

Analysis of MoDOT Communication and Outreach Effectiveness

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safe and they will make
you SAFE!

Prepared by
Heartland Market Research
and Missouri Department of
Transportation

MoDOT
Cares!

Analysis of MoDOT Communication and Outreach Effectiveness

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by



HEARTLAND
MARKET RESEARCH LLC

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Executive Summary

Heartland Market Research LLC was commissioned by MoDOT to assess MoDOT's current communication practices and existing customer segmentation procedures. As part of this study, Heartland was instructed to focus on particularly successful approaches to be determined through interviews with MoDOT personnel throughout the state. The participants were selected by MoDOT as representatives of MoDOT employees for various aspects of MoDOT communications. Thirty-one MoDOT personnel from multiple divisions and districts were interviewed specifically for this research. The participants were very well versed in MoDOT communications and provided great input for this report. A natural consequence of this selection process is that the results clearly captured how communication takes place, it did not capture the perspective of the average employee. An employee survey would be an appropriate forum to capture this perspective.

Based upon these interviews, it was clear that participants clearly differentiated communication practices depending upon whether or not the intended recipient was another MoDOT employee. Internal communications tend to be more detailed and use more jargon than external communications. Based upon this finding, an internal segmentation scheme was identified and slightly modified to include MoDOT retirees and widows. MoDOT tends to communicate to these internal segments through three methods: Direct, Indirect, and Performance Reports & Planning. The overall effectiveness of MoDOT's internal communications is good, especially regarding improvement projects. There is room for improvement in communicating with retirees, corresponding with the employees who do not use email on a regular basis, and the utilization of internal website (intranets).

As discovered in the interviews, MoDOT's external communications usually excluded jargon and focused on the broader picture. Based upon the interview findings and the criteria for a good segmentation scheme, discussed within the report, a segmentation scheme of five key segments was developed: General Public, Engaged Public, Media, Public Officials & Organizations, and Private Organizations (Non Media). The five key segments are exhaustive (complete) enough that they should work well for any part of MoDOT. Within each segment there are smaller groups, subsegments, that will be of interest to various MoDOT districts/divisions. Well over a hundred different methods of external communications were captured in the interviews. After reviewing all of them, they were placed into two of the types of communications utilized for internal communications: Direct and Indirect. Direct communications typically include the opportunity for two-way interaction, even if this interaction is delayed. Indirect communications are usually one-way communication channels, although some people can use them for interaction. For example, most people just read newsletters, but a few people will write letters to the editor.

After the external segmentation scheme was developed and the types of communications reviewed, seventeen focus groups and three online surveys were then held to help gauge the effectiveness of existing communication practices and to obtain feedback related to other potential communication methods. Other primary research being conducted by Heartland for MoDOT was also considered where appropriate. **Based upon all of this research, the overall finding is that MoDOT's communication effectiveness is good.**

There is ample room for improvement and this document is filled with various suggestions from MoDOT personnel, external stakeholders, and from the researcher. It would defeat the purpose of an executive summary to list all of them here. However, three suggestions in particular would be relatively easy to implement with the potential for significant improvements in MoDOT's communication effectiveness.

- 1. Better utilize the E-Update system.** MoDOT's E-Update system should be a jewel. Even with the problems documented in this research, it is a very effective method for distributing press releases and other information to the media and other interested recipients. It could be made vastly more effective by fixing the coding error that currently results in defective links (see page 50 for details) and by ensuring that all E-Updates provide useful information instead of just providing a link to the information. Once the E-Update system has been fixed, MoDOT should spend more time marketing this program, especially amongst MCS clients and bloggers. One of the findings of this research was that most people have no idea about most of MoDOT's services, including the E-Update system. As a side-benefit of this research, seventy-five MCS clients and five Missouri bloggers asked to be signed up for the E-Update system. Once the E-Update system is working properly, MoDOT should make a significant effort to publicize the system among potential adopters.
- 2. Share Best Practices.** After compiling and reviewing all the input, it became clear that Community Relations personnel are in contact with virtually all of MoDOT. While MoDOT has many Community Relations Managers across several divisions and ten districts, their duties vary greatly from one another. Periodically, the CRMs should share best practices with one another. It may prove difficult to find the time, but the CRMS together have a wide range of effective talents and skills. Providing a regular forum for sharing best practices with one another should greatly enhance the communication effectiveness of MoDOT. MoDOT already has some policies in place for sharing best practices. However, the feedback from the MoDOT interviews was that these processes are either not understood or not a priority within the organization.

- 3. Coordinate Your Newsletters.** Currently MoDOT has a vast number of newsletters that collectively reach many, if not all, of the many segments with whom MoDOT communicates. These newsletters are very effective at reaching particular subsegments. Most of the editors of these newsletters are strapped for time and would welcome some useful and appropriate content that they did not have to write. The central Community Relations office could initiate a monthly column that all newsletters would be encouraged to include when it was available. This column should be relatively short; a half-page to whole page. It could be presented as coming from MoDOT's central office or even from the desk of the Director. Each month it could educate the reader on something that should be relevant to all, but also important to MoDOT. Sample topics might include background on the E-Update system and instructions for signing up, information about MoDOT's funding cliff, information on how cost effective MoDOT is (dollars spent per mile vs. other states), etc. This would save existing editors time while enabling MoDOT Central to reach many different groups with a common message each month.

While this report discusses problems, best practices, and potential solutions, the author wishes to reinforce that the vast majority of interviews showed that MoDOT employees were happy with their organization, thought MoDOT was mostly headed in the right direction, and that the organization was continuing to improve.

Background

Heartland Market Research LLC was commissioned by MoDOT to assess MoDOT's current communication practices and existing customer segmentation procedures. As part of this study, Heartland was instructed to focus on particularly successful approaches to be determined through interviews with MoDOT personnel throughout the state. The participants were selected by MoDOT as representatives of MoDOT employees for various aspects of MoDOT communications. The participants were very well versed in MoDOT communications and provided great input for this report. A natural consequence of this selection process is that the results clearly captured how communication takes place, it did not capture the perspective of the average employee. An employee survey would be an appropriate forum to capture this perspective.

Seventeen focus groups and three online surveys were then held to help gauge the effectiveness of existing communication practices and to obtain feedback related to other potential communication methods. Other primary research being conducted by Heartland for MoDOT was also considered where appropriate.

Personal Interviews

Thirty-one MoDOT personnel were interviewed specifically for this research. The typical interview lasted an hour with some variance depending upon the employee. The shortest interview was about thirty minutes and the longest was about three hours. While the majority of the employees were associated with Community Relations (CR) through the Central Office or through one of the districts/divisions, a number of people outside Community Relations were also interviewed to ensure multiple perspectives on CR communications were obtained. The interviews included two Area Engineers, an Assistant District Engineer, two Community Relations Coordinators, the Community Relations Director, nine Community Relations Managers, a Community Relations Specialist, two Customer Service Representatives, a Senior Customer Service Representative, a Design Engineer, a District Construction Engineer, two District Engineers, a Maintenance Supervisor, the Multimedia Services Supervisor, three Outreach Coordinators, three Senior Community Relations Specialists, a Special Assignments Coordinator, and a Transportation Project Manager. The principal investigator (PI) also drew upon interviews and discussions with other MoDOT personnel for other research purposes as complementary research for this project.

While the results are very detailed, the use of an interview process means that the results may not be exhaustive. Given the large size of MoDOT, this is even likely. However, the omission of any communication practices or segments from this report is also a useful finding. The very fact that anything was omitted by all of the participants means the practice or segment fell into one of two categories. Either the missing practice/segment is so ingrained into the culture that the participants do not even consciously think about it or the missing practice/segment is not part of the participants normal work and are currently being ignored by MoDOT. The latter case is difficult to capture (the logical conundrum of proving a negative), but this research attempted to test this possibility with focus groups and other survey data. These results are documented later in the report.

In the course of each interview, participants were asked to discuss current communication practices for exchanging information with segments both internal and external to MoDOT. In the discussions, MoDOT personnel also listed the groups or segments of people with whom MoDOT typically communicated. Participants were also asked for their opinions about which communications methods were most effective. Finally, MoDOT personnel were also asked for suggestions on both improving existing practices and for new communication practices.

Participants were promised quasi-anonymity. While it was common knowledge who was being interviewed, participants were told that all their input would be aggregated into a report that would not differentiate individual responses except under two circumstances. The stated exceptions to this policy were in documenting best practices and if the participant explicitly stated that they wanted their name attached to a comment or suggestion. The best practice exception was made so that others within MoDOT will know who to contact if they wish to learn more about an effective communication practice local to a particular MoDOT district or division.

