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The official publication of the Idaho Associated General Contractors

Fall/Winter
2024



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to Reduce
Congestion on
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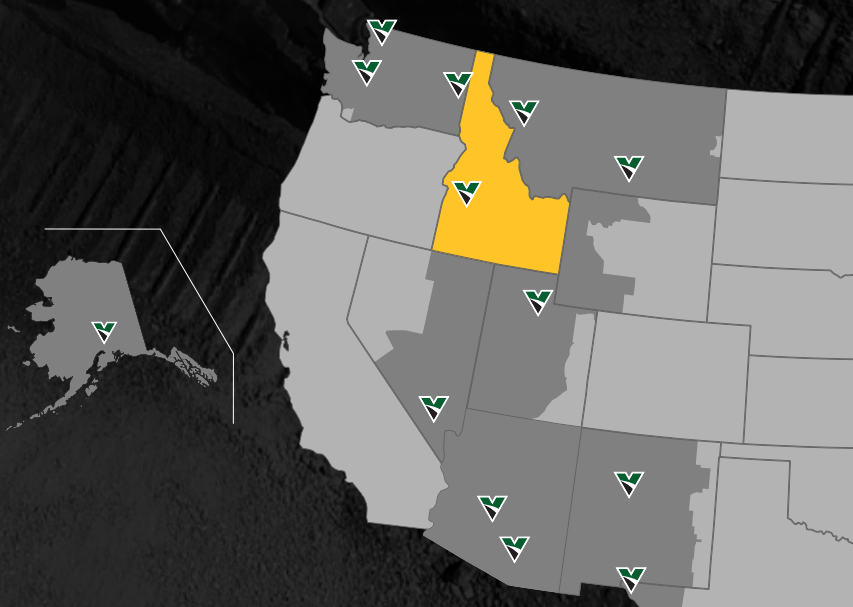
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MESSAGE FROM IDAHO AGC CEO WAYNE HAMMON



Welcome to the latest issue of *buildingIdaho* – the official magazine of the Idaho Associated General Contractors (AGC). We’re excited to share with you the latest news and insights from the state’s largest, most trusted network of construction professionals.

Nine decades ago, a group of dedicated and visionary leaders first organized the Idaho AGC. In the 90 years that have followed, the organization has grown and developed into one of the largest and most dynamic of the 87 chapters of the AGC of America that are spread out across the nation. With over 715 member companies, the Idaho AGC is thriving and remains THE construction association in Idaho.

While this 90th anniversary year has given us the opportunity to reflect on our past, it has also been a year dedicated to charting our future. This year, the board of directors engaged the entire AGC membership in the development of an updated strategic plan that will be implemented in January 2025. The new strategic plan outlines the organization’s vision and goals for the next three years and is built on solid principles established over our almost 100 years of experience. These include:

1) A focus on specialty contractors. Fifty-three percent (53%) of Idaho AGC members are specialty contractors. They range from the largest HVAC and electrical contractors in the state to the smallest painters and roofers operating in Idaho and everything in between.

We are proud that the Idaho AGC is the largest association of specialty contractors in the Idaho, and we’re dedicated to meeting the particular needs of these member companies. In the coming year, you will see a direct and impactful effort to ensure that all specialty contractor members have a voice in the organization and that we continue to deliver services important to their continued success.

2) Engagement of the next generation. As outlined in an article on the following pages, we are excited to announce the reconstitution of the Idaho AGC’s Construction Leadership Council (CLC). We encourage all members to identify those “up and coming leaders” that will soon be taking lead of your organization to join this effort. While there is no hard cutoff for membership, generally speaking, CLC members are under the age of 40, are in a mid-level management position within their company, and have an eye towards moving up.

The CLC is designed to help these future leaders further develop their leadership skills, expand their knowledge of the industry, and prepare for future challenges that await them as they move into more senior leadership positions.

Contact Sean Schupack at the AGC office to add someone from your company to the group.

3) Workforce development. Everyone in Idaho’s construction community continues to struggle with finding talent. With unemployment remaining at all-time lows, this is a serious problem that will require the entire industry working together. The Idaho AGC is uniquely qualified to lead this effort.

Contact Molly Johnson at the AGC office to see how your company can play a role in this important effort.

Of course, the strategic plan includes other items as well – but these are the highlights. Together, we will work to build a future that all of us can be proud of and an association that lasts at least another 90 years.

As always, I hope you feel free to reach out to me if there is ever anything I or a member of the Idaho AGC team can do to be of assistance to you and your company. We’re here to help you.

Sincerely,

Wayne ●



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AGC of America Education & Research Foundation Scholarship Recipients 2024

The AGC Education and Research Foundation offers undergraduate and graduate-level scholarships to students enrolled in ABET or ACCE-accredited construction management or construction-related engineering programs. Over \$10 million in scholarships have been awarded to more than 4,000 students attending colleges and universities across the country.

The 2024 Education Foundation Scholarship recipients are...



MAX BROSE - FILER, ID

Max is attending Linn-Benton Community College in their Heavy Equipment, Diesel Tech Program. He has an internship with Coastline Equipment through their John Deere TECH Program and has held leadership roles in the Diesel Club assisting with organizing the annual Dyno Days.



VIOLA CAPECCI - MOSCOW, ID

Viola is attending the University of Idaho and is a sophomore working towards a B.S. in Architecture. She spent the last three summers assisting at a children's woodshop class and as a construction laborer. After graduation, she plans to combine her interest in construction with her architecture degree.



BEN FERRARA - MUKILTEO, WA

Ben is attending Boise State University and is a senior in Construction Management. He was a member of the second-place Heavy Civil team at the ASC Reno Competition. Ben is the VP of operations for the BSU CMA and has held leadership roles in his fraternity. He has spent time working in both residential and commercial construction, most recently as an intern at Hensel Phelps in San Diego.



ADDY EAGLESTON - SCAPPOOSE, OR

Addy is attending Boise State University and is a sophomore working towards his Construction Management degree. He plans to focus on the commercial construction industry after graduation and has spent the last three summers working for a commercial construction contractor in Oregon.





RACHEL CLANCY – VICTOR, ID

Rachel is attending Boise State University and is a junior in the Construction Management program. She has grown up in the construction and real estate industries. Upon graduation, she plans to return home to work with her family. She is the marketing and communications officer in the BSU CMA and a member of Women in Construction, Engineering, and Development (WICED).



QUINN CLOVIS – COEUR D'ALENE, ID

Quinn is attending Boise State University and is a senior in the Construction Management program. He was the co-captain of the Commercial team at the ASC Reno Competition last year and has competed for the last three years. Quinn was one of two students selected to represent BSU at the ASC International Estimating Competition in Liverpool, UK where he and fellow teammates from Technical University Dublin received the third-place honor. He is the current VP of CM for the BSU CMA and spent this past summer as a project engineer intern at Andersen Construction.



GRANT GUSTAFSON – LAS VEGAS, NV

Grant is attending Boise State University and is a junior in the Construction Management program. He was recently elected to be the president of the BSU CMA. Grant spent his summer as a project engineer intern with the McCarthy Building Companies.



JACOB HESSING – ATHOL, ID

Jacob is attending Boise State University and is a junior in the Construction Management program. He is active in the BSU CMA and currently holds the office of treasurer. Jacob landed an internship with Lydig Construction in Spokane, WA this summer.



BRENNA GUNDERSEN – CHUBBUCK, ID

Brenna is attending Idaho State University and is a senior in the Civil Engineering program. She currently serves as a cabinet member for the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) at ISU and has participated in numerous competitions. Brenna works as a lab tech at STRATA and a research assistant at ISU.



JOSE PACHECO CASTELLANOS – NAMPA, ID

Jose received his A.A.S. Drafting Technology degree from the College of Western Idaho and is continuing his studies at the University of Idaho in the Civil Engineering program. He is proud to be a first-generation college student with a goal of becoming a structural engineer. Jose participated in the regional American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) competition in Vancouver, B.C. and was elected president of the student chapter of ASCE.

TOOLBOX HUNT

Dan Strauss was the winner of last issue's Toolbox Hunt challenge and recipient of the Milwaukee backpack prize.

For this issue, your challenge is to find all the tools scattered throughout the magazine, and tell us what page you found them on. Everyone who emails Hailey at HReyes@idahoagc.org the correct answer will be entered into a raffle for this OGIO backpack, compliments of Petra, Inc.



