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2026 FALL CONFERENCE
OCT 7 – 8 | SPOKANE WA

Maintaining Active Transportation Facilities | Communicating with Elected Officials



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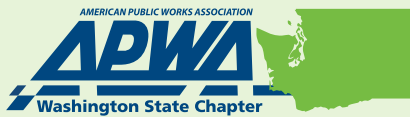
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The Spokane Falls and water & power building at downtown Riverfront Park in Spokane, WA.
Dreamstime.com

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Jim Rioux, PMP, 2026 Chapter President



Chapter Conferences: A Reflection of Who We Are



"Making Operations and Maintenance members of our chapter feel welcomed, valued, and recognized has been a focus of chapter leadership for years."

There are two conference moments that have profoundly influenced how I think about our chapter and how I approach my responsibilities as its president.

The first occurred during the Wednesday luncheon at the 2023 Fall Conference in Wenatchee. Chapter President Lauren Behm invited Tina Nelson to the podium, where she reflected on her early days with APWA. She described attending conferences where the room was filled almost entirely with white men in business attire. She then asked everyone to look around the room and recognize how far the chapter had come in creating a more diverse and representative membership.

The second moment came on Thursday evening at that same conference during the Night of Excellence Awards when Patrick Zellner accepted the Richard G. Andrews Chapter Pillar Award for his work with our Operations and Maintenance Committees and the ROADeo. His remarks were heartfelt and deeply moving. Patrick spoke about finding a place where he truly belonged within the Washington Chapter. Making Operations and Maintenance members of our chapter feel welcomed, valued, and recognized

has been a focus of chapter leadership for years. Patrick's comments suggested that we were finally making some progress.

These two moments are connected by a common theme: the ongoing effort to expand the APWA franchise by creating opportunities for more public works professionals to see themselves in our chapter. We have made tremendous progress, but our work is not finished. While we remain the professional home for our traditional public works disciplines, our chapter is strongest when we continue to broaden our reach. As 2025 Chapter President Jeff Brauns often asked, "What can we do to reach underserved members of our chapter?"

This year's Fall Conference continues that commitment.

Our keynote speaker will share her experiences overcoming barriers in a male-dominated industry and later in a corporate environment that was not always welcoming to women. Her story is one of perseverance, leadership, and creating opportunities for others, reinforcing our commitment to building a chapter where everyone can thrive.

The Rodeo has become one of the signature events of our Fall Conference, and it will once again take center stage

on Thursday. More than a friendly competition, the Rodeo has evolved into a celebration of the extraordinary skills and professionalism of our Operations and Maintenance members. It is an event where the chapter shines a spotlight on and celebrates our "Heroes That Wear Dirt."

Our educational program reflects the full breadth of the public works profession. Sessions will explore emerging topics such as artificial intelligence, environmental stewardship, infrastructure's role in community development, accessibility, effective communication of technical information to the public, and leadership and supervision. At the same time, attendees will find high-quality sessions covering the core disciplines that remain the foundation of our profession, including project delivery, public policy, emergency management, transportation, and wet utility engineering.

Our chapter conferences are an opportunity to celebrate each other and carry out our mission to provide premier education and networking opportunities. They are also an opportunity to showcase who we are as a chapter and who we aspire to be: a welcoming, inclusive community that celebrates excellence across every discipline of public works. ■

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New and Returning Members

May 5, 2026 through July 23, 2026

Karen Battis, Administrative Assistant 3,
City of Seatac, WA

Diane Bern, Deputy Director of Planning
and Public Works, Lummi Indian
Business Council

Enrique Borges, Lead Engineer/Manager,
ARDURRA – WA

Matt Chapman, Project Engineer,
Angela Fitzmorris, Director of
Marketing, KPFF, Inc.

Nathan Gentry, Construction Inspector,
City of Sequim, WA

Chris Goins, Public Works Director,
City of Sequim, WA

Priscilla Hillaire, Public Works
Administrator, Lummi Indian
Business Council

Attig Kazimi, Civil Engineer,
City of Federal Way, WA

Aparna Khanal, Deputy Director,
Public Work,
City of Mountlake Terrace, WA

Robert Klindt, Outside Industrial Sales,
Graybar

Kim Klinkers, City of Monroe, WA
Miranda Lange, Deputy Director of
Public Works, City of Ridgefield, WA

Steven Lange, Public Works Director,
Lummi Indian Business Council

Pedro Macias, King County, WA –
Dept. of Local Services

Drew Mayo, City of Sumner, WA
Jonathan Molina, Jona,
Thurston County, WA

Sean Molina, Project Manager II,
City of College Place, WA

Matthew Moore, Civil Utility Engineer I,
City of Port Angeles, WA

Christian Nichols,
Senior Project Engineer,

Jabes Otieno, City of Tukwila, WA
Fred Perryman, Street/Fleet/Storm
Operations Manager,
City of Centralia, WA

Adam Rector, Senior Director,
Accenture LLC

Scott Rohbaugh, Chief Technology
Officer, Fed Signal Corp-Environ
Sol Group

Steven Sampson, City of Ridgefield, WA
Shannon Sedlacek, Code Enforcement
Officer, City of Kirkland, WA

Jason Sheldon, Western Washington
Regional Sales Manager,

Karen Taing, Sr. Planning and
Development Specialist,
City of Seattle – SDOT

Man Truong, Senior Utilities Engineer,
City of Mountlake Terrace, WA

Kari Waller, Office Specialist PW MC,
City of Kirkland, WA

Robert Warbus, Public Works
Facilities Manager, Lummi Indian
Business Council

Jared Woods, City of Bellevue, WA –
Utilities Department




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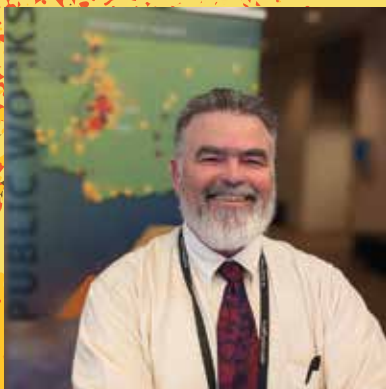


BUILDING

◆ COMMUNITIES OF BELONGING ◆



2026 FALL CONFERENCE
OCT 7 - 8 | SPOKANE WA



JIM RIOUX, PMP
2026 CHAPTER PRESIDENT

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

When people feel they belong, they participate fully, they contribute, they take risks, they lead. Our organization, our profession and our communities need people that participate fully, contribute, take risks, and lead.

APWA is a place where I feel I belong. A place where I feel welcomed, valued, and safe. My hope is that this organization be that place for everyone.

We can create that feeling for every person who walks through our doors. We can intentionally build a culture where belonging isn't accidental, but purposeful.

For the coming year join me and let's be intentional about reaching out to members that are struggling to find their place in this organization, elevating, and celebrating the people we work with, and treating the people we serve with dignity and respect. I invite you to join me and lean into the idea of...

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KEYNOTE: Mandy Rennehan

MANDY RENNEHAN is the founder and CEO of Freshco, one of North America's leading retail maintenance and reconstruction companies, serving some of the world's most recognizable brands, such as Home Depot and Nike. Known as the Blue-Collar CEO™, Mandy is a passionate advocate for the skilled trades and works to bridge the gap between blue and white-collar industries by championing opportunity, inclusion, and respect for all career paths. With her candid storytelling and practical leadership insights, Mandy inspires organizations to build stronger cultures where every individual feels valued and empowered to contribute. Her keynote on Building Communities of Belonging will challenge attendees to rethink how leadership, collaboration, and inclusion create resilient teams and thriving communities.

