

**KDOT Partnership Project  
December 4, 2003  
Advisory Team Meeting #4**

**Welcome and Presentation on Results, Recommendations, and Implementation**

The KDOT Partnership Advisory Group met in Manhattan, Kansas on December 4, 2003. Secretary Miller thanked the group for coming and introduced Chris Tatham, ETC Institute. Chris reviewed the project process, how recommendations were developed and the priority issues that came out of the data analysis stage. Those priority areas linked closely with the action priorities of the senior managers.

Secretary Miller presented her vision for KDOT and the explained how KDOT would work toward implementation. The three goals include:

Goal 1: Make KDOT a More Desirable Place to Work—Jim Kowach and Marcia Ferrill will be leading the action committee to focus on this goal.

Goal 2: Nurture Better Relationships with Local Governments—Mike Crow and Julie Lorenz will be leading the action committee to focus on this goal.

Goal 3: Develop KDOT's Roadmap for Continued Success—Dave Comstock along with Rosie Ingram and Ron McMurry will be leading the action committee to focus on this goal.

Secretary Miller described how each of these goals will be achieved through objectives that focus the efforts of each committee. KDOT staff listed below have been assigned to lead the efforts for each objective.

**Goal 1: Make KDOT a More Desirable Place to Work**

Objective 1: Make KDOT jobs more competitive through mechanisms that KDOT can control

- Identify what KDOT can do and cannot do for employees
- Assess the use of flexible hours by employees
- Assess changes to exempt/non exempt status, allowing for overtime in some positions.

Objective 2: Provide training on basis - Lon Ingram, Chief, Bureau of Materials & Research

Objective 3: Emphasize the public service aspect of KDOT employment - Krista Roberts, Chief, Bureau of Transportation Information

- Promote KDOT employees in local media
- Conduct ribbon cutting ceremonies
- Pursue more awards for excellence

Objective 4: Work to make changes in state compensation and benefit policies that hurt KDOT's ability to attract and retain good employees - Warren Sick, Assistant Secretary and State Transportation Engineer and Bob Stacks, Director, Division of Administration

- Salary benefits analysis
- Needs/situation of KDOT employees are communicated to key stakeholder groups.

## **Goal 2: Nurture Better Relationships with Local Governments**

Objective 1: Work with local governments to enhance the overall quality of the State's transportation system

- Update City Connecting Links (KLINKS) policies - David Church, Chief, Bureau of Traffic Engineering and an Area Engineer
- Make local project process easier to understand and use - Larry Thompson, District Six Engineer and Maggie Thompson, Public Involvement Liaison, Bureau of Public Involvement
- Establish a Bureau of Urban Planning - Terry Heidner, Director, Division of Planning & Development

Objective 2: Increase KDOT's involvement in local communities so that KDOT can be more responsive to local concerns and needs

- Transform the role of District Public Involvement Liaison into Public Affairs position - Bob Cook, District Five Engineer
- Redefine Area Engineer role and increase district involvement in decision making - Don Drickey, District Two Engineer

Objective 3: Educate key stakeholder groups and the general public about KDOT services and projects - Julie Lorenz, Director, Division of Public Affairs

- Develop a systematic method for communicating targeted information to external stakeholder groups.

## **Goal 3: Develop KDOT's Roadmap for Continued Success – David Comstock, Director, Division of Engineering & Design**

Objective 1: Review and potentially revise

- KDOT's mission
- State aid programs/invest in local roads
- City connecting links policy
- Local consult process
- Turn-back policy
- Share resources with stakeholders
- Project selection
- Multi-modal workgroup
- Succession Planning
- Broader involvement in decision making

It has also been suggested that a Board of Directors be instituted to promote momentum and accountability, and to provide guidance on communication.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

Deb Miller and Julie Lorenz asked each participant to share their thoughts or comments regarding the project. Below is a summary of the responses.