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BUILDING SUCCESS IN IDAHO:

GRSM and Meredith Thielbahr's *Leadership in Construction Law*



Idaho's construction industry is experiencing substantial growth, with major developments in both commercial and infrastructure projects across the state. From large-scale residential communities to complex infrastructure such as bridges and power plants, the demand for skilled legal counsel in construction law has never been higher. This boom has attracted top-tier legal experts to the region, and one of the key players supporting this burgeoning industry is Meredith Thielbahr, Managing Partner of Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP's Inland Northwest operations.

Thielbahr's practice is firmly rooted in construction and government contract law, where she handles high stakes matters with precision and proficiency. She has successfully represented contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and service contractors in complex disputes, ensuring their interests are protected in all facets of the construction process. A notable example of her work is the ongoing litigation surrounding the hangar collapse in Boise, Idaho in early 2024, which has drawn significant attention.

Her deep understanding of regulatory frameworks and her ability to navigate intricate legal landscapes have earned her prestigious recognition, including being named a Law360 Rising Star in Government Contracts for 2023 and receiving the Super Lawyers® Rising Star distinction in Washington and the Mountain States since 2016. Meredith's leadership extends beyond just handling individual cases – she oversees GRSM's offices in Spokane, Boise, and Tri-Cities, ensuring these locations remain critical hubs for construction expertise throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Under her guidance, the Boise office plays a pivotal role in the construction sector's continued growth in Idaho and the surrounding areas. With her team of legal experts, Thielbahr has helped GRSM establish itself as a cornerstone of support for clients involved in all aspects of construction, from

contract drafting to resolving disputes over construction defects, mechanic's liens, and environmental issues. By leveraging her team's technical knowledge in construction management and engineering, she ensures that even the most complex legal challenges are met with effective, practical solutions.

Beyond Meredith's leadership, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani is a national force in construction law. The firm has been ranked the No. 4 construction law firm in the nation by Construction Executive in the magazine's 2024 ranking of The Top 50 Construction Law Firms™. With more than 240 attorneys in its Construction Group, the firm provides end-to-end services for all construction-related matters. GRSM is known for its ability to handle a wide array of legal challenges for participants in the construction industry, including architects, engineers, contractors, and developers. The firm's reach spans across the U.S., with 80 offices and more than 1,400 attorneys, allowing it to provide comprehensive legal services from coast to coast. The firm's Construction Group is deeply integrated into GRSM's overall mission of delivering excellent client service across a wide range of industries.

Moreover, GRSM's commitment to diversity and inclusion sets the firm apart. Ranked within the top 25 in the National Law Journal's Women in Law Scorecard and among the top 10 in Law360's Women in Law Report, the firm is dedicated to advancing women in the legal profession. Female attorneys comprise 46 percent of GRSM's total attorney workforce, including 38 percent of its partners, significantly exceeding industry averages.

With Thielbahr's leadership and the firm's unwavering commitment to excellence in construction law, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani continues to strengthen its position as an industry leader while fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion that ensures future success. ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meredith Thielbahr is Office Managing Partner of the Inland Northwest region offices of GRSM. She is licensed in multiple jurisdictions, including Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Alaska, and the District of Columbia. She handles complex commercial litigation matters, including general civil litigation and products liability issues. Her practice focuses on handling civil litigation on behalf of her construction industry and government contract clients.

She assists contractors and suppliers in dispute resolution in both the commercial and public contracting arena. She works closely with clients on internal compliance investigations and handles formal qui tam and government lawsuits. She is versed at interpreting contract and regulatory compliance. Meredith may be reached at mthielbahr@grsm.com or 206-695-5109.

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As the only full-service law firm with offices and attorneys in all 50 states, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani delivers maximum value to our clients by combining the resources of a national firm with the local knowledge of a regional firm. With more than 1,400 lawyers nationwide, we provide comprehensive litigation and business transaction services to public and private companies ranging from start-ups to Fortune 100 corporations. Founded in 1974, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani is recognized among the fastest growing and largest law firms in the country. The firm is currently ranked among the 15 largest law firms in the U.S., the top 65 firms for diverse attorneys, and the top 15 for female attorneys in the Am Law 100.

What Are My ERISA Fiduciary Responsibilities if I Offer an Employer-Sponsored Health Plan?

By Alliant Employee Benefits

As the weather outside begins to change, this is the time of year when most employers start forecasting budgets for the next year. If you are among the more than 70 percent of employers in the United States whose health plans renew on January 1st, you are likely engaged in the challenging balancing act of selecting a health plan that meets the needs of your employees without breaking the bank. During this process, it is essential to keep in mind the responsibility that plan sponsors have to participants and their beneficiaries as fiduciaries of the health plan.

This fiduciary responsibility is regulated by laws such as the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) in the United States, which imposes strict obligations on those managing or overseeing health plans to ensure that the plan operates in the best interests of participants and beneficiaries. While ERISA fiduciary responsibilities are not new, recent transparency and disclosure requirements have increased the potential for class action lawsuits from plan participants, as well as audits and penalties from government entities.

Health plans are often complex, involving substantial amounts of money and multiple stakeholders. If fiduciaries fail to meet their obligations, participants could face financial harm, loss of benefits, or reduced access to healthcare services. Moreover, fiduciaries play a critical role in maintaining the trust and confidence of plan participants. By adhering to their responsibilities, fiduciaries promote stability, accountability, and transparency in the management of health plans.

As a fiduciary, here are some key elements to adhere to:



- 1. Duty of Loyalty:** A fiduciary must prioritize the interests of plan participants and beneficiaries above all else. Decisions made in the context of a health plan must not be influenced by conflicts of interest.
- 2. Prudent Management:** The duty of prudence requires fiduciaries to manage the health plan's assets and operations with a high degree of care, skill, and diligence. This involves making informed decisions regarding the administration and financial health of the plan.
- 3. Diversification of Plan Investments:** If a health plan involves the investment of funds, fiduciaries have a duty to ensure that investments are diversified to minimize the risk of significant losses.
- 4. Plan Documents:** Fiduciaries must ensure that the health plan is administered according to its governing documents, which typically include the plan's summary plan description (SPD), administrative procedures, and relevant regulations.
- 5. Monitoring and Accountability:** Fiduciaries are also responsible for monitoring the activities of service providers and other third parties who manage or administer parts of the health plan.

Due diligence and a review of plans and vendors as well as a well-documented decision-making process is the best defense against litigation. With the help of your broker partner, marketing options such as the Idaho AGC HealthPlan, and documenting decisions can alleviate the daunting task of maintaining compliance. ●



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Keeping Idaho Idaho, in a Time of Great Change and Growth

By The Idaho AGC

With so much growth and change impacting the state – and the Treasure Valley in particular – it is not uncommon to hear concerns from locals and transplants that love what makes Idaho, Idaho. How do we navigate all this growth without losing what makes us special? Idaho AGC Director of Government Affairs Sean Schupack sat down with Boise Mayor Lauren McLean and Meridian Mayor Robert Simison to get their perspective. Here's what they had to say:

Q: *How do we maintain Idaho's core values and what makes us so attractive to outsiders, while undergoing such growth?*

A: Boise Mayor, Lauren McLean: I love introducing people to Boise and most folks immediately notice how safe and welcoming our city is. People are drawn to Idaho, generally, and Boise, specifically, for our unique natural beauty, our connection to one another, and care for this place. People love seeing folks they know when they're out and about and appreciate our commitment to creating a city for everyone. As cities, we are the closest form of government to our residents, and they count on us to preserve and protect their core values. In Boise, that means preserving open space, investing in parks and public art, addressing housing affordability, and preparing our workforce for the jobs of the future.

A: Meridian Mayor, Robert Simison: For me, Idaho's core values come from the

rugged-individualism of the American frontier and cowboy. A place where we take care of our needs and one another, stay focused on what truly matters, and don't rely upon the government to solve our problems. For me, I believe that people are attracted to Meridian because we understand government isn't the solution, but rather we provide services to the community and help build the environment for others to succeed. Meridian is built from those values and our core focus is on ensuring we are a safe community built around families. We have great public and private education options. The quality of life in our community begins with amazing public parks and a variety of retail and family entertainment options. To help maintain what has been created, we want new area residents to know that our policies have built our success – through public and private investment – and that we want to maintain those practices to keep our values in place. Meridian has no debt and believes that growth should pay for growth. As a city, we stay focused on providing premier services to the community, and we work with our faith and non-profit community to help solve problems when needed.