APWA EVENTS

Learn more: apwawaconf.com



The APWA Operations and Maintenance Committee invites you to participate—and encourage your maintenance staff to join—in the Annual Equipment ROADEo at the APWA WA Fall 2026 Conference on October 8, 2026. The ROADEo challenges participants from across Washington to showcase their equipment skills by navigating a series of timed obstacle courses that reflect real-world public works operations. It's an exciting opportunity to demonstrate expertise, exchange ideas and best practices with peers from other agencies, and represent your organization. The overall champion will earn the opportunity to compete at the national level.



APWA-WA honors the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups within public works at the annual Night of Excellence Awards Banquet on October 8! With entertainment provided by Mark Eddie's Dueling Guitars, the event is sure to be a memorable celebration.

To attend, please add Night of Excellence Awards Ceremony to your conference registration or purchase tickets separately.

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HIGHLIGHTS



- » Earn CE Credits!
- » Legislative Update – 10.07
- » Dedicated O&M Track – 10.07
- » 6 Bonus Early Sessions Wednesday Morning! – 10.07

COLLABORATIVE RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY IN TRANSIT PROJECTS

Early integration of climate change assessment improves cost and time-efficient delivery on major transit projects while supporting resilient, sustainable outcomes. Sound Transit's Everett Link Extension Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) demonstrates how early risk identification, multidisciplinary collaboration, prioritizing adaptations at 30% design, and aligning LEED and Envision credits meet multiple requirements through a single coordinated work product.



ALICIA SABIN
*US West Climate and
Sustainability Lead
Mott MacDonald*



JONATHAN DONG
*Transit Strategic Advisor
SDOT*



RICHARD HUTCHINSON
*Senior Vice President
DKS Associates*

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF BELONGING THROUGH TRANSIT SPOT IMPROVEMENTS

Seattle's Transit Spot Improvements Program has delivered dozens of low-cost, high-impact projects that improve transit reliability, safety, and access across the city. Through examples including Route 8 on Denny Way, streetcar safety enhancements, reverse queue jumps, transit priority treatments, and equity-focused investments, attendees will learn how SDOT and its consultant partners identify, prioritize, and implement projects that provide measurable benefits without major capital expenditures. The session will provide practical lessons for agencies seeking to implement low-cost transit capital investments that provide transit benefits while improving mobility for historically underserved communities.



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**ROBERT McANDREWS,
MPA**
Public Works Director
City of College Place



CAMRON CLARK
Public Works Foreman
City of College Place



BILL HARVEY
President
Diversified Logistics
Training Solutions (DLTS)

INNOVATIVE CDL TRAINING FOR PUBLIC AGENCIES

The City of College Place partnered with DLTS to implement an innovative in-house CDL training program that certified employees in less than one week. Presenters will review training options, discuss workforce development challenges, and demonstrate how agencies can reduce costs, improve retention, and streamline CDL certification through contracted training solutions.

CREATING PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE TEAMS FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

When employees feel safe to speak up, ask questions, share ideas, and admit mistakes, teams perform better. This session explores practical leadership strategies for creating psychological safety across field crews, operations teams, and office environments while maintaining accountability and high standards. Attendees will leave with tools they can immediately apply.



ETHAN NASH
CEO & Organizational
Development
Consultant
Nash Consulting



DANIELLE AXT
Business Services
Analyst
City of Tacoma

ESCALATING TRAUMA RISKS & PUBLIC WORKS RESPONDERS

Public Works employees perform job functions alongside first responders but are not garnered the same consideration regarding mental health resources. It is paramount to recognize the impact of the trauma they experience and formulate ways in which to support employees beyond the scope of resources currently deployed, such as EAP.



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HIGHLIGHTS

- » **Golf Tournament – 10.06**
Supporting the Scholarship Fund
- » **Hike APWA – 10.06**
Hike with the Membership Committee
- » **Cribbage Tournament – 10.07**
- » **CSO Tank Tour (walking) – 10.07**
- » **Spokane's Urban Mobility Network – 10.07**
Walking / biking /scooting tour of downtown Spokane
- » **Margaritaville Social – 10.07**
Surfing, music, and food! Costumes encouraged!
- » **ROADeo – 10.08**
- » **Night of Excellence Awards Banquet – 10.08**
Ticket purchase required.
- » **Exhibit Hall & Coffee Cart**
Win prizes with Exhibitor Bingo!
Complimentary coffee & snacks!

50 YEARS PRACTICING ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY: LESSONS LEARNED

After almost 50 years of practicing all forms of alternative delivery, the key performance attributes of successful and unsuccessful alternative delivery projects remain generally consistent. This session will identify and we will discuss those key attributes through the lens of the Owner, Owner's Advisor, General Contractor, and Design Firm.



JIM DUGAN
Principal Consultant
Parametrix



SCOTT RIVAS, P.E.
Associate Principal
SCJ Alliance



AREN MUCAR, AICP
Associate Principal
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LESSONS FROM MALDEN WILDFIRE RECOVERY

This session explores the short and long-term recovery of Malden, WA, after the 2020 wildfire, highlighting infrastructure rebuilding, long-range comprehensive planning and zoning, funding challenges, and community resilience. Learn how engineering, policy, and leadership aligned to rebuild a small town while preparing for future wildfire risk.



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**CAROLINE BARLOW –
MODERATOR**

Capacity, Management,
Operations &
Maintenance Manager
Seattle Public Utilities



**ROBERT McANDREWS,
MPA**

Public Works Director
City of College Place



ALYSSA ARDOUREL, PE

Civil Engineer, Vice
President
Huitt-Zollars, Inc.



KIM KLINKERS, PE

Senior Engineer
City of Monroe

MENTORSHIP: BLUEPRINTS FOR A THRIVING WORKFORCE

Knowledge transfer through mentorship is essential to workforce retention and succession. Through mentorship, staff grow as they seek advice, learn from trusted peers and gain confidence through constructive feedback. Panelists will share candid insights on the value of mentorship, navigating common challenges, and cultivating authentic and mutually beneficial relationships.



**BRICE MARYMAN,
PLA, FASLA**

Principal
*MxM Landscape
Architecture*



**AMALIA LEIGHTON
CODY, PE**

Director of Engineering,
Western Region
Toole Design

BUILDING CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES, MINIMIZING BARRIERS

Can our public works effectively confront the challenges of loneliness, polarization, and a general retreat from civic life? This session will explore new frameworks and in-depth case studies to explore how a pro-social public works program can rebuild our communities' civic connections.

PRACTICAL AI WORKFLOWS FOR PUBLIC WORKS

See how public works staff can use AI to review plans and reports faster, draft stronger deliverables, and build SQL, Ruby, and Python scripts for tools such as InfoWorks ICM and ArcGIS. Attend for practical methods that improve engineering productivity on work you already do.



MIKE LEONARD, PE

Senior Stormwater
Engineer
HDR



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Maintaining Active Transportation Facilities: The Work That Keeps Networks Moving

By Dustin DeKoekkoek, PE, and Briana Weisgerber, PE, Co-Chairs of the Transportation Committee

Across Washington, communities are investing millions of dollars in sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared-use paths. These facilities connect people to schools, transit, jobs, parks, and local businesses, but the success of these investments isn't determined on opening day. It's determined years later by how well these facilities are maintained.

When people walk, bike, and roll, they are far more sensitive to surface conditions than when they drive. A pavement joint that a car crosses without notice can divert a bicycle wheel and cause a crash. Gravel and broken glass collect along the roadway edge, exactly where bike lanes sit, puncturing tires and causing falls. An uplifted sidewalk panel or an ice-covered curb ramp can make an entire route unsafe for someone using a wheelchair or walker.