Internal Segments & Communications

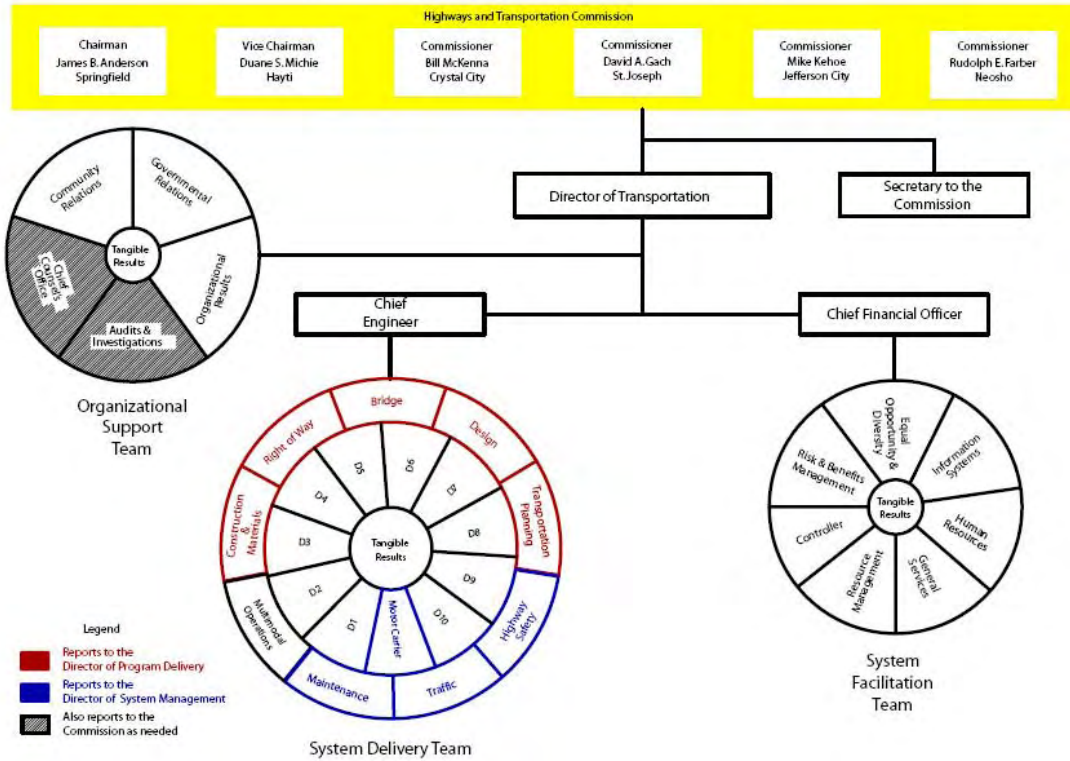
Participants clearly differentiated between practices for communications within MoDOT and practices for communicating to those outside of MoDOT. Further, their examples and general attitude about these two types of communication were clearly distinct.

Internal communications revolve around making sure each person has enough specific information to do his or her job and enough information to be an ambassador to the rest of the world. Internal communications tend to be more detailed and use more jargon than external communications. Within the internal/external distinction, participants then discussed segmentation and communication methods.

Internal Segments

When asked which groups, or segments, of MoDOT with whom they had contact, the individual responses ran the gambit. Some participants listed dozens of divisions and all ten districts. The most concise answer was “*Every division, every level, and field execs.*” After compiling and reviewing all the input, it became clear that Community Relations personnel are in contact with virtually all of MoDOT. The following figure is from MoDOT’s website and provides a general overview of MoDOT’s organization. The only two divisions on the chart there were not explicitly mentioned by multiple participants were the Chief Counsel’s Office and Audits & Investigations.

Figure 1: MoDOT's Organization
Missouri Department of Transportation



MoDOT’s organizational chart is a very accurate segmentation tool that included almost every segment mentioned by the participants. The existence of such a chart is not surprising, but **the fact that almost all responses could be directly mapped onto the chart shows that these segments are not merely paper organizations, but accurately represent how employees perceive MoDOT.**

There was one key segment that was mentioned by many participants, yet not included on the organization chart. There is a good reason for this as this missing segment is **MoDOT retirees**. This segment should also include “MoDOT widows” – family members of a deceased MoDOT employee. Retirees could be classified as either an internal or external segment. It is recommended that this segment be considered an internal one for the following reasons. First, many participants thought retirees were a largely untapped resource for MoDOT consisting of thousands of skilled people, mostly well disposed toward MoDOT, and with ample amounts of available time. Second, by definition, most members of this segment were internal to MoDOT earlier in their lives. Third, many of the participants who wanted to utilize the retirees wanted to employ them as ambassadors for MoDOT. As such, they would be informally speaking for MoDOT to external segments. Finally, judging by the participant comments, most retirees still strongly identify with MoDOT. If MoDOT classified their retirees as an external segment and this became known, as it obviously would be as more employees retired, it could adversely impact the retirees’ organizational identification and reduce their motivation to serve as ambassadors.

Internal Communications

Over a hundred different methods of internal communications were captured in the interviews. After reviewing them all, these can be placed into three primary types of communication: Direct, Indirect, and Performance Reports & Planning. Direct communications typically include the opportunity for two-way interaction, even if this interaction is delayed. Indirect communications are usually one-way communication channels, although some people can use them for interaction. For example, most people just read newsletters, but a few people will write letters to the editor. Performance Reports & Planning is a special hybrid category, with unique importance to an organization with MoDOT’s values and culture.

Direct Communications

Face-to-Face: Participants discussed two types of face-to-face communications: formal and informal. While there were ample exceptions, in general participants thought that formal face-to-face communications were primarily used to distribute information in hierarchical processes. Leaders distributed information and asked for reports and feedback in a structured process. Many unit monthly meetings fell into this category, although a few were structured less formally. Some districts and divisions met more frequently. The more formal communications were seen as an effective way to ensure everyone had access to key information and was very useful for handling routine matters.

However, most participants strongly felt that events that encouraged questions and two-way communications are also an internal strength of MoDOT and should be continued. Many examples of this were brought up by various participants. The bi-annual meetings (spring and fall) that allow specific MoDOT groups to informally meet with their leaders has many advocates. Others pointed to the annual employee fair as a good opportunity for building relationships and for sharing information. Some mentioned the practice of some District Engineers meeting with every single one of their employees several times a year in informal settings (including on project work sites) as an effective means of receiving realistic feedback and suggestions from those on the front lines. MoDOT conducts many events that facilitate interactions between all levels of MoDOT employees and the participants judged these activities to be a very effective communications tools.

Many other employees simply talk to their Community Relations Manager (either face-to-face or informal phone calls) when they have questions. Participants utilize natural congregation areas such as employee break rooms, smoking break spots, and even local credit union lobbies as places to informally share information.

Telephony: While hardly a new tool, much of today's communications still takes place over the phone. While this is usually one-on-one communication, phone conferencing is common and video conferencing is also available. While there was no consensus on when the phone should be used instead of other options such as personal visits or email, this seemed to be largely a matter of personal preference, there was general consensus of some techniques that made phone use more effective. People who updated their voicemail message frequently with specific information (for example, "*Today is March Third. I will be in meetings most of the day, but if you leave a message I will call you back before 4:00 PM.*") were exemplified by participants as very effective communicators. It is also easier for participants to judge tone over the phone or in person compared to "colder" technologies such as email which suggests using these warmer methods when it is possible that one's intent may be misunderstood.

Email: Email is a very effective and useful tool for those who work in an office environment. For many, it has become an indispensable method to quickly communicate with one or many people at once. People use it to save time, distribute information, and to temporarily or permanently archive communications. However, as valuable as email is for many, there are times it is not effective for some internal communications at MoDOT. Approximately half of district employees do not use email. Recently, networked PC have been placed where all employees have access, but in practice many employees do not use it. All supervisors are asked to check email, but given that their job duties keep them outside much of time, supervisors are only asked to check email once per day. This means that if supervisors check their email first thing in the morning, they may not get important message until next day. Several participants also raised the scenario of important emails not being communicated to maintenance workers for days when their supervisor is traveling or sick and cannot relay email messages.

Indirect Communications

Newsletters and Brochures: MoDOT uses a host of newsletters and brochures to facilitate internal communication. *Connections* is the primary statewide monthly magazine. It is aimed at employees and retirees, but also read by legislators (an external segment). The process of compiling news from all over the state requires contributors to submit their articles at least 30 days in advance of publication. Several contributors stated that they try to have their work completed six to seven weeks ahead of time. Thus, *Connections* is not well suited for urgent news, but it is not used for this purpose. Most participants saw the magazine as a forum for promoting their district/division and as a way to positively recognize contributors. This is an effective use of the medium, as it is positive for all three reader segments. Employees are either recognized or read about their contributing peers, retirees and legislators read good things about MoDOT to reinforce their familiarity with the organization. Several Community Relations Managers stated that they read the other districts' sections to get ideas that they may be able to implement locally. A few also use their space to help keep in touch with retirees. While there was not a consensus, the majority of district participants were happy with the recent move from two black and white pages to one color page for each district.

Most districts within MoDOT produce one or more employee newsletters in addition to participating in *Connections*. The publication frequency of these newsletters varies from weekly (most frequent), to biweekly (typical), monthly, and quarterly (least frequent). These newsletters are not intended to be read outside the district and are less formal. They are another way of recognizing employees, especially for work that may not be interest outside the district and thus would not appear in *Connections*, but still important within the district. Other divisions have similar newsletters. These newsletters also include safety tips, news about employees such as weddings and births, and sometimes other items to encourage fellowship and morale. For example, jokes and internal trivia contests are common. These newsletters tend to be electronic, but copies are printed for employees who do not regularly use email. In additional to being distributed via email, copies are usually archived on the districts/divisions' internal website. This helps keep the intranet current and generates traffic. While all of the newsletters were well received by virtually all participants, the more frequently published (and shorter) newsletters seemed to be more effective than the less frequently published (and longer) newsletters based upon the overall impression received from all the interviews. This makes intuitive sense as shorter publications are more likely to be finished by all the readers and this will generate more content (more frequent traffic) for the internal website. One participant shared a story from shortly after their employee newsletter was revised and shortened. *“I read it from cover to cover. I’ve never done that with a newsletter before.”*

One of the districts has a specific newsletter just for retirees and MoDOT widows named *Beyond MoDOT*. It is available in physical (mailed) and emailed formats. This newsletter helps maintain the relationship between the extended MoDOT family. It does so in various ways. *Beyond MoDOT* provides information about current and future projects to keep the readers informed. However, the newsletter also carries news about the retirees and MoDOT widows such as who moved, who died, and what people are doing now. These personal details are much appreciated by the readership. The personal stories also maintain and reinforce the relationship between MoDOT and the retirees. Previous employees contact MoDOT with information about new stories and to update their contact information to ensure they keep receiving *Beyond MoDOT*. The participants knowledgeable of this retiree newsletter gauged it to be very effective. Interestingly, people in most districts/divisions thought that retirees were an untapped resource, but did not know of a good way to reach them. Using one district's retiree newsletter as an example for reaching retirees may be useful for many other divisions.

