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CROSSSECTION



Who Will Build Michigan's Future? *A Gubernatorial Candidate Q & A on Industry Priorities*

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Kamminga & Roodvoets Inc.'s peat excavation operation.

Photo by Brendan Doyle, Kamminga & Roodvoets, Inc.

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Welcome Aboard



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The following text is the full transcript of Mike DeFinis' President's Address delivered at MITA's 2025 Annual Conference. As the 2025 Board of Directors President, Mike shared reflections on the state of the industry, the priorities facing our members, and the opportunities ahead

Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you for being here – and thank you for what each of you does every day to support this association and our industry.

As I stand here today, I want to take a few minutes to reflect on where we've been, what we've accomplished, and more importantly, what still needs to happen.

This past year has been a strong one for MITA – and I'm proud of what we've done together.

We've had success. We've made progress. We've shown up. We've stayed engaged.

And when it mattered, we helped move the needle on Road Funding – something this industry and MITA have been working toward for a very long time.

That is certainly worth recognizing and our success should not be diminished. A significant effort went into Road Funding, and the outcome was positive.

But I also want to be very clear: we are not done. Not even close.



Past President
Mike DeFinis

Because as important as Road Funding is — and as hard as we worked for it — our industry's future will not be protected by one good year, one win, or one legislative cycle.

We have more work to do.

And the work ahead will require the same thing that got us here: Commitment, Discipline, Unity, and a willingness to Stay Involved, even when it's inconvenient.

One of the most important messages I want to leave you with today is this:

- We cannot afford to lose momentum.

The reality is that Roads and Infrastructure must be viewed together. They are connected.

So, when we advocate, we must advocate with the full picture in mind. We must push for a long-term, sustainable approach — not short-term fixes that look good in the moment but fall short in the years that follow.

And we also need to recognize where the next chapter of this work is going to be won:

- At the Local Level. Local relationships. Local education. Local engagement.

Now more than ever, we need to be present in our Counties, in our Townships, and with Local Decision-Makers.

Because those conversations — the ones that happen close to home — are often the ones that ultimately shape what happens at the State Level.

And, speaking of the State Level — we also must be honest about what's coming next.

- Legislative turnover is going to be significant.

That means we are going to spend the next cycle — and likely next several years — doing something that sounds simple but is absolutely critical:

- Re-educating Lansing.
- Rebuilding relationships.
- Teaching the basics again.
- Explaining how this industry works.
- Explaining what our workforce needs.
- Explaining what happens when Roads and Infrastructure are neglected.
- Explaining what long-term underinvestment really costs the people of Michigan.

That takes time. It takes repetition. It takes presence. And it takes resources.

Which brings me to the MITA PAC. We cannot give up on the PAC.

- If anything, we need to re-commit to it.

The PAC is not about politics. It's about access. It's about education. It's about being in the room when decisions are made — and making sure our industry is understood, respected, and represented.

The PAC allows MITA to build relationships with decision-makers from both sides of the aisle, to support leaders who support our industry, and to stay engaged in a way that is responsible, professional, and effective.

And that leads to another point: MITA must remain a neutral party.

- We are not here to serve one side.
- We are not here to chase headlines.
- We are not here to be pulled into the noise.

We are here to serve the industry.

- To advocate for what is right. For what is sustainable. For what is safe.
- For what strengthens Michigan's economy and protects the men and women who work in our industry.

That means we must stay grounded in our roots, understand our base — and stay focused on what is best for the industry.

And sometimes, if we're being honest, that will make us uncomfortable.

- Because doing the right thing isn't always the easiest thing.
- Staying neutral isn't always popular.
- Advocating for long-term solutions isn't always the quickest win.

But that's exactly why MITA matters — and why this association has the credibility and respect it has earned over time.

Because we show up. We do the work. We stay steady. And we keep pushing.

Because we have the BEST team.

- The road ahead is important.
- The work ahead is necessary.
- And the opportunity ahead is real — if we keep the momentum going.

That said, I encourage you all to:

- Stay active. Stay engaged. Keep educating. Keep advocating.

Let's keep pushing forward — together. Thank you. **CS**

IS IT EVER DONE?

The following was emailed to the membership in March, but is worth repeating.

Short Answer No!

Direction, we all need it, whether you believe it or not, me included. None of us have it all figured out. We rely on our personal perspectives and internal analytics to solve issues meaningfully. The reality is that the best solutions come from collaborative efforts. But if I'm being honest, collaborative efforts are hard and can be time-consuming. You have to listen to others even when you think you've got it all figured out. This is where expertise comes into play. We need to lean into each other's strengths. Rely, share, and react, or don't react. Sometimes a



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reaction only serves to breathe life into problems that may never surface. Listen when it's hard. Perception is the reality for many of us, but it is often the farthest thing from the truth. Stay with me, I'll make a point.

All of it matters! None of it matters!

As a member, you have a big priority for your business and the people you employ. In turn, they count on your ability to navigate our ever-changing bureaucracy and to continue providing their families with opportunities to grow in *Continued on page 10*



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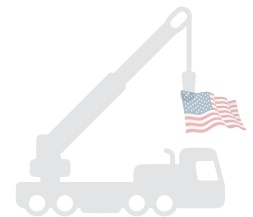
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stable jobs with good benefits (no pressure there). The truth is none of that matters without proper infrastructure funding. Which is why funding is always at the top of MITA's priority list. Your problems will disappear as fast as the funding does, and not in a good way. Let that sink in. All your training, bidding, building, and buying of equipment are for naught when the river runs dry. As an industry, we got quick glimpses of radical market changes last fall, when it was unclear whether funding would happen. So, if you think you're safe from infrastructure funding issues because you work in private markets, think again. Do not take funding for granted ever, regardless of the work you perform. Desperate companies make radical changes. We all want to survive.

Tangible

When you spend your hard-earned dollars, I'd dare say the vast majority of us would like to have something tangible in hand. Here's \$50k, here's a truck. You get it! Last year, many of you donated to the PAC. I'm sure some of you felt like you just threw money out the window of a moving vehicle. Others understood that our efforts would create more opportunities ... at some point. Which is where one of our largest problems lies: we are not a patient bunch, and, like many other industries, we are a victim of our own success. Every project seems to come with expedited schedules and narrow completion dates. The opposite is true in the legislative process. Those wheels grind slowly; it took three years of historic PAC fundraising, a rally, and attending more legislative events than you could ever imagine during that time period to obtain the nearly \$2 billion in new funding last fall, which, by the way, was only half of what we were advocating for. MITA encouraged numerous members in pivotal districts to attend the most boring events you can imagine and deeply thanked them for their time. They were working for you or for us, as the collective MITA., taking precious time away from their businesses and families. Some might say they were working for themselves and their own ambitions, and if true, you benefited anyway.

What's Next?

I'd like to say there's some new dramatic effort that needs attention to lather you up and rally your support. Simply stated, that would be BS! We, as a membership, need to get to a point where we understand that this is what we do. We educate, advocate, and execute as a membership, period. Here's what's on the radar.

- Continued work to close the gap on road funding
- Push for proper water and sewer funding
- Guardrails for spending related to Neighborhood Roads Fund (it's your work)
- Ensuring the Wholesale tax on Marijuana is upheld favorably in the court system for the industry.
- Ongoing involvement in Aggregate Distribution Issues.

- Ongoing involvement in Camera Enforcement
- Road Usage Charges Pilot involvement, RUC (Our Funding Future)
- Heavy involvement in an upcoming brutal election cycle

And any other garbage that impacts our industry! FYI, this is the short list! The aforementioned issues all require a high level of connection with Governmental and elected officials. MITA will continue to prioritize its budget toward promoting the need for good infrastructure through the FixMiState campaign and other media outlets, ensuring the public and legislators are educated about the need.

How can you help?

First and foremost, we need to understand we are all in this together. Associates serve contractors; it's a symbiotic relationship that should be supported in a give-and-take manner. Even non-members benefit from our tireless work. MITA represents businesses of all shapes and sizes, which is not an easy task. We ask our government to spend our tax dollars wisely, and sometimes those fixes require change on our part. If you're still doing business the way you did 10 years ago, you are most likely on your way out. We, as an industry, need to evolve and create opportunities for efficiency. Most of those that come from the field, are we listening? Or are we trudging along in the same old same old fashion?

Second, digest these words again. We are better and stronger together. Try to understand that you have a place in the legislative process, even if you hate politics; your business cannot escape them. Give to your association, it has your best interest at heart. MITA has raised, on average, \$500k via its PAC over the last several years. That is the new floor, and when combined with collective efforts between our industry partners and member engagement. MITA (aka You) moved a mountain last year! Every legislative effort in Michigan essentially went backwards while we moved the needle in a big way. MITA's peers are astonished by our legislative accomplishments. It may take you a bit of time to fully understand what is coming through the Neighborhoods Road Fund, the additional \$100M a year for the five-year local bridge program, and the positive impact they will have on our communities and your businesses. But it is coming.

Third, be consistent. Give early. Early money is good money. Elections are in the fall, so being impactful with candidates who support good infrastructure and responsible permitting and who desire to properly fund it is paramount. The MITA political agenda is solely driven by what's in the best interest of the industry with respect to our conservative base and vetted regularly through the Board of Directors. These vettings are not cake walks and can be contentious at times, but in the end, our 2022 developed code of ethics will keep the train on the tracks. In short, we need to be on the front end of things to enhance our chances for success.

Fourth, donor spotlights. Give credit where credit is due. A donor spotlight is that forum. We all have skin in the game, and MITA has been asking for a deeper level of commitment from you and your key people. Our success is inherently tied together; we all win when one wins. What matters is how you count that win. Balance within the various markets is important. It creates responsible bidding practices and helps all sleep at night. Proper funding creates balance. Many of you will look for reasons not to give. Challenge yourself to do the opposite.

Fifth, assess. Let this all sink in, and ask yourself honestly what's appropriate given the endless attacks on our industry. What's my honest ability to support these efforts that have no official ending? What can I be consistent with in my efforts? How long will I let others carry the water?

Sixth, expect a phone call or two and some emails from your own peers. MITA will be sharing the donation information with the PAC Board. You may be contacted more than once due to overlap, but that should only underscore the importance of our efforts.

Lastly, write the check! The MITA PAC can take direct donations from an L.L.C., and you can assign related names to that check to acknowledge the team. Otherwise, personal checks to the MITA PAC are acceptable, and many members have opted for sensible quarterly donations via our credit card system. Give what you feel is appropriate for your role in our industry! The math's

easy if every member company gave \$2K to these efforts, we'd exceed our goals in a big way. That's a dream for a later day. I understand that many will continue to sit on the fence until they feel the pain I've been speaking to or come under direct threat of ruin. I get it! I'm not particularly fond of writing my check with a growing family and my own wants and needs. But I also see what we've been able to accomplish.