When facilities aren't maintained, people adapt in ways that may increase their exposure to crashes. Bicyclists leave a debris-filled bike lane and merge into traffic. Pedestrians step into the street to avoid an obstructed sidewalk. Deferred maintenance carries legal risk too; agencies have faced lawsuits from bicyclists injured on poorly maintained pathways.

From Complaints to Standards

Research conducted by the University of Washington for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and published in late 2024 as Maintenance of the Active Transportation Elements of Complete Streets (<https://depts.washington.edu/trac/research-news/maintenance-of-the->



With quick change attachments, the multipurpose UTV owned by WSDOT Eastern Region becomes a snowplow with sander, material loader, mower, and sweeper. Source: WSDOT.

active-transportation-elements-of-complete-streets) found that across North America, maintenance of bike lanes and paths is still largely complaint-driven rather than guided by defined service levels. That is changing among leading agencies, and a consistent theme in the research is that dedicated crews with right-sized equipment get better outcomes than highway maintenance staff can – because these crews make bike lanes and paths their first priority.

The fifth edition of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (<https://store.transportation.org/item/publicationdetail/5371>) lays out a practical framework for making that shift: build an inventory of bikeway assets, inspect them periodically, set realistic performance measures, estimate costs, program the work, and track results.

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Designing for Maintenance

The cheapest maintenance decisions are made before construction. Over the life of a facility, clearing and sweeping costs can actually exceed the initial construction cost of some bikeways, particularly in snow and ice climates. Those costs are largely locked in by design: good drainage prevents standing water and ice, buffers provide snow storage and limit debris accumulation, and width determines what equipment can do the work. One of the highest-value steps an agency can take is to bring maintenance staff into review plans before the 30-percent design is completed.

Putting It into Practice in Washington

Maintenance needs vary widely across the state. In Western Washington, rain, moss, and leaves clog drainage systems and accumulate in bike lanes through the wet season. In Eastern and Central Washington, snow, ice, sanding operations, and freeze-thaw cycles drive the workload.

Washington agencies are adapting. Seattle operates compact enclosed sweepers on protected bike lanes where conventional equipment can't reach. In Spokane, the city's first separated bike lanes were designed to accommodate the dimensions of available snow clearing and sweeping equipment. The city reallocated funding for the project, and city council voted to support the effort.

"During preparations for installing the city's first several separated bike lanes, it quickly became clear that the new layouts required new approaches to maintenance, equipment, and staffing," says Colin Quinn-Hurst, Principal Planner with the City of Spokane. "Now it's an ongoing effort to support and expand that four-season maintenance capacity as the network of separated bike lanes grows."

In Redmond, the city's recently adopted Transportation Master Plan includes a greatly expanded maintenance chapter, spotlighting the increased maintenance needs of a multimodal system and the funding required to address these needs.

"Redmond is hyper-focused on getting more people to walk, bike, and take transit to meet its climate goals, improve safety, and meet the travel demand associated with a rapidly growing community," says Michael Hintze, AICP, RSP1, Transportation Planning Manager for the City of Redmond. "Having well-maintained infrastructure supports this effort by making infrastructure safer, more accessible, and more inviting."



Street sweeper Seattle. Source: WSDOT.



Cambridge, MA. Source: Joseph Poirier, Nelson\Nygaard.

Keep the Conversation Going in Spokane

These topics will come to life at the APWA-WA Fall Conference, October 7–8 at the Davenport Grand in Spokane, where attendees can tour the city's 27 x 2027 Urban Mobility Network by bike or scooter and hear city staff share what's working and what challenges to expect.

Agencies don't have to start from scratch, either. The Federal Highway Administration's **Guide for Maintaining Active Transportation Infrastructure for Enhanced Safety**, the **Winter Maintenance Resource Guide** developed by Toole Design, and the maintenance chapter of AASHTO's Guide for the Development of

Bicycle Facilities, Fifth Edition, all provide practical recommendations.

For public works professionals, maintaining these facilities is about more than pavement and paint. It's about protecting public investments and ensuring sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared-use paths keep serving Washington communities for decades to come. ▀

Dustin DeKoekkoek, PE, is the Seattle Office Director at Toole Design. Briana Weisgerber is an Active Transportation Programs Engineer at WSDOT. Together they co-chair the APWA-WA Transportation Committee.

RESOURCES

Maintenance of the Active Transportation Elements of Complete Streets (WSDOT/UW, 2024)
<https://depts.washington.edu/trac/research-news/maintenance-of-the-active-transportation-elements-of-complete-streets>

Guide for Maintaining Active Transportation Infrastructure for Enhanced Safety (FHWA, 2024)
<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/guide-maintaining-active-transportation-fhwa-sa-23-005>

Winter Maintenance Resource Guide (Toole Design, 2024)
https://tooledesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2024_Winter_Maintenance_Resource_Guide.pdf

Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, Fifth Edition (AASHTO, 2024)
<https://store.transportation.org/item/publicationdetail/5371>

Communicating with Elected Officials: Understanding Their Side of the Equation

By Keith Pugh, PE, Government Innovation Liaison, WithersRavenel, Inc., APWA President 2022–2023



kpugh@withersravenel.com

"As my dad used to say, and as public works professionals should strive to live by: Leave Things Better Than You Found Them."

If you've spent any amount of time in public works, you already know this truth: **technical competence alone isn't enough.**

You can have the data, the analysis, and the best professional recommendation, and still walk away from a council meeting frustrated, confused, or disappointed with the outcome.

The disconnect usually isn't about intent. Most elected officials genuinely want to do the right thing for their community. More often, the challenge is **communication**, understanding how they receive information, what pressures they face, and how decisions look from their side of the dais.

As public works professionals, part of our job (whether we like it or not) is learning how to effectively communicate complex, long-term infrastructure needs to people who live in a very different decision-making world.

Start with trust, or nothing else matters

Effective communication with elected officials begins with **trust**. Without it, even the best technical analysis won't land.

Trust is built through transparency, consistency, and honesty, especially when the news isn't good. Elected officials don't expect perfection. They do expect timely, complete, and truthful information. Once trust is broken, it is incredibly difficult to restore.

That means sharing information early, not managing surprises at the council table, and being just as forthcoming with bad news as good. Over time, this builds confidence, not just in individual staff members, but in the public works organization as a whole.



Options, involvement, and ownership

One common mistake staff make is arriving with a single recommended solution and defending it at all costs. That approach often puts elected officials on the defensive.

Instead, effective communication is about bringing options.

Elected officials are ultimately accountable to the public for how money is spent and which priorities move forward. Providing clear alternatives – do nothing, do something, do more – respects that role. It allows them to weigh tradeoffs between cost, risk, service level, and timing.

When elected officials are involved early and given the opportunity to shape the decision, something important happens: **they gain ownership**. And ownership leads to better support, stronger advocacy, and more durable decisions when public pressure inevitably shows up.

Understanding how councils really work

Every council is different, but some realities are nearly universal. Most council members live in a world of **executive summaries**, not technical reports. Few will read a full staff memo cover to cover. Many decisions are largely formed **before** the meeting begins. The council meeting itself often functions more as a public performance than a working session.

That's why early communication matters so much.

One-on-one or small-group briefings, outside the public spotlight, give elected officials a chance to ask questions, admit confusion, and test their understanding. These conversations are invaluable. They reduce assumptions, prevent misunderstandings, and lead to more informed votes at the table.

And yes, councils will ask questions that are already answered in the staff report. That's not a sign of disrespect. It's a sign of how information is processed in a political environment.

Election cycles and 'quiet time'

Election cycles matter sometimes more than we want to admit. During campaign seasons, even sound infrastructure decisions can become perceived "wedge issues," especially if they involve cost, disruption, or long-term investment. Outside the election window, those same proposals might face little resistance.