Q: *How does this perspective influence your policy decisions as the mayor of the City of Boise or Meridian?*

A: Boise Mayor, Lauren McLean: Our policy decisions must be responsive to the people we serve. They expect us to set big

goals around climate action, open space protection, economic development, public safety, cultural diversity, and more. We've recently begun implementing our updated zoning code which favors a more compact development pattern – encouraging growth where we have the infrastructure to support it so that we can create more housing opportunities at Boise budgets and prepare the place we love for a climate constrained future.

A: Meridian Mayor, Robert Simison: For me, it's important to always remember where we have come from and what has made us successful – that is making hard decisions along the way and staying focused on providing our services to the community. We would not have the ability to build the new fire stations and police station if others hadn't made hard decisions to collect impact fees many years ago. These types of decisions have set Meridian up for long-term success. The mantra that good policy is good politics and that good budgets are derived from good policy is something I think Idaho has always strived for and that I have held true to.

Q: *What do you see as the number-one challenge facing the valley in the next 10 years?*

A: Boise Mayor, Lauren McLean: These are issues we must work together to find solutions for, alongside our partners in the business community.

A: Meridian Mayor, Robert Simison: We ask our residents for feedback through a community survey and, since 2014, the number-one issue that folks want solved is transportation and the challenges that growth puts on the roadway network. I think if you look at the Valley as a whole, with Meridian being located in the center of that Valley, we need to be working with our partners to ensure that the long-term impacts and needs are planned for now, so we are in a better place in 10 years.

Q: What is the City of Boise/Meridian doing to meet this challenge?

A: Boise Mayor, Lauren McLean: We've made a commitment to partnering with local governments and agencies throughout the Treasure Valley, the state, and the federal government. We've found that when we put our shoulders to the wheel in cooperation with others, we can do more and better for the people who live, work, and play in our city. To that end, we continue to invest in Valley Regional Transit, support our partners at the Ada County Highway District in building an active transportation network that gives Boisean's a choice for how they commute, and actively seek funding partnerships to accelerate our efforts.

A: Meridian Mayor, Robert Simison: As part of my priorities, I have been focused on bringing practical solutions to the table and advancing actual projects that will help the Valley and Meridian sooner, rather than waiting for our partners' plans. Some of your readers may not know, but Meridian does not own, operate, or construct the roadway network in Meridian. That authority is governed by the local Ada County Highway

District (ACHD) and the State of Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). I have worked with our council to advance projects by providing local funding to help get projects moving forward. For example, the City contributed \$2.5 million to the design of a local arterial road widening and overpass to connect

south and north Meridian at Linder Road. These types of investments help the agencies advance needed projects sooner than the planned timelines. It's these types of investments in partnerships, and in project funding, that ensure we are part of the real solutions that Meridian needs today and into the future. ●





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24/7 EMERGENCY RESPONSE



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: Supreme Court Reigns in Federal Regulators

By AGC of America

Overturning the Chevron Case ruling will change how courts handle lawsuits over federal agency rules.

In a significant U.S. Supreme Court decision issued June 28, the Court reversed a 40-year-old legal precedent that required judges to accept federal agencies' reasonable interpretations of ambiguous or silent statutes, rather than apply the court's own interpretation.

In throwing out the so-called Chevron "deference doctrine," the Supreme Court has changed how courts will handle lawsuits involving challenges to agencies' interpretations of statutes they administer when specific agency actions are tested through litigation. The effect will rein in federal agencies' power and leeway to fill

in the blanks dictating their authority to write detailed regulations implementing legislative statutes. From now on, courts must determine what statutes mean by employing traditional tools of statutory construction as they have always done. This decision may bode well for AGC's current litigation efforts to protect construction companies from federal agency overreach.

So what does this mean? Going forward, Congress will likely face increased pressure to write laws that clarify its intent and how it wants federal agencies to act in the rulemaking process. Put simply, they will be pressured to leave little to be interpreted by federal agencies. On the other hand, agencies will need to provide strong legal justifications for their rules

and strictly follow Congress's direction to pass judicial review. Also, federal agencies will likely face more restrictions from rewriting regulations that impose different (flip-flopped) rules each time a new administration takes over.

What does AGC think will happen next? We expect more federal regulations to be challenged in courts, and judges will scrutinize agency actions more closely and exercise their independent judgment to decide whether an agency has acted within its statutory authority, as the APA requires. This could mean more inconsistent decisions by the lower courts. To be clear, the Supreme Court did not invalidate a myriad of federal regulations in their overturning the Chevron decision. Each rule will have to

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be challenged in court, and this will take time.

What was the specific case and what did they rule? Specifically, the Supreme Court overturned its ruling in a case called *Chevron U.S.A. v. Natural Resources Defense Council* (1984), concluding that Chevron is inconsistent with a law called the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). The APA, which governs federal rulemaking procedures, says that courts,

not agencies, must decide “all relevant questions of law,” even those involving ambiguous laws. And courts must set aside agency actions inconsistent with the governing statute, as interpreted by courts. The combined cases leading to this decision are *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*, No. 22-451, and *Relentless v. Department of Commerce*, No. 22-1219, both decided on June 28.

The Court acknowledged that agencies

still have a role in cases involving statutory interpretation, especially when they have “specialized experience.” In these cases, courts may look to agency interpretations and give them due respect under cases like *Skidmore* (decided in 1944), taking into consideration factors such as whether the interpretation is roughly contemporaneous with a statute’s enactment, the validity of the agency’s reasoning, and consistency of the agency’s interpretation over time. Agency interpretations may be informative, but they cannot bind reviewing courts, which is why *Chevron* went too far.

The Court emphasized that in overruling *Chevron*, it “do[es] not call into question prior cases that relied on the *Chevron* framework” even though the Court has changed its interpretive methodology. That prior cases relied on *Chevron* does not constitute a “special justification” for overruling those cases. Thus, at least for now, prior cases that applied *Chevron* deference still stand.

AGC is actively challenging government overreach in the courts and pushing back against a suite of new costly and onerous federal regulations that were promulgated based on an expansive reading of statutory authority, including U.S. DOL’s new Davis-Bacon Prevailing Wage Rule; U.S. EPA’s new PFAS Superfund Rule; U.S. OSHA’s new Walkaround Representative Rule; NLRB’s new Joint Employer Rule; and U.S. EPA and USACE’s definition of Waters of the United States.

Keep up with the latest AGC Judicial Advocacy News. Listen to AGC’s ConstructorCast to learn more about the intricacies of the association’s litigation program. To support AGC’s litigation efforts, please consider making a corporate donation to our Construction Advocacy Fund.

Please contact Leah Pilconis for more information. ●



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Idaho AGC Launches CLC



IDAHO AGC
CONSTRUCTION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Idaho AGC is very excited to announce the launch of the Construction Leadership Council (CLC). The CLC was established to fulfill the need to cultivate the next generation of leaders in the construction industry as well as the association both at the local and national levels. It has been many years since the Idaho AGC chapter had an active CLC and we believe there is a strong demand for such an organization. And our members (you!) have told us as much.

The purpose of the CLC is to act as a conduit for participants to network, exchange ideas about work and industry, serve the community, and gain professional development and leadership skills, all while having fun! It is meant to be a member-driven group whose agenda, events, and leadership is all set by volunteer leaders. Staff will provide logistical support, organize the meetings, and take care of any other support tasks needed by the group.

Troy Stamp, preconstruction manager at Andersen Construction, has volunteered to be the first chair of the organization. He has a BS in Civil Engineering from the University of Portland and is

currently pursuing an Executive MBA at Boise State University. He is a skilled networker and enjoys bringing people together to align on goals, both in business and personal pursuits.

“I serve on the National Construction Leadership Council for the AGC,” Stamp shared. “Having seen firsthand the networking, shared industry expertise, and career growth that local CLC chapters foster nationwide, I’m stoked that we’re launching a chapter here in the Treasure Valley! I can’t wait to unite local leaders so we can grow individually while driving the future of our industry forward, and I’m thankful for the opportunity to serve.”

By the time this magazine is in your hands, the first meeting, scheduled for October 24th, will have taken place at the new Andersen Construction offices in Boise. At that meeting, the official schedule will be set. If you or someone you know would be interested in getting involved, or if you have questions or would like to be added to the contact list, please reach out to Sean Schupack (AGC staff liaison) at the contact info listed below.

Sean Schupack – sschupack@idahoagc.org ●

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Idaho AGC Members Receive National AGC Safety Awards (NASA)

The National AGC Safety Awards (NASA) program has been an ongoing effort since 1991 to offer AGC members an opportunity to evaluate their safety record. The NASA compares an AGC member's safety record with other AGC members across the country according to the member size and construction type. Additionally, the NASA provides a great opportunity for members who have excellent safety records to compete for nationally recognized awards.