In closing, I hope you've all underestimated me, my drive, and my love of our industry as your Executive Vice President. I've given you 32 years of my adult life serving it, and you, with no intentions of letting off the gas, but "I'm just a guy," to quote a dearly departed friend. We will not always win, but our efforts are worth the fight! As an association, we can move mountains together and should.

Rob

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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

CAMERAS IN WORK ZONES

ARE THEY EVER GOING TO HAPPEN?

The short answer is, we aren't sure.

In 2019, MITA and MDOT formed the Michigan Work Zone Safety Taskforce, which has developed recommendations on how to improve safety in road construction work zones. One of the earliest recommendations was to allow for automated speed cameras within work zones. The policy, at that time, was in 5-10 states and showed strong signs of successfully slowing down speeders. Now, 18 states allow for automated speed camera enforcement within work zones. In Maryland, reports show that the use of cameras has resulted in an 80% reduction in the number of speeders. In addition, fatalities dropped by half in the first three years of the program's use.

MITA was successful in getting legislation passed to allow for automated speed camera enforcement within work zones. And currently, MDOT is working on finding a way to implement that policy as quickly as possible. There have been a couple of bumps along the way with securing the necessary funding to operate the program.

Earlier this year, approval of budget items from previous year budgets that had not yet used the funds appropriated was denied by the House of Representatives, and over \$600 million in what are called work projects were rejected. The appropriation for automated camera enforcement was one of those projects that was stripped of its funding. The issue is currently tied up in courts, but the department is looking for other ways in which the program can be funded.

Speed cameras would detect a vehicle exceeding the posted speed limit and if an individual was ex If an individual was recorded violating the posted speed limit by 10 miles an hour or more in a work zone while workers were present, the following would apply: For a first violation, or a subsequent violation more than three years after the individual's most recent violation, a written warning would have to be issued on a form authorized by MSP. For a second violation within three years of a written warning issued as described above, the individual would be responsible for a civil infraction and would have to pay a civil fine of up to \$150. For a third or subsequent violation within three years of the individual's second or subsequent violation, the individual would be responsible for a civil infraction and would have to pay a fine of up to \$300. Present would mean



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located in proximity to a roadway that is not protected by a guardrail or barrier.

Preliminary talks with the Department indicate that they are attempting to do a slow roll out of the program and potentially have cameras in a couple of projects in the upcoming construction season. These are a proven method in getting drivers to slow down in construction zones and we will do our best to get this effective tool out on as many job sites as possible and as soon as possible. MITA staff will keep the membership updated on any movement. **CS**





Thank you to everyone who has supported the MITA PAC.

Your contributions are doing more than supporting candidates—they’re helping secure the future of Michigan’s infrastructure industry. Last year’s nearly \$2 billion funding win didn’t happen overnight; it was the result of sustained engagement, advocacy, and investment in the political process.

Infrastructure funding isn’t guaranteed, and neither is our industry’s stability. The PAC ensures our voice is heard where decisions are made. Your continued support helps protect jobs, create opportunity, and keep Michigan building.



As part of MITA’s Long-Term Sustainable Funding Campaign, the PAC plays a critical role in advancing policies and supporting leaders who understand the importance of reliable, long-term infrastructure investment.

If you have any questions about how PAC contributions are used, please contact MITA Executive Vice President Rob Coppersmith or Vice President of Government Affairs Lance Binoniemi.



Name	Company	Amount
Joel Smeenge	Give Em A Brake Safety, LLC	\$50
George Verscheure*	C. A. Hull Co., Inc.	\$110
Rick Thompson	Michigan Paving and Materials	\$1,000
Chad Loney	Rieth-Riley Construction Co., Inc.	\$2,500
Kirk Alward	Brenner Excavating, Inc.	\$250
Jake Arndt	Brenner Excavating, Inc.	\$200
Scott Kenney*	Anlaan Corporation	\$20
Justin Armstrong*	Give Em A Brake Safety, LLC	\$25
Ken Wolverton*	Give Em A Brake Safety, LLC	\$50
Dennis Rozanski	Dan’s Excavating, Inc.	\$500
Jeff Irvin*	Action Traffic Maintenance, Inc.	\$125
M. Todd Chartier	M.L. Chartier Excavating, Inc.	\$5,000
Megan Chartier	M.L. Chartier Excavating, Inc.	\$1,000
Kyle Wesch	M.L. Chartier Excavating, Inc.	\$1,000
Malcolm Chartier	M.L. Chartier Excavating, Inc.	\$1,000
Travis Knappins	M.L. Chartier Excavating, Inc.	\$1,000
Scott Kicinski	M.L. Chartier Excavating, Inc.	\$1,000
Heath Brinker	M.L. Chartier Excavating, Inc.	\$250
Patty Meyer*		\$25
Chris Woolley*	C. A. Hull Co., Inc.	\$50
Will Morrison*	Give Em A Brake Safety, LLC	\$50
Timothy Peake*	Action Traffic Maintenance, Inc.	\$125
Chip Toth	Soils & Structures, Inc.	\$500
Brian Mayer*	Ajax Paving Industries	\$50
Michael Kalin*	Kalin Construction Company	\$100
Gerald Kalin*	Kalin Construction Company	\$500
Jay Arndt	Brenner Excavating, Inc.	\$250
Ugo Mancini	Rauhorn Electric	\$200
Justin Peyerk	Dan’s Excavating, Inc.	\$2,500
Jennifer Slater*	Action Traffic Maintenance, Inc.	\$50
Dave TerBeek	AIS Construction Equipment	\$700
Robert Hentkowski	Dan’s Excavating, Inc.	\$500
Joe Goodall	Dan’s Excavating, Inc.	\$500
Jason Reinhardt	Ace-Saginaw Paving Co.	\$500
Scott Bazinet	Lowe Construction Company	\$10,000
Douglas Kaltz	MUE, Inc.	\$1,000
Andrew Dauksts	Give Em A Brake Safety, LLC	\$250
Dyrris Marshall	ShadowTeam VFX	\$1,000
Michael Campbell	GM & Sons, Inc.	\$250

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MDOT'S TRANSITION TO AASHTOWARE CIVIL RIGHTS AND LABOR SOFTWARE



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The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has announced that it is in the beginning stages of testing a new module of AASHTOWare Project to help administer civil rights and labor compliance. MDOT recently procured the AASHTOWare Civil Rights and Labor (CRL) software suite, which is expected to eventually replace the existing MDOT 2124A Employment Reporting System (MERS). This transition is a necessary step to align MDOT's systems with the 2024 Final Rule regarding Prompt Pay codified in 49 CFR 26.29, which requires subcontractor payment information (payor) for all levels of subcontracting (payee/payor).

Under 49 CFR 26.29, state departments of transportation and other recipients of federal highway funds are required to maintain and report accurate records on disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) participation, contractor payroll and labor compliance, and associated supportive documentation. The 2024 Final Rule emphasizes standardized reporting and robust data management to ensure civil rights compliance throughout the life of federally assisted projects.

The clear requirement that a prime pay any subcontractor for satisfactory performance of their contracts no later than 30 days from receipt of payment from the owner remains. In addition, as part of the Prompt Pay Final Rule, there is a stipulation that reliance on complaints or notifications from subcontractors about a contractor's failure to comply with prompt payment and retainage requirements is not a sufficient monitoring and oversight mechanism. Unfortunately, MDOT's current MERS process heavily relies on that process, and it does not provide an avenue for a subcontractor to verify payment.

For years, MDOT has relied on MERS as its primary system for prime contractor reporting. While MERS has served as a useful platform, MDOT has acknowledged that its capabilities are increasingly outpaced by federal expectations and the technological needs of modern compliance management. The

shift to AASHTOWare CRL is expected to address these challenges by providing an integrated platform with enhanced functionality for civil rights reporting and labor compliance tracking. MDOT is expecting to start with the implementation of the Prompt Pay reporting requirements, but anticipates additional CRL functionality to be adopted further down the road.

MITA has heard some industry concerns from those who have been involved in the initial testing to date. The contractor concerns mentioned include the additional time necessary per payment to comply with the proposed workflow requiring subcontractors to verify receipt of payment in the system, the added expense to fulfill the requirements, and the concern about what the recourse will be if a subcontractor does not verify the payment timely. In addition, some have recommended that MDOT use electronic payments to a bank account to automatically satisfy the federal requirements. The thinking being that once the electronic payments have been established and verified, every payment after would be automatic, and a paper trail can readily be produced. MDOT has stated that this proposal does not fully comply with the federal requirements.

MDOT plans to continue a testing period of CRL over the coming months. This phase includes internal system validation, user acceptance testing, and iterative refinement of configuration and workflows. After the testing phase, MDOT anticipates letting some pilot projects in the fall of 2026, with a full implementation plan to follow soon after essential feedback on the pilots. MDOT has confirmed that they will develop and deliver comprehensive training materials and support resources to assist in a smooth transition for all stakeholders.

Unfortunately, one thing this system does not do is mitigate concerns about ensuring the prime contractor is paid timely by the owner, which is an issue MITA has increasingly been hearing about, especially over the last couple of years. It may also be

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MIOSHA EMPHASIS PROGRAMS:

WHY SMART CONTRACTORS PAY ATTENTION



Greg Brooks

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517-347-8336

Let me say this right up front: when enforcement trends shift, smart contractors don't ignore it — they lean in and get ready.

Over the last several years, MIOSHA has sharpened its focus through targeted Emphasis Programs. These aren't random inspection blitzes. They're strategic enforcement initiatives aimed at reducing injuries and fatalities in high-hazard industries.

And if you're in excavation and underground utility work, you're squarely in the crosshairs.

That's not meant to alarm anyone. It's meant to prepare you.

What Is a MIOSHA Emphasis Program?

An Emphasis Program is a structured enforcement initiative targeting specific hazards, industries, or injury trends. These programs can be:

- **Statewide**
- **Regional**
- **Local or Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs)**

MIOSHA builds these programs based on injury and fatality data, complaint trends, inspection findings, national OSHA initiatives, and high-risk construction activities.

Once an emphasis program is in place, inspections increase. Compliance officers are trained to look closely at very specific hazards. And when violations are found in those targeted areas, citations are often serious.

What that means for contractors:

- You're more likely to be inspected.
- The inspection will be focused.
- Documentation will be scrutinized.
- Penalties can be significant.

Right now, one of the most significant emphasis areas affecting MITA members is **excavation and trenching**.

Excavation & Trenching: Still One of the Most Dangerous Jobs in Construction

We all know this — but it bears repeating.

A trench collapse happens in seconds. Soil weighs roughly 100–120 pounds per cubic foot. Cave-ins continue to cause

serious injuries and fatalities nationwide.