Understanding this reality doesn't mean compromising professional ethics. It means being strategic. Many agencies

intentionally avoid controversial decisions during what some call “quiet time” around elections. Others reframe how options are presented to make them easier to explain and defend publicly.

Either way, the takeaway is simple: **context matters**, and timing can be just as important as content.

Public pressure and human nature

Newly elected officials often arrive with high confidence, a strong sense of mandate, and limited appreciation for how complex infrastructure decisions really are. Some may make commitments they can't keep. Others may take early positions before all the facts are available, the classic “ready, shoot, aim” approach.

Over time, most develop thicker skin and a better understanding of governance. Some never do.

Regardless of experience level, staff can help by meeting early, presenting balanced information, and creating space for learning before public positions harden. That preparation benefits everyone, elected officials, staff, and ultimately the community.

When councils underperform

Not every council functions at its best. Some are fragmented. Some are dominated by personalities. Some struggle with misinformation, power imbalances, or inconsistent direction.

Underperforming councils create real challenges for staff, particularly when long-term infrastructure planning requires alignment, discipline, and follow-through.

In these situations, clarity becomes essential. Summarizing direction quickly, documenting decisions, and clearly outlining costs, timelines, and impacts are critical. And whenever possible, these conversations should happen away from the public arena. Public embarrassment rarely produces better outcomes and often carries career consequences for staff.

Information is power – use it wisely

Information can be empowering, or it can be weaponized.

For councils to function effectively, information must be shared **consistently and equitably** across all members. When some receive details early and others don't, mistrust grows and dysfunction follows.

Regular briefings, coordinated through the manager's office, help ensure everyone is working from the same set of facts, especially during election periods where communication must be handled carefully.

Municipal size matters

Communication dynamics change dramatically based on municipal size.

In smaller communities, mayors and council members often have closer relationships with residents, and closer involvement in operations. That proximity can blur roles, especially when staff wear multiple hats and elected officials become the first stop for service complaints.

In these environments, communication with elected leadership, particularly mayors, becomes even more important. Done well, it strengthens alignment. Done poorly, it creates confusion and conflict.

The power of storytelling

At the heart of all of this is storytelling.

Public works professionals are the subject-matter experts, but expertise alone doesn't move decisions. We have to translate complexity into stories that make sense, stories about outcomes, consequences, and community values. Good infrastructure stories:

- Are brief and focused
- Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Use visuals instead of spreadsheets
- Show future impacts, not just current conditions
- Present consequences of action and inaction

Elected officials need stories they can retell, to constituents, to the media, and to themselves.

Equity and the long view

Infrastructure decisions are fundamentally about **equity**.

Every time we defer maintenance, delay investment, or choose short-term savings over long-term responsibility, we shift the burden forward, to future residents, future leaders, and future taxpayers. That is a generational equity issue.

Communicating this clearly is part of our responsibility as public servants. Good infrastructure stewardship isn't just about today's budget – it's about fairness across time and across communities.

Closing thought

Effective communication with elected officials isn't about winning arguments. It's about building trust, fostering understanding, and helping leaders make informed decisions that serve the whole community, today and tomorrow.

That responsibility doesn't end at the council table. It extends to the next generation of professionals who will inherit the systems we manage.

As my dad used to say, and as public works professionals should strive to live by:

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Lost and Found Items

Lost and Found



What happens when someone loses their car keys at a city park or leaves a backpack behind at the county fairgrounds? State law (specifically RCW 63.21.060) sets forth the procedures to be followed by governmental entities when they acquire lost property. That statute indicates agencies should take the following steps:

- Attempt to notify the apparent owner of the property; and
- If the owner does not collect the property, then within 30 days but not less than 10 days after the agency acquires the lost property, the property needs to be forwarded to the police chief (if found in a city) or the county sheriff (if found in an unincorporated county).

Despite this straightforward procedure, questions sometimes still arise. The following are some questions MRSC has received on topics related to “lost and found” items.

Q: *City employees discovered a cell phone with no charger and car keys in a local park. If no one comes forward to claim them, how do we handle these items?*

A: The requirements local governments must follow related to lost property can be found in RCW 63.21.060. If your agency has followed these procedures

and the property remains unclaimed after the required 30-day period, RCW 63.21.060 states:

A governmental entity may elect to retain property which it acquires and dispose of the property as provided by chapter 63.32 or 63.40 RCW.

In other words, the agency can choose to dispose of the property in the same manner that the police or sheriff departments dispose of property following statutes chapter 63.32 RCW and chapter 63.40 RCW. These statutes are pretty lengthy, so here is a summary:

1. The agency must provide written notice to the owner of the property, if known.
2. If property is still not claimed 60 days from when written notice was provided, the agency can:
 - a. Sell the property at a public auction to highest bidder;
 - b. Retain the property for agency use; except the owner has the right to reclaim the property within one year of receipt of notice;
 - c. Destroy the property if it has no commercial value or the cost of the sale exceeds its value and other factors are met; or
 - d. Donate the property to nonprofit charitable organization.

Q: *A few months ago, the police department found a wet duffle bag on the beach shore with money inside. A lot of the money was also wet but some of it was salvageable. We processed it as lost property, and the City was advised to follow the U.S. Department of Treasury's mutilated money process for the wet money, which allows currency to be exchanged at face value if more than 50% of a note is identifiable. Someone has now stepped forward to claim the property. Do we return both the salvaged and mutilated money to the owner or submit the mutilated money to the Treasury first?*

A: RCW 63.21.060 sets forth the procedures to be followed by governmental entities when they acquire lost property, which, presumably, has been incorporated into your local code and covers all lost and found property, including cash. If your police department has reached the step where the lost property is to be released to the person(s) who claimed it, then it could also tell them about the Treasury's mutilated money process, allowing them (and not the City) to decide how to proceed with the mutilated currency.

Q: I found a driver's license in an old Lost and Found box in our town hall. Given that this box was from 2018, how should the town handle the driver's license?

A: With respect to the driver's license, RCW 63.21.090(2) states:

*Regardless of whether a county, city, or town designates an alternate department or governmental entity under subsection (1) of this section, the chief law enforcement officer or his or her designated representative is responsible for retaining any of the following types of property in accordance with the requirements of this chapter: **A bank card; charge or credit card; cash; government-issued document, financial document, or legal document; firearm; evidence in a judicial or other official proceeding; or an item that is not legal for the finder to possess.** A county, city, or town designating an alternate department or governmental*

entity under subsection (1) of this section shall establish procedures for ensuring these types of property are directed to the chief law enforcement officer or his or her designated representative.

Q: One of our drivers found a small bag of cannabis on the bus floor after a shift. With decriminalization of possession, the cannabis is lost property under RCW 63.21.060. However, given that possession of cannabis is still a federal offense, would returning it constitute a violation of federal law?

A: Regarding state law for public entities for lost-and-found property, in general there is a requirement to turn such property over to law enforcement after 10 days but within 30 days. With respect to the found cannabis, your transit agency could turn it directly over to law enforcement for secure handling without waiting 10 days, keeping a record of how it was handled. It is

doubtful the owner will come forward to claim it, but if they do, your agency can point to the record of its location.

Q: What happens when lost property that was found by a city employee during their working hours goes unclaimed. Can the property be released to the employee?

A: RCW 63.21.070 provides: *An employee, officer, or agent of a governmental entity who finds or acquires any property covered by this chapter while acting within the course of his or her employment may not claim possession of the lost property as a finder under this chapter **unless the governing body of the governmental entity has specifically provided, by ordinance, resolution, or rule for such a claim.***

In the absence of a local ordinance, resolution, or rule providing for such a claim, an employee cannot keep unclaimed property simply because they found it. ▀



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Using VR to Step Inside Tomorrow's Infrastructure Projects

By Nicholas Tucker, KBA, Inc., ntucker@kbacm.com, Co-Chair – APWA Washington Publications Committee



“
It is becoming possible to visualize public works projects years before they are delivered, in increasingly personal and intuitive ways.”