- Project selection process— the process has been in place for at least 25 years and one of the positives of it is that there is confidence that politics are not involved. It needs to be more than just a formula, there needs to be some local consult—and review of funding allocation between programs. It is important to review the formula, to make sure it is still working and providing the results that make sense.
- Relationship between contractors and suppliers with KDOT is an important issue. It was asked if that issue should be added as a priority. Secretary Miller responded that while relationships between contractors/suppliers and KDOT is an important issue, relationships with cities and counties is a larger issue across the board. Partnering and developing relationships with contractors and suppliers will continue to be emphasized, potentially through training opportunities.
- How will the role of the Public Involvement Liaison (PIL) change? Currently the PIL responds to many inquiries, complaints and requests. They are involved in projects that are going on in their Districts. The role in the future looks for them to be more proactive in their approach—to contact local governments early in projects, to talk with area civic groups about what is happening in their area, plan ribbon cuttings, attend civic events, etc.
- Appreciate the opportunity to help shape direction of KDOT.
- Training on the basics is important, especially with the field inspectors. The curriculum development will be important.
- Keep communications going with workgroup, employees and each other.
- Share ideas with employees as they are developed.
- Much of what this is about is relationship building.
- One of the reasons that this project was initiated was the Governor's top to bottom review of state agencies with a cost cutting emphasis—what were the results? Are they being communicated?
- Maintain the momentum of the project. The Board of Directors is an excellent idea to help keep things moving forward.
- All three objectives are very good, but in order to get numbers two and three done, objective number one needs to be the most important. Employee morale is critical.
- The idea of emphasizing the public service aspect of the job is a good one.
- There is some animosity between Area Engineer and Superintendent—some changes are needed to keep the superintendents informed of what is going on. As Area Engineer roles are looked into and revised, look for ways to keep Superintendents involved—they are the back up.
- Please consider demographics more--there is an aging population that will be less mobile in 20-30 years especially in rural areas.
- There is a lot to consider and work on with respect to local governments. The KLINKS policies are not easily understood for most people. The snow removal policies in small towns were cited as an example of how the public doesn't differentiate between a KDOT road and a local road – and shouldn't

have to be able to differentiate. Maybe there are ways to help smaller towns with less staff and size. Many people do not see the difference between KDOT's responsibilities and Cities' responsibilities.

- Should the advisory group make a statement about the Program and this project?

## **BREAKOUT GROUPS**

Advisory Group members were then divided into one of three breakout groups and were asked to identify key actions and priorities for the implementation teams to focus on in the next 12-18 months.

### **Group 1—Making KDOT a more desirable place to work**

#### **What training should KDOT focus on and why? Which one is a priority?**

Project Inspection training should be the top priority. While it may not be possible for KDOT personnel to teach training, they should be instrumental in developing curriculum.

- LPA's need training on these issues too.
- Requires implementation, structure, coordination, and follow-up to know who is getting the training and who needs it.

#### Other training issues

- Need cross-training in various jobs. There should not be jobs that only one person is capable of doing. (Applies to most jobs within KDOT.)
- Supervisors need training on how to do performance evaluations. Everything from how to record and document performance and goals to how to work with employees on issues.
  - Training on how to deal with poor performance—documentation, steps necessary for progressive discipline.
- Training on basics of KDOT as an organization (beyond the Organizational Overview)
  - Providing more tools to serve as an ambassador
  - Knowing who to call for issues
  - Being able to explain why decisions were made
  - Utilizing the area and sub area personnel to help with issues

**What are some of the challenges and actions you could take to address those challenges in terms of:**

Issues under KDOT control

- Promote staff from within KDOT—how you advertise for the position, internally and externally.
- Redefining overtime pay (pay staff for time that is worked) exempt/nonexempt issue.
- Reclassify engineering positions into non-engineering positions where possible (not all jobs require an engineer)—for exempt/nonexempt issue.
- Look at all positions for reclassification and ways non-engineers could fill positions.
- Currently pay is limited to two steps even if one is promoted beyond two steps. Change it so promotion would come with commensurate pay.
- Currently moving expenses are capped, which does not help with relocations and incentives for promotions.
- Non monetary recognition for positive performance.
- Provide meaningful work so personnel feel that their roles are contributing to the positive role of KDOT.
- Pay for professional registrations and licensing and professional associations and memberships.
- Flex time—currently being looked at to see why it didn't work in the past and why it might work now. It would be good in some functions, but not necessarily across the board. It is job dependant. It wouldn't work in maintenance. Core hours are important.
- 4-day work week—could work for some job functions. It works for surveyors.
- Organization needs to be efficient. There needs to be a balance between agency needs and employee needs.
- KDOT rules on procurement.