MIOSHA's excavation emphasis program centers on compliance with **Construction Safety Standard Part 9 – Excavation, Trenching, and Shoring**.

Here's what compliance officers are paying particular attention to:

Protective Systems

- Proper sloping (Table 1 requirements)
- Benching
- Trench boxes/shielding
- Hydraulic shoring

Soil Classification

- Competent person evaluation
- Visual and manual testing

Access & Egress

- Ladders within 25 feet of travel
- Ladders extending 3 feet above the landing

Spoil Placement

- Minimum 2 feet back from the trench edge

Water Accumulation

- Dewatering and protection measures

Inspections

- Daily inspections by a competent person
- Inspections after rain, vibration, or hazard-increasing events

Adjacent Structures & Utilities

- Underground installations
- Traffic or equipment vibration

Documentation

- Training records

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- Competent person qualifications
- Inspection logs

Here's the part some contractors underestimate: under an emphasis program, documentation matters just as much as what's physically in the ground.

What This Means for Excavators

If you perform underground work, you should assume this: You are more likely to be inspected.

The compliance officer will know Part 9 inside and out.

Missing or inadequate protective systems will result in serious citations.

A "serious" violation carries financial penalties. But the fine is often the smallest part of the problem.

The bigger impacts can include:

- Increased scrutiny on future projects
- Prequalification complications
- Higher insurance modification rates
- Reputational damage
- Recruiting challenges

Owners are watching. Regulators are watching. And frankly, the industry is watching too.

The Real Question: Are You Inspection-Ready Every Day?

An emphasis program doesn't change the rules.

It changes the intensity of enforcement.

The standards haven't moved. The expectations haven't changed. What's changed is the focus.

So here are the questions every excavation contractor should be asking:

- Is your competent person truly confident in soil classification?
- Are daily inspections documented — consistently?
- Do crews understand Table 1 sloping requirements?
- Are trench boxes properly rated and installed?
- Are spoils placed correctly every time — not just when it feels like someone might be watching?

Because under an emphasis program, someone often is.

Why MITA Members Have an Edge

This is where membership makes a real difference.

At MITA, our safety team doesn't just show up after something goes wrong. We work proactively with contractors to prevent problems in the first place.

Members have access to:

- On-site jobsite safety visits
- Excavation compliance reviews
- Competent person training
- MIOSHA-specific standard interpretation
- Mock inspections
- Documentation review assistance

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JEREMY JOHNSON & CREW TOEBE CONSTRUCTION LLC

Toebe Construction's Safety Department is nominating Bridge Superintendent Jeremy Johnson and his crew for a Crew Safety Spotlight, recognizing their outstanding performance on the challenging **I-696 reconstruction project** spanning the cities of Southfield, Oak Park, and Royal Oak.

The crew's dedication shone during the demolition and beam setting of the **Church Street Plaza / Z03 Tunnel**. This structure is a 700-foot-long overpass spanning I-696 that had significant water leak issues, prompting the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to replace the entire superstructure.

Project Scope Highlights:

- **Removal and Replacement:** The work involved the challenging removal of 352 prestressed box beams. The crew then began the process of setting 210 total AASHTO girders for the new superstructure.

- **Structural Work:** In addition to the beam work, the project included 9,000 cubic feet of hand chipping on the substructure, placement of 384 end diaphragms, and the laying of 28,000 cubic yards of structural soil on top of the completed structure.
- **Safety and Execution:** Jeremy and his team helped to develop complex plans for demolition and erection. Their ability to effectively plan, coordinate, and execute work with precision, maintaining clear communication and upholding the highest safety standards, ensured the critical operation was completed smoothly and without incident.

Toebe Construction is highlighting Jeremy and his crew's proactive approach, professionalism, and exemplary leadership as a testament to the company's commitment to excellence in safety, quality, and performance. **CS**



MITA's Safety Coordinator, Matt Moody, is visiting jobsites across Michigan to recognize crews and individuals who go above and beyond to protect their teammates. "Spotlight on Safety" celebrates everyday excellence that prevents incidents, strengthens the safety culture, and ensures everyone goes home with all their fingers and toes. As a small token of appreciation, Matt brings a MITA high-viz shirt for each person recognized. If you have a team member or crew you'd like to nominate for a future Spotlight on Safety award, contact Matt at mattmoody@thinkmita.org.

CHAD CLARK

Manager & Senior Technician, Soils and Structures

For 12 years, Chad Clark has been a driving force at Soils and Structures. Starting as a technician and advancing to Manager and Senior Technician, he has become the go-to resource for the team. With more than 1,000 jobs completed, Chad's expertise, leadership, and dedication make him an invaluable part of the organization. **CS**

DAN NIEMCZAK

Technician, Soils and Structures

We proudly recognize Dan Niemczak for 10 years of service at Soils and Structures. One of our longest-serving technicians, Dan is known for his deep technical knowledge and thorough understanding of every project he's worked on. With more than 800 jobs completed, his experience and commitment continue to strengthen the team. **CS**



BRANDON BUCKENBERGER

Underground Foreman, Iafrate Construction

Brandon Buckenberger consistently sets the standard for safety leadership at Iafrate Construction. As an Underground Foreman, he played a key role on a large-scale project with more than 1,000 tradespeople on site, where his commitment to safety stood out.

His detailed Pre-Task Plans were recognized by the General Contractor and used as training tools for other contractors — a testament to the example he set across the project.

Brandon is proactive, organized, and never hesitates to ask questions to ensure work is completed safely. His leadership and dedication to safety make a lasting impact on his crew and every job site he serves. **CS**



FRUIT RIDGE AVENUE IN WALKER UPGRADED

By Aram Kalousdian

A \$30 million project in Walker that included an approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile reconstruction of Fruit Ridge Avenue NW over Interstate 96 between 3 Mile Road NW and Northridge Drive NW, bridge reconstruction, interchange reconfiguration, drainage, traffic signal upgrades, signing, pavement markings, and nonmotorized path construction began in March 2025 and was expected to be open to traffic in October 2025.



The existing Fruit Ridge Avenue NW Bridge was two lanes without a sidewalk. The new bridge is five lanes with a 5-foot-wide concrete sidewalk on the east side of Fruit Ridge Avenue NW between 3 Mile Road NW and Northridge Drive NW, and a 14-foot-wide multi-use path on the west side of Fruit Ridge Avenue NW. The new ¾-mile-long multi-use trail connects the existing 6 ½-mile-long Fred Meijer Standale Trail and the existing 9-mile-long Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail.

The project also includes 22 48-inch-tall by 105-foot-long steel plate bridge girders, which are the primary support for the bridge deck and a 9-foot by 6-foot by 140-foot-long precast concrete box culvert located north of I-96 under Fruit Ridge Avenue.

“We are thrilled to be part of this project with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the city of Walker, and our dedicated subcontractors. The improvements being made will have a great impact on the residents and businesses in the city of Walker,” said Brendan Doyle, Kamminga & Roodvoets, Inc. project manager. Kamminga & Roodvoets, Inc., of Grand Rapids, was the prime contractor for the project.

“The existing bridge is being replaced with two single-span bridges, one over eastbound and one over westbound I-96. This allowed for a more optimal proposed profile design and will result in lower future maintenance costs,” said Kyle Piccard, P.E., projects & contracts engineer for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Grand Rapids Transportation Service Center.

“The city of Walker has experienced consistent residential growth and substantial commercial growth over the last 20 years, which has resulted in a significant traffic volume increase at the I-96 interchange, resulting in the need for this project.

“Collaboration and partnership between MDOT and the city of Walker has been vital throughout the entire project. While MDOT managed the design and construction, the city has been a crucial part of the process, providing support and input throughout.

Continued on page 24





Beams for the bridge over eastbound Interstate 96 were set the weekend of July 18, 2025. Preparation for the westbound bridge beam setting for the weekend of July 25, 2025, followed. Photo courtesy of the Michigan Department of Transportation.



Fruit Ridge Avenue looking north from 3 Mile Road. Eastbound Interstate 96 ramps were realigned. Work to realign the westbound I-96 ramps were close to complete. Photo courtesy of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

“The schedule for the job has been expedited from the start. The city of Walker received the state earmark funds in early 2023, and the design for this job was completed 1-½ years later. The design consultant team on board, consisting of Fishbeck, RS Engineering, Materials Testing Company (MTC), and Atkins, handled this aggressive schedule incredibly.

“The project includes realignment of the eastbound exit ramp and the westbound exit ramp. The existing eastbound exit ramp connected to 3 Mile Road at an unsignalized intersection. Queueing from the 3 Mile Road and Fruit Ridge Avenue intersection regularly spilled back beyond the ramp intersection, causing major delays for traffic on the exit ramp. The new eastbound exit ramp will connect to Fruit Ridge Avenue and will be aligned with the eastbound entrance ramp at a new signalized intersection. The existing eastbound loop entrance ramp was removed in order to allow for this alignment. The existing westbound exit ramp was aligned with a driveway to a local business. The new westbound exit ramp will be aligned with the westbound entrance ramp. The new tight diamond

configuration of the interchange will improve traffic operations and safety.”

Subcontractors on the project included Anlaan Corporation, of Grand Haven (bridge demolition and bridge reconstruction); Action Traffic Maintenance, of Grand Blanc (fencing); C & D Hughes, Inc., of Charlotte (cold milling and hot mix asphalt [HMA] surface removal), and Corby Energy Services, Inc. (cured-in-place pipe, and sanitary sewer lining).

Additional subcontractors on the project included Gabe’s, of Sheboygan, Wis. (horizontal directional drilling and pulling 16-inch ductile iron pipe); Give ‘Em A Brake Safety (permanent signs, guardrail, and traffic control), and Great Lakes Tree Service, of Grand Rapids (tree removal and clearing).

Subcontractors on the project also included J. Ranck Electric, Inc., Inc. (electrical and signals); K&H Concrete Cutting, Inc. (saw cutting); M&K Jetting &Televising, Inc., of Jackson (videotaping sewer and culvert); Martin J Concrete, Inc., of Coopersville



Beam setting for the bridge over westbound Interstate 96 occurred on the night of July 25, 2025. Photo courtesy of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

(concrete pavement) and Natural Environmental Reclamation Concepts, Inc., of Hanover (restoration and plantings).

Additional subcontractors included Opperman Grooving Inc., of Portland (recut shoulder corrugations); PK Contracting,

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GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE Q & A



Jocelyn Benson



Mike Duggan



John James



Tom Leonard



Aric Nesbitt

In Michigan and across the United States, we are approaching one of the most important and interesting elections of our time. Although it feels like we say that every election cycle these days. And it is true, every election we have more voters than the last, more money involved in politics, which means more television and radio advertisements, more fliers in your mailbox, and more candidates knocking on your door asking for your vote. It can be overwhelming to say the least. And it is very difficult to know where candidates stand on specific issues. This is an attempt to help with that.