In the process of putting together this article, I had the privilege of riding Sound Transit's Tacoma Dome Link light rail extension nearly 10 years before the project is scheduled to be opened to the public and four years before construction begins. I was able to see the view from both sides of the train as it went from Federal Way to Fife to Tacoma. And I got to see the view from the driver's cab.

Because of the title of this article, you know this ride was virtual, but the point stands that it is becoming possible to visualize public works projects years before they are delivered, in increasingly personal and intuitive ways. Where in the past we would only get still renders and top-down diagrams of planned infrastructure, now we can see, from a first-person perspective, what the world will look like with the completed project in place.

Prospective transit riders wearing a VR headset can look out the windows of a light rail car and see what their ride will be like a decade from now. Stakeholders can

play with real-time traffic models in a fully rendered 3D environment to understand exactly how a new interchange design will relieve congestion. And agency leaders can use these tools to demonstrate to the public what they will be getting from their tax dollars.

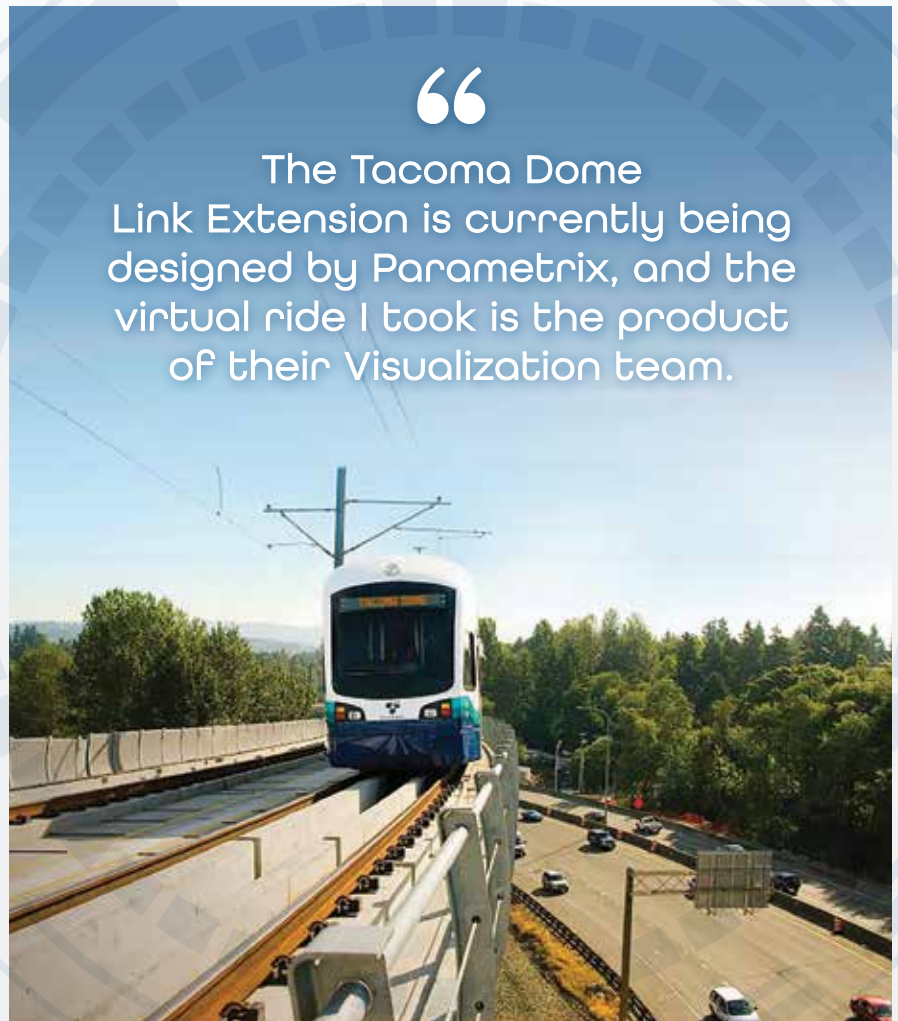
The Tacoma Dome Link Extension is currently being designed by Parametrix, and the virtual ride I took is the product of their Visualization team, led by Visualization Project Manager Wayne Sullivan. He's been producing infrastructure visualizations for almost 30 years and has personally been a part of the sector's evolution.

Sullivan's use of VR for visualization began in 2015 during the design phase of Project Neon in Las Vegas. He and his team were tasked with creating a 3D model of the project for interactive project management and public outreach, and to create videos using the model to show the public what the finished project would look like. They built the model and put a virtual 360-degree camera into a virtual helicopter that flew along a pre-set track, letting viewers click and drag to move the view around like they would on Google Maps Street View.

Though they weren't contracted to do so, Sullivan and his team decided to bring a VR headset to the first outreach meetings as an added bonus. It helped make the viewing experience more intuitive and immersive. Not all members of the public grew up using video game controllers or a mouse and keyboard to maneuver in a 3D space, but wearing a headset, they can just look around.

"We included instructions and a countdown, we didn't want to freak anybody out, we were worried about people getting sick," Sullivan said. "And we were amazed, nobody got sick, everyone understood it immediately. We were able to show 'look what you're gonna get, your kids will be able to ride their bikes all the way to the store on a protected lane. We could show someone in a wheelchair how accessible a design would be.'"

Since then, the models have only gotten better, both in utility and in realism, as raw computing power has increased. Sullivan's team now combines data from the Google Maps Tiles API with custom elements made using the Unreal Engine modeling software,



which is most commonly used in the development of video games. Because of this, it's no surprise that much of his team has a background in video game development and modding.

"It's a lot easier to teach them what a DTM is or how to model super elevations and stuff like that, than it is to try and get someone whose an engineer or a CAD person to understand about modeling and UV mapping," Sullivan said.

Along with increasing fidelity, Sullivan believes the future of visualization will be in the accessibility of models. Pixel Streaming is a method of accessing high-quality visualizations that run on a high-powered server somewhere in a data center, and can be streamed and interacted with on more modest user hardware like a phone, tablet, or laptop. VR headsets are also becoming more affordable and powerful every passing

year. Some don't need to be plugged into a computer, and many can run programs in 8K at 120 frames per second.

It's all a far cry from the days of drafting tables and 2D images rendered from simple polygons. While infrastructure projects often take a tremendous amount of time and money to reach completion, at least we have ways of seeing and getting excited about the future more than ever before. ▀

Check out the VR Visualization Tools:



Kudos Wall

Let's celebrate public works!

Kudos to Our Newly Certified APWA Professionals

The APWA Washington Chapter is proud to recognize members who have recently earned national APWA professional certifications. These credentials represent a commitment to advancing knowledge, strengthening leadership, and promoting excellence in public works.

APWA certifications validate expertise across critical areas of the profession, including infrastructure inspection, stormwater management, and public works leadership. By achieving these certifications, these professionals demonstrate their dedication to serving their communities and advancing the public works industry.

Please join us in congratulating:



Certified Public Infrastructure Inspector (CPII)
Ihsanullah Ihsan, CPII – Construction
Inspector, PSOMAS, Tacoma, WA



Certified Stormwater Manager (CSM)
Michael A. Perfetti, CSM – Surface
Water Senior Program Manager,
City of Tukwila, WA



**Certified Public Works Professional –
Supervision (CPWP-S)**
Nicholas B. Hagman, CPWP-S – M&O
Superintendent, WSDOT, WA

Kudos to Debbie Sullivan for 26 Years at the City of Olympia!



