

TRANSFER

Rail safety committee to reduce grade-crossing fatalities

NJDOT Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Board Chairman **James Simpson** and members of the NJ Safety at Railroad Crossings Leadership Oversight Committee recently met at NJDOT to discuss

that took the life of a 13-year-old boy in October," said Commissioner Simpson. "Our job is to help prevent accidents through 'E-cubed' — engineering, education and enforcement."



Commissioner James S. Simpson gives remarks on Rail Crossing Safety along with NJ TRANSIT Executive Director James Weinstein.

reducing overall fatalities and accidents at railroad grade crossings.

The committee is composed of representatives from agencies such as the Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NJ Department of Education, State Police, Motor Vehicle Commission and NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety, NJ TRANSIT Police, NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT and Operation Lifesaver. It was convened in response to recent fatalities on NJ TRANSIT's rail system.

"This committee set out to take a fresh look at the state's rail network with a mandate to do everything possible to prevent fatalities on the rail system, such as the tragic grade-crossing accident

The committee was tasked with developing strategies in the areas of engineering, education and enforcement in order to ramp up safety across the state's rail network, particularly in areas where trains travel through densely populated neighborhoods. The Commissioner set a deadline for a final report from the committee in 60 days.

An immediate result of this renewed focus on safety is that locomotive engineers, train crew members and other field personnel will be actively engaged in identifying and reporting patterns of trespasser activity to enable law enforcement officials to respond appropriately.

Some of the recommended approaches identified by the committee include:

- Performing a comprehensive reinspection of the rail, light rail and bus systems to look for areas where additional safety measures can effectively be implemented.
- Developing partnerships with local stakeholders, such as the Department of Education and state legislators, to explore the possibility of mandating schools in municipalities along the railroad or near rail facilities to provide annual safety education programs to students about the dangers associated with the railroad.
- Developing a Safety Summit involving community leaders and representatives from groups such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys and Girls and scouting clubs, where NJ TRANSIT Police, rail, bus and light rail operations make a compelling presentation around the dangers of trespassing on railroad property and unsafe pedestrian practices.
- Developing media campaigns that include a safety Public Service Announcement; creating a safety message, safety tips and a YouTube video for the njtransit.com home page; exploring the use of social media tactics to influence teens and young adults; issuing safety alerts via My Transit, which sends travel information directly to customers' e-mails or web-enabled mobile devices; and creating a safety bumper sticker or billboard to place on all NJ TRANSIT nonrevenue vehicles.

The report is scheduled to be issued within the next two weeks.

DOT research showcase a crowd pleaser

Visitors from as far as Utah and Minnesota joined more than 200 attendees at the 13th Annual New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Research Showcase at Mercer County Community College recently. Hosted by the New Jersey Local Technical Assistance Program, the annual fall program featured



Lambert

speakers and representatives from NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT, the Federal Highway Administration, (FHWA), and local universities, public agencies and consultant services.

E. David Lambert, NJDOT Director of Bridge Engineering and Infrastructure Management opened the day-long event, and was followed by keynote speaker Ernie Blais, division administrator, FHWA NJ Division. Blais's keynote addressed how research products can help address everyday challenges, such as the Every Day Counts initiative, which is designed to identify and deploy innovation aimed at shortening project delivery, enhancing safety and protecting the environment.

Other speakers included:

- Chris Hedges, senior program officer of Cooperative Research Programs at the

Transportation Research Board (TRB) of the National Academies. He described the TRB organization, how its services can be a great tool for public-sector transportation professionals faced with limited resources, and how academic and consultant research professionals can become successful TRB research contractors.

- Ted Green, engineering project manager at the New Jersey Local Technical Assistance Program at the Rutgers' Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation. He addressed technological advancements made to the transportation system in both the United States and abroad, highlighting state-of-the-art practices such as pavement safety edge, hybrid composite bridge beams, and light-emitting diode (LED) necklace lighting on bridge suspension cables.

NJDOT Director of Statewide Planning **Andrew Swords** presented 2011 Outstanding Students in Transportation Awards to: Sami Demiroglu, Rutgers; Luis Gaitan, Rowan; Dan Kravetz, Rutgers; Thanh Le, Rutgers; Xiaochen Xu, City College of New York; and Naifeng Yu, New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). These students were selected on merit by university faculty who worked with them on NJDOT research projects.

Camille Crichton-Sumners, manager of NJDOT's Research Bureau, presented the 2011 NJDOT Research Implementation Award to Dr. Jay Meegoda of NJIT. Meegoda's project, "Culvert Information Management System," is a computerized information management system utilized by the NJDOT to locate, inspect,

rate and financially analyze NJDOT roadway culverts. The research team included NJIT's Dr. Tom Juliano and Dr. Chi Tang.