We do have one of the most unique gubernatorial elections coming up in November. This is mainly due to a serious third-party candidate, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, running as an

independent with a serious chance of winning. In addition, there are very strong candidates running for the Republican and Democratic nominations.

MITA developed and distributed a candidate questionnaire focused on infrastructure and other key industry priorities and is publishing the responses received in the following pages. Certainly, this will not give you a complete picture of these candidates, and we encourage you to do some of your own research, but we hope this is a good start. Please use these responses to base your important decision on who to vote for this November.

Additional candidate responses will be featured in the summer issue.

I. Vision and Leadership

If elected Governor of Michigan, what would be your top three priorities during your first term, and why?

Benson

My top three priorities as governor would be to lower costs, raise wages, and ensure every Michiganders' rights and safety are protected.

Everywhere I go in Michigan it's clear that people are struggling to pay for childcare, find good paying jobs, and buy a home in the community they want to live in, as the cost of everything continues to skyrocket and government feels more like an obstacle course than a helping hand.

As Secretary of State, I know how to make sure state government shows up when you need it, saves you time, saves you money, and then gets out of the way. I've run one of our state's largest agencies, saving residents time, saving them money, making their lives easier, and then getting out of the way. And I know how to stand up to bullies who use lies and threats to rip away our voices, our rights, and our freedoms.

So my priority as governor will be driving down costs, increasing well paying jobs, and protecting our safety and our

freedoms. I'll work with anyone to get that done, and I'll take on anyone, no matter how powerful, who gets in the way.

Duggan

My first priority is education. I have a five year plan to tackle the literacy crisis and bring real accountability to our schools, but also to reinvest in and revamp our career and technical education system. My plan calls for every student to have a skill or career path within five years by:

- Eliminating CTE deserts and ensuring that every district has comprehensive CTE programming;
- Increasing CTE funding from \$40->\$200M over five years and allowing districts more flexibility in how they can fund their programs (e.g., by allowing districts to use vocational millages to contract with programs in neighboring districts);
- Revamping the merit curriculum to provide more flexibility and recognition towards CTE courses;
- An apprenticeship-ready schools initiative so more CTE programs can serve as direct pathways to registered apprenticeships. This will include new pre-apprenticeship standards that allow for high school programs to qualify

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for extra funding and certify as “Apprenticeship Ready;”

- Instituting a statewide goal of at least one credential or certificate for every student backed by reimbursements of up to \$500 towards the actual costs of each achievement earned in a high impact, high demand field;
- Extending dual enrollment to post-secondary trade schools; and
- Expanding paid work-based learning and coop programs in partnership with key industry clusters.

My next priority is economic development and growth. That must include infrastructure investments and systemic reforms to make it more efficient to build that infrastructure. The recent roads legislation was a great step forward, but only gets us half way towards solving the problem. More funding is needed for our roads, plain and simple, and I can drive the bipartisan consensus needed to get there.

My final priority is affordability. I will scale the efforts and programs I used to address affordable housing in Detroit statewide, and I’ll address the regulatory barriers that have made homebuilding cost prohibitive. Moreover, I’ll use the same focus on efficiency and effectiveness that I used to save the Detroit Medical Center as its CEO to bring down healthcare costs for Michiganders.

James

As Governor of Michigan, my top three priorities will be:

- Revolutionizing education in Michigan to expand choices for families, improve literacy, and make the system more accountable to parents and taxpayers;
- Making Michigan a high-growth state by lowering the tax and regulatory burdens for residents and businesses and cost of living, while improving infrastructure and making energy more reliable and affordable for ratepayers;
- Restoring trust in state government by adopting the highest standards for ethics and transparency, auditing all state expenditures for the past ten years, and eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse to make government more accountable to taxpayers.

We must not accept a Michigan that continues to rank among the worst states in the country for education, economic growth, and ethics. Michigan’s next Governor must confront these issues and lead with bold solutions for meaningful change. We owe it to all of our citizens - especially our youngest generation - to offer hope and opportunity, and that’s why these issues are the top three priorities of my Freedom Agenda for Michigan.

Leonard

My top three priorities as Governor are:

1. Making Michigan a Growth State: For the past two decades, Michigan has struggled to grow its population. We are 49th out of 50 for population growth this century, beating only West Virginia. Every issue I tackle will focus on one goal, growing our population so our children can stay and thrive

here. That means cutting the income tax immediately to 3.9% and beginning the process of phasing it out entirely. Half of the country’s top 10 growth states either have no income tax or one that is lower than Michigan’s. We also need to restore Right-to-Work, which, since its repeal, has seen Michigan fall from 36th to near last in unemployment.

2. Education Reform and Third-Grade Reading: Only 75% of Michigan’s fourth graders can read at a proficient level. Improving early literacy outcomes is foundational to everything else we want to accomplish. We must invest in what works, expand skilled trades education in our schools, and hold the system accountable for results.
3. Government Accountability and Transparency: Michigan taxpayers deserve to know how every dollar is spent. I will subject the executive branch to FOIA and push the Legislature to adopt a similar initiative, implement zero-based budgeting, double the budget of the Auditor General, and ban NDAs in state government. As Speaker, I championed open records reform and as Governor, I will finish the job.

Nesbitt

1. Revitalizing Michigan’s Infrastructure without Tax Hikes: We must finally fix our roads, bridges, water systems and broadband networks, by dedicating 100% of fuel tax revenues to roads and ending the diversion of these funds to other areas of the budget. My priority is to deliver a long-term, sustainable funding solution that relies on efficiency and prioritization, not on burdening hardworking families with higher taxes.
2. Unleashing Economic Growth through Deregulation: Michigan’s economy is being suffocated by red tape and a “pay-to-play” corporate welfare system. I will take a “blowtorch to bureaucracy” to reduce the cost of doing business, streamline permitting for developers and contractors, and create a predictable regulatory environment that encourages investment from all businesses, not just those hand-picked by Lansing politicians.
3. Workforce Development and Vocational Education: We cannot build Michigan’s future without a skilled workforce. I will reform our education system to prioritize vocational training and career-technical education, ensuring that our young people are career ready for the high demand skilled trades jobs that MITA members rely on to build our state.

Michigan faces an increasingly polarizing political environment. How do you plan to work effectively with both Republicans and Democrats to advance your policy agenda and deliver results for residents?

Benson

As Michigan’s Secretary of State, I serve as the state’s chief motor vehicle officer and have transformed a department that

was once the poster child for inefficiency into one of the top agencies. We've eliminated long waits at Secretary of State offices and launched mobile offices to meet residents where they are.

In order to do that, I had to work within a divided government to pass the policy reforms to make it happen. I worked across the aisle, found common ground, built coalitions, and secured policy wins for every Michigander no matter who they voted for.

That's how I do this job and that's how I'd govern: I'll work with anyone to deliver for our state and stand up to anyone who threatens Michigan communities, our economy, and our rights and freedoms.

Duggan

This question is critical and illustrates why I'm running for Governor as an independent. Republicans and Democrats in closely divided Lansing are continually obsessed with gaining the majority over the other instead of solving problems for Michigan. Electing another Democratic or Republican Governor will do nothing more than keep the same pendulum swinging back and forth, while Michigan falls farther behind in education, jobs, infrastructure, and affordable housing. As an Independent candidate, I will not take sides in any of the Senate or House elections, but will build a future governing coalition from members of good will on both sides of the aisle.

James

During my two terms in Congress representing Oakland and Macomb Counties I have achieved a proven record of working successfully with local, state, and federal officials - both Democrats and Republicans - to deliver results for the people of Michigan, including funding for infrastructure improvements at Selfridge ANG Base and the Mound Road corridor - projects with a major impact on the regional economy and hundreds of thousands of commuters in Metro Detroit.

As Governor, I will use my experience in business, the military, and in Congress to build coalitions in the legislature in support of my Freedom Agenda to achieve academic excellence, make Michigan a high-growth and more affordable state, improve public safety, expand access to and lower the cost of health care, and to enforce the highest standards of ethics, efficiency, and transparency in state government. While Democrats and Republicans may differ on specific solutions, all of these issues are crucial to improving the quality of life and transcend the typical partisan political interests.

As a Lansing outsider with a bold agenda for change, I believe that I offer the unique combination of experience in the private and public sectors to achieve these objectives and deliver for the people of Michigan. And as a business leader whose business is directly and significantly affected by our state's infrastructure every day, I will bring unique insight and experience to the Governor's office to forge solutions to our state's infrastructure challenges.

Leonard

I have a strong track record of working across the aisle and getting things done. As Speaker of the House, I worked with legislators from both parties to achieve targeted funding support for important programs even while lowering overall spending. The bipartisan tax cut we passed in January 2018, which increased the personal exemption and provided a special credit for seniors, earned broad support from both Republicans and Democrats.

I also worked with Governor Snyder, despite disagreements, to reform Michigan's underfunded teacher pension system, a reform described as the most innovative teacher pension reform in the nation. When we disagreed, I didn't walk away from the table; I used the budget process to find common ground and leverage support for important policy reforms like repealing driver responsibility fees and funding school safety programs.

My approach to governance is what I call the Dan Campbell approach. I don't talk about other candidates or focus on blame. Michigan's challenges are bigger than any one of us, and solving them requires bringing people together around practical solutions with a positive vision. As Governor, I would take that positive message anywhere in the state because real leadership means listening first and then working together on real solutions.

Nesbitt

Throughout my time in the Legislature, I have maintained a 100% voting record because I believe in showing up to do the work. While I stand firm on conservative principles, I have a track record of finding common ground on "commonsense" solutions that benefit our state. Infrastructure is not a partisan issue; a pothole doesn't care if you're a Republican or a Democrat. I will work with anyone willing to prioritize actual investment in our roads over wasteful spending. My approach is to invite leadership from both sides to the table to focus on our shared goals: safe roads, clean water and a prosperous economy.

II. Infrastructure Funding and Policy

Infrastructure Funding Challenges

What do you believe is the single biggest challenge to properly funding infrastructure in Michigan today?

Benson

Our state has world-class resources, yet we've lacked a clear vision to leverage those resources to benefit our residents. We need a long-term, comprehensive investment strategy to build out our infrastructure – whether it's drinking water, public transit, roads, or our energy grid. I'm committed to working with local leaders, businesses, and stakeholders to direct investment where Michiganders need it most, and make sure Michiganders get the most value from each and every infrastructure dollar we invest.

We know policy and investments mean nothing if they aren't implemented well. As someone who knows how to direct state dollars to making government work for people, I know we need leaders who are willing to get this done as well.