Many districts and divisions also put out information for employees by publishing small brochures that can be quickly read. These brochures are available at multiple locations within MoDOT, such as break rooms, Human Resources, Community Relations, display cases. These brochures are a method for providing ample details about virtually any subject. For example, some brochures document random transportation facts about Missouri – in which case the brochure may also be made available to the public – while another brochure discusses how the retirement system works for MoDOT employees. To the extent that these brochures are readily accessible to employees, this method is effective.

Internal Websites: Participant responses on this tool varied greatly. Some districts/divisions reported that the intranet was an essential tool for them. It is a place for employees to go to find information archives, who to contact, and, in some divisions, a clearinghouse for current and future projects. Many districts/divisions depend heavily upon this resource. Other districts/divisions have a few people who utilize it as an archiving tool and the rest of the organization usually just ask one of these users for help when needed. Some internal sites have the goal of making it easy for all users to access their archived information. For example, the *Cumulus* archive in multimedia services allows many users to be self-sufficient. Other sites are optimized for users within their own district/division. **According to the participants, the more effective internal sites were the ones that were both well organized and were constantly updated.**

Performance Reports & Planning

This is listed separately from the direct and indirect methods because of both its importance and because it is a hybrid. MoDOT leaders discuss these measures face-to-face and then distribute this information through both direct and indirect methods (for example, the Tracker report itself is an indirect communication method).

The participants were virtually unanimous that MoDOT is a very performance oriented culture. Various tools are in place to help the organization track its performance. Individual divisions and districts have their own specific performance measures. MoDOT as a whole has a state-wide Tracker document that is published quarterly with a host of specific measures relating to various performance goals. There are also District/Division Performance Measures, also known as “D-Trackers,” that have more specific measures related to a specific district/division. While the Tracker is publicized both internally and externally, the D-Trackers are internal publications intended to provide focused feedback on where districts and divisions are doing well and where attention should be concentrated for future improvements.

MoDOT’s business planning process is also an effective way of communicating internally. Several participants said they reviewed the business plan to help better understand MoDOT’s immediate future and then made decisions based upon the plan.

Effectiveness of Internal Communications

Overall Effectiveness

Based upon the interviews, the overall effectiveness of MoDOT’s internal communications is good. In general, participants praised the organization’s ability to communicate within its various districts/divisions, especially regarding improvement projects. The overall results were the same for most of the internal segments (see Figure 1: MoDOT's Organization on page 9) as presented below.

Table 1: Overall Effectiveness of Internal Communications

Direct Communications		Effectiveness
	Face-to-Face	Good
	Phone and Voice Mail	Good
	Email	Mixed
Indirect Communications		
	Newsletters & Brochures	Good
	Internal Websites	Mixed
Performance Reports & Planning		
	Tracker	Mixed
	D-Trackers	Good
	Business Plan	Good

Table 1 indicates that there is room for improvement in three key areas. As discussed earlier, approximately half of MoDOT district employees do not use a computer as part of their job. While a computer has been made available for their use, typically in a break room, many people never use it. Their supervisors are only required to check their email once per day, so it may be almost twenty-four hours before an urgent email is read – even longer if a supervisor is traveling, sick, or takes a day off. Unless and until using a computer becomes part of the daily activities of these employees, email will not be an effective method of reaching many of MoDOT’s employees.



Some districts and divisions have made their internal websites effective communication tools. Others have placed their time and effort elsewhere and are still figuring out how to best utilize MoDOT's intranet to facilitate communications. MoDOT has the opportunity for those districts/divisions with effective internal websites to serve as benchmarks and share their experience with the MoDOT organizations who have strengths in other areas.

The Tracker report was rated as mixed because of the impact it has had on internal communications. The communication of the Tracker report itself is actually very good.¹ Not a single interviewee was ignorant of the Tracker and most participants discussed participating in multiple Tracker meetings each quarter to disseminate results and to discuss future performance objectives. The problem, as perceived by the participants, was that MoDOT spent too much time discussing Tracker to the neglect of other issues.

In the words of four Community Relations Managers:

- *During quarterly meetings, too much time is spent discussing Tracker. It is important, but meeting time could be better spent with more talk on sharing best practices, and discussing current activities.*
- *CRMs do not have time to talk to each other at quarterly meetings, all focus in on Tracker. Need more networking time, time to share experiences with one another. Currently some of this goes on via calling each other, but networking at quarterly meetings would facilitate this.*
- *Good, but had adverse impact on quarterly meetings. Quarterly meetings are now dominated by Tracker and sometimes a bit of immediate problem solving. No longer used for sharing best practices.*
- *Too much time spent on Trackers at quarterly meetings, not enough time left for other important work such as relationship building and sharing best practices.*

¹ Several suggestions for improving the Tracker arose throughout the interviews. A few people expressed concern that the Planning Partners measure was not consistent across districts. The concern was not on the mechanics of capturing the measure, which was consistent, but on who was surveyed. The measure could be improved by ensuring that the same groups of people (for example, only members of RPCs and MPOs) were surveyed. Some in Media Services wanted to continue to tweak and expand their satisfaction survey and, if feasible, to track the number of MoDOT supplied pictures used by the media. Others suggested tracking jobs per person and jobs per dollar as additional overall Tracker measures.

Retirees

Many participants indicated a desire to better utilize retirees, but most people had no idea on how to reach this segment other than articles in *Connections*. As a whole, MoDOT's effectiveness in reaching this segment is poor. However, at least one MoDOT district is doing quite well communicating with this segment and the rest of MoDOT has the opportunity to learn and improve from this example.

Internal Concerns

Readers should be careful not to draw the wrong impression from the information in this section. Some participants had concerns which are provided to ensure MoDOT personnel will be aware of these issues and consider solutions. However, readers should not conclude that the interviews were negative experiences. Even though participants shared some concerns, the overwhelming majority of interviewees were very positive about MoDOT as a whole and thought MoDOT had made vast improvements in recent years. People thought that MoDOT was heading in the right direction and most considered themselves fortunate to be working for the organization.

While MoDOT does a good job internally communicating about projects and other information related to MoDOT's purpose, a number of participants thought MoDOT could do better when it came to informing people about internal issues such as human resource concerns. For example, some of the district personnel mentioned a recent notice that was emailed to all employees from Jefferson City concerning an increase in employee health care costs. The CRMs had no advance notice, so they could not answer district employee questions about the change. One person pointed out that the name Community Relations was externally focused and believed that this external focus influenced how CR saw its job, thus encouraging a tendency of overlooking employees and retirees.

Most MoDOT employees are aware of the rural/urban divide where neither county residents nor city residents believe that a fair share of resource dollars are spent in their area. A similar situation exists within MoDOT. Throughout the interviews, several central office employees stated a belief that they were sometimes overlooked in favor of attention to those in district offices. Likewise, several district employees thought they were given less attention than those in the central office. While the answer to this situation is outside the scope of this project, it is clear that some people see executive attention as a zero-sum game where attention paid to one MoDOT organization must come at the expense of attention paid to another MoDOT organization.

External Segments & Communications

Participants clearly differentiated between practices for communications within MoDOT and practices for communicating to those outside of MoDOT. Further, their examples and general attitude about these two types of communication were clearly distinct. Internal communications usually included jargon and specific details about the subject. External communications usually excluded jargon and focused on the broader picture.

External Segments

When asked which groups, or segments, of individuals and organizations outside MoDOT with whom they had contact, the individual responses had even more variety than participant answers to the internal question. Some participants volunteered very detailed lists. Another said “*Everyone.*” and was meant it. When probed, this response was narrowed to “*Everyone in Missouri plus those who pass through or otherwise interact with Missouri.*” The respondent was not being flippant, but seriously reflecting that MoDOT’s responsibilities affect millions of people, including some who do not reside in Missouri.

Given the wide focus of MoDOT activities, developing a useful segmentation scheme was more challenging than it would be for basis business activities. By definition a good segmentation scheme is homogeneous within, heterogeneous between, substantial, and operational. This means that each segment should consist of similar people while being different from other segments (a truck driver should have more in common with another truck driver than an elected official), large enough to be worth treating as an individual segment, and MoDOT should have the ability to reach these segments (for example, left-handed red-headed truckers would not be an operational segment since it would be difficult to aim at these particular truckers vs. truckers in general).

An optimal segmentation scheme could be developed for each district/division within MoDOT. However, this would not be an optimal situation for Community Relations, the voice of MoDOT. Since Community Relations – including the CR personnel within other districts/divisions – is involved with most of the communications from MoDOT, they need one segmentation scheme that can be generally applied to most situations. As such, **a segmentation scheme of five key segments was developed from the information provided in the interviews: General Public, Engaged Public, Media, Public Officials & Organizations, and Private Organizations (Non Media).**

The five key segments are exhaustive (complete) enough that they should work well for any part of MoDOT. Within each segment there are smaller groups, subsegments, that will be of interest to various MoDOT districts/divisions. These subsegments are not exhaustive, but include all of the segments discovered in the interview process. For example, some public service announcements are aimed at Males 18-34 because they are more likely to engage in risky behavior. Females 18-34 are not listed as a subsegment since they are not a high risk group and have not been identified as a specific group of special interest to MoDOT.

