterns. Displays in the second open house were preliminary project plans that included modifications stemming from concerns raised at the first meeting.

“I have ridden my bike across the Pancheri bridge hundreds of times and never once without adrenaline tingling in my fingertips and my teeth gritted.”

— Jo Deurbrouck

Publicity

District 6 accommodated television crews before, during and after the open house as requested.

Invitations to the open houses included contact information for those who could not attend but were willing to provide feedback, which some did.

During construction, transportation officials held public meetings weekly on work schedules and progress, coordinating with anyone who had concerns, including representatives of utility companies.

Construction contractor HK Contractors e-mailed project notices to schools, emergency services (fire and police departments), businesses, and post offices.

District 6’s Traffic Section placed portable electronic message boards along Pancheri Drive and I-15, as needed.

The district posted the project on the ITD website and placed construction updates on the 511 Traveler Services system, Facebook and Twitter to connect with people who may not get news in traditional ways such as television, newspaper or radio.

Summary

The open houses were successful, inviting public participation, promoting public trust and confidence, and improving projects.

Incorporating recommendations improved safety, mobility and economic opportunity. ■

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ITD doesn't actually construct projects; it contracts them. This relieves the department of the need to own and maintain all types of construction equipment and to hire the people to operate them only to lay them off when projects are completed. Also, awarding jobs to low bidders saves taxpayer dollars while it invites efficiency. It's how departments of transportation operate in all 50 states.

In the Beginning

Construction professionals at District 6 participate in projects long before bulldozers and scrapers arrive to move earth. Their involvement starts years earlier when the Office of Transportation Investment at ITD Headquarters in Boise lists projects in the Idaho Transportation Investment Program (ITIP) and Engineering Manager Karen Hiatt assigns each project to a construction engineer.

District 6 has two construction engineers: Wade Allen and Matt Davison. Dubbed "resident" engineers, they study project scope, budget and schedule as determined by district project managers and then provide input on project development, as requested. *Resident* harks back to the time when a construction engineer lived on the work site but today designates the engineer in charge.

Wade and Matt manage "residencies," which are groups of civil engineers as well as transportation staff engineer assistants (TSEAs) and inspectors, who together administer construction contracts. Residency A includes Wade, Bryan Young, Rich Asbury, Casey Messick, Mike Poole, Darwin Smout, Fred Tucker and Gregg Bowman, and Residency B includes Matt, Steve Ball, Pete Demitropoulos, John Cleveland, Troy Monk, Dave Holmberg, Warren Cuppy, Joe Kopplov, Joshua Sprague, Leon Thornton and Mike Taylor. These groups of experts oversee all district construction projects.

