

Peer exchange groups: low cost, low key, lots of learning

AT MOST public works, highway and streets departments, only one or two people are doing a particular job. Talking to someone with similar responsibilities from another community can often be helpful. Sharing information and ideas, or getting a new perspective or a “heads-up” on a problem can also save time.

One great place to make such connections is the regional TIC workshop; you tell us so on the feedback forms. Unfortunately,

travel time, program costs, and conflicting commitments keep a lid on such opportunities. Another way you can do it is by joining or organizing an informal peer exchange group. Public works directors in several areas of the state have done just that.

As Director of Public Works in Shawano 30 years ago, Maurie Rott helped form “SNEWPS”—the Society of North Eastern Wisconsin Public Works Supervisors. DPWs serving smaller communities in the five-county

area, along with streets superintendents from the larger ones, started meeting for half a day, about four times a year.

“The topics were issues that interested us,” says Rott, who now works for SEH (Short Elliott Hendrickson), based in Madison. “We would meet in different communities, sometimes tour a public works facility or have a speaker. There was always a roundtable discussion where we could talk about a hot topic and share lessons learned.”

Continues next page

RESOURCES

Print copies of publications are available free from the TIC while supplies last. Electronic copies may be downloaded from the TIC Web site.

Videos and DVDs are loaned free through county UW-Extension offices.

The Web addresses listed here and elsewhere in this newsletter are live in the electronic version of **CROSSROADS** on the TIC Web page. Clicking them should take you directly to the indicated page. If you are not able to retrieve a document, contact us and we will get a print version to you.

TIC Web site
<http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/>

Publications

A Landowner's Guide to Building Forest Access Roads, USDA Forest Service NA-TP-06-98, July 1998. Provides information on road construction and maintenance for low volume roads including information on culvert sizing and the use of Geotextiles. In print from TIC and online at <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/stewardship/accessroads/accessroads.htm> (html version) or <http://.../accessroads.pdf> (pdf).

REVISED *Signing for Local Roads*, Wisconsin Transportation Bulletin # 7, 12 pp. A handy overview of signing responsibilities and principles, common sign types and their uses, sign placement (including distance charts), and installation. Includes brief section on pavement markings. Revision current with MUTCD 2003 Edition and the 2005 Wisconsin Supplement.

REVISED *Using Salt and Sand for Winter Road Maintenance*, Wisconsin Transportation Bulletin # 6, 4 pp.

Basic information and practical tips on how to use deicing chemicals and sand. Discusses factors that affect deicing action, environmental impacts, pre-wetting, use and misuse of abrasives, and gives a brief introduction to anti-icing.

Websites

Section J of *Iowa Traffic Control Devices and Pavement Markings: A Manual for Cities and Counties* provides a discussion of what data to collect in a sign inventory, the cost of data collection, and how to select software. The manual is available at <http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/itcd/index.htm#j>

Videotapes

NEW *Foamed Bitumen, Wirtgen Road Equipment*, 10 min. #18774 Explains how foamed asphalt is made and used. Shows both laboratory examples and field construction methods. Applications include stabilized base and cold mix surfacing using recycled asphalt pavement.

NEW *Tire Chains How to Install and Use Them*, US Army Cold Regions Research & Engineering Laboratory, 20 min. #18775. A two-part video. The first 15 minutes covers snowplowing with a Humvee truck. The second 5-minute video gives basic information on installation and use of tire chains. Good installation details. Intended for equipment operators.

Members would take turns planning the next meeting, hosting, providing snacks, and sending notices. Annual dues of \$25 covered basic expenses, and they wrote up some basic bylaws.

When he became Operations Director for Janesville, Rott and another SNEWPS alumnus, now in Evansville, formed a similar group in that area. He also learned about others in Waukesha, Tomahawk, the Fox Valley, and the Milwaukee area.

These days, as their informal "grandfather," Rott tries to visit each group once a year and hosts a statewide meeting for them about every other year. He gets support from his current employer, SEH, and from the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Public Works Association where he's an active member.