Table 2: Segments and Subsegments

General Public	
	Children (Young)
	Males 18-34
	Parents
	Pickup Truck Drivers
	Youth in General
	Impaired Drivers
	DUI
	Elderly
	Physically Handicapped
	Pass Through Travelers
	Commuters
	Vacationers/Tourists

Engaged Public	
	Motor Carriers (Engaged Pass Through Travelers)
	Walk-Ins (Those in MoDOT Lobbies)
	Web-Site Visitors
	Involved Public
	Local Residents
	Local Property Owners
	Major Employers
	Environmental Advocates
	Engaged Pass Through Travelers
Media	
	Traditional
	Newspapers
	Radio
	TV
	New
	Blogs
	Online Communities
	Websites (of Non-Traditional Media)

Public Officials & Organizations	
	Elected & Appointed Officials
	US Legislators
	State Legislators
	County Legislators
	City Legislators
	Public Organizations
	Blueprint for Safer Roadways
	City & County Road Departments
	Environmental Protection Agency
	Federal Highway Administration/US DOT
	Federal Transit Administration
	Missouri Department of Tourism
	Other Missouri Agencies
	Other State DOTs
	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
	Planning Partners
	Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
	Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs)
	Emergency Personnel
	Enforcement
	Fire Departments
	Medical
Private Organizations (Non Media)	
	Individual Firms
	Associations & Groups
	Asphalt Paving Association
	Farm Bureau
	Kiwanis Clubs
	Rotary Clubs

General Public

The general public consists of members of the public that have not taken action to contact MoDOT. There are times when MoDOT needs to reach smaller groups, or subsegments, within this larger segment. Based upon the interviews, the following subsegments are often of interest to MoDOT: Children (Young), Males 18-34, Parents, Pickup Truck Drivers, Youth in General, Impaired Drivers, and Pass Through Travelers. The last two subsegments may be further divided. Impaired Drivers consist of DUIs, the Elderly, and the Physically Handicapped. Pass Through Travelers include Commuters and Vacationers/Tourists.

Engaged Public

The engaged public consists of members of the public who have taken action to contact MoDOT. Subsegments identified in the interview process include Motor Carriers, Walk-Ins (those in MoDOT lobbies), Web-Site Visitors, and the Involved Public. The Involved Public subsegment consist of members of the general public who may be affected by improvement projects. After being contacted by MoDOT, some of these people attend meetings concerning the improvement project. At that point, they become engaged and make up the Involved Public subsegment. This subsegment may be further divided into Local Residents, Local Property Owners, Major Employers, Environmental Advocates, and Engaged Pass Through Travelers (Commuters, Vacationers/Tourists, and Motor Carriers).

Media

The Media segment consists of those who provide news to the some or all of the general public. It consists of the Traditional Media and the New Media. The Traditional Media consists of three subsegments: Newspapers, Radio, and TV along with their affiliated websites. The New Media consists of Blogs, Online Communities, and Websites other than those belonging to the Traditional Media. The name, *Blogs*, derives from *web logs*. Blogs are individual or group websites for pundits of all topics.²

Public Officials & Organizations

The Public Officials and Organizations segment consists of individuals and organizations who are responsible for serving part or all of the general public. As part of their responsibilities, they share an interest with MoDOT in safety and improvement projects. Subsegments within this segment include: Elected & Appointed Officials (including US, State, County, and City Legislators), Public Organizations (such as the Blueprint for Safer Roadways, City & County Road Departments, Environment Protection Agency, Federal Highway Administration/US DOT, Federal Transit Administration, Missouri Department of Tourism, Other Missouri Agencies, Other State DOTs, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Planning Partners (Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Planning Commissions), and Emergency Personnel (Enforcement, Fire Departments, and Medical).

Private Organizations (Non Media)

As the name describes, the Private Organizations (Non Media) segment consists of entities that are neither public nor media. Subsegments are Individual Firms and Associates & Groups. Associations & Groups include parties such as the Asphalt Paving Association, the Farm Bureau, Kiwanis Clubs, and Rotary Clubs.

² For example, for two Missouri blogs that may be of specific interest to MoDOT see <http://www.missouriaccidentlawyerblog.com/> (traffic accidents) and <http://www.missouridwiblog.com/> (DUI).

External Communications

Similar to the internal communication feedback, well over a hundred different methods of external communications were captured in the interviews. After reviewing them all, these can be placed into two of the types of communication utilized for internal communications: Direct and Indirect. Direct communications typically include the opportunity for two-way interaction, even if this interaction is delayed. Indirect communications are usually one-way communication channels, although some people can use them for interaction. For example, most people just read newsletters, but a few people will write letters to the editor.

Direct Communications

Face-to-Face: Personal communications are one of the most widely used tools for external communications within MoDOT. MoDOT employees, especially those in Community Relations, are constantly meeting with many people, both individually and in group settings. Examples of individual contacts include media interviews, conversations with various elected and appointed officials, and even door-to-door campaigns to involve and/or notify the public about improvement projects. All MoDOT employees are represent MoDOT through word-of-mouth with their relationships with family, friends, and other acquaintances. In the words of one Community Relations Manager, *“For better or for worse, each employee is an ambassador to the rest of Missouri.”* MoDOT personnel give speeches and presentations to many groups, including Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, schools, childcare facilities, and to the engaged public. Other speaking opportunities are sometimes provided in cooperation with a local Speaker’s Bureau. MoDOT employees hold meetings with many types of elected and appointed officials – including local and state legislators, MPOs, and RPCs – and have public hearings to help plan new improvement projects. MoDOT personnel hold expos, participate in groundbreaking ceremonies complete with ribbon cuttings, and stage rollover demos. MoDOT utilizes community events of all sizes, from the annual state fair in April to local back-to-school fairs in various communities, as methods of engaging in face-to-face communications with the general public.

Telephony: The publicity campaign regarding MoDOT’s universal number, 1-888-ASK-MODOT, is bearing some fruit. Some members of the general public are starting to call this number when they have questions. During the day, calls are automatically routed to the appropriate district based upon the calling number. Recently an improvement was made to ensure that the phones are always manned. After eight of the districts close for the day, their calls are then routed to Kansas City (for the I-70 districts) or St. Louis (for the I-44 districts) for the evenings and nights. For many callers, this contact is their first direct exposure to MoDOT and the impression they form will greatly influence their attitude toward MoDOT for the rest of their lives.

These calls are usually handled by the operator, but more complicated issues are sometimes forwarded to the Community Relations Manager. However, the majority of external phone calls made or received by the CRMs were contacts with the media, followed by contacts with elected and appointed officials. Sometimes these calls are initiated by the CRM, sometimes by the other party. One of the CRMs, who thought their district had a great relationship with the local media, credited their telephony policy as a key factor in their positive relationship. If they could not answer a media question when it came it, the district's policy was to call the journalist back within five minutes, even if it was just to tell them they were still working on the problem. If the district happened to be swamped with calls, priority was given to the journalists with immediate deadlines. For example, the district would call the daily journalists before responding to the weekly journalists when the weekly journalists deadline was days away instead of hours.

Email/Fax/Direct Mail: While a form of direct communication, this could be considered a hybrid category. Individual communication is definitely considered direct communication. However, form letters/emails/faxes are really more an indirect method as the intent is to distribute information vs. engage in two-way interaction. Letters are frequently used to contact members of the general public who may be affected by improvement projects. These letters provide information about the project and typically invite the recipients to an Involved Public meeting where they can become engaged with the project planning. Email and email lists are frequently used for project discussions and some members of the media prefer email to the phone. Several Community Relation Managers commented on the advantages of archiving their email correspondence, so they can document exactly what was said in the past.

E-Updates are emails for which the recipients volunteer to receive. Anyone can go to <http://www.modot.org/eMoDOT/> and follow the directions to sign up for an account. Many districts also provide forms for this purpose and people can also call 1-888-ASK-MODOT to register. As part of the registration process, the user indicates what type of information he wishes to receive. For example, the user can receive information from one or all of the individual districts, from the Jefferson City office (statewide information), from Motor Carriers, and from Engineering Policy. Within each of these areas, the district/division may give the user more options. For example, all the districts allow users to receive information on a county basis, many of the districts allow users to receive information on major routes, and a few of the districts have additional options such as receiving information on surplus items.

Indirect Communications

Newsletters and Brochures: MoDOT produces and distributes many newsletters and brochures for a wide variety of subjects. Some segments even have multiple newsletters written with them in mind. As discussed under Internal Segments & Communications on page 13, *Connections* is primarily an internal publication, but it is also read by legislators. Some districts/divisions write their own newsletters for their legislators (e.g., *Talkins*) or for travelers on certain roads (e.g., *Route 412 Connections*). There are newsletters for motor carriers (*News on Wheels*), bicyclists and pedestrians (*Wheels and Heels*), and even one for those interested in MoDOT's Adpot-A-Highway program (*Roadside Review*). General newsletters are also available. In contrast to the vast *Connections*, a more concise general transportation newsletter, *MoDOT ExpressLane*, is available to anyone interested in Missouri transportation news.

A few newsletters are electronic only, but most are printed and many are available in both formats. These are distributed in many ways. Newsletters and brochures are sometimes mailed, placed in MoDOT lobbies, put in rest stop kiosks, made available at local chambers of commerce, and distributed in other local businesses as appropriate. For example, MoDOT has placed newsletters in canoe rental places, hotel lobbies, and gas stations. Electronic copies are distributed via email and by posting on the web.