The APWA Washington State Chapter extends a well-deserved Kudos to Debbie Sullivan for her years of dedicated service and leadership in public works and within APWA. A longtime APWA member, Debbie served as Chapter President in 2017 and contributed countless hours to advancing the Chapter and supporting public

works professionals across Washington. Her commitment to APWA extended well beyond her term as President. Debbie volunteered as Conference Chair for many years, helping create successful and engaging events that brought public works professionals together to learn, connect, and share ideas. She also won the President's Award in 2016, and Outstanding Service Award in 2013. In 2020, she was appointed Assistant City Manager for the City of Olympia, continuing her commitment to serving her community. She retired in May, marking 26 years with the City of Olympia. Thank you, Debbie, for all you have contributed to our Chapter and our profession!

–WA Chapter

Kudos to Henry Morales for 50 Years of Service!

Let's give a huge kudos shout out to Henry Morales with the City of Olympia Publics Works Department. At a recent Service Recognition Ceremony Henry received an award for 50 Years of Service! In 1976 Henry began his journey as "Extra Help" for the City's Streets Department. Throughout his career he has served with Olympia's streets, solid waste management, and stormwater operations crews. His current supervisor, Pat Shepp, pictured with Henry and City Manager Jay Burney, noted that after 50 years Henry still shows up every day with a positive attitude. Thank you Henry for a lifetime of public service!

–The City of Olympia & Jim Rioux, APWA WA Chapter President



Kudos to Scott Egger, Boss-Level Grill Master on Your Retirement!



We had it all – a grill master, a style icon, and an outstanding Public Works Director all wrapped into one person. We wish Scott Egger all the best

in his retirement!

Scott led the City of Lacey's Public Works department with professionalism, expertise, a deep commitment to serving our residents, genuine care for the staff around him, and a contagious smile.

Here's to the next big chapter! Happy retirement, Scott.

–City of Lacey



From bold ideas to impactful action Scott served at the WA Chapter president in 2018, as well as contributing to many years to advancing public works and inclusivity within the community. In 2017 he won the Inclusion Advocate Award, 2024 the



Outstanding Service Award and in 2020 he won the President's Award. Thanks you Scott, for all you have contributed to our Chapter and our profession!

–WA Chapter

Kudos to Caroline Barlow & Team for an Outstanding Committee Summit!

This year's Committee Summit featured a new venue (Brightwater Community Center Hall), a new educational component (Committee Organization and Communication Training), and a well-attended social and networking function after the summit.

Kudos to the team effort!

- **Caroline Barlow** for her leadership and vision for the event
- **Charlie Green** for organizing the content of our training with Communication Resources
- **Paula Welly** for working on the program handouts
- **Tara Davis** for helping with food and logistics
- **Communication Resources** for providing an excellent training session at no cost to the chapter

–WA Chapter



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TRACKS TO DESTINY:

HOW THE NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD BUILT WASHINGTON'S CITIES

By Susann Babaei, SCJ Alliance, Co-Chair of the History Committee

The Northern Pacific Railroad had a tremendous influence in Washington State as a whole and on the development of cities. Before the Northern Pacific Railroad, Washington was a sparsely populated frontier territory. It was connected by river canoes, wagon roads, and coastal shipping. Prior to the railroad, Washington's settlement patterns grew around coastlines, rivers, and military posts. Indigenous trade routes had long connected communities across the Cascades and along the Columbia Plateau. Early Euro-American settlements followed the same logic: river ports like Walla Walla, Fort Vancouver, and Olympia thrived as key nodes, supported by trails and wagon roads but constrained by slow and rugged travel (Lange). The territory's potential for business became evident early on with the abundance of timber, wheat, coal, and mineral production.



Northern Pacific Railroad Ad – HistoryLink.org

Business and political leaders determined that there was a need for a faster, more reliable way to connect Washington territory to the broader national economy (Northern Pacific Railway).



Seattle & Walla Walla Line – HistoryLink.org

SEATTLE & TACOMA

But where was the western terminus of the first line to be? By the summer of 1873, the railroad had already reached Tenino and needed to make a decision on the final terminus. On July 14, 1873, a crowd of early Seattle settlers gathered at Yesler Mill to hear Arthur Denny read aloud a telegram from the Northern Pacific Railroad answering that question. Seattle citizens expected that their city would be selected. Much to their shock and anger, the telegraph read “we have located the terminus on Commencement Bay.” Seattleites were dismayed that the

wealth and prosperity promised by the railroad would benefit Tacoma, not Seattle (MacIntosh & Wilma).

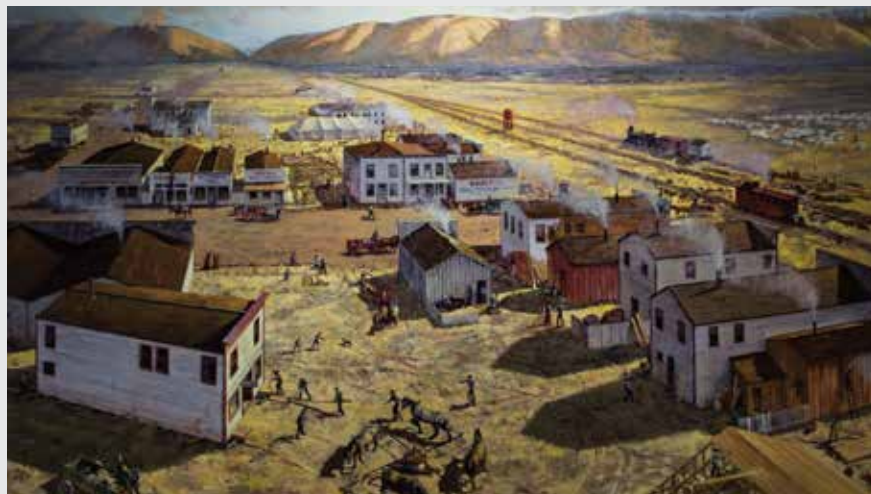
Tacoma City in 1873 was a new village sparsely populated and meagerly developed but built with the anticipation that the railroad would come there. The Northern Pacific chose Tacoma because it would require fewer miles of track to reach Tacoma than Seattle, had a flatter grade, and because the railroad had secretly bought acres of land away from Tacoma village that they called “New Tacoma” (MacIntosh & Wilma). Tacoma boomed after the decision. The railroad's arrival led to rapid growth and investment.



Spokane Railroad Depot – Spokane Historical Society

The population grew from 7,000 in 1885 to 36,000 in 1890 (Northern Pacific Railway). Graders carved streets, wharves sprouted along Commencement Bay, and speculators built out the city. Boosters claimed that the railroad would make Tacoma “the New York of the West” (Tacoma Ledger, 1874). While that prediction didn’t fully materialize, the city’s identity and long-term role as a freight and port hub were cemented.

Seattle, bypassed and furious, did not give up. Instead, its business leaders funded their own railroad. Civic pride, competition, and infrastructure investment became



Portrait of Yakima City Buildings Preparing for Move – Yakima Herald

defining regional forces. This grassroots effort secured freight traffic and proved Seattle’s determination to participate in the regional economy.

The Northern Pacific Railroad later constructed a line into Seattle, and over time the city also attracted service from other rail companies.

SPOKANE

When the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Spokane Falls in 1881, the town was still a small frontier settlement centered around the waterfall. The location was ideal. The falls provided hydropower, and the region sat at the crossroads of nearby mining districts, rich timberlands, and fertile agricultural plains. Once the railroad arrived, Spokane’s growth was immediate and dramatic.

The Northern Pacific constructed depots, machine shops, switching yards, and warehouses along the river. Merchants, hotel operators, and suppliers followed, creating a vibrant commercial district (Historic Spokane).