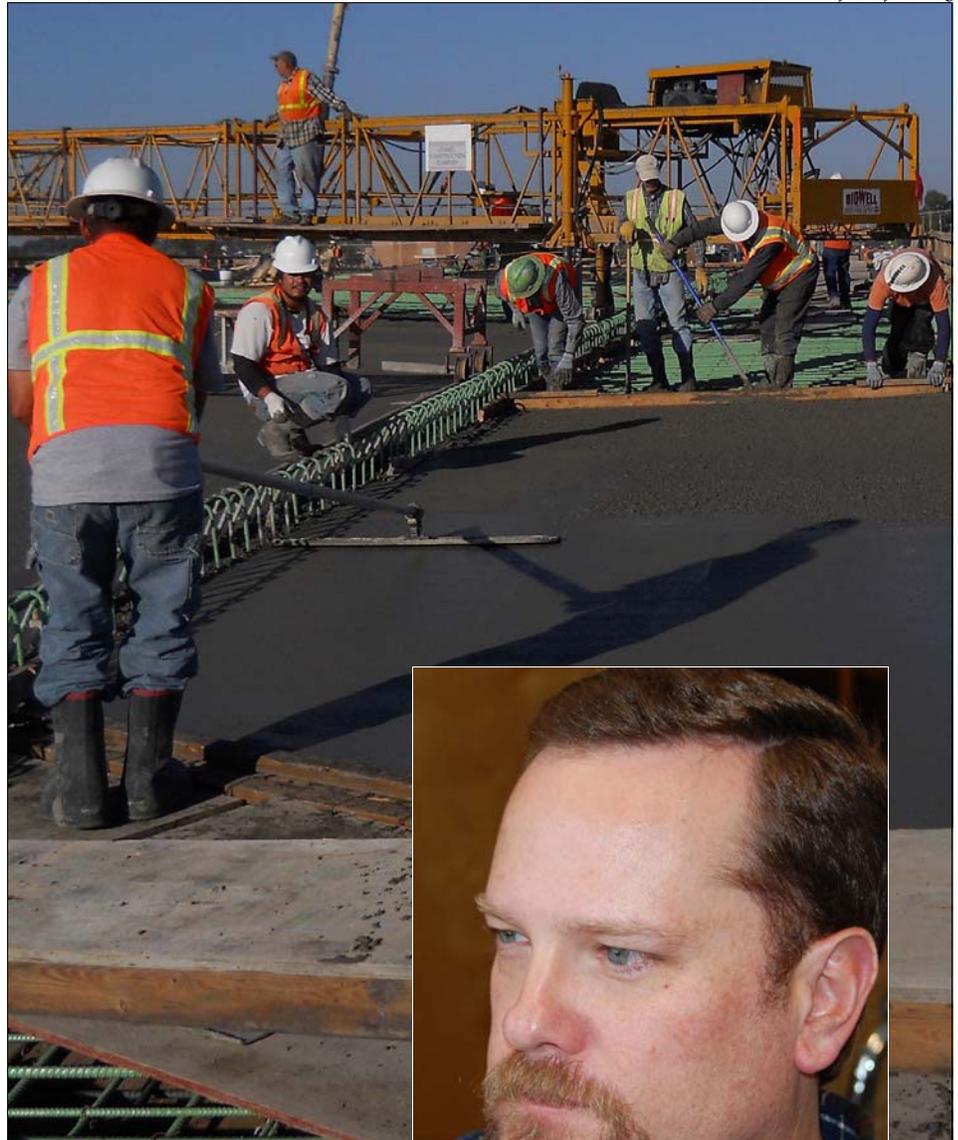
On the Job

Resident engineers take responsibility for ensuring that contractors build



Erecting the Menan-Lorenzo interchange on May 11, 2011.

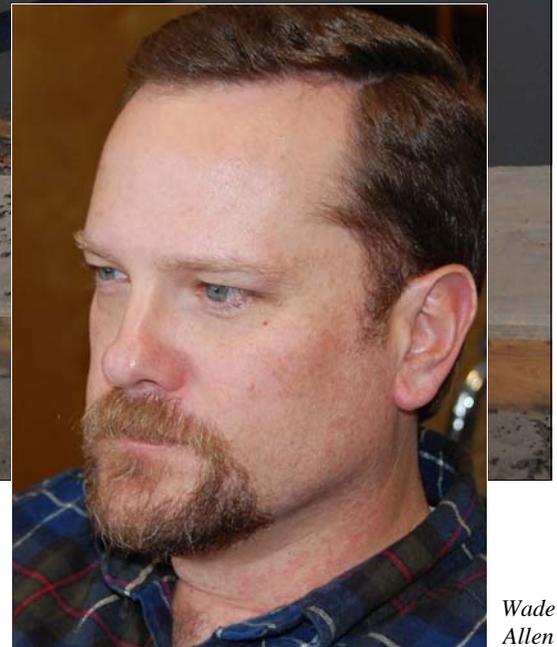
Photo courtesy of Bryan Young



Pouring the deck of the Pancheri overpass in early October 2012.

projects according to contract requirements. Assisted by their staff engineers, TSEAs and inspectors, they direct contractors, coordinate schedules and keep records.

Inspectors also monitor contractor work, being the district's eyes and ears in the field. They review plans,



Wade Allen

test and accept materials, report findings and document progress. District maintenance personnel help inspectors with testing, if needed.

Jerry Mastel and Karl Martin, transportation technician principals

and office managers, assist residencies, checking pay-item calculations, verifying certifications, paying contractors, filing records and closing out jobs.

With members of their staff, Wade and Matt meet with contractors and subcontractors prior to construction to review plans, obtain schedules and identify points of contact. They meet contractor officials, answer questions and determine who can sign change orders and payrolls.

“We find out how the contractor plans to work the job so we can staff it,” Wade says.

Equipment rolls, as construction sites come alive.

Karen directs Wade and Matt as necessary. She is an excellent resource, especially on difficult issues.

Meeting the Challenge

Constructing a road project teems with challenges, one of which is coordination. “Big projects involve dozens of crews, which must work together to meet contract requirements,” Wade says.

“Managers also must coordinate with utilities and local governments,” Matt says.

Coordination is central to successful project administration, not to mention community relations.

Contractors sometimes misread or misinterpret provisions of a contract, Matt says, which can be problematic. “Interpreting for my wife, who is deaf, is much easier than interpreting some special provisions for a contractor.”