External websites: In addition to the main MoDOT website (www.modot.org), districts/divisions have their own connected sites such as <http://www.modot.org/northwest/> and <http://www.modot.org/mcs/>. A record of press releases along with available media files is available at <http://www.modot.org/newsroom/index.htm>. Some districts/divisions provide many resources through their websites while other districts/divisions concentrate their efforts elsewhere. MoDOT also creates new websites both independently (e.g., <http://www.thenewi64.org/> and <http://www.improvei70.com/>) and in conjunction with other partners (e.g., <http://www.savemolives.com/>).

MoDOT has also started buying online banner ads as a method for reaching part of the General Public segment. The ads were specifically aimed at the Youth In General subsegment.

Reports: As discussed under Performance Reports & Planning on page 16, MoDOT produces and commissions a great number of reports as part of its efforts to monitor and improve its activities. While these reports are primarily intended for internal audiences, MoDOT strongly believes in being open with the public. These reports are also available on MoDOT's website (<http://www.modot.com/newsandinfo/> and <http://www.modot.com/services/OR/byDate.htm>). Two reports in particular receive much external attention.

By an act of the Missouri Legislature, MoDOT is required to submit an accountability report to the State of Missouri before November 10 of each year. A copy of last year's report is available at

<http://www.modot.org/newsandinfo/reports/2007AccountabilityReport/index.htm>.

MoDOT has used this legal requirement as an annual opportunity to showcase its results, plans, and needs to the Missouri Legislature.

MoDOT also is committed to its Tracker, a report that measures how well MoDOT delivers services and products to its customers. It captures changes over time, so readers can see whether or not MoDOT is improving on specific performance measures. More information about the Tracker, as well as copies of previous reports, may be found at http://www.modot.org/about/general_info/Tracker.htm. Experience has shown that members of two segments have also been quite interested in the Tracker: Public Officials & Organizations and the Media.

Media: In addition to being one of the five segments, the media also provides a means for external communications. Traditional media – television, radio, and newspapers – are most utilized while a few districts/divisions also have some contact with new media (blogs, online communities, and websites of non-traditional media). Media attitude toward MoDOT, along with the availability of television coverage, varies greatly across Missouri. In the urban districts, media personnel tend to be more cynical and engage in “gotcha journalism.” Television coverage is readily available, but only when and if the media is interested in the story. In the rural districts, television coverage is scarce, but media relations are typically much more cordial. MoDOT improvement projects are big news and most media personnel take a more cooperative approach to creating stories. Hybrid districts – those with some fair sized cities along with plenty of rural communities – tend to fall somewhere between the urban and rural extremes. Television coverage is more available in these districts and the local CRM often helps break in the television journalists as most of these people are on their first assignment and hope to move to a larger viewing market after gaining some experience.

Many districts/divisions utilize television for public service announcements (PSAs), traffic updates, and the occasional news story. At least two MoDOT organizations also create or help create the occasional television show. Radio plays a similar role across the state. Several districts/divisions also participate in interviews with, and providing news tips to, radio call-in shows where both the host and the listeners may ask questions. Several districts as well as Motor Carrier Services (via satellite radio channels aimed at truckers) participate in these communication activities. MoDOT also utilizes newspapers to distribute traffic updates and improvement project stories. In addition, MoDOT sometimes places advertisements in newspapers (e.g., notices about public meetings) and MoDOT organizations read the local *Letters to the Editor* as an additional method of monitoring public opinion.

As a compliment to their other media efforts, MoDOT has also placed some advertisements in movie theaters. Before the previews and movie begins, ads from MoDOT appear on the big screen. This provides another channel for reaching the general public.

Signs: MoDOT uses a wide variety of signs with which to communicate. These options include posters aimed at pedestrians to giant billboards that can be easily seen by all drivers. Small signs are used to notify travelers of public meetings, such as for the Involved Public improvement projects. Changeable message boards are used for a wide range of purposes, including road closures, safety messages, incident response, and traffic detours. These boards need to be programmed on site (at the sign). Newer, dynamic message boards have been placed along I-44 and I-70. The messages on these signs can be controlled from both the local district as well as the appropriate corridor headquarters (District 4 for I-70 and District 6 for I-44). Some districts have even started using stencils to paint messages on the road itself. These paintings reinforces the safety theme that MoDOT promotes, such as “*Arrive Alive.*” Likewise, some of MoDOT’s mailrooms now include these safety slogans as part of printing the postage on envelopes. Safety signs, with messages such as “*Buckle Up,*” further reinforce MoDOT’s safety theme when people enter or leave many MoDOT facilities.

Contests: A few organizations within MoDOT utilize contests to reach members of the general public and to promote specific messages. In order to build local support and to connect with the National Work Zone Awareness Week, a MoDOT district sponsors an Annual Work Zone Safety Poster & Coloring Contest. Children are asked to either color in safety sheets (for age groups 2-3 and 4-5) or to create their own safety posters (for grades 3 to 6, with each grade being its own group). First, second, and third place winners are determined for each of the sixth groups. The district also placed the image of one of the winning entries on a billboard along a local interstate.

For the last four years, high school juniors and seniors in Southeast Missouri could compete in a bridge building contest and win prizes up to a \$10,000 scholarship provided by five different universities. Each year the event has grown and obtained more favorably publicity for the safety message and for MoDOT.

As part of the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety, MoDOT coordinated with more than 80 participating schools to allow high school students to compete for more than \$8,500 in prizes. Prizes were awarded to schools for overall seatbelt usage, most improved seatbelt usage, and developing the best 30-second buckle up message aimed at teens.

Miscellaneous: Some MoDOT employees are very creative in their efforts to distribute information. A few of these efforts do not fit with the other categories, and have been documented in this section. MoDOT played a large role in the first Tour of Missouri and received some favorable coverage for their efforts to create safe passage for the bicyclists and to inform motorist of the impact on driving. The following passage is from *Pro Cycling News* (<http://www.dailypeloton.com/displayarticle.asp?pk=11792>).

About MODOT (Missouri Dept. of Transportation) and the 73-strong vehicle convoy on Highway 65: That was impressive. It was the perfect freeway barricade. I don't know what it took to organize that, but it was great. Especially for traffic at high speed, barricades just don't cut it. State control need to be commended for the job they've done so far this week. It's been pretty phenomenal. I can't really see any glitches, it's been second to none.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) dubs itself “The Voice of Transportation” and receives national attention on transportation issues. MoDOT Director Pete Rahn currently also serves as AASHTO’s president. This provides opportunities for the national press to become familiar with MoDOT’s transportation expertise and has the potential for developing national press contacts that will continue after AASHTO has a new president.

At least three of MoDOT’s district headquarters have a memorial garden to honor MoDOT employees who died in work zones. While none of the interview participants brought up memorial gardens as a communication tool, its potential for influencing the general public should not be underestimated. While strictly a subjective opinion, seeing the memorial gardens had a much greater impact on this author than all of the related PSAs ever did, even more than the particularly effective Ken Hoierman spot. A few years ago MoDOT also started an annual event, *Operation Orange*, to call attention to Work Zone Awareness Week.

Focus Groups and Surveys

In collaboration with the MoDOT stakeholders, it was decided to conduct focus groups throughout the state and to host online surveys to obtain feedback about effective ways MoDOT could communicate with the general public. As listed in the following table, twenty groups were selected to help obtain a representative sample of opinions of the general public in Missouri.

Table 3: Twenty Research Groups

Group	Description	Methodology	Location	Participants
1	General Public	Focus Group	Columbia	4
2	General Public	Focus Group	Columbia	5
3	General Public	Focus Group	Mexico	2
4	General Public	Focus Group	Mexico	5
5	GP: Minority Group	Focus Group	O'Fallon	6
6	General Public	Focus Group	O'Fallon	5
7	General Public	Focus Group	Chillicothe	6
8	General Public	Focus Group	Chillicothe	6
9	General Public	Focus Group	St. Joseph	6
10	GP: Minority Group	Focus Group	St. Joseph	5
11	General Public	Focus Group	Springfield	6
12	General Public	Focus Group	Springfield	6
13	GP: Minority Group	Focus Group	St. Louis	6
14	General Public	Focus Group	St. Louis	6
15	Teenage Males	Focus Group	Rolla	6
16	Teenage Females	Focus Group	Rolla	6
17	Traditional Media	Focus Group	Joplin	3
18	New Media - Political	Online Survey	Internet	6
19	New Media - General	Online Survey	Internet	2
20	MCS Clients	Online Survey	Internet	171

The first fourteen groups represented the general public. Most general public groups were fairly diverse in terms of age except for the Chillicothe groups, where the average participant tended to much older than the other groups. All general public groups were of mixed gender except for Groups 3 and 6 which were both female only groups (male invitees did not show to these groups). Groups 5, 10, and 13 were all minority groups (African Americans) while most other general public groups were racially diverse.



Groups 15-16 were recruited with the help of *Rolla High School*. Twelve juniors and seniors participated in these groups that focused on methods for contacting teen drivers. Other than a few special communication needs, the opinions of these groups were similar to that of the general public.

Group 17 consisted of members of traditional media. A total of six people were expected, two from radio, two from television, and two from newspapers. While the sample sizes are too small to be statistically significant, the behavior of these different media types was interesting. Both members of the radio media showed up on time. One of the television recruits called to cancel and the other called and showed up 30 minutes late. One of the newspaper representatives called and cancelled and the other simply did not show. As expected, this group did not represent the general public and the findings from this group is listed separately.

Groups 18 to 20 were geographically disperse, so they were asked to complete online surveys. Groups 18 and 19 were members of the New Media, also known as bloggers who predominately blog about events within Missouri. Group 18 consisted of bloggers who focus on political stories while Group 19 consisted of non-political bloggers. It was expected that there might be a difference in attitude toward MoDOT between these two groups. With the apparent exception of response rates (a greater percentage of political bloggers responded to the survey invitations), there was no significant difference between these groups. Moreover, their general attitudes about MoDOT and transportation issues were similar to that of the general public.