The Great Spokane Fire of 1889 threatened to halt this momentum when it destroyed more than 30 city blocks. Instead, the city rebuilt quickly with materials delivered by rail: brick, steel, and machinery that enabled downtown to rise again in stone and masonry. Many of these early 1890s buildings still define Spokane’s architectural character today.

By the early 20th century, multiple railroads served the city, and their presence solidified Spokane as one of the West’s premier rail junctions (Spokane Historical).

By 1910, Spokane had become the commercial and cultural hub of a vast region that spanned multiple states and provinces. Its rapid rise from a riverside outpost to one of the Northwest’s most influential cities was driven almost entirely by the arrival and expansion of the Northern Pacific Railroad (HistoryLink.org, 2003; Historic Spokane).

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HOW THE NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD BUILT WASHINGTON'S CITIES

YAKIMA

Not every town benefited from the railroad. In 1884, the Northern Pacific began building its Cascade Branch. The railroad announced that it would not stop at Yakima City. Instead, the railroad built a depot at a new townsite four miles to the north called North Yakima (HistoryLink). The reasons given for this vary. The railroad insisted that the land would be too swampy for the railroad once irrigation was in place. Other accounts suggest that there was a land dispute between the City and the railroad. The railroad wanted more money and more control than the City was willing to give (Yakima Herald-Republic).

Desperate to keep the railroad in the city, Yakima City officials offered the railroad half the vacant land if it would abandon the effort, but the railroad turned it down. The officials then convinced the territorial government to file suit against the railroad, which Yakima City won in district court and later in the territorial Supreme Court. But it was too late.

As the lawsuit worked its way toward the U.S. Supreme Court, the railroad proceeded with its plans to develop North Yakima. The Northern Pacific offered to give landowners as many lots in the new town as they had in the old one, and even to pay the cost of moving buildings. Through the winter and spring of 1884–1885, more than 100 buildings were moved on trucks and rollers from their original locations to the new site (Yakima Herald-Republic).

One building, the Guiland House hotel, remained open for business during the three weeks it was winched across the Valley on log rollers to the new town (Yakima Herald-Republic).

By May 1885, the press reported that Yakima City was “a thing of the past.” By the time the U.S. Supreme Court got the case and ruled in favor of the railroad in 1892, North Yakima was an established city and the new county seat, while Yakima’s population had dropped from 500 to 150. In 1917, the Legislature voted to change Yakima City’s name to Union Gap, and the following year, North Yakima dropped the north from its name and became simply Yakima (Wikipedia).

LEGACY

The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad ushered in modern Washington. It connected farms, forests, mines, and mills to national markets (Northern Pacific Railway). It brought workers from across the world, contributing

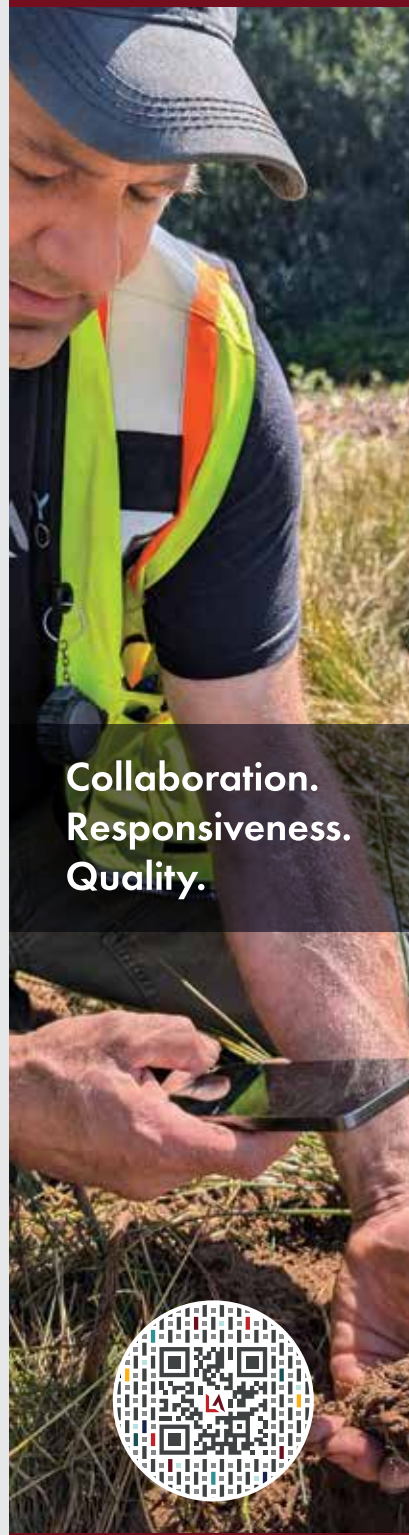
to cultural diversity and new social dynamics. It spurred civic investment, new public services, and infrastructure expansions.

The routes chosen in the 19th century still guide transportation and commerce. The railroad fostered population growth, shaped urban form, and tied Washington into national networks. Infrastructure decisions made during this era helped define the Washington we know today. ■

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Tips for Communicating Technical Information to Non-Technical Audiences



By Monique Doyle

Communicating with members of the public about technical projects in public works can be a challenge, and sometimes the public reaction to a proposed or planned project is unpredictable. But strategic communication and early outreach can smooth the road towards a successful and on-time public works project.

At the Washington Chapter's Spring Conference in Vancouver in April, Jordan King and his colleagues from Kimley-Horn presented on this topic to an interested audience of approximately 55 attendees. The following are their pro tips to successfully engage with non-technical audiences:

1. Translate the details – focus on meaning rather than technical information and reduce the jargon.
2. Lead with impact – outline what changes can be expected and what the benefits to the community will be.
3. Use visuals strategically – simplify maps and graphics before sharing your messaging with the public.
4. Timing matters – start early; the earlier you connect with the public about what's going to happen the better.
5. Partner with experts – experienced communication and outreach team members can help you ask better questions when meeting with the community, align your messaging earlier, and help tailor your benefits statement.

Another recommendation is to develop a “tool box” with different types of messaging and information delivery.

Door-to-door canvassing is often the most effective public outreach technique. In addition, the following information-sharing methods can work well:

- Campaign-style street signs in the area
- Online FAQs and printed mailers
- A hotline for concerned locals to call and a public website
- An open house and “meet the contractor” event
- Postcards and messaging to hang on doors of homes and businesses
- Hosting an information booth at local fairs and other outdoor events

Be sure to share your messaging multiple times and in a variety of different ways.

Focusing on communicating effectively about the project with those in the community will lead to fewer delays, faster project approvals, and help your public works projects stay on budget. ▀



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The O&M Committee is a group of dedicated public works professionals who represent the daily operations workers within the APWA. Like first responders, operations and maintenance workers answer the call – day or night, rain or shine – doing the work most never see, but everyone depends on. We don’t just fix problems. We protect communities. We keep life moving.

ROADeo & The Fall Conference

Preventing and responding to crisis situations with the right technology, techniques, and skills takes the right training. At this Fall’s conference, we’re hosting not just the ROADeo, but a complete O&M learning track that includes sessions on communications, emerging trends, lessons learned, and a supervisor’s roundtable. Investing in O&M staff training is an investment in the long-term success of your communities and we encourage you to send staff to the conference.



The ROADeo

At the ROADeo held at every Fall APWA WA Chapter Conference, participants demonstrate the machinery maneuvering skills it takes to perform the daily internal



operations of Public Works departments. Participants will also have the opportunity to network with other public agencies on techniques and how to better serve the City, County, or State Agency they represent. Winners of the event then go on to compete at the APWA national level: Western Snow and Ice Conference.