MAPWO meets monthly

For about 15 years Milwaukee Area Public Works Officials (MAPWO) members have been heading to West Allis every second Thursday, from September through June. Mike Pertmer West Allis DPW, who co-founded the group with Bill Kappel of Wauwatosa, provides the facility, coffee, and a secretary to take minutes.

"Meetings start at 9:00 and we're done by 10:30, or 11:00 at the latest," says Kappel. "We decided that keeping it as part of the work day was attractive." As with the Northeast group, meeting responsibility and snacks

duty are passed around. Each December they plan the topics for the next year, usually leaving one or two dates open in case a hot issue comes up.

At one recent meeting a DNR representative talked about local tree pests, like gypsy moths and birch borers, and how to deal with them. Other meetings have covered emergency response mutual aid agreements, labor contracts, and designing utilities for stormwater management.

"We have programs on anything people want to discuss," says Kappel. "It's helpful when some communities are ahead of the curve on an issue and they can share information."

Membership is open to anyone who wants to join, and members will often bring staff when a meeting topic might interest them. Quite a few urban foresters came to the tree pests meeting, for example.

Another approach

With a big membership area ranging from Shawano to Lake Michigan and up to Marinette, the Northeast group only gets together three times a year, usually for half a day.

"We keep it very low key," says Dick VandenBoogaard, Street Commissioner for the Village of Kimberly. "We get together about 9:00 a.m., shoot the breeze a little, then a vendor comes in to give a product overview, or we might have a speaker."

Vendors sometimes also sponsor the meeting.

One fall they went to see how Green Bay uses baling for their leaf disposal. "I wanted to see if it would work for us," says VandenBoogaard. "It turns out you need a lot of leaves."

Each session ends with members sharing information. They describe what's new in their community, like a good piece of equipment or the bid price of salt, and sometimes what's bad as well. Hearing about other people's triumphs and mistakes can make a difference on the job. At the same time, getting acquainted with your neighbors lets you find support when you need it, or make joint purchases to get a lower price.

Person to person, neighbor to neighbor, peer exchange meetings can make a big difference for a negligible cost.

For information about a group in your area or help in forming your own, contact Maurie Rott, by e-mail: pmr@ticon.net or phone: 800-732-4362

CALENDAR

continued from page 12

Other training opportunities

Snow Plow Roadeo

Wisconsin Chapter American Public Works Association Snow Plow Roadeo and Equipment Show September 21, Lambeau Field, Green Bay, WI. Roadeo teams interested in competing must register by September 1.

Contact

Mark Hochschild

Phone

(414) 761-5372

Fax

(414) 761-5321

Email

mark_h@ci.greenfield.wi.us

Also at

<http://wisconsin.apwa.net/>

Pesticide Applicator Training

Pesticide Applicator Training and testing for right-of-ways is held annually in January or February. Information and pre-registration online at <http://lpcm.wisc.edu/PAT/> or call Rose Scott at 608/262-7588, or e-mail: PAT-program@facstaff.wisc.edu

Individual study options also available.

CROSSROADS provides information on roads and bridges for local officials. Published quarterly by the Wisconsin Transportation Information Center (TIC)—part of the nationwide Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)—with assistance from the Federal Highway Administration, WisDOT, & the University of Wisconsin—Extension. For permission to reproduce articles or graphics, please contact us.

Don Walker DIRECTOR
donald@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Steve Pudloski STAFF
pudloski@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Ben Jordan STAFF
jordan@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Keith Knapp STAFF
knapp@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Susanna Fuerstenberg PROGRAM ASSISTANT
tic@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Lynn Entine WRITER/EDITOR, ENTINE & ASSOCIATES
Susan Kummer GRAPHICS, ARTIFAX

PHONE
800.442.4615

FAX
608.263.3160

EMAIL
tic@epd.engr.wisc.edu

WEB SITE
<http://tic.engr.wisc.edu>

 Wisconsin
LTAP

FALL 2005

11