Duggan

Partisanship and the lack of a consensus-driven approach to problem-solving by Lansing is the reason Michigan can only manage to act once every 20 or 30 years to make meaningful infrastructure investment. We can't continue to wait until our deteriorating infrastructure hits crisis stage. An ongoing commitment to preservation and upkeep needs to be combined with a rational schedule for major rebuilding so that Michigan's infrastructure assets are managed with the same care any private company would protect its assets.

James

I believe that the single greatest challenge to properly funding infrastructure in Michigan is the lack of political will to ensuring a stable source of revenue for road and infrastructure projects. Neglecting roads as a priority and relying on temporary, one-time fixes have had disastrous consequences for Michigan over the long term. Lack of coherent policy on infrastructure funding has inhibited economic growth, put public safety at risk, and diminished the quality of life for Michigan residents and businesses. It's time for Michigan to elect a governor committed to the hard work of achieving a long-term solution for road and infrastructure funding using existing sources of revenue by exercising fiscal discipline on state government across the board.

Leonard

The single biggest challenge to properly funding infrastructure in Michigan is that for decades, governors and legislatures have failed to invest enough resources. Michigan has historically spent far less per person on roads than most other states, and that chronic underinvestment has compounded. Additionally, the recent road funding package shifted infrastructure funding away from a traditional user-fee model and tied a greater share to the general fund — making road funding vulnerable to competing budget priorities year after year. When road dollars have to compete with every other state spending priority, infrastructure loses. We need dedicated, sustainable funding streams so that the money drivers pay at the pump actually goes to fixing roads — not diverted elsewhere. As Speaker, I found a way to accelerate road funding by one full construction season, getting money out to fix roads a year earlier than planned. That kind of urgency and focus on results is what's been missing.

Nesbitt

The single biggest challenge is the lack of funding certainty caused by the mismanagement of infrastructure dollars, reliance on one-time General Fund surpluses and "shell games." For too long, Lansing has treated road funding as a piggy bank for other

projects or used it as a bargaining chip in budget negotiations. We have to make sure the funding isn't being siphoned off for corporate handouts and bureaucratic expansion instead of the pavement and pipes it was intended to maintain.

Comprehensive Infrastructure Goals

What does your campaign seek to accomplish regarding infrastructure funding overall, including roads, water systems, and sewer infrastructure?

Benson

Infrastructure is a major part of inclusive and integrated economic development. Michigan's world-class assets mean nothing if our residents don't have clean water to drink, reliable ways to get to work, and the digital connectivity the modern economy demands. We need a governor that will work with leaders on both sides of the aisle to invest in the infrastructure updates our communities most need.

As governor, I will address contamination in drinking water from lead, PFAS, agricultural runoff, and industrial pollution by accelerating lead service line replacement across Michigan and investing in water infrastructure upgrades for aging municipal systems.

If we want to make Michigan the best place to live, work, and raise a family — we also need to make it easier to get to work, to see your friends and family, or even to just get to a football game. That's why I will fight to build a statewide transit and high speed rail system. That includes expanded regional public transit networks in metropolitan areas, intercity rail connections between major cities and Chicago, and rural transit options so communities outside cities aren't left behind.

We also need to make Michigan more affordable. That's why I will modernize Michigan's energy grid to support clean energy deployment, and the demands of advanced manufacturing without burdening residential ratepayers — positioning Michigan as a leader in the mobility and energy transition.

Michigan has all the resources we need — from our Great Lakes to major cities to vibrant communities with booming small businesses — and it's time we connect

Michigan's amazing places together so they reinforce each other and grow our economy instead of competing.

Duggan

The first step has to be to assess all state practices to assure taxpayers are getting full value for their spending. We will intensely review the State's approach to procurement, permitting, and construction by incentivizing innovation, consolidating systems, and making it easier to build. I will unify standards and shift the focus to outcomes instead of continuing a system where builders have to interface with numerous governmental entities with varying levels of prescriptive specifications.

Once we can assure the public the dollars are being spent

as efficiently as possible, we can build the consensus to fill the rest of the road gap funding.

On underground infrastructure, Detroit led the way in investing billions in upgrading our water lines, sewers, and stormwater systems. I'll scale that approach statewide by reprioritizing existing funds and taking an aggressive approach to securing federal funds, as well as an openness to low interest revolving loan pools and other novel funding solutions.

James

Michigan cannot tax, spend, or borrow its way out of meeting its challenges on roads, water systems, and sewer infrastructure. We need to adopt a pay-as-you-go approach that avoids new debt. During the past seven years, overall state government expenditures have increased dramatically while our state's infrastructure has been neglected. As Governor, I would pursue an approach similar to that taken by Indiana's recent governors that has prioritized infrastructure improvements with no new debt or taxes. Indiana was able to achieve major infrastructure improvements over the past 15 years by privatizing management of some state transportation assets and by exercising much greater discipline across all of state government. As a result, Indiana has much better roads and more modern infrastructure, a major factor in making Indiana's economic growth much higher than that of Michigan. Through more effective leadership and more efficient management of state government resources, a new governor can deliver similar results for Michigan.

State government should also explore offering local communities - especially those in Southeastern Michigan and in the Tri-Cities region - low-interest loans to upgrade their storm sewer retention and treatment capacity to address long-term environmental impact, on the condition that those communities are spending their existing state and federal funding properly.

Leonard

My campaign seeks to accomplish several key infrastructure goals:

First, prioritize local roads. For too long, state highways and expressways have taken the lion's share of road funding while our local roads crumble. Any new or increased road funding should go directly to repairing and maintaining local roads which is where most Michiganders drive every day. As Speaker, I helped deliver record road repair funding of over \$4 billion, and as Governor I would build on that foundation with an even stronger focus on neighborhood and local roads.

Second, ensure that taxes paid at the pump actually go to roads. Drivers should have confidence that the fuel taxes they pay are being used for their intended purpose and not diverted to other budget items. I know the governor and legislature passed legislation to make this a reality. Our next governor needs to ensure it's implemented, especially if the cannabis tax is overturned at the court.

Third, address water and sewer infrastructure needs by cutting red tape and streamlining the permitting process so that critical projects are not delayed by bureaucratic hurdles. Michigan's water infrastructure challenges demand serious attention and dedicated investment.

Fourth, regulatory reform! It's in our plan. We must resolve this aggregate issue so that our state does not continue to waste money because of nimby concerns. **(I am not aware of any other candidate that has publicly put this in their plan - we have.)**

Finally, ensure full transparency in how infrastructure dollars are spent so taxpayers can see results and hold government accountable for delivering projects on time and on budget.

Nesbitt

My administration will seek to establish a model that guarantees long-term stability for our infrastructure sectors. We must move away from the "stop and go" funding approach that makes it impossible for contractors to plan and hire.

Roads: I will ensure every penny paid at the pump goes to the roads.

Water & Sewer: I will leverage federal matching funds more effectively and prioritize grants for rural communities that have been neglected, ensuring that water security is a reality for every township and city.

Broadband: We will eliminate barriers to expansion to finally connect our rural communities to the high-speed internet they need to compete.

Transportation Department Reform

What ideas or reforms would you propose to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the Michigan Department of Transportation?

Benson

As Michigan's Secretary of State I took a broken system and made it work for everyone. Gone are the days where going to the Secretary of State's office meant endless waiting and wasted time. We've eliminated the long waits at our offices and you can renew your license at a grocery store kiosk or go online. We launched mobile offices to bring services directly to communities across the state, meeting people where they are, saving people time and saving them money. We did this by putting people first.

I will take the same approach to the MDOT. Just as we did with Secretary of State Offices - we were able to save money for Michiganders with smart efficiencies and improve workplace conditions for employees. First, we need to make sure every dollar we spend on transportation is benefiting Michiganders as much as possible. Other potential opportunities at the DOT include ensuring that we make full use of the 25% of auto-related sales tax revenue that is being set aside for public transit. We

can also streamline funding and permitting for smaller repairs and routine paving.

We know that addressing problems early saves us money in the long run. Just because it isn't broken doesn't mean we can't fix it anyway — we shouldn't wait for things to reach a critical state of disrepair before fixing them.

Investing in people will guide every decision I make with the Michigan Department of Transportation. I know right now it feels a lot like government too often is showing up everywhere we don't want it and nowhere we actually need it. I've shown that state government can actually show up when you need us and then get out of the way. And I'll do the same as governor.

Duggan

I really want to study the efficiency of the historic divisions of responsibilities between MDOT and local road commissions. One thing I'd like to study is the possibility of MDOT acting as the central contractor and reorienting commissions to play more of the role of a strategic buyer (e.g., by defining scope, enforcing warranties, and managing performance). It seems possible that this type of structure could help prioritize value, durability, and lifecycle cost and put more dollars into pavement, less into overhead.

James

As Governor I will hold MDOT accountable to the same standards of fiscal discipline and efficiency to which I plan to hold all state departments and agencies. This includes a comprehensive independent audit of all state expenditures for the past ten years to eliminate ongoing waste, fraud, and abuse. Savings achieved by reduction in MDOT bureaucracy should be re-directed to critical infrastructure needs. Additionally, a review of MDOT standards should be conducted to ensure that quality issues with major road projects are not resulting in additional burdens on taxpayers. For example, the premature concrete failure of M-6 in Kent and Ottawa Counties resulted in tens of millions of dollars in additional repair costs that were borne by taxpayers. MDOT took too long to assess and explain these failures and thus should be held more accountable in the future.

Leonard

I would propose several reforms to improve MDOT's effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability:

First, implement zero-based budgeting at MDOT, requiring the department to justify every dollar spent rather than simply rolling forward previous budgets. This forces a rigorous evaluation of whether programs and expenditures are delivering results.

Second, increase transparency by publishing detailed project-level data, including costs, timelines, and outcomes so taxpayers and legislators can see exactly where money is going and whether projects are being completed on time and on budget.

Third, double the budget of the Michigan Auditor General to put more investigators on the ground holding departments

like MDOT accountable.

Fourth, ensure MDOT leadership is focused on accelerating project delivery. As Speaker, I pushed to get road funding out one construction season earlier and that same urgency needs to be embedded in the department's culture from top to bottom.

Finally, streamline regulatory and permitting processes so that construction projects can break ground faster without sacrificing safety or quality standards.

Nesbitt

My primary reform would be a total overhaul of the permitting process to cut the red tape that currently delays critical infrastructure projects. In the construction industry, time is money, and the current bureaucratic hurdles at MDOT act as a hidden tax on every project.

We need the state government to move at the speed of business, not the other way around. By streamlining these approvals and holding the department to hard deadlines, we will reduce overhead costs for contractors, eliminate the uncertainty that stalls development, and get shovels in the ground faster to fix our roads.