To be eligible for the award, the company must be an AGC member and must supply summary data from their OSHA Form 300A for the previous year. There is no application fee to participate. The Chapter then submits the information to the AGC NASA program on behalf of the member company.

Two awards are given to members: the "Zero-Incidence Rate Certificate of Commendation" is awarded to those who have a zero-incidence rate. Those who have an incidence rate 25 percent below each occupational division's average are awarded the "Incidence Rate Below 25% of Division Rate Certificate of Commendation." Occupational divisions include Building, Highway, Federal & Heavy, Utility Infrastructure, and Associate/Specialty.

Achieving a zero-incidence year is no accident: safety has to be a priority for the company, a part of the company culture embraced and enforced by the entire team, from the CEO to the laborer. Congratulations to the following Idaho AGC members who received the Zero-Incident Rate Certificate of Commendation:

- Bateman-Hall, Inc.

- Bighorn Traffic Services
- CM Company
- Das-Co of Idaho
- Golden Valley Construction, Inc.
- GSE Construction Co., Inc.
- Hansen-Rice, Inc.
- Quality Electric, Inc.
- Rivers West Construction, Inc.
- STRATA
- Superior Blasting, Inc.
- YMC Mechanical, Inc.

In addition to these awards for zero incident rates, ESI was awarded a Certificate of Commendation for Excellent Safety Record for achieving a rate 25 percent below their division average.

Congratulations to all members awarded NASA recognition. For questions or additional details on how your company can apply for recognition, contact Molly Johnson at mjohnson@idahoagc.org.

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Keep Employee Retention High with a Return-to-Work Policy

By Angela Laughlin, Return-to-Work Supervisor, SIF Idaho Workers' Compensation, and Becky Coble, Claims Manager, SIF Idaho Workers' Compensation



It's clear that we are still recovering from the Great Resignation, when 4.5 million workers were quitting their jobs each month (about three percent of the workforce). Seventy-five percent of employers report having trouble filling positions and we know that the widespread labor shortage still hits trade industries both nationwide and in Idaho, where we have a higher rate of job openings than the national average.

That means that worker retention is something many employers are spending more and more time on. Between the monetary cost of recruiting and the time it takes to find and then train a new worker, it's essential to do as much as possible to keep the employees you have.

This is one of many reasons why employers are considering Return-To-Work policies, and why we strongly support them at SIF. While workplace injuries are hard to eliminate completely, businesses can mitigate their impact by supporting injured workers and helping them return to work as soon as possible.

Obviously, some injuries mean a worker cannot continue in their current role, but Return-to-Work Policies include identifying light-duty tasks that workers can do until they are able to return to their original position.

Having a Return-To-Work Policy in place means business owners can more accurately assess an employee and the best way to keep (or fill) an essential

position in their business – and make the most appropriate decision for the business as soon as possible.

SIF is proud to be building a registered nurse-led Return-to-Work team to support employers and injured workers in an effort to increase employee retention.

Angela Laughlin has been with SIF since 2020 and brought with her 20 years of nursing experience. She has a strong background in, and passion for, occupational health. She has utilized her skills as a certified nurse case manager to coordinate and streamline medical care and assist workers on their road back to gainful employment.

And Becky Coble, claims manager, has 30 years' experience managing claims at SIF, and understands employer concerns as they manage injured workers.

Coble and Laughlin suggest the following key factors to consider when building a Return-to-Work Policy that will benefit both employees and employers:

- Identify light-duty tasks and responsibilities in advance.

By creating a list in advance, it will be easier to identify a restricted or light-duty role quickly if a workplace injury does happen. If you have many workers who must drive or lift heavy items, for example, it's worth taking some time to identify what other tasks are available that they could do.

If you're not sure what types of tasks and roles in general might be suitable for injured workers, then consider:

- Projects that are always on the back

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burner that you'd love to complete but don't have specific employees assigned to them.

- Administrative or other jobs that aren't filled or always seem to fall by the wayside.
- Any deliveries or other tasks that you contract out – with a potential added benefit of saving contractor fees as a result.
- Designate a point person.

Once a workplace injury happens, there are many aspects to coordinate. Letting your employees know who to contact when they are off work (and who might contact them) confirms that as a business you care about their health and that someone will be working on a possible return-to-work plan. For employers who are looking to be known for providing a positive workplace experience, this can go a long way to reassuring employees and keeping them invested in your organization.

TALK TO YOUR PREFERRED MEDICAL PROVIDER EARLY AND OFTEN

If you don't already have a preferred medical provider, consider setting one up now. By having a conversation with them about your intention to provide restricted or light duties to your employees where possible, they can anticipate that when examining your injured worker.

Doctors and injured workers are not always aware what positions and roles might be available. By letting your preferred medical provider know that light-duty options either have been or will be identified, they may be more equipped to define specific restrictions and limitations, so they don't just sign an employee off as "unfit to work."

Decades of research into workplace injuries has shown that the longer an injured worker remains off work, the less likely they are to return to gainful employment. In fact, once someone has

been off for six months, this likelihood decreases by 50 percent. We also know that whether an employee feels valued and supported by their employer after an injury directly correlates to how likely they will recover sufficiently to return to work. While this has always been an issue workers' compensation insurers have looked to impact in an effort to keep employees in the workforce, it is now increasingly a business decision

employers have to consider if they are concerned about employee retention.

At SIF, we're proud to be building a specific Return-To-Work program, providing resources and support to employers looking to be proactive about this issue. As the workers' comp insurer for the majority of employers in our state, we know the more people are part of vibrant and valued workforces, the stronger our communities are in Idaho. ●



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US-95 Granite North & Frontage Roads

Bonner County, Idaho

Before construction US-95, Granite Loop Road/Homestead Road Intersection are in the middle of the photo.

Project Team

HDR Engineering, Inc.

HDR was the lead design firm and performed construction engineering and inspection (CE&I).

Contractor

M.A. DeAtley Construction

Consultants

T-O Engineers (now part of Ardurra) provided survey and prepared ROW, drainage, and utility plans.

American Geotechnics (now part of Shannon & Wilson) performed geotechnical investigations to confirm rock, unsuitable materials, and topsoil depths.

David Evans and Associates augmented HDR inspection staff

STRATA provided materials sampling assistance and testing during construction.

US-95 is the major north-south route in the panhandle of Idaho. Connecting Canada to Mexico through Coeur d'Alene, the highway is the major thoroughfare for commerce and the primary corridor for commuters, recreationists, and tourists in the immensely popular and growing Coeur d'Alene region. Over the last 15 years, traffic congestion in the corridor has increased due to population growth and transportation of commercial goods to and from Canada and around the Pacific Northwest. The Granite area is the southernmost segment in Bonner County of the larger Garwood to Sagle Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was completed in 2010. The 31.5-mile corridor was planned to increase capacity, accommodate future traffic demand, and improve highway safety. In 2010 and 2011, the southerly portion of the Chilco and Athol (13.1 miles) corridor was completed, creating a controlled-access, divided highway with four interchanges, and frontage roads on each side of US-95 for local and residential access.

In 2017, ITD selected an HDR team to design and develop the next phase of the corridor, called Granite North. The project starts where the last project left off, near the bottom of Granite Hill, proceeds approximately 2 miles to the north, and terminates at the Trails End Road intersection.

The US-95 Granite North project expanded approximately 2 miles of highway, redesigned more than a dozen intersections and approaches, and consolidated access points.

By separating low-speed local and residential traffic from the 75-mph highway design speed, the redesigned highway seeks to quell a high crash rate. This segment of roadway had 51 crashes with several serious injuries and three fatalities from 2012 to 2017, primarily at the Homestead Road/Granite Loop Intersections. The project features a new at-grade intersection at Trails End Road with acceleration and deceleration lanes and illumination. The intersection is forward compatible for the future Trails End diamond interchange with BNSF overpass, which will eliminate the at-grade rail crossing.

Constructed one year ahead of schedule, the completed highway, frontage roads, shared-use path, and approaches improve the level of service and safety within the corridor, and provide multimodal access and connection to the recreational areas of Farragut State

relocated utilities, developed several reconfiguration options, and coordinated with multiple agencies and stakeholders to create a corridor that solves immediate needs and integrates with the long-term corridor plans.

