

Farm equipment study

from page 3

"I'm optimistic because through this process, I've seen all sides engage with the question of how to reduce the impact of heavy loads on roadways," Veith says. There was a sense, he adds, that public and private interests can strike a balance so farmers get a fair return on their investment in equipment and local governments have the tools to protect the taxpayer's investment in good roads.

Discussions in Phase II of the project will concentrate broadly on issues specific to weight limits, responsible permitting and highway safety. Three work groups will focus on equipment definitions, examining the special impact of manure hauling operations and developing materials to communicate study results.

A second and final report is due out at the end of July 2013.

The loH Phase I report is available at <http://www.topslab.wisc.edu/workgroups/waiioh.html> along with information on the full study group membership and background material provided to the work group panels.

"Our approach brings together a knowledgeable group of people who are committed to taking a reasonable and scientific look at how public policy can respond effectively to the impact of modern agricultural equipment on our roads," Rhinesmith says. "This includes weighing changes that, applied in the right measure, we hope will produce long-lasting solutions." ■

Contacts

Rory Rhinesmith

WisDOT Division of Transportation System Development
608-266-2392
rory.rhinesmith@dot.wi.gov

Richard Stadelman

Wisconsin Towns Association
715-526-3157
wtowns1@frontiernet.net

David Vieth

WisDOT Bureau of Highway Maintenance
608-267-8999
david.vieth@dot.wi.gov

Michael Weber

Association of Equipment Manufacturers
414-298-4149
mweber@AEM.org

Resources

<http://www.topslab.wisc.edu/workgroups/waiioh.html>

Link to loH study group report and other materials on the Wisconsin Traffic Operations and Safety Laboratory website.



Supervisory and management training a practical resource

PEOPLE WHO MOVE UP through the ranks in public works and highway departments in Wisconsin have a valuable resource in two supervisory and management training programs offered by the Wisconsin Transportation Information Center (TIC) in cooperation with the American Public Works Association (APWA) Wisconsin Chapter. The 15 courses in two programs teach practical skills to individuals who supervise people and manage projects, or aspire to take on more responsibility in their agency.

In local government, most public works supervisors and engineers earn promotion because of their technical skills and strong work ethic, but few have the opportunity to consider how best to fulfill their leadership role within a public organization. The *Public Works Supervisory Academy* (PWSA) and *Public Works Management Institute* (PWMI) programs give them the chance to focus on those roles and responsibilities. They learn from a seasoned instructor and alongside others who are on the same journey in a collegial and problem-solving environment.

A closer look at the programs and impressions from participants illustrate the value of professional development in fostering effective local government operations, no matter the size or scope of the agency or the program.

From the basics to advanced

The training programs use lecture, case studies and discussion to cover a range of relevant topics. These include employee supervision, leadership skills, work-place safety, purchasing and inventory control, local government organization and personnel systems, ethics and communication skills. PWSA grounds lead workers, first- and second-line supervisors, and new managers in the funda-

mentals through nine one-day courses. Public works managers and seasoned supervisors can apply for or follow up with PWMI, a five-class advanced program.



Wisconsin TIC Director Steve Pudloski congratulates Jenny Schultz, City of Columbus Public Works, on completing the PWSA certificate.

One of the required PWMI courses is a two-day course offered by UW-Madison. *Municipal Engineering for Non-Engineers* gives supervisors and managers working in public agencies a better understanding of the concepts, methods and vocabulary of municipal engineering so they can make informed decisions related to alternatives guided by good engineering practice. It explores the basics of how streets, water, sewer and utilities work together, budgeting for projected capacity and use, and other operational issues.

Jerry Benzschawel, Field Supervisor in the City of Sheboygan Falls Department of Public Works, describes the *Municipal Engineering* seminar as a real benefit to him and his agency. Benzschawel supervises work for the streets department, the water utility and wastewater services.