State compensation and benefits/ some promoting KDOT

- Develop allies outside agency to promote KDOT and lobby for better pay/benefits. Be more proactive with relationships.
- Work more collaboratively with associations (KCE,KCA, KCEC, etc) to send message throughout the organization, not just to top board members because message does not always find its way to everyone.
- Hold open houses for legislators with employees on KDOT needs/issues/concerns to convey message and develop a dialog.
- Encourage communication with officials.
- Be an ambassador to KDOT, not just about what it does, but what it needs.

## Group 2—Nurture Better Relationships with Local Governments

- Connecting links—share responsibility without KDOT always being the bad guy.
  - Degree of involvement tied to the type of facility and local staff capabilities. Loosen control as you go down facility type. Use a tiered approach, which offers flexibility depending on capabilities of local unit of government.
- Area Engineer to attend Chamber Meetings. That position should become the face of KDOT.
- Utility coordinating committees—area engineer should attend these as well.
- Local projects don't need so many reviews.
- When examining the Local Projects review process, start from the beginning and wipe the slate clean. The Feds aren't nearly as stringent as in the past, so build from minimum requirements from the Feds.
- Currently the application process is lengthy.
- Pass through federal money instead or pass along state funds without as much review/inspection.
- The 29 month schedule associated with local projects should be the maximum schedule, not the mandated schedule. There could be incentives for early delivery.
- Does Local Projects need to do all field checks? Could area engineers conduct field checks?
- Is plan check necessary? Go to grants.
- FHWA certification for smaller cities?
- Tiered approach to handing off local projects to locals. Needs flexibility.
- Consider lump sum. Open up discussion with Feds for incentive/disincentive.
- As programs are reviewed and policy changes considered, small group of cities/counties representing a broad cross section should be used to discuss possible changes.
- Flexibility is needed in field checks.
- Locals and KDOT do have some good relationships—don't lose what is working, tweak where necessary. There is some flexibility already in some areas.

## **Group 3—KDOT's Roadmap for Continued Success**

### General Expectations for the roadmap

1. Set the stage for the next transportation program
2. Will provide a 20-year vision for the Agency that:
  - a. Identifies system needs
  - b. Has 5-10 year implementation plans
3. Establishes/defines what success for the Agency means/what should be measured
4. Should be flexible
5. Helps foster cultural change
6. Provides framework that links the agency together
  - a. Organizes structure
  - b. Policies
  - c. Business practices

### Specific Issues/Concerns

1. Succession planning should really address leadership development
  - a. Mentoring, cultivating leaders
  - b. Retaining good people
2. Multimodal workgroup
  - a. Needs to be more than a token effort
  - b. Should result in changes that make other modes a priority
  - c. Integrates other modes into planning/design
3. Broader involvement in decision-making/stakeholders
  - a. Get community leaders who work behind the scene involved
  - b. Take advantage of support that can be provided by cities/counties
  - c. Eliminate jurisdictional barriers over responsibilities (city vs. county vs. KDOT)
4. Turn back Policies
  - a. Ensure locals are actively involved in this phase of the process

### Who to Involve/Engage in Process

1. Locals—cities/counties-the right level of people, mayor, staff, manager
2. Chambers of Commerce
3. Regional Economic/Commerce Groups
4. FHWA
5. School Districts
6. Key: Document the participation of groups in the process over time.

## **WHERE WE GO FROM HERE**

The Secretary thanked members for their time and willingness to share their views in an open and candid way. Members expressed interest in receiving updates on progress, willingness to provide additional assistance/input, and compliments on a very open and engaging process.