Group 20 consisted of Motor Carrier Clients who had utilized MoDOT services in the month of April 2008 and provided a working email address. 171 clients participated in the survey. In addition to asking many of the same questions asked of the other groups, some unique questions were asked of this group at the request of the Motor Carriers division.

Overall results were remarkable consistent across the groups. In various combinations of locations, gender, race, and age, there were only a few key differences between the groups. Where differences concerning communication effectiveness exist, details are specified in the appropriate section. One difference did not pertain to communication effectiveness. Throughout the focus groups, all participants were given the opportunity to express their opinions about MoDOT whether or not these opinions pertained to communications. The three African American groups thought MoDOT should do more to hire minorities. This is similar to the findings from the 2007 qualitative research done to investigate factors of satisfaction in the Kansas City area.

In most focus groups, several standard questions were asked. A summary of their responses follow. Since responses were similar for each group, an overall summary is presented. The results of the MCS survey are provided separately to prevent the greater number of MCS survey responses from overwhelming the other responses.

A copy of the general script used for the focus groups is available in *Appendix A: Focus Group Script* on page 64.

Satisfaction with MoDOT

Participants were asked to discuss their overall satisfaction with MoDOT. Of the ninety-one people with an opinion, 87.9% were satisfied with the job MoDOT was doing vs. 12.1% who were dissatisfied. Three people did not have an opinion as they recognized neither MoDOT nor the Missouri Department of Transportation.

The MCS survey (Group 20) had similar results. 88.1% of the respondents were satisfied with the job MoDOT was doing vs. 11.9% who were dissatisfied.

Personal Contact with MoDOT

Twenty-two point three percent of the participants stated that they had had personal contact with MoDOT. Of these people, most had a favorable impression of MoDOT. The people with personal contacts with MoDOT with poor impressions of MoDOT had personal reasons for their dissatisfaction. For example, one had applied for a job at MoDOT, but did not receive it. The other had a cousin who worked at MoDOT and “*He complains a lot.*” While this last case is just one example, it supports the CRM who stated “*For better or for worse, each employee is an ambassador to the rest of Missouri.*” Most participants who knew people at MoDOT had favorable impressions. But the one who said his cousin complained a lot about working for MoDOT had a negative impression.

Advance Notice of Projects

Participants discussed their experience regarding road construction and improvements in Missouri. Of those with an opinion (92 people), 42.4% said they were usually surprised by road construction, 38.0% said they were surprised about half the time and had advance notice about half the time, and 19.6% stated that they usually knew about the projects in advance.

The MCS respondents were more informed than the general public, but over a third were still usually surprised by road construction. Of those with an opinion (140 people), 36.4% said they were usually surprised by road construction, 35.0% said they were surprised about half the time and had advance notice about half the time, and 28.6% stated that they usually knew about the projects in advance.

Media Coverage of MoDOT

Participants were asked about their impressions when the media had stories on MoDOT. 70.9% thought the media coverage was usually positive, 24.4% thought the coverage was usually neutral, and 4.7% percent thought the media coverage was usually negative.

The MCS results were similar. 69.9% thought the media coverage was usually positive, 25.6% thought the coverage was usually neutral, and 4.5% percent thought the media coverage was usually negative.

Billboards

Participants thought that MoDOT's electronic road signs were the most effective option for notifying the public, slightly edging out MoDOT message boards. Ninety-one people had opinions on the effectiveness of billboards for communicating to the general public, especially about improvement projects and anything else that would impact traffic flow. 92.3% thought this would be effective vs. 7.7% who did not agree.

While the majority of the MCS respondents thought billboards were effective, the numbers were less than that of the general public. 81.3% thought that billboards were effective while 18.7% disagreed.

Television

Percentages are also provided for this question, but readers should be aware that several issues are tied up into this one question. Participants were specifically asked *How effective do you think it is for MoDOT to put messages on TV about upcoming road projects?* 82.9% of the respondents thought this would be effective while 17.1% disagreed. MCS responses were almost identical to that of the general public with 83.1% agreeing that TV messages were effective and 16.9% disagreeing.

However, in the focus group discussion, rural residents were skeptical if this could actually be done. They first answered the question based upon how effective they thought this would be if MoDOT could do it. However, the rural groups (Mexico, Chillicothe, and Rolla) doubted the viability of this option even though most of them would have liked to receive their transportation news this way. Rural residents were skeptical since they did not have a local television station in the area and those who subscribed to satellite television could only get “local” news from the nearest large city.

The feedback from these focus groups highlights the value of this research method. With a typical survey, researchers would never know that respondents had significant doubts about the feasibility of a answer where 82.9% of the respondents stated that the method would be effective.

Radio

Most of the participants also thought radio was quite effective for communicating to the general public, especially about improvement projects and anything else that would impact traffic flow. 86.5% thought this would be effective vs. 13.5% who did not agree.

While the majority of the MCS respondents thought radio was effective, the numbers were less than that of the general public. 81.5% thought that radio was effective while 18.5% disagreed. MCS respondents were also asked about the effectiveness of satellite trucker radio (*Open Road* or *Roaddog*). 57.0% thought that the use of satellite trucker radio would be an effective approach.

Newspapers

74.7% of the respondents thought that newspapers were effective for communicating to the general public, especially about improvement projects and anything else that would impact traffic flow. 25.3% did not agree.

MCS respondents were much less likely to find newspapers effective. 57.1% thought that newspapers were an effective medium while 42.9% disagreed.

MoDOT Message Boards

Participants thought that MoDOT's electronic road signs were one of the most effective options for notifying the public, just slightly lower than the other road sign option of billboards. 91.9% thought using electronic road signs for communicating to the general public, especially about improvement projects and anything else that would impact traffic flow, was effective. 8.1% disagreed.

The minority who disagreed thought it was difficult to read road signs on highways with more than one lane in each direction. Unless the driver was in the far right lane, these participants thought it was too difficult and dangerous to read signs. When asked about overhead road signs, such as those attached to overpasses, most of the objections then vanished.

The MCS survey responses were similar. 88.7% of the respondents thought that the MoDOT message boards were effective while 11.3% disagreed.

Unique Findings in Teenage Groups

As expected, 100% of the teenage participants had email accounts and access to the internet at home and school. 100% of the participants also had cell phones, although two of them did not use text messaging. However, many of the participants said they rarely check their email, some as infrequently as once a month or less. Instead, the teenagers stay in contact with their friends through cell phones, especially text messaging for those who have it, and through social networking sites such as Facebook and Myspace. In Rolla, the teenagers had a strong preference for Facebook but stated that this varied greatly from community to community. Social networking sites have strong networking effects, with the value of the service coming from as much as who has joined as from the service itself. 100% of the teenagers stated that they would sign up MoDOT as a “friend” through Facebook if MoDOT had a way to do this that would only provide them with information that was local to their area.

The teenage groups differed greatly from the other groups in that they had little expectations of privacy. They believe that privacy is mostly an illusion in today’s world and are willing to accept this in exchange for better living through technology. For example, these groups were the only groups to positively respond to *MoDOT could buy equipment that would send your cell phone voice or text messages when you were headed toward a construction project? Would this be helpful or annoying?* 100% of the respondents thought this was a great idea, their only concerns were implementation. They thought it would be even better if the cell phone (or GPS system) would automatically alert them when they were approaching a construction zone so long as they had time to detour. Respondents were asked if receiving a cell phone call or text message while driving could pose a safety concern. The students responded that they were using their cell phones this way anyway, but an automatic audio alert would resolve this issue if MoDOT could make a deal with the telephone providers to generate this service.

The teenagers also suggested two other methods for MoDOT to reach high school drivers. They suggested that MoDOT send a person out to their school on a regular basis (suggestions ranged from every semester to once every three years) to discuss all the services MoDOT offered (such as E-Updates) along with appropriate safety messages. They had the impression that MoDOT sometimes visited schools, but not on a regular basis. The students also suggested that MoDOT provide the school with local construction announcements and then the school could incorporate these announcements in with the other announcements it makes to the students. After the student focus groups were finished, Heartland discussed this idea with a Rolla High School principal. The principal did not think that adding this type of information to the audio announcements was a good idea, but said the school would be glad to incorporate this type of information in their monthly newsletter which goes to each home for the benefit of students and parents.

Unique Findings in Traditional Media Group

The three respondents (two radio and one TV) were quite satisfied with MoDOT. They were very satisfied with their local district and overall satisfied with the Central Office. At the suggestion of Lori Marble, the participants were asked about the online media resources (sound bytes, pictures, video) made available by MoDOT Central. 100% of the participants were thrilled with this resource and stated that their firms all used them. Even the radio stations need pictures and video for their websites. All three said that they would be very happy if MoDOT's district office could provide a similar service.

While all the respondents thought MoDOT was doing a good job, they had two suggestions for improvement. First, they thought MoDOT Central could be more responsive to their deadlines. Second, one respondent thought MoDOT could be more proactive when bad news occurred. The example the participant raised was a spill that required EPA involvement. Once the news organization heard about the spill and contacted MoDOT, the participant stated that the MoDOT district was completely open and cooperative. However, since MoDOT had known about the spill for hours, they wish MoDOT had taken the initiative to contact them.

Unique Findings for New Media (Blogger) Groups

Like the other groups, 100% of the bloggers had no idea that the E-Update system existed. Their opinions about MoDOT were quite similar to that of the general public. While not surprising, 100% of the bloggers who expressed an opinion on the subject thought that blogging was an effective way for reaching people with transportation news. Reaching bloggers is challenging as many of them protect their email address behind forms. This requires a significant time investment to individually contact each blogger. However, this time may prove worthwhile. Out of the eight blogger responses we received, five of them want someone from MoDOT to contact them to help them setup an E-Update account and to learn more about the online media resources that MoDOT provides. This contact information was provided to MoDOT in a file external to this report.

