

CENTERLINE

A Monthly Newsletter for the Employees of NDOT

I-15 EXPRESS LANES COMPLETED

Alongside the Las Vegas Strip, NDOT has put Interstate 15 travel on the express track with recent completion of the I-15 express lane project.

The project built two express lanes in each direction of I-15 between Russell and Sahara avenues, parallel to the Strip. Separated from regular travel lanes by three-foot-high ‘candlestick’ delineators, through traffic can now make the five-plus mile journey past the resort corridor in the designated express lanes. With through traffic separated from vehicles exiting within the resort corridor; weaving, merging and congestion can be reduced.

“The project gives drivers a smoother ride and gives those exiting onto the Strip easier access and safer, more consistent traffic flow,” NDOT Assistant Project Management Chief Jeff Hale said, noting that approximately 250,000 vehicles drive through the area every day.

Due to unforeseen issues with utilities, underground water levels and the Union Pacific Railroad, the original project completion goal of mid 2009 was delayed. NDOT worked closely with partner agencies to address the issues and much of the express lane system, excluding one small segment, was opened in 2009 to provide the additional lanes while final touches were completed.

“Even before the entire express lane system was open, it helped having the extra lanes that traffic could use as regular travel lanes,” NDOT District Engineer Mary Martini explained. “However, the area has seen numerous accidents because the freeway section north of Sahara is not wide enough to accommodate all the lanes. With the completion of the

project and the opening of the small segment that was previously closed, the express lanes are designated for through traffic only. We will be monitoring the accident rate and hopefully the new express lanes will function as envisioned.”

Constructed by Capriati Construction and overseen by NDOT crew 915, funding for the approximately \$21 million project came from Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority room tax revenue apportioned by the State Legislature. Nearly 25 percent of all Las Vegas tourism generates from visitors from southern California, many of whom will now have easier, more streamlined access to the Las Vegas Strip thanks to through traffic being separated into the express lanes.

“These are Nevada’s first interstate express lanes,” Hale said. “They’re eventually planned to become part of a larger high occupancy vehicle network with dedicated carpool lanes connecting the major Las Vegas freeways.”



Through traffic takes the express lanes on I-15 northbound alongside the Las Vegas Strip.

RALPH LOPEZ RETIRES



Removing Boulder



Repaving

After serving as the longest-term NDOT employee of recent years, NDOT District II Supervisor Ralph Lopez has retired.

Ralph started at NDOT 46 years ago. Beginning on what was then a two-person Emigrant Pass maintenance crew, the rural lifestyle on the hilltop station between Elko and Battle Mountain suited the dedicated NDOT employee well. With a love for operating machinery, Ralph enjoyed snowplowing and repaving duties for his twenty-one years on the crew; even if the equipment was less advanced than today.

“Back then, there was a small motor on the sanders,” Ralph said. “Often, to keep the sander working, we had to stop the truck, and remove or replace the spark plug in the sander motor.”

Work hours were also different.

“During snow, we were lucky if we slept two hours before we went back out to plow again,” Ralph explained, relating how he once spent 32 hours straight snowplowing.

Then, in 1985, Ralph received a call, asking him to join the Fernley maintenance crew. Five years later, Ralph moved even closer to Reno when he transferred to Crew 251 on the U.S. 395 Nevada-California border.

“I was a country kid, scared of coming into the city,” he recalls.

After six months on the suburban-area crew, the self-proclaimed country boy moved to the heart of the city when he transferred to work on Interstate 80 through Reno-Sparks. It was in Reno that Ralph settled into the triumphs and challenges of city maintenance work, eventually becoming Supervisor II overseeing 47 people on six maintenance crews.

Especially challenging were the vehicle crashes that Ralph was often the first to respond to. In fact, Ralph was first to respond one day in November 2000 when fellow employee Richard Culver was shot twice while stopping to assist a motorist.

“I saw where he was bleeding by his leg and tried to stop the bleeding right away,” Ralph explained of the makeshift cloth tourniquet he fashioned to help save Culver’s life.

Ralph encountered his own numerous life and death situations while working on the roadside; first when he was hit and his pelvis broken by a wayward vehicle and then when he lost half of his left pinkie finger while on duty.