Meegoda

The research showcase also featured breakout sessions on current or recently completed NJDOT research projects in the areas of environment, infrastructure, ITS/multi-modal and safety.

Members of a Research Peer Exchange delegation — including representatives from highway transportation agencies in Minnesota, Utah, Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. — attended the showcase and enjoyed breakfast with NJDOT Commissioner **James Simpson**, as well as a tour of the Ewing headquarters facilities.

Submitted by Stefanie Potapa

TRANSPORTER

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NJDOT's Season of Service



Commissioner James Simpson talks to the media about bringing dozens of coats to the Tender Hearts organization in Trenton on Dec. 5, as part of Governor Christie's Season of Service initiative. The coats were donated by NJDOT employees during the holiday season. Tender Hearts inexpensively sells or gives away gently used clothing and other personal items to the needy in the area. Jim Van Hise (right), along with his wife, Mary, co-founded the nonprofit business in 1977.



Continuing in the spirit of the Season of Service, Commissioner Simpson was busy wrapping gifts for underprivileged children at HomeFront in Trenton just a week after his visit to Tender Hearts. HomeFront is a nonprofit agency that provides a comprehensive network of services for the poor and homeless in Mercer County.



Assistant Commissioner of Government and Community Relations Anthony Attanasio also delivered a supply of donated coats earlier in the day to the Trenton Rescue Mission.

Real heroes

The term "hero" is tossed around these days in a casual and sometimes careless way. However, there was never a clearer example of the true meaning of the word than what happened on Dec. 13, at an NJDOT worksite on Route 46 in White Township, Warren County.

NJDOT Crew Supervisor **Joseph Popelka** and Assistant Crew Supervisor **Patrick Walker** both played a central role in saving the life of a mother who entered a burning building in a vain attempt to save the life of her two-year-old son.

Upon noticing the fire at the house, Popelka and his crew radioed for emergency responders, and, remembering that Walker was a volunteer firefighter, Popelka urgently summoned him to the scene.

When the mother of the boy raced into the burning building in a panicked attempt to rescue her son, Walker followed her in at his own peril. Using the skills he has honed as a firefighter, Walker fought through heavy smoke, intense heat and flames. He located the disoriented and semiconscious mother and dragged her to safety.

While the young boy's life was tragically lost, the tragedy might have been compounded without Popelka's and Walker's swift and brave intervention. Their actions drew a commendation from NJDOT Commissioner **James Simpson**, and a great deal of admiration and respect from their colleagues.

Not to mention giving real meaning to the word "hero."



Smiles abound at the recent graduation ceremony of Project Management College Masters certificate students. From left: Walt McGrosky, director, Division of Capital Program Support; Joseph Cook; Yogesh Bhavsar; Tina Deng; Jeevangot Singh; Andrea Herrick; and Juan Javier.

NJDOT congratulates Project Management College Grads

Project Management College (PM College) is a familiar name for most at NJDOT. Since October of 2006, PM College has provided instructor-led courses that give the participant a hands-on interactive class where understanding of project management concepts comes naturally and easily.

The instructors are well-versed in the art of project management, having worked for Fortune 500 companies in the U.S. and abroad, most often as private consultants. But possessing knowledge and communicating the information in lay terms doesn't necessarily follow. The instructors at PM College are trained in teaching adults, which translates into a dynamic course where conceptual information is integrated

into project management as practiced here on the job. Students learn best practices and can apply them immediately, as well as share ideas with colleagues.

To earn a master's certificate from PM College, you must complete a total of six courses. The three-day Project Management Essentials course begins the program and is the prerequisite for all other courses. NJDOT's Division of Capital Program Support and PM College create the curriculum that is offered every year. All courses are held in the Foran Technical Services building at the Parkway Avenue complex in Ewing, and are offered to those in professional titles.

For more information visit www.pmcollege.com/content/learning-philosophy, or contact the Division of Capital Program Support.

Submitted by Sue Leedom

Tis the season at NJDOT



John "Santa" Zoltanski arrived at NJDOT on Dec. 16 for the department's annual Holiday Celebration, along with his helper Deb Hirt (left) and "Mrs. Claus" Shari Leichter.



"Mere Tumhare sab ke liye - Happy Holidays" was performed by (front row, from left) Swati Gandhi; Charu Jegan; Krishna Tripathi; Arpita Upadhyay; Vandna Patel; Urvi Dave; Jeevanjot Singh; Neha Galgali; and (back row, from left) Hardev Dave; Ramchandra Patel; Pavan Sheth; and Atul Shah.