Unique Findings for MCS Group

The MCS group was asked some questions in addition to the standard questions reported earlier. These questions and their results follow. **Readers should keep in mind that the respondents come from a pool of people who provided MCS with their email address, so this percentage is probably much higher than the general MCS client. All of the online responses will probably skew much higher than the norm for this group.**

In theory, the non internet questions should be representative of the MCS clients as a whole and the fact that many of the answers are virtually identical to the responses of the general public support this assumption. The bias on the online responses is not bad, the answers should be quite representative of the MCS online users and this data could help MCS better serve this segment. Readers should just keep in mind that these answers probably do not reflect the opinions of the MCS clients who do not use the internet.

How effective do you think it is for MoDOT to communicate messages about upcoming road projects via email from MoDOT?

71.1% of the respondents thought this was effective vs. 28.9% who disagreed.

How effective do you think it is for MoDOT to communicate messages about upcoming road projects via trucking associations (such as OOIDA and Missouri Motor Carriers Association)?

63.2% of the MCS group respondents thought this was effective. 36.8% disagreed.

How effective do you think it is for MoDOT to communicate messages about upcoming road projects via trade groups?

Most (62.0%) of the MCS group thought this was ineffective. Only 38.0% thought this would be an effective means of communication. While we did not ask questions pertaining to the size of the respondent's firm, it is reasonable that the participants who belonged to larger firms were the ones that thought this method would be effective.

Did you know these [MoDOT Carrier Express] services were available online?

94.1% of the respondents were aware.

How likely are you to use these [MoDOT Carrier Express] online services?

	Frequency	Percent
Definitely Very likely (80% to 99% chance)	102	59.6%
Likely (51% to 79% chance)	37	21.6%
Unsure Unlikely (21% to 49% chance)	19	11.1%
Very Unlikely (1% to 20% chance)	8	4.7%
	1	.6%
Total	4	2.3%
	171	100.0%

If you have used MoDOT Carrier Express (the online service), how satisfied are you with it? If you have not used it, please skip this question.

Out of the 149 respondents who answered this question, 84.6% of the respondents were satisfied with MoDOT Carrier Express vs. 15.4% who were dissatisfied.

MoDOT has a free service, E-Update, that allows users to receive press releases about construction and other highway issues for specific parts of Missouri. Were you aware of this?

31.6% of the respondents were aware of the E-Update service. While this is much higher than that shown by the general public – virtually no one in the general public is aware of this service – it shows that even in an audience that consists of professional drivers of whom 94.1% were aware of Motor Carrier’s online services, that the majority of drivers (68.4%) did not know about the E-Update system. As the next question makes clear, once people are aware of the E-Update system and the benefits it offers, they are eager to subscribe.

The E-Update service allows you to pick and choose what type of information you receive. One of the areas is information of interest to Motor Carriers. Would you like someone from MoDOT to contact you about receiving this type of information via email?

47.4% of the respondents who answered this question (81 people) said yes. The actual useful number was slightly less as six people did not leave their email address. However, 75 people responded positively and left their email address. This contact information was provided to MCS who was going to contact each one with information about how to choose from MCS's six subscription categories.

Researchers have to be careful not to get too excited about positive research results. There is usually a large gap between what respondents say they will do and what they will actually do. This is not because most respondents are dishonest, but because people rarely follow through on all their intentions. For example, every year, most people say this is the year they will lose ten pounds although most of them do not follow through. When researchers find evidence that people actually follow through with an intention, it is much more reliable than just the intention itself. **The fact that seventy-five people provided their email addresses and requested that MoDOT contact them about subscribing to E-Updates shows the strong demand for this tool once MCS clients are aware that it exists.**

Messages to MoDOT

As part of each focus group, participants were given the opportunity to provide a message to MoDOT about how MoDOT could best communicate to them. Most people thought the discussion had already captured this information, but many people went ahead and provided a personal message for MoDOT despite this belief. These messages are available in *Appendix A: Focus Group Script*, starting on page 64.

Effectiveness of External Communications

Effectiveness by Segment

Based upon the interviews, the overall effectiveness of MoDOT’s external communications is good. Table 4 captures the overall effectiveness of external communication methods by the five external segments.

Table 4: External Communication Effectiveness

Direct Communications		General Public	Engaged Public	Media	Public Officials & Organizations	Private Organizations (Non Media)
	<i>Face-to-Face</i>	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	<i>Telephony</i>	Mixed	Good	Good	Good	Good
	<i>Email/Fax/Direct Mail</i>	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Indirect Communications						
	<i>Newsletters & Brochures</i>	Mixed	Good	Good	Good	Good
	<i>External Websites</i>	Poor	Mixed	Good	Good	Good
	<i>Reports</i>	Poor	Mixed	Good	Good	Good
	<i>Media</i>	Good*	Good*	N/A	Good*	Good*
	<i>Signs</i>	Good	Good	N/A	N/A	N/A
	<i>Contests</i>	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
	<i>Other</i>					
	Tour of Missouri	Good	N/A	Good	Good	N/A
	AASHTO	N/A	N/A	TBD	Good	N/A
	Memorial Gardens	Good	N/A	Good	N/A	N/A

Each communication method/communication segment cross was evaluated and assigned a good, poor, or mixed rating if appropriate. If a combination was judged as not appropriate (for example, using the Tour of Missouri to communicate with the Engaged Public segment does not appear to make sense), it was given a rating of “N/A”. In general, method/segment combinations that received a good rating are not further discussed in this section. However, a few combinations need further discussion and these were given a rating of “Good*.” The AASHTO/Media combination was given a “TBD” rating to indicate that it is too early to know if this method will succeed in its goal of building long-term relations with the national media.

Telephony

The general public is the most difficult segment for MoDOT to reach. Telephony works well when a member of the general segment calls MoDOT, but it is difficult for MoDOT to use the telephone to initiate contact with large numbers of the general public. As an example of the difficulty in using telephony for mass communication, in last year's statewide phone survey, over 80,000 calls were placed to obtain 3,500 complete responses. A similar problem holds for the Email/Fax/Direct Mail category. While MoDOT has had success in mailing information about projects to people in the immediate area (for example, many districts use property lists and their own databases as part of the notification process for the Involved Public activities), it would be both difficult and expensive to notify the general public via mail for a typical road closure.

Email/Fax/Direct Mail (E-Update)

The Email/Fax/Direct Mail category earned a mixed evaluation across every segment. **If it were not for E-Update implementation problems, this category would have received a good evaluation for four of the segments: Engaged Public, Media, Public Officials & Organizations, and Private Organizations (Non Media).** MoDOT's E-Update system is a marvelous idea. It allows recipients to determine what type of messages they receive concerning various subjects and regions. Some districts/divisions provide many more options than others, but every district allows users to elect to receive information on a county-by-county basis. However, there are two major flaws with the implementation that prevented a good evaluation.

First and foremost, the implementation of E-Update has a basic coding error in its programming that adversely impacts its usefulness and its perceived professionalism. At the end of each and every E-Update this PI has received – and E-Updates from multiple MoDOT organizations were reviewed – there are two hyperlink errors. Somehow the E-Update program includes part of the next sentence “To” in some of its hyperlinks. Not only does this look unprofessional, it also renders the hyperlinks useless to those with little computer experience. The following was copied directly from an E-Update.

To view information about MoDOT visit
<http://www.modot.org> To change or delete your subscription
information visit <http://www.modot.org/eMoDOT> To view
MoDOT's privacy policy view
<http://www.modot.org/general/privacy.htm>

If a user clicks upon one of the defective links, his browser attempts to take him to a nonexistent web page where he receives an error. For example, if the user clicks upon the first link from the above text, he will be directed to <http://www.modot.orgto/> instead of <http://www.modot.org/>.

The other problem with the E-Update process is that some messages are simply annoying and do not provide the value that they should. This is not a universal problem, some E-Updates are very useful and provide specific information. For example:

Signs Being Tested As Means of Easing Congestion on I-44
Willow Springs, Mo. - Interstate 44 motorists around the Cuba, Mo., area may notice new roadway signs featuring blue dots and the words, "Incident Bypass Route." The signs are part of a pilot program the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) is conducting. The goal is to reduce traffic congestion on Interstate 44 during incidents by routing traffic around the delay-causing event.

The bypass signs recently were installed on Interstate 44 in south central Missouri with the intent to manage congestion caused by an incident. The permanent signs are expected to save MoDOT time, manpower and money in the long run. Motorists stand to benefit from being instantly directed to an incident bypass route, alleviating frustration and time lost sitting in traffic.

"The signs are permanent and work much like the hurricane evacuation signing in southern states," said Curt Woolsey, MoDOT Traffic Operations Engineer. "Missouri is the first state to sign designated incident bypass routes. The cost of the signs is minimal and we stand to greatly improve safety for the traveling public as well as our highway workers."

The incident bypass route on Interstate 44 near Cuba is part of a pilot program being conducted by MoDOT. This location was chosen for inclusion in the pilot due to the number of incidents occurring in the area and the volume of motorists unfamiliar with this section of the interstate.



Bypass routes are selected based on the ability of the road to handle large amounts of traffic, the width of the road and bridges along the route as well as several other factors. The roadway between interchanges was carefully evaluated to determine the best locations for the signs.

MoDOT has traditionally rerouted traffic by setting up a series of detour signs and placing MoDOT personnel and/or law enforcement to direct traffic at key intersections along the route. While effective, coordination of this method is time consuming and requires extra manpower.