III. Economic Development and Fiscal Responsibility

Economic Development Initiatives

Economic development has been a major focus of state government for decades, and the funding of incentives remains a significant legislative debate. What are your ideas for attracting and retaining businesses in Michigan without reducing revenues needed to fund essential state services, such as infrastructure?

Benson

Making Michigan the best place to call home means making Michigan the best place to get a job, have a career, and one day retire. We want our businesses to be building, hiring, and growing. And we'll do that by investing in people – developing a world class workforce – and places – communities where people can live and thrive – to keep our talent there and help us grow. Because let's face it, we live in the most beautiful and most creative place in the world surrounded by more of the world's freshwater than anywhere else. Michigan can be the economic engine of the Midwest and the Great Lakes region. That's my vision for our state.

Here's how we'll help get there: by helping Michigan businesses actually grow. By cutting through red tape and modernizing our regulatory systems. By creating clear, consistent economic policies that don't shift with every administration. By investing in site readiness and infrastructure so businesses can scale quickly. By building talent pipelines directly connected to employer needs. By making Michigan a state where it will be as easy to start a business or build



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Duggan

We need to depoliticize economic development by getting out of the business of providing upfront cash incentives for economic development (i.e., the SOAR program) and instead strengthen the tools that we know work well that enjoy broad support: performance-based incentives like transformational brownfields and site-readiness programs. With those tools, I'll bring in major companies and work with them individually to meet their workforce and expansion needs. That's exactly how I brought 10 new factories to Detroit, including the first new auto assembly plant in decades along with thousands of jobs.

We also need to reform our approach to regulation and permitting to provide businesses with predictability and better customer service. This is exactly what I did by, for example, eliminating redundant municipal restaurant permits and business licenses, as well as by creating a concierge/navigator program to help small and new businesses.

Lastly, I'll focus on expanding Michigan's tech and knowledge economies by prioritizing public-private partnerships, expanding opportunities for venture funding, and creating innovation zones like I did around the Michigan Central tech hub. And I'll revamp our fumbling approach to data centers by utilizing statewide standards and local engagement processes to educate residents, secure local buy in, and allow companies to develop the future economy here in Michigan.

James

As Governor, making Michigan a much more affordable, high-growth state is my top priority. Michigan lags almost every other state in the country for population and economic growth. We need to follow the example of other states with successful, high-growth policies and adopt those here in Michigan. That will require bold leadership and change, including:

- elimination of Michigan's individual income tax to reduce the tax burden on current residents and attract new ones.
- tort reform.
- reducing the corporate income tax and regulatory burdens on employers.
- overhaul the MEDC, end the current strategy of secret deals and random giveaways to mega-projects and adopt a new strategy that reduces taxes and regulations across the board for all employers, including streamlining permitting and merging Michigan's multitude of economic development agencies.
- 100% tax credit for corporate contributions to scholarships for skilled trades education.
- focus on retention, reclamation, and recruitment of jobs - in that order.

Leonard

I believe the best economic development strategy is creating a competitive environment where businesses want to locate and grow and not by having government pick winners and losers with taxpayer-funded subsidies. My plan focuses on several key areas:

First, cut the income tax immediately to 3.9% and begin phasing it out entirely.

Second, restore Right-to-Work. Since its repeal, Michigan has plummeted in unemployment rankings. If and when federal policies succeed in bringing thousands of manufacturing jobs back to the United States, those companies will choose states like Florida, Texas, Kentucky, or Indiana over Michigan unless we are competitive. We cannot afford to lose that opportunity.

Third, ensure full economic development transparency. Michigan taxpayers deserve to know every company that receives a subsidy, the amount received, and how the money was spent. We should ban NDAs in state government and make all incentive agreements public.

Fourth, protect Michigan's farmers, who contribute over \$125 billion annually and employ over 20% of our workforce, from burdensome regulations that force them out of the industry.

Fifth, eliminate the MEDC and create the Michigan Business Action Center (MiBAC) - a central hub to help all businesses, big or small. MiBAC will provide guidance on regulations, assist with permits and licensing, connect businesses to state resources, and support growth and expansion. By focusing on service, Michigan can build a business-friendly environment that fosters growth and innovation for all business, not just a select few companies.

Sixth, as been mentioned - implement zero-based budgeting.

This approach grows the economy and the tax base without sacrificing revenues needed for essential services like infrastructure.

It should be noted, all economic development should be focused on infrastructure; not handing out direct checks to corporations.

Nesbitt

We must stop spraying incentives at the biggest balance sheets through corporate welfare gimmicks. Handing out billions in taxpayer cash to select large corporations is unsustainable and drains resources that should be funding essential services like infrastructure.

Instead, I will compete for business by enacting broad based tax relief and regulatory certainty that benefits every job creator in Michigan, from the family farm to the manufacturing plant. By eliminating these expensive corporate handouts, we can protect our revenue streams for infrastructure and public safety while creating a business climate where companies want to locate because of our workforce and infrastructure, not because of a government bribe.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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The 2026 MITA Annual Conference once again brought Michigan’s transportation industry together for two impactful days of connection, education, and celebration at Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort. With more than 1,400 registered attendees, the event reflected the strength and momentum of our association and the industry we represent.

This year’s conference featured a sold-out trade show with more than 80 exhibiting companies and the generous support of dozens of sponsors whose logos appear in the following pages. Their continued investment in MITA helps make this signature event possible and underscores the collaborative spirit that drives our industry forward.

In addition to a robust lineup of educational sessions and keynote presentations, the conference provided an opportunity to recognize outstanding leadership and achievement. MITA proudly honored members of the Future Leaders program and presented two Honorary Member awards to Jim Klett and Gerry Kalin for their lasting contributions to Michigan’s transportation community. The MDOT Small Business Champion Award was presented to Ajax Paving, recognizing its commitment to supporting small businesses and strengthening industry partnerships.

As you browse the photos and sponsor and exhibitor listings in this issue, we hope you are reminded of the energy, engagement, and shared purpose that define the MITA Annual Conference.

And as we look ahead, please mark your calendar: the 2027 MITA Annual Conference will move to Grand Rapids, taking place January 27–28, 2027. We look forward to welcoming members and partners to this exciting new location for the next chapter of MITA’s premier annual event. **CS**

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1. Representatives of the Dave Fons Memorial Fund at their booth, promoting truck safety awareness and outreach initiatives.
2. A little post-keynote magic: Jack Dykstra, Dakota Queen, and Alex Drew show off their Jon Dorenbos–signed cards.
3. Honoring a year of leadership: Mike DeFinis (center) accepts his award as MITA Board President, flanked by Pete Scodeller (left) and Rob Coppersmith.
4. Mark Stapleton of G2 Consulting presents during the session on the U of M Heli Pad Sinkhole Project, co-hosted with Lynn Harmala of Lawrence M. Clarke, Inc.
5. Rob presents awards during the Future Leaders Awards Ceremony, recognizing the industry's rising stars.
6. Blending inspiration with illusion, Jon Dorenbos performs a live card trick during his keynote presentation.
7. Chris Poe accepts the MDOT Small Business Champion Award on behalf of Ajax Paving Industries.
8. Celebrating together: Honorary Member Gerry Kalin (far right) stands with Cheryl Kalin, JW, and Hilary Kalin, and Dale Klett (far left).
9. The Stoneco team poses together in their booth on the trade show floor.
10. MITA Board President, Pete Scodeller (center) poses with his team from Scodeller Construction and Fonson Company.
11. Chip Toth, Soils & Structures; Derrick Arens, AnLaan Corporation; and Ed Conrad from RAM Construction Services pose together during the cocktail reception.
12. Speaker of the House Matt Hall addresses the conference, discussing priorities impacting Michigan's infrastructure industry
13. The Rehmann team together at the SBP reception.
14. Mitch O'Neil and James White showcase United Rentals' presence on the trade show floor.
15. Incoming Board President Pete Scodeller addresses attendees during his Presidential Breakfast speech, incorporating a deck of playing cards in a lighthearted nod to keynote speaker Jon Dorenbos.
16. Honorary Member Award recipient Jim Klett is pictured with his wife, Andy Klett, following the award ceremony.
17. Attendees fill the room during the MDOT breakout session at this year's conference.

Nearly 100 exhibitors filled this year's trade show floor showcasing innovative solutions and industry leaders.



IV. Transportation Revenue Policy

Road and Bridge Funding Models

The most recent road funding package passed this fall shifted funding away from a traditional user-fee model and tied a greater share of infrastructure funding to the state's general fund. What are your views on funding roads and bridges as a general fund budget item versus relying on a user-fee-based revenue stream?

Benson

Every day, Michiganders rely on our roads and bridges to go to school, get to work, and see friends and family. This is vital infrastructure that requires long term planning and funding. We need to continue to find new ways to fund the infrastructure improvement we need in order to make Michigan the best place to do business and build a life. As governor, I will build a coalition of elected leaders, local officials, labor and other organizations to find more and better ways to continue to fund these projects.

Duggan

The use of general fund dollars will always leave our infrastructure funding at the mercy of the annual year-to-year budget fight. It is not a reliable source of funds for long-term planning or management. While electric vehicle market share is not increasing as quickly as some had predicted, it is inevitable that hybrids and electrics will steadily gain a greater percentage of Michigan's driving. That renders the traditional gas tax as an unreliable revenue source in the long run. It's time for Lansing to get its head out of the sand and address a realistic long-term funding approach. I intend to convene a group of all the interested parties and develop a new means of road funding under which all vehicles pay their fair share for actual road usage.

James

The legislative agreement in the Fall of 2025 to secure funding for roads and infrastructure provided a short-term, one-time fix but is woefully inadequate as a long-term solution. As Governor, my approach will be to fund roads and bridges using existing revenue and opposing tax increases and additional borrowing. I support relying on a user-fee-based revenue stream instead of relying on the general fund because a dedicated revenue stream ensures stability for long-term projects. However, a user-fee-based revenue system will be successful only with effective fiscal discipline - meaning no tax/fee increases and no additional borrowing. I will also draw upon my relationships in Congress and with the Trump Administration to augment existing state road/infrastructure revenues with additional federal support, as I have done with successful appropriations for Selfridge infrastructure improvements and for the heavily-traveled Mound Road corridor in Sterling Heights and Warren.

Leonard

As you may know, I voted for the 2015/16 plan to dedicate \$1.2 billion. I understand the significance of infrastructure investments. I do believe more in a "use base" system, however, "use based" to me is everyone. Even those who do not drive on the roads still get their groceries, medical care, etc from those who travel on them. While I know it's a difficult haul because of constitutional limitations, if I had my say, I'd like to see sales tax revenue dedicated to roads. I think that is the fairest way as we all benefit from roads.

I am the only candidate that has put forth a complete, comprehensive plan.