In 2008, Ralph’s quick response and dedication to public safety at crash scenes earned him the first “Support and Assistance Award” ever given by the Nevada Highway Patrol.

More quiet were the times when Ralph was able to travel NDOT freeways for potential improvements and maintenance betterments. In a sign of the collaboration that was the hallmark of his career, Ralph worked closely with the crew supervisors reporting to him to develop road improvement projects, and says that he greatly appreciated their expertise and dedication.

Ralph’s advice for those just starting in their NDOT employment is true to his collaborative nature. It is advice that has served him well in his 46-year strong NDOT career: “Listen, ask questions and take time to learn from others.”

As Ralph begins his retirement, he looks forward to taking time to travel.

PUTTING NEVADANS ON THE MOVE



Without personal transportation, how would you get to work, the doctor or even the grocery store? Nevada's many public transit programs provide transportation that connects Nevada citizens with the services they need. And NDOT's hard-working transit staff has recently administered federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to support vitally-needed transit services across the state.

The Transit section received just over \$7 million in Recovery funds. Half of that Recovery money went to provide new buses for vital local transit programs.

"Predominantly, we give transit funds to senior centers, rehabilitation facilities, Indian reservations and non-profit rural transit providers," NDOT Transportation Planner Derek Kirkland explained. "In fact, much of the funding provides rides for seniors and the disabled. In rural areas, our funding also helps provide transit to the general public."

Remaining Recovery transit funds were split between transit construction and operations improvements, including the construction of approximately 25 new bus shelters and a bus fueling/storage facility.

The Recovery money is not the only transit funding administered by NDOT Transit. Every year, NDOT transit staff oversee millions in Federal Transit Administration grants. In 2008, NDOT distributed approximately \$8 million in funding throughout the state for vital transit programs.

The result? Since the program began in 1975, more than 350 vehicles have been acquired that operate in 60 Nevada communities including most of the larger rural communities and the state's reservations and colonies.



Annually, over one million rides are given on vehicles provided by NDOT's disbursement of federal funding.

"Working in the Transit section and Multimodal Planning is by far the most rewarding job position I have ever had," Transit Planning Coordinator Trish Giomi said. "Some individuals utilizing these services would have no human contact without the transportation services. It allows them to stay in their homes and remain independent by providing the necessary transportation to shopping, medical appointments, social events, etc."

Public words of thanks for NDOT's transit staff can be found on the back page of this edition of Centerline.

NDOT TRANSIT STAFF

Michelle Gardner-Lilley, Transit Manager

Trish Giomi, Transit Coordinator

Derek Kirkland, Transportation Planner

Natalie Christ, Transportation Planner

Melisa Kunter, Transportation Planner



Pictured from right to left, Michelle Gardner-Lilley, Natalie Christ, Melisa Kunter, Trish Giomi and Derek Kirkland stand proud in front of a transit bus that is ready to deliver to a local transit provider.

KudosKorner

TRANSIT MATTERS

Community Thanks for NDOT Support of Local Transit Programs



My eyes no longer allow me to drive, so I am very thankful for the Fallon shuttle. It allows me to schedule and plan appointments, etc.

Ray Pelmone, Fallon resident

Many of our {Douglas} county's senior citizens are dependent upon the Douglas Area Rural Transportation Dial-a-Ride System for shopping, medical and dental appointments, physical therapy sessions and travel. Without this public transportation system, many of our seniors would be forced to move out of the county, reside in assisted living or be dependent upon high-priced private transportation services which most of them can not afford.

Paul Lockwood, President, Young at Heart Senior Citizens Club

Public transportation is an important component to Mesquite's current and future economic development. Without it, new businesses and future homeowners may look to other areas.

Susan Holecheck, Mayor, Mesquite

Without a means of transportation, many {seniors} find themselves confined without access to food, clothing, medical care or society. Were it not for the Silver Rider System which now provides these services, the only guaranteed transportation for them comes with a flashing red light atop its roof.

Elaine Buhan, Laughlin resident

Welcome

Marlene Goddard, *Elko*
Tonya Sieben, *Carson*



All NDOT employees-
Remember to always be attentive and follow safe practices in road work zones and all work locations.



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