Uniqueness and/or Innovative Applications of New or Existing Techniques

BIFURCATED HIGHWAY TO REDUCE EARTHWORK AND ELIMINATE RESIDENTIAL RELOCATIONS

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) conceptual design included relocating the mainline highway and frontage roads east to allow a completely offline construction operation while maintaining traffic on the existing highway. This design included 3 complete residential relocations, over 2 million cubic yards of earthwork, and a total construction cost of over \$40M, exceeding the \$23M available funding for the project. HDR's team suggested performing a value engineering analysis to reduce costs, ROW impacts, and residential relocations. Over 3 months, HDR prepared 15 alternatives that shifted the east and west frontage roads and the northbound and southbound lanes of US-95 onto separate alignments and stair-stepped profiles to optimize earthwork; reduce residential, cultural and wetland impacts; and facilitate ROW acquisition and relocations.

The selected alternative shifted the corridor to be more aligned with the existing roadway. This reduced the ROW acquisition costs by 55% and eliminated two residential relocations. The separated and bifurcated highway alignments reduced the overall excavation from over 2 million cubic yards (CY) to 1.2 million CY, saving an additional \$6M. Ultimately, the estimated construction cost was reduced to \$30M for a \$10M savings.

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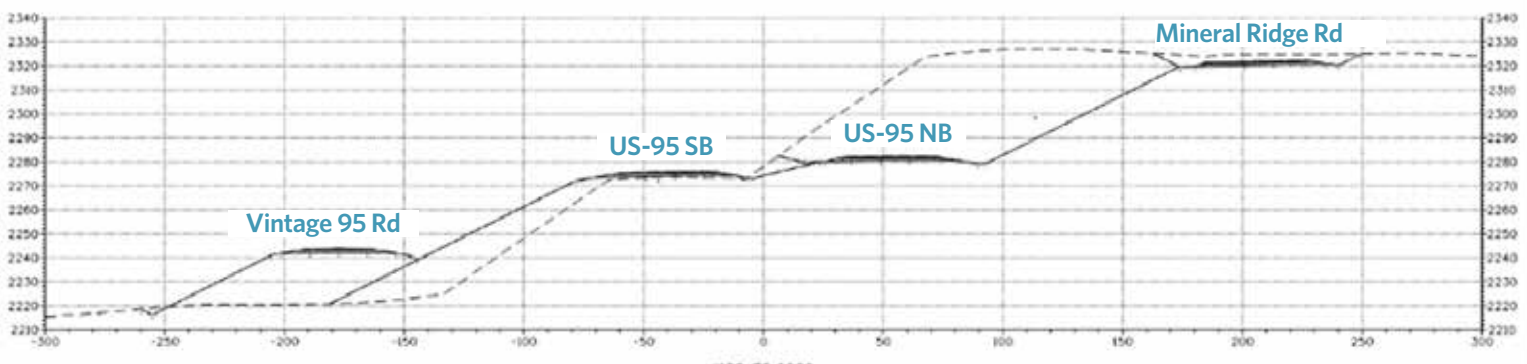
The project design was developed with Bentley OpenRoads to develop a finished-grade digital terrain model used for Automated Machine Guidance (AMG) to help reduce construction staking and surveying efforts and expedite earthwork operations. The design and model development was critical to understanding earthwork



US-95 and Granite Loop Road/Old House Road Intersection prior to construction. High accident location located on hill with passing lane and low sight distance.



US-95 looking north. Completed project photo. From left to right: Vintage 95 Road, southbound US-95, northbound US-95, and Mineral Ridge Road.



BIFURCATED ROADWAYS



Bifurcated roadways allowed for significant time and cost savings.

movement in different stages. The design and construction phasing was based on the east frontage road (Mineral Ridge Road) being built first and then shifting US-95 onto this road while US-95 northbound, southbound and west frontage road (Vintage 95) were constructed. Modeling the roadways and considering topsoil stripping, unsuitable material, excavation, and embankment required multiple interim surfaces to confirm construction limits, potential material storage and waste areas, and potential impacts on wetlands and cultural resources. Ultimately, the contractor used subgrade and finished grade Digital Terrain Models (DTMs) to construct the roadways to the lines and grades shown in the construction documents. Along with supplemental cross-section data and survey information, the DTMs allowed the use of up to five scrapers, dozers, and excavators to strip and grade the project extremely efficiently with higher-than-normal production rates.

TEMPORARY PASSING LANE, FUTURE SHARED-USE PATH & UTILITY CORRIDOR

The team planned to use the west side frontage road for US-95 traffic use after the first construction season. They decided it was prudent to include a similar passing lane up the Granite Hill grade to provide safer operations over the winter. After the US-95 mainline was completed and traffic shifted to the ultimate roadways, the west frontage road was re-stripped to a conventional two-way, two-lane roadway. Instead of removing pavement from the third passing lane, a 5-foot buffer strip was removed, and the remaining 10-foot paved section was repurposed for a shared-use path. The pathway connects to the previously completed corridor segments and provides over 15 miles of multimodal access for bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians to the region's many off-road trails, facilities, and Farragut State Park. In addition to the multimodal access

benefit, the 5-foot buffer area was used for a utility corridor to consolidate telecommunications and ITD facilities within the ROW. This simplified utility relocation during the project (sharing of trenches and conduit) and for future improvements that would have less impact on utilities in the area.

Future Value to the Engineering Profession **PART OF THE LARGER GARWOOD TO SAGLE PROJECT**

The project is part of the US-95 Garwood to Sagle corridor project that will widen US-95 to four lanes and provide frontage roads and interchanges. As a whole, the corridor will reduce congestion in the corridor between Sandpoint and Coeur d'Alene while increasing safety and resiliency. The US-95 Granite North project is an interim step between the previously congested roadways and the full project buildout, which will include interchanges and overpass of the BNSF railway paralleling the US-95 corridor at Trails End and Homestead Road intersections. These will ultimately remove two at-grade railroad crossings and further increase safety for the community.

AMG LESSONS LEARNED

Immediately upon notice to proceed, the contractor requested a merged DTM of the four independent corridor models developed for design along with one finished grade and subgrade surface. This was not performed during the design since it was not known how the contractor would build it or how they would prefer to receive the electronic information. Contractor equipment and file size limitations were rectified easily by clipping surfaces. Ultimately, the team learned that merged corridor models instead of separate corridor models should be provided. The surface should be reviewed to confirm the merged surfaces match cross sections in the plans to make

grading operations. In addition, with the AMG setup, inspectors utilized GPS Rovers tied into the system and digital models to check elevations, locations, and lengths at any time. This allowed for issues to be caught and worked through with the contractor on the spot.

USE OF DRONE TECHNOLOGY

During construction, routine drone flights were done to capture work progress, earthwork progress, and assist with issue resolution and public outreach. The site was mapped each flight and tied in with GPS enabled portable ground control points to develop accurate site topography from each flight. These electronic surface files can be used for many purposes including, issue resolution, revisions to design, and verification/resolution of earthwork quantity disputes. In addition, isometric photos were taken to provide team members and the public with a birds eye view of progress on the job as the work progressed. The contractor's use of AMG, mobile rover devices for inspectors, and real time site topo from drone flights resulted in a project that was very close to planned quantities with zero earthwork quantity disputes.

WORKING ALONGSIDE A LARGE STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The project is a critical route not only to US-95 daily commuters and truckers hauling industry loads to/from Canada, but also for adjacent residents and businesses off Old House, Granite Loop, Homestead, Mara Meadows, and Trails End Roads. From the project's outset, the team incorporated a large stakeholder group, including ITD and the GARVEE office, BNSF, fiber optic, communication, power and water utility companies, Kootenai and Bonner Counties, City of Athol, and Lakes Highway District. ITD held an open house to present the corridor design, access routes, construction schedule and ultimate traffic operations upon project completion. As a result of stakeholder outreach and valuable feedback received,

concerns. During construction, coordination continued with local property owners, utility companies, and county road departments.

The team emphasized maintaining safe and constant access during construction. The contractor had to make up to 40-foot cuts and 60-foot fills while maintaining traffic for residents and businesses. The project team balanced customer needs with the speed of construction in these challenging areas. By excavating in stages and shuffling traffic through subgrade, the team maintained a suitable driving surface for all traffic, from passenger vehicles and motorcycles to semi-trucks hauling materials.