Nesbitt

The user-fee model is the fairest and most reliable method because it directly links usage to maintenance and provides the dedicated revenue stream necessary for the long-term planning MITA members require. **CS**



BEYOND THE GAS TAX: WHAT A ROAD USAGE CHARGE COULD MEAN FOR MICHIGAN

For years, MITA has kept a close eye on a nationwide trend of moving away from gas taxes to fund road construction projects. There have been a few attempts in recent years to use federal grant money to study alternative usage charges to the fuel tax in Michigan. The subject has had mixed support and opposition from both sides of the aisle, mainly citing privacy concerns for those who oppose moving to a mileage-based user system.

In the most recent road funding passage, \$7 million was approved to host a pilot program in Michigan to study a road usage charge system for drivers. Part of the requirement was to establish a task force to advise on the pilot itself. The advisory committee consists of experts from various state departments and stakeholders, including MITA's VP of Government Affairs, Lance Binoniemi.

For decades, the gas tax has been the backbone of transportation funding across the country. The logic was simple: the more fuel you use, the more you pay into the system that builds and maintains the roads you use. It functioned as a rough "user fee," tying road funding directly to driving behavior.

But that model is starting to break down.

Across the country, states are changing their reliance on gasoline taxes and exploring alternatives like road usage charges (RUCs), also known as vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fees. The shift is not ideological so much as economical. The gas tax simply isn't generating the revenue it once did, despite infrastructure needs continuing to grow.

One major reason is fuel efficiency. Today's vehicles travel farther on every gallon of gas than cars did when most state gas tax rates were set decades ago. At the same time, electric vehicles that use no gasoline at all are becoming more common. While EV drivers still use the roads, they contribute little or nothing to traditional fuel taxes. As a result, revenue per mile driven is steadily declining.

Inflation compounds the problem. Most gas taxes are set as fixed cents-per-gallon rates. Over time, construction costs rise, but gas tax rates often remain unchanged due to political resistance to raising taxes. In real terms, the purchasing power of gas tax revenue has eroded significantly.

Road usage charges attempt to address these structural issues. Instead of taxing fuel consumption, RUC systems charge drivers based on the number of miles they drive. This would still capture a user fee-based revenue stream for road and bridge

maintenance while adapting it to a future that includes electric vehicles and increasingly efficient cars.

For many states, the question is no longer whether the gas tax model is weakening, but how quickly they need to transition to something more sustainable. Pilot programs in states like Oregon, Utah, and Virginia are testing different approaches, from flat per-mile rates to systems that account for vehicle weight or location. The goal is to design a funding mechanism that is fair, stable, and resilient to technological change.

Michigan is moving one step closer to this change with the developed task force. As a pilot program is put together, MITA will continue to update the membership. As transportation evolves, so too must the way it is funded. The move toward road usage charges reflects a broader recognition that our gas tax may not be equipped to finance the infrastructure of the future. **CS**



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HOUSEKEEPING ON THE JOBSITE:

THE CORNERSTONE OF SAFETY, EFFICIENCY, AND PROFESSIONALISM

Construction sites are an inherently dynamic and demanding environment, characterized by a constant ebb and flow of activity. A multitude of skilled trades work simultaneously, each contributing to the overall progress of the project. Given this high level of activity and the sheer volume of materials involved, it's easy to overlook a critical element of successful site management: **housekeeping**.

The consequences of neglecting this fundamental aspect can be detrimental to a project and its success. Imagine a jobsite where debris, scrap materials, trash, and discarded tools are left where they fall. This can rapidly transform the jobsite into a hazardous obstacle course. The statistics are stark and unforgiving: according to the US Department of Labor, **an alarming fifteen percent (15%) of all accidental worker deaths and over two-thirds (2/3) of all workplace injuries** are directly attributed to slips, trips, or falls. These incidents are overwhelmingly preventable and stem from poor housekeeping or a complete lack thereof. A messy jobsite is, quite literally, a deadly one. Housekeeping is a shared commitment.

A common misconception is that housekeeping is solely the responsibility of a designated clean-up crew or the general contractor. In reality, **housekeeping is everyone's job and responsibility**—every worker, every trade, and every level of supervision. It requires a cultural shift

where every individual recognizes that they are responsible for the immediate area they work in, as well as the paths they use to navigate the site. This means:

- **"Clean as you go":** Do not wait for a designated time to clean up. Scraps should be placed in designated bins immediately.
- **Proper storage:** Tools and equipment must be put away after use, not left lying in walkways or on elevated surfaces.
- **Clear pathways:** Walkways, access points, and emergency exits must be kept free of obstructions at all times.

While the primary focus of excellent housekeeping is the prevention of injuries, its benefits ripple throughout the entire project lifecycle, offering significant operational and financial advantages:

1. **Increased Efficiency and Time Savings:** When a jobsite is orderly, workers spend less time searching for tools, materials, and equipment. A tidy environment streamlines work processes, reduces bottlenecks, and ensures a smoother, more continuous workflow. The time saved by not navigating clutter or recovering misplaced items translates directly into higher productivity and adherence to project schedules.
2. **Asset Protection:** Clutter often conceals dangers to valuable assets.



Matt Moody

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Tools and equipment left on the ground can be easily damaged, run over, or lost entirely, leading to unnecessary replacement costs and downtime. Good housekeeping involves designated, secure storage areas, protecting the contractor's investment in machinery and materials.

3. **Improved Worker Morale and Productivity:** A clean, organized, and safe work environment significantly encourages workers. It fosters a sense of pride in the workplace, reduces stress, and promotes a more professional attitude. Workers are inherently more productive and focused when they do not have to worry about tripping over debris or navigating chaos. A clean jobsite is a sign that the company genuinely values the well-being of its employees.

An often-overlooked yet crucial aspect of housekeeping is the **professional image it portrays for the contractor**. The jobsite is a direct reflection of a company's commitment to quality, safety, and organization.

- **First Impressions Matter:** When a subcontractor, client, competitor, or municipal inspector visits a jobsite, a mess of tools, trash, and debris strewn about immediately creates a lasting negative impression. This

Continued on page 70

CONSTRUCTION'S FATAL FOUR

PROTECT YOURSELF ON THE JOB

Did you know? The Fatal Four—falls, struck-by incidents, electrocutions, and caught-in/between hazards—are responsible for over half of construction-related deaths each year. MITA is here to help you stay safe with essential training.

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THE 2026 SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL PLAYBOOK

KEY PLAYERS, TIMELINES, AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

More than four years and 110,000 projects have advanced since the 2021 infrastructure law's enactment. Now, Congress has an opportunity to build on this achievement with a new surface transportation reauthorization bill due Sept. 30.

Despite a narrative that Congress is broken, transportation spending and policy continues to be an area where bipartisan cooperation exists. The 2025 transportation spending bill saw increases while most other programs remained flat. The recently enacted 2026 transportation appropriations bill will also boost surface transportation resources.

As congressional action turns to reauthorization of highway and public transportation programs, the following highlights the state of play, leaders to watch, and addresses key questions.

Here's what we know:

- While the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) devoted federal funding to an array of programs from highways and bridges to broadband and clean water projects, Congress will be taking a narrower approach in 2026. Lawmakers are seeking to enact legislation that reauthorizations only highway, transit and likely some rail programs.
- Both House and Senate leaders have announced intent to release draft legislation in the spring after robust collection of stakeholder input.
- Enacting new legislation will require bipartisanship with 60 votes required in the Senate. Leaders in each chamber are committed to working in a bipartisan way to deliver legislation with broad-based support.

With about seven months before the current law expires, there is ample time to enact new legislation, and Congress is making progress. Expect ups and downs and plan to speak up about how the law has positively enhanced your business and community.

House Outlook

Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (T&I) Chairman Sam Graves (R-Mo.) has been committed to advancing a five-year reauthorization of highway and public transit programs by the

end of this Congress and has been working in a collaborative way with his Democratic counterpart on the committee Rick Larsen (D-Wash.).

While initially aiming for new legislation by the end of 2025, the six-week government shutdown pushed timelines back to the spring. Committee staff have been working to assess the thousands of policy requests from lawmakers and stakeholders, including ARTBA's "Moving America Forward" reauthorization report.

Senate Outlook

The Senate is operating under a similar schedule to the House with the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee expecting to release legislation this spring. Unlike the House, bipartisanship is a requirement in the Senate with 60 votes needed for legislation to advance.

The top Democrat on the EPW committee, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) recently signaled he is pulling back from negotiating with his Republican counterpart, due to concerns that good-faith negotiations and compromises struck to pass new legislation may be ignored by the Trump administration.

The Senate outlook is further complicated because more committees are involved in crafting the legislation. While the EPW is responsible for drafting the highway portion of a bill, the Banking Committee, Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee, and the Finance Committee must also draft titles for inclusion that handle transit, safety, rail, and revenue.

Lauren Schapker is ARTBA vice president of legislative affairs.

Timeline

Spring: Anticipated release of surface transportation legislation, as announced by respective House and Senate authorizing committee Chairs Graves and Capito.

May Fly-In: ARTBA's May 11-13 Federal Issues Program serves as opportunity to build momentum for passage of new legislation.

Sept. 30: Expiration of current surface transportation law.

Nov. 3: Midterm elections to determine make-up of next Congress.

Mid-November: "Lame duck" session begins, which offers Congress one more chance to complete legislative activity before conclusion of the 119th Congress.

Who to Watch:

These key players will help shape the outcome of the reauthorization bill. Here's what they've said about transportation and construction during the 119th Congress:

President Donald J. Trump: In response to being president: "I have two jobs...I [also] have a construction job, which is really like relaxation for me because I have been doing it all my life."

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy: "It is one of the unique spaces in government where we work together because safety... is not a red or blue issue. It's an American issue."

House T&I Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-Mo.): "We need to get back to building, and that starts with legislation focused specifically on improving our roads, bridges, and other surface transportation infrastructure."

Senate EPW Committee Chairman Shelley Moore Capito (R-W. Va.): "It will take collaboration from my Senate colleagues, the Trump administration, and our stakeholders to complete the bill before the IIJA expires in September of 2026."

Senate EPW Committee Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.): "Our directive is clear: work together to build on the early successes of the IIJA and further improve our transportation infrastructure."

House T&I Committee Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-Wash.): "The T&I Committee must keep the investments of last Congress going to create good-paying jobs and deliver safer, cleaner, greener and more accessible transportation to communities across America."

Outstanding Questions

Enacting a bill on time is ARTBA's top policy priority for 2026. With several months until expiration, the path legislation will take is not yet known. Here are some of the biggest questions we expect to be answered in the months ahead:

Will the bill continue on the current investment trajectory? The previous four years have demonstrated the effect increased funding for roads, bridges, safety and public transit can have on communities with safety, mobility and economic improvements happening coast-to-coast. However, the work is not done, and significant system needs remain. Congress must continue prioritizing federal investment in surface transportation to keep America moving.