Having served in every capacity during his 13 years with the department, he says he brings a "well-rounded view" of operations to his supervisor role. What can someone with Benzschawel's years of experience gain from these

courses? "Public agencies today are subject to intense scrutiny from many quarters so managers need to keep their skills sharp and geared toward good problem solving," he says. Tapping into targeted training programs, like PWSA and PWMI, is one way he does this.

Among benefits from course presentations and discussions, Benzschawel picked up new ways to manage operational and personnel issues that he put right into practice and felt the reassurance that his agency is doing many things right.

Skills for advancement

Another program participant with years of experience at many levels in her department is Jenny Schultz. Currently a Maintenance Worker with the City of Columbus, Schultz received her PWSA certificate in May and plans to pursue the PWMI program next.

She started with the Columbus Public Works Department 17 years ago in a part-time position that evolved to fulltime. Her goal today is promotion to Crew Leader, managing day-to-day jobs and taking more responsibility for budgets and personnel.

Schultz credits the PWSA sessions for providing her with practices she applies to handling tricky personnel issues and implementing time management strategies. Discussions about setting budget priorities and defining leadership style helped her hone skills that are important as she advances in her career.

"Overall, I feel the training makes me a better manager and, in that way, is a real benefit to my agency," Schultz says.

Broader knowledge

Art Bahr recently completed the PWSA certificate and is close to completing the PWMI program. He calls both offerings worthwhile for someone like him who wears many hats. Bahr is Public Works Director, Utility Manager and Village Administrator for the

Village of Gresham in Shawano County. During his four years with the village, he has managed a wide range of municipal services for the community of about 600 people.

The management training programs gave him a broader knowledge of all the processes and practices required of someone in his role. "I came away with a better sense of setting up systems for doing preventive maintenance on all facilities and systems," Bahr says, adding that he also gathered information to help educate village trustees about setting priorities.

Return on investment

Assistant Supervisor of Highway Dale Poggensee is close to earning his Public Works Management certificate. Six years with the Walworth County Public Works Department, two and a half as supervisor, Poggensee says he took something away from every class that he uses on the job. "The courses opened my eyes to how things are supposed to work in local government and why," he notes. "They also gave me a fresh angle on leadership, a better sense of what it takes to motivate employees to perform and do well."

Poggensee follows in the steps of two other supervisors in his department who completed the courses and found them beneficial. The training "makes us a better team," he says, a powerful return on investment for the county.

Trading solutions

Networking with other public works professionals was another plus these recent participants valued. The sessions proved a welcome chance to learn from the experience of others and compare notes on challenges and solutions.



Posing with their certificates for completing the Municipal Engineering for Non-Engineers course in April, these eight public works and highway department supervisors all plan to complete the PWMI program in the near future.

"Trading solutions with peers in the field and hearing the creative ways people found to improve efficiency and effectiveness is a great benefit of the course sessions," Benzschawel explains. "The instructors focus on everyday topics and generate good discussions about the real issues and challenges that happen in our departments."

Low cost and available

Supervisory and management training for public works leaders is the focus of a national movement fostered by APWA. The Wisconsin program, designed in cooperation with the APWA Wisconsin Chapter, is one of the earliest approved by the national organization. TIC, which assumed responsibility for the PWSA and PWMI programs in early 2013 from the UW-Madison Department of Continuing Studies, is committed to sustaining the original program.

TIC will continue keeping class sizes small to encourage the free exchange of ideas and problem solving and make the courses available at reasonable registration fees. The plan is to offer each of the 15 courses at least once a year so participants can complete their certificates in less than two years. ■

"Trading solutions with peers in the field and hearing the creative ways people found to improve efficiency and effectiveness is a great benefit of the course sessions."

Contacts

Steve Pudloski
Wisconsin Transportation
Information Center
608-262-8707
pudloski@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Resources

<http://continuingstudies.wisc.edu/pda/public-mgmt/academy.htm>

UW Continuing Education page with information about Public Works Supervisory Academy.

<http://continuingstudies.wisc.edu/pda/public-mgmt/institute.htm>

UW Continuing Education page with information about Public Works Management Institute.