Throughout construction, many property owners adjacent to the project saw changes and new developments. The team worked with them to quickly adjust and add new access points to accommodate their needs. They provided grading, culverts, and paving for new and revised access points during construction and without any project schedule impacts. Before closing permanent at-grade crossings and major traffic shifts, notifications were provided to the many stakeholders using public outreach, in-person communication, message boards, and 511 (Idaho's highway impact notification system) and signed detours.

Social, Economic, and Sustainable Development Considerations

BUSINESS IMPACTS

The revised access to businesses with frontage roads improved safety and access for customers. Since the start of the project, an adjacent material source operation reopened, creating new jobs. This has also unlocked properties along the corridor to become valuable real estate for development opportunities, with several new property developments now taking place adjacent to the project.



Adjacent Stakeholders – Commercial Rock Pit, railroad, and nearby residents.

Everyone the team heard from in the area was in favor of creating the controlled access facility and relocating the main highway access to the Trails End intersection. There was consensus that this project would address their safety concerns.. This project eliminated direct access to the 75-mph highway using new frontage roads, reduced steepness, and widened curves to reduce accident potential, especially during winter driving conditions. Ultimately, this is now a much safer facility for residents, businesses, freight movers, and visitors.

IMPROVES STORMWATER TREATMENT

The team's familiarity with the area and surrounding soils allowed seamless integration of stormwater treatment and disposal standards into the project. The new roadways created additional impervious pavement. To treat and disperse stormwater on site, the team created conveyance ditches and bioinfiltration ponds, which minimized and/or pretreated direct discharge to wetlands.

SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The frontage roads and limited access highway significantly decreased motorist idling time and pollution due to that decreased idling time. Additionally, multimodal facilities were defined for both bicyclists and pedestrians, including buffered, shared-use pathways along the entire corridor. Ultimately, the project reduces the likelihood of high-speed crashes since the intersections were moved to low-speed frontage roads with reduced average daily traffic. The decrease in emissions helps reduce greenhouse gases due to reduced idling and stop times associated with the many intersections and approaches. The new stormwater facilities clean, remove, and absorb pollutants from roadway runoff before infiltrating into the soil and, ultimately, into the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, one of the largest sole-source aquifers in the United States. Drinking water from this aquifer and the protection of this water is critical to the health and safety of over half a million residents in Idaho and eastern Washington.

and used the blasted rock material on the project site. The onsite crushed rock was used for over 1.5 miles of new rock-lined ditches and over 200,000 tons of crushed base rock which provided a majority of the new roadway base. Utilizing onsite material significantly reduced hauling costs and the associated emissions and fuel usage.

Complexity WHAT AND HOW TO BUILD

During the initial design startup, the team analyzed the EIS configuration and realized that BNSF's facility had been expanded from one track to two tracks since the FEIS, which would greatly increase the project cost since the original plan included a bridge over the railroad tracks.. During the value engineering effort, the planned underpass at Homestead Road was evaluated for a future overpass instead. The west side frontage road that crossed under US-95 with two underpasses was eliminated in favor of a more cost-effective continuous frontage road. The frontage roads required blasting of granite knobs, which allowed for suitable material to be crushed on site and used for roadway base and rip rap through the project.

During design, the team identified problems ahead of time, allowing for resolution before getting to work, thus saving time and money. One of several examples of issues identified was that the temporary crossover on the north portion of the job didn't tie in properly. By identifying the problem early, the team was able to redesign and provide updated surface models before commencing work, thus eliminating delays and extra costs.

PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS

The team scheduled virtual meetings with ITD District 1 and the GARVEE office staff to streamline the design review and approval process. By including discipline subject matter experts in each review, the team balanced the necessary design components from the perspectives of roadway geometry, drainage, structures, traffic operations, and driver expectations.



Rock slope to be blasted.



Construction of mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) Wall



Blasted material was crushed and used on the project for rock lined ditches, roadway base, and rip rap.



UTILITY RELOCATIONS AND INTEGRATION

The project team needed to relocate communication and power lines in the utility corridor adjacent to and within the shared-use pathway. The relocations were dependent on right-of-way acquisition. That pushed the work into taking place during the first year of construction, which was a major challenge that threatened to delay the project. The team quickly implemented weekly utility coordination meetings that focused on problem-solving and site walks with each utility. This cooperation between all parties led to the power company uncharacteristically sharing their poles with other utilities, ITD allowing the use of their existing fiber for temporary utility company use, and using an existing drainage culvert for temporary cable crossing beneath the highway.

Fulfillment of Client/Owner Needs

Completed under budget and a full year ahead of schedule, the substandard roadway geometrics and skewed intersections are replaced with a new controlled access facility with frontage roads. The winning contractor's \$21M bid was approximately \$9M below the engineer's estimate. The main cost savings came from the more efficient earthwork (\$3.6M) and lower asphalt pavement costs (\$1.7M). The project was built while maintaining traffic in both directions throughout construction, including the uphill passing lane.

Summary

For many years and through several projects, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) planned to improve capacity and safety in the panhandle of north Idaho to handle new growth. Since 2017, when ITD selected an HDR team to design and develop the next phase of the corridor, Granite North, HDR and ITD have worked together in design and construction to deliver this award winning project.

The US-95 Granite North project expanded approximately 2 miles of highway, redesigned more than a dozen intersections and approaches and consolidated access points. By separating low-speed local and residential traffic from the 75-mph highway design speed, the redesigned highway will quell the previous serious and high crash rate. The project features a new at-grade intersection at Trails End Road with acceleration and deceleration lanes and illumination. The intersection is forward compatible for the future Trails End diamond interchange with BNSF overpass, which will eliminate the at-grade rail crossing.

Constructed one year ahead of schedule, the completed highway, frontage roads, shared-use path, and approaches improve the level of service and safety within the corridor, and provide multimodal access and connection with Coeur d'Alene to the south, Farragut State Park on Lake Pend Oreille just 5 miles east, and our Canadian border to the north. The project team relocated utilities, developed several reconfiguration options, and coordinated with multiple agencies and stakeholders to create a corridor that solves immediate needs and integrates with the long-term corridor plans.





Highway 16 Extension Project Progresses in Treasure Valley

The project is now entering its third and final phase

By Kelsey James

A multi-year project is well underway on Idaho Highway 16 after a decades-long push to build a new north-south route for the central Treasure Valley. The SH-16 extension sits between McDermott and Star roads and will extend the highway from U.S. 20/26 south to Interstate 84.

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) is tasked with constructing the limited-access highway. According to the ITD, the future interchanges will serve between 65,000 and 110,000 vehicles per day by 2045. Once completed, the average travel time from I-84 to SH-44 is expected to be seven to 10 minutes using SH-16.

“Limiting access to a few interchanges ensures uninterrupted traffic flow, enhancing mobility, and reducing congestion on our roadways,” Public Information Officer Sophia Miraglio said.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project, perhaps the largest road renovation the Treasure Valley has seen since the 1992 opening of the Broadway-Chinden Connector, aims to reduce travel times – a request long advocated for due to population growth in the region.

“SH-16 will improve regional mobility, provide access to I-84 in the rapidly growing Treasure Valley, and improve commutes for thousands of motorists,” Project Manager Dan Gorley said.

While development is expected to follow, the economic impact from SH-16 can already be seen. Contech Engineered Solutions, a member of the Idaho AGC, is serving as the general contractor for the project. The company has constructed girders for several of the bridges and retaining walls, all of which were fabricated at their Caldwell location.

Additionally, the concrete and aggregate used in the project is sourced locally from Idaho.

Work on the new highway focuses on eight areas: the SH-16 Mainline, SH-16/I-84 Interchange, SH-16 Franklin Road, SH-16 Cherry Lane overpass, SH-16 Ustick Road, McDermott realign, SH-16 McMillan Road overpass, and SH-16 US-20/26 (Chinden Boulevard).

SH-16 MAINLINE

- Building a new highway with two lanes in both directions, a center median barrier, and 10-foot shoulders;
- Elevating the highway between five and 20 feet off the ground; and
- Building bridges over the Union Pacific Railroad, Five Mile Creek, Ten Mile Creek, and other irrigation structures.

In the future, ITD plans to expand the

intersections to interchanges, allowing free-flowing traffic on SH-16.

SH-16/I-84 INTERCHANGE

The SH-16/I-84 Interchange will see a new bridge over I-84 and ramps to and from I-84 and Franklin Road. Flamingo Road south of I-84 will also be realigned.

In the future, ITD will expand this location into a system-to-system interchange. The final interchange will allow motorists to travel directly to and from SH-16 without stopping at Franklin Road.