Our Heroes Wear Dirt

For us, "Our Heroes Wear Dirt" isn't a slogan – it's a badge of honor. It symbolizes the sweat, sacrifice, and pride that our teams have. It's the unbreakable bond between those willing to get their hands dirty so others don't have to.

We are the ones in the trenches. The ones who show up. The ones who get it done. And we invite you to join us in Spokane this fall.

Learn More: <https://washington.apwa.org/events/roadeo>.

PUBLIC WORKS

FIRST RESPONDER

First Responders Day: October 28

Public works are First Responders. It's simple: we go into disaster areas with the primary responsibility of clearing roadways so that other responders can access stricken areas. Public Works also provides traffic control, debris management and assists with rescue, evacuation, damage assessment, infrastructure repair, and restoration of certain services. The national focus is now on building Resiliency, particularly through Critical Infrastructure Protection. Public Works is a major

"owner/operator" of the transportation, water/wastewater, and stormwater systems that are so vital for the safety and health of communities. Though the Homeland Security Department considers Public Works as part of the Emergency Services Sector, overall acceptance and recognition by other disciplines as equal partners in emergency management is still lacking.

How You Can Help

Get ready to share the message on October 28, 2026!

- Request a proclamation (note: most offices take 30 days to process)
- Use the Public Works First Responders Symbol in online posts or communication
- Share your staff's stories of being First Responders

Go to the resource page for graphics and more ideas:



www.apwa.org/news-and-announcements/recognize-national-first-responders-day-on-october-28-25

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By Brian Ziegler

Get Ahead with Your Hands

Our hands are remarkable creations and virtually impossible to duplicate, even with today's robotics. Grasping, picking, pointing, scratching, slapping, and squeezing are all accomplished without a single muscle in the hand. (The muscles actually reside in your wrist and forearm, transferring force through your tendons.)

Our hands can also serve as useful reminders ("mnemonics") of the two most important skill sets for successful public works outcomes:

(1) Serving customers and

(2) Delivering on projects.

Conveniently, our five fingers can represent five skills that lead to success in serving customers and delivering on projects.

On the One Hand: Serving Customers

Let's start by defining what a customer is (which is not to be confused with what a stakeholder is, a subject for another article).

Whether in business or government, customers **receive** products and services and suppliers **provide** them. Customers and suppliers are connected through what we call value-added activity (VAA). Without VAA, there is no customer-supplier relationship (which is one reason stakeholders aren't truly customers).

Excellent customer service starts with:

- The VAA itself,
- The customer receiving that value, and
- The supplier providing it.

Let's consider a simple case with **you** as the supplier of the VAA.

Your hand can be a helpful guide to delivering great customer service. In this analogy, each finger represents a basic skill needed in every interaction with both internal and external customers. Let's look at each finger, starting with the thumb.

THUMBS UP

As leadership guru Stephen Covey says, "Start with the end in mind." Before every customer interaction, ask: "What result do I want from this interaction?" Ideally, the answer is "**A satisfied customer.**"

While it's not always possible to satisfy everyone, it's amazing how powerful the **intent** to satisfy can be. Aim for a 'thumbs up' (a happy customer) at the end of the

interaction (and consider checking in during it, too).

INDEX – NUMBER ONE

Sayings like "The customer is always right" or "The customer is our number one priority" are popular motivators.

In this analogy, the index finger reminds **you** that the customer in front of you is the only customer you have **right now**.

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Distractions keep you from giving customers the attention they deserve – so stay focused.

Have you ever received service from someone who won't make eye contact or was clearly distracted by their phone? Remember how that interaction felt and make the current interaction your top priority. That way, your customer will feel valued from the outset.

MIDDLE – MAXIMUM VALUE

The tallest finger reminds us to deliver "maximum value" in every customer interaction (within the VAA relationship). Here, "maximum value" can be thought of as the relationship between quality and cost, aiming for the highest quality for the least cost (more on this in another article).

In other words, provide each customer with the best possible quality for their (and your) investment of time and money.

RING – RELATIONSHIP

For lasting credibility (especially with your regular customers), prioritize the relationship over the task. Building trust, cohesion, and teamwork fosters cooperation, which becomes invaluable when more difficult issues arise. Don't sacrifice the relationship in the name of task expediency. As my wife has reminded me, "Do you want to be right or do you want to be in a relationship?"

PINKIE – PAIN

This finger often hurts the most when injured (at least for me), reminding us that delivering VAA to customers requires some sacrifice. This may mean accepting some temporary loss or discomfort

If we are motivated by love, we act out of genuine care for the customer. If we are motivated by fear, we may sacrifice to avoid conflict, keep our job, or impress others. Either way, customer service requires an investment of our time, energy, money, and peace of mind, and that can sometimes feel painful.

Those are five reminders for delivering your best customer service.

On the Other Hand – Delivering Projects

Projects abound in the public works world, and not just in design or construction.

In the broadest sense, a project is any temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result. Unlike "business as usual," a project has a defined beginning and end and a defined customer (so the preceding discussion about serving customers applies here, too).

THUMBS UP

Good project delivery – like good customer service – starts with the thumb again. Because customers define success, it's essential to know who they are, what they want, and how they'll measure a good outcome. Early customer endorsement increases the odds that at the interaction will result in a satisfied customer and a satisfied project team.

When working to satisfy a customer, the most important questions to ask are: "What, when, and how much?" In project management parlance, this is the "triple constraint" of scope, schedule, and budget.

INDEX – WHAT

The index finger represents the "what," or the scope of a project. Ideally, if your customer knows what they want, they can describe it to you and maybe even point to it: "Aha, that's it!"

Often, the project manager (that's you) has to describe alternatives until the customer says, "Eureka!" This can be time-consuming, but without scope alignment, all subsequent project-management work is at risk.

MIDDLE – WHEN

The middle finger represents the "when," or the maximum time available to deliver the project. As with scope, the customer may need to consider multiple options before an agreement can be reached on a due date. Once agreed, it's another good time to ask for the "thumbs up."

RING – COST

The ring finger represents the cost, or the budget. Once you present the cost/budget, the customer's desires for "what" and "when" may change.

As we all know, good projects – like good relationships – require investment, and you need to confirm the customer is truly invested. Scope, schedule, and budget are tightly linked: you can't change one without changing one or both of the others. Balancing all three constraints is critical to earning another thumbs up.

PINKIE – EVALUATION

Lastly, we come to the pinkie, which represents an often-overlooked part of good project delivery: team satisfaction. A good manager will check in regularly with the team (at a minimum, team satisfaction should be checked as often as customer satisfaction is measured).

For many projects, a simple Plus/Delta assessment works well. You can ask, "What should we **keep** doing?" and "What should we **change**?" Other tools are available, too.

Those are five reminders for delivering excellent projects.

Round of Applause

Use your fingers to remind you of the ten essential skills in serving customers and delivering projects.

Hands can also remind us of a reliable path to job happiness: gratitude. Use those hands to applaud the people in your life who support you and deserve affirmation (you'll feel better, and so will they). And don't forget to give yourself two thumbs up regularly, too. ▀

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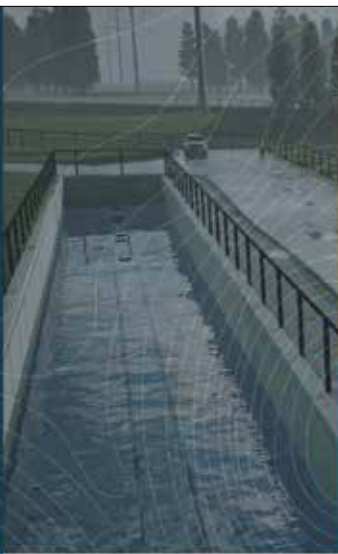


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