"These signs will already be in place and motorists will immediately be able to route around the incident," Woolsey said. "As soon as they see an incident message on the interstate message boards or encounter a traffic backup, they can immediately take the bypass route signed with the 'blue dot'. Beyond the message board notifications, MoDOT will alert local broadcast media of the incident and information can be immediately shared over the air waves."

The signs displaying a blue dot with the words "incident bypass route" will be permanently installed along the interstate immediately prior to the interchange where the incident bypass route is available. Additional blue dot signs will be permanently installed along the bypass route to guide traffic along the bypass route and back to the interstate.

For additional information regarding this or other transportation-related topics, call the MoDOT Customer Service Center, toll-free, at 1-888-ASK MoDOT (275-6636). Customers also may email the center at d9csc@modot.mo.gov. To learn more about the incident bypass sign program or to view a photograph of the sign, visit <http://www.modot.org/>.
###

Links to related information: Visit this link for a sample of the "blue dot" that will lead motorists along the alternate route. To view information about MoDOT visit <http://www.modot.org> To change or delete your subscription information visit <http://www.modot.org/eMoDOTTo> view MoDOT's privacy policy view <http://www.modot.org/general/privacy.htm>

Other than the universal coding problem at the end, the previous example provided detailed information to the reader. However, other E-Updates simply taunt the user. For example:

South Central District

March 14, 2008

Weekly Road Report (Week of Mar, 17)

The MoDOT Weekly Road Report (Week of Mar 17) has been posted.

This report is being provided to you in an effort to keep you informed of roadwork in your area.

On-line Link
http://www.modot.mo.gov/southcentral/roadwork/Roadwork_SouthCentral.htm

(The weekly road report link is the same each week)

While the reminder that this resource is available is useful, it would be even more useful if the appropriate information from the website link was included in the email. For example, if the email recipient had indicated that they were interested in updates from Phelps county, the email could include the following (which was copied from the site to which the email linked):

Phelps County

Construction Project

Route 63:

Contractor crews continue work to replace the bridge over Beaver Creek. Normal work conditions this week.

Location: 1.3 miles north of Route W

Project Detail: The project will include a wider bridge deck and improvements to the roadway joining the bridge.

Project Length: 0.25 miles

Estimated Completion: September 2008

Route 63:

MoDOT crews will perform concrete replacement on the roadway.

Location: North of Rolla

Route 63:

Contractor crews will continue to resurface existing pavement. Traffic will be restricted to one lane

with flaggers in the workzone area as contractor crews lay asphalt. Minimal delays can be expected.

Work hours are 7am to 4:30pm Monday - Friday

Location: North of Edgar Springs, MO., going south to County Road 6280



Project Detail: Project will include resurfacing and adding passing lanes.

Project Length: 9.4 miles

Route 8:

Centerline and shoulder rumblestrips

Roadway Maintenance

Route K:

MoDOT crews will cut brush on the right of way.

Various Routes:

MoDOT crews will patch potholes, replace, install and or maintain roadway signs.

Since the recipient had already expressed interest in this information, it would be more useful to email it to the user instead of requiring the user to click on a link to obtain this information.

Newsletters & Brochures

Newsletters & Brochures received a mixed rating for the general public simply because this method does not reach the majority of this segment. In general, MoDOT produces very high quality newsletters and brochures that are quite effective for reaching people in the other four segments. They also reach some members of the general public, but not enough to make this one of the more effective ways of reaching the general public.

MoDOT's annual highway road map may be the most effective brochure they have for the general public.

External Websites and Reports

External websites are a poor way to reach the general public. This has nothing to do with the content of MoDOT's websites, but merely reflects the current behavior of the general public. In a recent MoDOT qualitative study of Kansas City Area residents, 86% of respondents stated they had never visited MoDOT's website. While 14% of the population had visited MoDOT's website at least once, only 1% visited it daily and another 1% visited it weekly. The ten focus groups conducted for this project supported this finding. 12% of the respondents had visited MoDOT's website at least once, but only one person frequently visited the site (she visits it before driving on long trips across Missouri).



By definition it is assumed that members of the Engaged Public would be more likely to utilize the website than members of the General Public, but it is doubtful that a majority of them do. Therefore this segment was assigned a mixed evaluation for the external website. Similar reasoning was used to assign values to the reports for the General Public and Engaged Public.

Media

MoDOT does a very good job utilizing the media to communicate effectively. The reason why the rating of Good had an asterick was because of MoDOT's limited use of New Media. MoDOT is very effective with Traditional Media, but does not yet have policies and procedures in place for effectively using New Media.

Contests

Parts of MoDOT have proven that contests are an excellent way to reach all five segments. However, this was given a mixed evaluation because most of MoDOT does not yet employ this communication method.

Best Communication Practices

As part of this study, Heartland was instructed to focus on particularly successful approaches to be determined through interviews with MoDOT personnel throughout the state. While any list of best practices is subjective, the following criteria were applied in the development of this list. First, the practice had to be mentioned by multiple interview participants. Second, when feasible to check, the practice had to be supported by focus group feedback. Third, the practice had to be consistent with standard marketing and communication theory. A few practices were not subject to all of these criteria, and these were more subjective and based upon the PI's personal analysis, expertise, and experience with MoDOT (e.g., personal familiarity with a district's database expertise). It is also very possible that some of these practices have already been implemented by other districts/divisions, but the participants did not think to mention them during their interviews. However, it is likely that most of these practices are not universally employed by all within MoDOT that could utilize them and this list should provide some ideas for overall improvement. Specific organizations are listed to provide credit where credit is due and to enable those interested in implementing a particular idea to know whom to contact for more detail.

Contests: As discussed under External Segments & Communications under Indirect Communications, a few MoDOT organizations use contests as a method of reaching the general public. District 10 annually hosts two contests. They manage the Annual Work Zone Safety Poster & Coloring Contest for children and a bridge building contest for high school juniors and seniors.

Employee Skills Rodeo: While all districts/divisions have similar events to train employees and promote safety at work, District 9's employee skills rodeo was frequently mentioned as a great example. Their process is fun for the employees, gains favorable publicity, and meets the goals of providing training and encouraging safety. As part of their training, employees drive snowplows and load trucks. Legislators and media are invited to attend. They are sent a card and requested to RSVP. Follow up calls are made as needed.

Interdistrict Cooperation – Media Lists: By collaborating with several districts, District 6 has developed a composite email list for the I-44 corridor. While members of all media types utilize the list, members of radio and newspaper media have been particularly complimentary about it.

Interdistrict Cooperation – Subcontracting: Districts 1 and 4 have an unusually close relationship. As a metropolitan district, District 4 has more projects than they can easily handle. To help manage this number of projects, they subcontract a fair number of them to District 1. In addition to helping District 4, this provides enough volume to allow District 1 to more efficiently utilize resources with the improved economies of scale. As part of this relationships, both districts have gained vast knowledge in distance project management, including experience in mixing on-site visits with video-conferencing.

Internal Snow Teams: District 7's experience may prove helpful for some other districts. Past practice required a small group of employees to work the snow shifts as the weather required. This was detrimental to morale as it required employees to work long days (up to 13-hour shifts) on short notice, and sometimes required employees to unexpectedly be away from families during holidays. With input from District 8, the process was completely revised. The pool of workers responsible for these duties was more than doubled by including employees up to pay grade 13. The snow shifts were split into three eight-hour shifts and employees now have the option of not working their regular shift. If on a rotation team, employees were guaranteed some holidays off (managers covered this) and could then reliably schedule family holidays. These rotating teams were given fun names such as Flakes and Snow Bunnies to help promote a festive air. Morale boosters such as very casual wear and stocking favorite snacks were also employed during these shifts. Radio training was provided to all members of the pool to ensure cross competencies for all snow team requirements. These changes have moved serving on the snow team from a negative obligation to being a fun task.

Involved Public Presentations - Format: District 5 has recently moved to a much higher use of aerial maps to show local impact of new projects. Simultaneously, the district reduced their use of easels and moved to a greater utilization of table displays. The overall results have been superior to meetings that used standard presentations on easels. The combination of the aerial maps and the more informal tabletop format has generated more conversations and MoDOT personnel have perceived this method as being more effective than the standard easel format.

Involved Public Presentations - Preparation: District 2 has started communicating with local legislatures and business leaders before holding the first public meeting on a new project. This has been very successful. Since these community leaders have now already provided input to MoDOT before the public meeting, MoDOT presenters can address any raised concerns before the meeting or discuss them in the presentation itself. Presenting the fact that the initial planning proposal was developed in consultation with local community leaders has also produced positive results. Experience with this procedure suggests that meetings are now more productive and less confrontational than previous meetings.

Major Closures: District 6 has recently completely closed part of I-64, opting to complete work in two-years instead of spending six to eight years on the project with partial closures. This was the first time MoDOT has purposely completely closed such a busy interstate for improvements and while it is too early to judge the final outcome, the first few months have gone much smoother than the media and public expected.

Organization: District 10 seems to have made a science out of organization. Everything is filed and archived. As part of this focus on organization, they have developed expertise using Microsoft *Access*, a database program. These databases are another way to archive information, including tracking people for Involved Public projects. Another example is their news tracking. They have clerks scan all relevant news articles, letters to editors, and accident reports as external sources of information. They then email this information to appropriate people on a project basis and post it on internal bulletin board.

Project Cost Sharing: Districts 2 and 3 are very practiced at working with local communities on cost share projects and spent much of their interview time discussing such partnerships. They initiate many such proposals and typically offer to split 50% of improvements if the local community pays the other half. Not only does this build relationships with communities, it has additional benefits for MoDOT. MoDOT's participation ensures the projects are done properly and helps with long-term safety issues.