SH-16 FRANKLIN ROAD

ITD is constructing a signalized intersection at Franklin Road where traffic will stop before continuing on SH-16 or I-84. Work will also include widening Franklin Road around the new intersection to make room for new turn lanes to and from SH-16.

In the future, ITD will be constructing a full interchange at Franklin Road.

SH-16 CHERRY LANE OVERPASS

- Building an overpass for State Highway 16 to cross over Cherry Lane;
- Building a new local road (Quasi Place) near Ten Mile Creek to provide access to properties west of SH-16;
- Constructing a bridge for SH-16 to cross over Ten Mile Creek; and
- Constructing a second bridge over Ten Mile Creek where Quasi Place crosses the creek.

SH-16 USTICK ROAD

- Building a signalized intersection where traffic will stop before continuing on SH-16;
- Widening Ustick Road around the intersection to make room for new turn lanes to and from SH-16; and
- Realigning McDermott Road east of the intersection.

In the future, ITD will expand the signalized intersection at Ustick Road to a tight diamond interchange.



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MCDERMOTT REALIGN

McDermott Road was realigned east of SH-16 at Ustick Road. The new alignment made room for the new SH-16/Ustick Interchange.

SH-16 MCMILLAN ROAD OVERPASS

- Building an overpass for SH-16 traffic to cross over McMillan Road;

- Constructing a new local road (Ersatz Place) north of McMillan Road and west of SH-16 to provide access to properties;
- Construction a bridge south of McMillan Road for SH-16 traffic to cross over Five Mile Creek; and
- Adding a pedestrian bridge over the creek on the east side of McDermott Road.

SH-16: US-20/26 (CHINDEN BOULEVARD)

ITD is constructing a full interchange between SH-16 and US-20/26. This interchange is being constructed in several stages, including:

- Building new ramps and traffic signals between US-20/26 and State Highway 16. Traffic will use these ramps and traffic signals while the rest of the interchange is under construction;
- Widening US-20/26 in the immediate project area to make room for new turn lanes to and from SH-16; and
- Constructing a partial cloverleaf interchange at US-20/26 and SH-16. This includes building a bridge over US-20/26, as well as a “loop” ramp for eastbound traffic on US-20/26 to access northbound SH-16.

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The project is being paid for with Transportation Expansion and Congestion Mitigation (TECM) funds as a part of Governor Little’s Leading Idaho program.

PROJECT HISTORY

Work first began on the project as early as 2006 when an environmental impact statement was completed between 2006-2011. From there, Phase 1 of the project focused on extending the highway two miles south to U.S. 20-26, which was completed in 2014 (at the time, the highway ended at State Highway 44 [State Street]).

From 2017 to 2019, ITD was in the process of developing a design for

the highway extension between U.S. 20 and 26. In 2001, the design of the main roadway was completed, with an estimated cost of \$102 million.

Phase 2 of construction began in 2022 and includes building the mainline roadway; interchanges with I-84 and U.S. 20-26/Chinden; and overpasses at McMillan Road, Cherry Lane, and the railroad tracks. Phase 2 items required funding for the design (\$25 million), acquiring right of way (\$86 million), and construction (\$253 million).

PROJECT FUNDING AND TIMELINE

The project is being paid for with Transportation Expansion and Congestion Mitigation (TECM) funds as a part of Governor Little’s Leading Idaho program. The mainline is expected to be completed in 2025 or 2026, with the U.S. 20-26 interchange expected to be finished in 2026 at the earliest.

For more information about the project, visit www.itdprojects.idaho.gov.

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College of Eastern Idaho Breaks Ground on New Future Tech Building in Idaho Falls

The 88,000-square-foot facility is expected to be completed in March 2026

By Kelsey James

Construction on the College of Eastern Idaho's new Future Tech building is officially underway and is expected to be completed by March 1, 2026.

CEI, alongside Andersen Construction and Lombard Conrad Architects, broke ground on the project in June of this year, though plans for the new building had been in the works since before 2018.

The soon-to-be 88,000-square-foot facility will be situated on the north side of the Idaho Falls campus. This area was selected because it's the widest area

CEI has on site that hasn't already had a new development. After the Future Tech building is complete, there will still be space for a couple smaller buildings.

The two-storey facility with a clear storey mechanical mezzanine on top will host energy, innovation, and technology-related courses – such as cybersecurity and mechatronics – as well as IT and STEM programs.

The overall construction budget is estimated to be over \$40 million and will be funded through state and donor funds.

“The facility will house both classrooms

and laboratories. Once it's fully built, it will have a conference center with a conference room,” said CEI Director of Facilities and Operations, Greg Horton. “There will be about 25 or so labs and classrooms on both levels.”

In addition to classrooms and the conference center, the building will have field testing laboratories and a large gathering area for business and civic events, student group projects, and bay space. There will also be student study areas spread out throughout the building, or what the college is calling ‘collaborative spaces.’

The large stairwell, which can also be used for studying and gathering, was inspired by a building on the Montana State University campus (the college, along with Andersen Construction and Lombard Conrad Architects, toured other U.S. universities to get an idea of what they wanted to be included in the design).

Horton's role with the project includes



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“We had good references from previous projects that are similar and the most relevant CM/GC project experience.”



ensuring construction proceeds as it's supposed to, that the building is built per the plans, and all CEI's expectations are met according to its agreements with the state and architect.

“Everything is running smoothly. We didn't anticipate anything underground we didn't know about, and there hasn't been thus far,” Horton said. “We'll have concrete poured by the end of September, and we'll start standing steel in October. We'll do that throughout the winter. We won't have it watertight until next summer.”

CEI is the only educational institution in Idaho without a career and technical education building, according to its website.

Andersen Construction was selected to lead the project two and a half years ago after CEI sent out a request for qualifications.

“They chose us mostly because we've successfully worked with the Division of Public Works in Idaho on several CM/GC projects previously and we've had success for Idaho State University,” said Andersen Construction Project Manager, Andrew Stewart. “We had good references from previous projects that are similar and the most relevant CM/GC project experience. We are excited to be part of the team and to represent CEI and DPW as its builder for this legacy project.”

Stewart says the construction of the facility will feature architectural glass and

custom hardwood trim. There will also be modern cladding that's a continuous layer of insulation, which will make the building more energy efficient and give it a high rating for insulation envelope.

“I don't think CEI has ever had a project of this size,” Stewart said. “This is going to be awesome for Idaho Falls. In my opinion, people are going to want to go to school here, and it should produce a bunch of great jobs for the local community.”

For more information about the College of Eastern Idaho's new Future Tech building, visit www.cei.edu/future-tech.



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College of Western Idaho and Interfaith Sanctuary Introduce Construction Career Launcher Apprenticeship Certification Program

By Kelsey James



A partnership between the College of Western Idaho and Interfaith Sanctuary is helping Boise's homeless population secure jobs in the construction industry.

"It was love at first sight," Interfaith Sanctuary Executive Director Jodi Peterson-Stigers said of the collaboration between the two organizations. "It's so brilliant and heartwarming, and the instructor that comes to the shelter, you couldn't have handpicked a better human to work with our population. He's not just teaching construction skills – he's also deep into life lessons and the importance of having pride in your work. The students connect well with him and

that's beautiful to witness."

Interfaith Sanctuary was founded in 2005 by a group of interfaith leaders responding to an immediate crisis when another homeless shelter that had been serving men, women, and families with children became a men's only shelter overnight.

"Thirty-nine different faith leaders met and said, 'We have to do something.' So, they created what was the first version of Interfaith, which moved from church to church and to school gymnasiums," Peterson-Stigers said. "They offered shelter and a warm meal every night three months a year, during the coldest time of year in Boise. Eventually, they

raised enough money in 2007 to build what is our permanent emergency shelter that operates 24/7 and 365 days a year."

Today, Interfaith Sanctuary is a homeless shelter that serves single mothers and women, families with children, senior citizens, and the medically fragile. While the group used to primarily only be an overnight shelter, they began offering daytime programming in 2015 to assist people in more meaningful ways.

"We have a family program, a program for the medically fragile, and a senior program. Those are situated at our hotel shelter that was founded in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic," Peterson-

Stigers said. “Through emergency funding, we were able to get an additional 100 beds in a hotel that we’ll continue to operate until we move into the new shelter that we’re building on State Street.”

Interfaith Sanctuary also offers ‘Project Recovery,’ a full-time on-site recovery program, ‘Project Well-Being,’ a full-time on-site mental health program, as well as a food service training program to help individuals interested into going into the food service industry connect to employment after completing their Serve Safe certification.