Severe weather delays construction. Heavy rain prevents paving, since plant mix must be spread and compacted within a certain temperature range and on relatively dry pavement. Downpours also make ground too soft to bear heavy equipment.

Contractors don’t sing in the rain.

Unearthing foreign objects also delays construction. “On a job in Utah, my



Photo courtesy of John Cleveland

Reconstructing the west approach to the new interchange on I-15 at Dubois May 17, 2012.



Newly resurfaced U.S. 20 west of Sugar City on October 26, 2011.

crew discovered a railroad track from an old spur.” Matt says. “The work-around for this obstacle cost the city of Provo time and money.”

Traffic control subcontractors balance the contractor’s need to complete a project with ITD’s need to minimize traveler inconvenience, obviously a challenge. Meeting heavy workloads



Matt Davison

with limited staff and overtime restrictions poses problems, too, Matt says.

It’s in the Contract

Unexpected work (work not specified in the contract) requires authorization by change order.

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“When you get on the ground, you find things you didn’t anticipate,” Wade says. “Utility lines aren’t as marked, supplies arrive late.... Contracts simply cannot cover every possible contingency.”

“Some things are beyond the contractor’s control,” Matt says.

District 6 officials complete a change order form, describing needed changes. The form, which amends the contract, must be signed by ITD and the contractor for inclusion in the project file.

Resident engineers also use change orders to alter installation methods or substitute construction materials.

Staking a Claim

The hardest part of being a resident engineer is processing a claim, Wade and Matt say.

“A contractor believes ITD owes him compensation,” Matt explains. “He submits a claim to our residency, requiring us to thoroughly investigate its merits.”

Handling a claim is tedious, time-consuming and potentially contentious, which is unsettling, he says.

Blessed are the Merciful

Resident engineers hold contractors to stipulations of the contract.

“We are not in the business of putting people out of business,” advised Jimmy Ross and Steve Hutchinson, past ITD chief engineers.

“Residencies may allow some leeway when possible,” Wade says. “We try to be fair.”

“Firm but flexible is the rule,” Matt says.

Closeout

Contractors must request and certify project completion, including all paperwork required for the project file.

Karen inspects finished projects, notifying District 6 Engineer Blake

Building piers for new Pancheri overpass July 14, 2012.

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Rindlisbacher when he can send acceptance letters.

“Completing a job on time, under budget and to specifications is a great feeling,” Wade says.

Euphoria from finishing a project fades quickly in the face of ongoing projects. Last year District 6 managed 31 projects, and this year the tally is 29.

“Completing projects is what we do,” Wade says.

“One after another,” Matt comments. ■



Inspector Rich Asbury monitors work on the Menan-Lorenzo interchange May 11, 2011.



Photo courtesy of Rich Asbury

Crew cuts rebar to remove girders of the old Pancheri overpass on Oct. 25, 2012, at 1:20 a.m. in a driving snowstorm.

Comings & Goings

New employees are Ben Burke, traffic engineer (see **Alvarez, Burke...**, page 1).

Departing employees: Kerry Fisher, transportation technician (TT), Ashton.

Promotions: Troy Despain to Transportation Management System Coordinator. Based in the District 5 office in Pocatello, he will assist maintenance personnel in Districts 5 and 6 troubleshoot problems with data entry into the Transportation Asset Management System (TAMS). Troy has worked 13 years in striping and maintenance for District 5.

Retirees: Leon Radford, shop foreman, 29 years, and Byron Tavenner, Special Crew, 38.5 years.

In Memoriam

– Will Taylor, 64, died Nov. 30, 2012. He was a past construction inspector.

– Ray Ward, 75, died Dec. 28, 2012. He was Supply Operations supervisor previous to Paul Walker.

– Everett Mortensen, 79, died Feb. 3, 2013. He was a past TT in Dubois.

District 6 expresses condolences to family and friends.

New arrivals: Jessika Emma Hiatt, brand new daughter of Engineering Manager Karen Hiatt. Born February 25, she weighed 8 pounds, 7 ounces, and was 20 inches long. Both daughter and mother are fine.



Kudos

Motorists have thanked District 6:

– Ed Bala for bare roads between Idaho Falls and Harriman Park on Jan. 22.

– “Good job on keeping roads safe in Eastern Idaho.” – via ITD Twitter by dps4305 on Dec. 24.

– “ITD has been doing a good job keeping Idaho 31 clear. I made it through in high winds and blowing snow. Thanks!” – Steve Stuebner on Dec. 18.

Lt. Chris Weadick, ISP, thanked Josh Sprague and Joe Martinez for help.



Canada's way with words.