Interfaith Sanctuary’s latest venture is a collaboration with the College of Western Idaho to provide construction classes to the homeless. The Career Launcher Construction Apprenticeship Certification program, now in its third iteration, is being funded through the Idaho Workforce Development Council. The grant provides a certain number of classes through a two-year period. The College of Western Idaho and Interfaith Sanctuary are aiming to graduate at least 80 people per year for a two-year period.

Since transportation can be a challenge for the homeless population, the grant from Idaho Workforce Development Council allows the college to bring classroom training directly to Interfaith Sanctuary’s shelter. The grant also covers the \$875 participants would typically have to pay to take part in the program.

“The fact it’s right under our roof makes it easy for them to be successful,” Peterson-Stigers said. “It takes a lot of stress away because they’re safe in their environment. Sometimes, if they’re trying to move onto a college campus while experiencing homelessness, they have a lot of traumas. Doing it at the shelter has proven to be a good equation.”

Micron introduced Interfaith

Sanctuary to the training program, Peterson-Stigers explains. At the time, Interfaith Sanctuary was in the process of building the new shelter location. Micron made a sizeable donation to the project to create what’s now referred to as the ‘community workforce classroom.’ After Micron heard about the Idaho Workforce Development Council funding, the

company connected Interfaith Sanctuary with the College of Western Idaho to create the Construction Career Launcher Apprenticeship Certification program.

“Between Interfaith Sanctuary and Micron, we have two very large-scale construction projects happening and the labor force can’t meet the demand,” Peterson-Stigers said. “Our first goal



The advertisement features the Smith Simple logo at the top, with the word 'smith' in a large, bold, lowercase font and 'simple' in a smaller, lowercase font below it. To the left of the text is the Chevrolet bowtie logo, and below it is the word 'CHEVROLET' in all caps. To the right of the Chevrolet logo is the slogan 'Together let's drive™' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the text and logo is a photograph of a white Chevrolet pickup truck parked at a construction site. The truck is the central focus of the image, with a yellow excavator and other construction equipment visible in the background. The bottom of the advertisement is a dark grey banner with white text that reads 'SERVING IDAHO SINCE 1919' in large, bold, uppercase letters. Below this, in smaller white text, is 'JOHN GIANNINI | COMMERCIAL FLEET SALES MANAGER' and '208.569.4112 | JOHN@THESMITHGROUP.COM'.



was to try to build up the labor force for construction. Our second goal, once we get into the new building, is to have two tracks: one for construction and the other for mechatronics, which would allow them to get employed at Micron at a liveable wage with a skill that is trainable and doesn't require an undergrad degree."

Marc Swinney, director of business, manufacturing, and IT programs at the College of Western Idaho, says funding also provides all materials, tools, and PPE for students so they can graduate from the program with safety goggles, safety glasses, ear protection, gloves, and work boots.

"Just knowing there's a big gap in the labor force with the ongoing growth of construction, there's a real need for labor right now," Swinney added. "Construction wages have been going up. These are good jobs that are available out there. On the other side of the demand,

there are folks in certain situations that need employment – they might just not have the gainful skills or the stability or support system that's needed to be able to move up in a job. CWI is working on giving them those employability skills, and then Interfaith Sanctuary is working on giving them that stability and support they need to be able to transition to jobs and self-sufficient living."

The classes offered are focused on carpentry skills that can be applied to residential, commercial, and industrial construction. Each class is either four or six weeks, with 36 total hours of instruction. The first session ran from May 14 to June 20, the second was July 23 to August 17, and the third was September 24 to October 19.

"There's a component that touches on safety, a component of it that covers measurements, basic construction math, working with a tape measure, planning

how much materials you'll need for a project, and then it moves into the hands-on piece," Swinney said.


"In each of the classes we've had a project to complete that could be used to benefit Interfaith Sanctuary's homeless shelter," he added. "The first class we made six picnic tables, and then the second class we made seven Adirondack chairs that were used for auctioning off for fundraisers to help raise money for the shelter. In the third class, they made kitchen tables that can be used once folks get out of the homeless shelter and relocate to some type of housing."

The following session will have attendees building beds that will then be used at Interfaith Sanctuary's new shelter location.

Ronald Alexander, instructor of the new program, experienced homelessness first-hand in his early 20s.

"I lived in a van for three months,"

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The classes offered are focused on carpentry skills that can be applied to residential, commercial, and industrial construction.

Alexander said. “It was a struggle, but it’s finding the right connections, trying to set the right goals, and caring about where you want to go or what you want to do.”

Alexander started teaching at the College of Western Idaho part time in 2015. When the chance to join the Career Launcher Construction Apprenticeship Certification program came up, he didn’t hesitate to join the project.

“I looked at it as a great opportunity to share my knowledge,” he said. “Being in the construction industry for the last

30 years, I knew I couldn’t do the work forever, so how do I pass this information on to other people so they can use those skills? How can I help them be successful? I’m not on this planet just for me; I was put on this planet to be a help or benefit to someone else.”

Alexander’s lessons go beyond the basics of construction. While he does focus on things like cutting, sanding, measuring, and estimating the time it will take to complete a project, he also wants his students to learn how these skills relate to their regular life.

“I’m trying to interweave it together,” Alexander said. “In areas we fear or are afraid of or we don’t know enough about, we procrastinate – but when do that, we’re preventing ourselves from moving forward. We try to include these life skills to use with anything in their life but also on the project itself. I tell them, ‘Look, you’re building your future one step at a time today.’”

For more information about Interfaith Sanctuary and the College of Western Idaho, visit www.interfaithsanctuary.org and www.cwi.edu. ●



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Building Resilience: Investing in Mental Health for a Thriving Construction Workforce

By Advanced Benefits

Idaho's construction industry is a powerhouse, but the demanding nature of the work can take a toll on employees' mental well-being. Long hours, physical strain, tight deadlines, and unpredictable environments contribute to stress, anxiety, and even depression. To build a truly successful workforce, construction companies need to prioritize mental health alongside physical safety.

THE UNIQUE PRESSURES OF CONSTRUCTION

Construction workers face a unique set of challenges that can impact mental health. Deadlines, unpredictable weather, tight budgets, and potential safety hazards create stressful work

environments akin to a pressure cooker. The physical strain of construction work can lead to fatigue and contribute to emotional burnout, especially when coupled with long hours. Frequent jobsite changes and long hours can lead to feelings of isolation, even for team-oriented projects. Not to mention how much the construction industry can be feast or famine, with periods of unemployment or underemployment leading to financial worries.

Even worse, stress and a physically demanding job can increase the risk of substance abuse as a coping mechanism. According to a 2023 report by American Addiction Centers, employees in the construction industry have nearly twice the

According to a 2023 report by American Addiction Centers, employees in the construction industry have nearly twice the rate of substance abuse as the national average, with around 15 percent of all construction workers in the U.S. having a substance abuse disorder compared to 8.6 percent of the general U.S. adult population.

rate of substance abuse as the national average, with around 15 percent of all construction workers in the U.S. having a substance abuse disorder compared to 8.6 percent of the general U.S. adult population. This same study found that 16.5 percent of construction workers reported heavy alcohol consumption within the past 30 days, nearly twice the average of all full-time workers surveyed.

INVESTING IN MENTAL WELLNESS

In the face of adversity, employers and HR professionals in the construction industry can address these challenges head-on, and build a more resilient and thriving workforce with these helpful tools and resources:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Offering confidential

counseling services through EAPs provides a safe space for employees to seek help.

- Mental health awareness training: Educate employees on the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Partner with local mental health organizations to provide the training, ensuring its accuracy and relevance.
- Stress management programs: Consider offering these workshops on-site during lunch breaks or safety meetings to maximize participation.
- Positive work culture: Fostering a culture of open communication and respect creates a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable discussing mental health concerns. Encourage regular health checkups and provide

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resources for employees to seek medical help.

- Peer support programs: Develop peer support programs where employees can connect and share experiences. This can be done through mentorship programs or anonymous forums.
- Reduce stigma: Organize events and campaigns to normalize discussions about mental health.
- Lead by example: Leaders need to prioritize their own well-being and model healthy work habits. This includes taking

breaks, encouraging employees to use their PTO, and avoiding excessive communication outside of work hours.

By prioritizing mental health initiatives, Idaho AGC member companies can create a construction environment that fosters resilience, reduces presenteeism and absenteeism, attracts top talent, and improves overall employee well-being. This investment will not only enhance the lives of their workers but also improve company morale. ●

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