Will Congress address the Highway Trust Fund (HTF)? The bill offers an opportunity for Congress to dedicate new revenue to

Continued on page 46

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the HTF for the first time in nearly two decades. Enactment of a federal electric and hybrid vehicle fee would be an important first step, and other proposals, like a national vehicle registration fee, are also gaining support on Capitol Hill. With roughly \$250 billion needed to supplement the HTF in order to sustain current funding levels, General Fund transfers will also likely be needed.

Where does President Donald Trump stand on a new bill? President Trump's first term saw a dedicated focus on infrastructure, though a bill did not materialize. In his second term, he has not spoken publicly about prioritizing a surface transportation bill, but he has emphasized his background as a builder.

What You Can Do

Advocacy inside and outside Washington, D.C., will be critical to enacting a major bill on time. ARTBA is advocating for increased investment and a slate of policy proposals, as developed by the association's Reauthorization Task Force and approved by the Board of Directors in May 2025.

Host a site visit: Seeing is believing, and with more than 110,000 projects receiving support from the 2021 infrastructure law, a project tour can be a memorable way to build support in Congress for the next bill.

Communicate community improvements: As leaders, you know first-hand how these investments have helped support your business and others. You are a trusted voice for elected officials, so when they are out in your community, share your story.

Attend the 2026 Federal Issues Program and Fly-In: Transportation construction industry stakeholders will arrive in Washington May 11-13 to hear directly from policymakers and head to Capitol Hill to make the case for a robust reauthorization bill. Don't miss the action. Register: artbafederalissues.org.

Participate in grassroots activities: As legislation progresses, ARTBA will send alerts to its grassroots network asking them to weigh in at key moments. Make sure you are signed up to receive alerts at ARTBA's Grassroots Action Center.

Support candidates who support investment: This November, there are elections for all House members and one-third of the Senate. Pay attention to how your congressional delegation acts on infrastructure and make sure those who support transportation investment are re-elected. **CS**



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MINTON NAMED STATE DIVISION ADMINISTRATOR FOR OFFICE OF MAJOR PROJECTS

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has announced that Steve Minton has accepted the State Division Administrator (SDA) 17 position for the Office of Major Projects (OMP), effective Dec. 21, 2025. He will fill the role following the departure of Ryan Mitchell, who leaves state service Jan. 2, 2025.

Minton brings more than 27 years of experience with MDOT, having served in a variety of leadership roles, including Metro Region Associate Engineer of Development, Projects and Contract Administration Engineer at the Oakland Transportation Service Center, and Contracts Project Manager at the Macomb TSC. He currently serves as Project Manager in MDOT’s Innovative Contracting Unit, where he oversees complex initiatives such as the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program and advances the design and delivery of non-traditional trunkline projects through strong cross-functional collaboration.

A graduate of Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, Minton combines deep expertise in project management, policy development, innovative contracting, and stakeholder engagement. Outside of work, he enjoys traveling, spending time with family, and what he describes as a “mild” obsession with golf. **CS**



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PAYNE + DOLAN EARNS NATIONAL ASPHALT PAVEMENT ASSOCIATION'S HIGHEST HONOR



Payne + Dolan | A Walbec Group Company has been awarded the 2025 Sheldon G. Hayes Award, the highest honor presented by the National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA), recognizing excellence in asphalt pavement construction.

The prestigious national award was presented for Payne + Dolan's outstanding work on **US-2 from east of Great Lakes Road to Gogebic Station in Gogebic County, a Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) project**. The Sheldon G. Hayes Award is given annually to projects that demonstrate superior pavement quality, construction practices, and long-term performance.

This project was selected at the national level for its exceptional workmanship, attention to detail, and commitment to quality throughout construction. Located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the US-2 corridor serves as a critical transportation route, and the improvements enhance safety, durability, and ride quality for both commercial and passenger traffic.

The Sheldon G. Hayes Award represents the pinnacle of achievement in the asphalt pavement industry. Payne + Dolan's recognition highlights the company's continued leadership, technical excellence, and dedication to delivering high-quality transportation infrastructure in partnership with MDOT. **CS**

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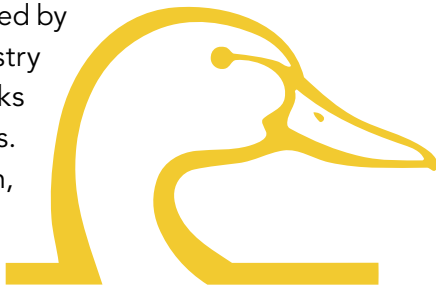
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CRH MICHIGAN REGION PRESIDENT NAMED CONSERVATION PARTNER OF THE YEAR BY DUCKS UNLIMITED

Rick Becker, President of CRH’s Michigan region — which includes Michigan Paving and Materials, Stoneco, and Cadillac Asphalt — was named Conservation Partner of the Year by Ducks Unlimited, an organization dedicated to conserving, restoring, and managing wetlands and habitats for North America’s waterfowl. Becker received the award on Jan. 28 in Lansing, Michigan, during the Ducks Unlimited Legislative Luncheon, an event sponsored by the Michigan region companies.

The event was attended by several legislators, industry partners, and Ducks Unlimited staff members. Guests enjoyed lunch, refreshments, and a selection of Ducks Unlimited merchandise to take



home. Austin Fisher of Stoneco attended the event to accept the award on behalf of Becker.

The award presented to Becker honors his leadership, collaboration, and on-the-ground impact that has significantly advanced wetland conservation. Thanks to Becker’s long-time support, the organization has been able to make a profound impact on conservation efforts across Michigan.

“I’m honored to support the work Ducks Unlimited is doing across our state,” Becker said. “The organization plays a vital role in preserving Michigan’s wetlands, and we’re proud to stand with them in advancing conservation efforts that benefit both wildlife and future generations.”

The luncheon also highlighted public and private conservation initiatives throughout the state, as well as the legislators who support the policies and funding necessary to keep wetlands healthy. Ducks Unlimited discussed ongoing partnerships and funding accomplishments made possible through the support of the Michigan Legislature. Staff and legislators were recognized for their continued commitment to Ducks Unlimited’s mission. **CS**



Rick Becker proudly poses with his award for Conservation Partner of the Year.



Stoneco employee, Austin Fisher, center, poses with Ducks Unlimited representatives accepting the award on behalf of Rick Becker at the event.

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MEMBER NEWS

G2 CONSULTING GROUP ACQUIRES CONSTRUCTION TESTING SERVICES, EXPANDS REACH INTO THE BAY AREA AND THUMB REGION

G2 Consulting Group, a Troy-based leader in geotechnical, environmental and construction engineering services, announced it has acquired Construction Testing Services, a respected engineering services provider with more than 40 years of experience serving clients across Michigan's Bay Area and Thumb region.

G2 is a fast-growing engineering firm employing 140 people across its offices in Troy, Ann Arbor and Chicagoland. The addition of CTS' team of nine strengthens G2's presence in Michigan. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

"For decades, CTS has built its success on deep client relationships and a commitment to excellence," said Tim Byrnes, co-owner of CTS. "When we began considering succession planning, we wanted a partner who truly understood our services and who would build on our foundation—not change it. G2 turned out to be the perfect answer. This is a true win-win for our employees and clients alike."

Founded more than 40 years ago, CTS has earned the trust of its clients by delivering innovative, quality engineering services. By joining G2, CTS employees will benefit from expanded career paths and support, while clients will gain access to enhanced service capabilities and broader resources.

"At G2, we've respected CTS for years through industry collaborations and shared projects," said Jason Stoops, Managing Principal at G2 Consulting Group. "From our first conversations, it was clear that this partnership would be a great match. We're thrilled to welcome the CTS team to the G2 family and are committed to making them feel supported and valued."

Both G2 and CTS have a proven track record in geotechnical engineering and materials testing. G2 also provides comprehensive environmental engineering and construction services.

The acquisition further expands G2's geographic reach. Recognized by outlets such as Crain's Detroit Business "Largest Engineering Firms" and the Zweig "Hot Firms" list, G2 continues



to broaden its footprint and deliver its hallmark "Smart. Results. Fast." to a growing client base.

Integration and transition planning is underway with both firms committed to ensuring a smooth process for employees and clients alike. G2 has a strong employee-focused culture and plans to maintain the CTS office and staff, while providing expanded back-office support services and additional engineering capabilities. **CS**





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ERIC MORRIS NAMED PRESIDENT OF HNTB'S GREAT LAKES DIVISION

Eric Morris, PE, has been named president of HNTB's Great Lakes Division. In this role, Morris will provide strategic leadership for complex infrastructure programs and business operations while leading more than 1,100 multi-disciplinary HNTB professionals across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan.

"Eric is a proven leader who understands our clients' most complex mobility and infrastructure challenges and knows how to bring solutions to every program," said Michelle Dippel, HNTB Western Region president and executive vice president. "His expertise in the Great Lakes region, commitment to

collaboration and passion for mentoring make him exceptionally well suited to lead the division's professionals in delivering successful outcomes for our clients and communities."

Since joining HNTB in 2002, Morris has excelled in a variety of leadership roles. Most recently, he served as operations officer for the Great Lakes Division, where he provided oversight and strategic leadership in project delivery and business operations across the division.

Previously, Morris served nearly eight years as Michigan office leader, during which time he significantly expanded the firm's market presence and broadened services statewide. His leadership



contributed to the opening of three new office locations and strengthened HNTB's role in delivering critical transportation and infrastructure solutions throughout Michigan.

"I'm honored to lead HNTB's Great Lakes Division and to work alongside such an exceptional group of professionals,"

Continued on page 70

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DAVE FONS MEMORIAL FUND WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER MATT PAYNE

The Dave Fons Memorial Fund for the Advocacy of Truck Safety is proud to announce the addition of Matt Payne to its Board of Directors, further strengthening the organization's commitment to advancing safety across the trucking industry.

Payne serves as Safety Director for Ajax Paving Industries of Michigan and brings more than 15 years of experience in occupational safety and health. A Certified Safety Professional (CSP), he holds a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Safety and Health from Oakland University. Throughout his career, Payne has demonstrated a strong dedication to improving workplace safety through practical solutions, education, and forward-thinking strategies.

His expertise spans both field operations and organizational safety leadership, providing a well-rounded perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing the industry today. Known for his passion for continuous improvement, Payne is committed to driving meaningful change in truck safety through innovation and collaboration.

"We are thrilled to welcome Matt to the board," the organization shared. "He brings not only a wealth of knowledge and experience, but also fresh ideas that will help expand our impact and reach within the trucking community."

As the Dave Fons Memorial Fund continues its mission to promote safer roads and protect those who work in and around the trucking industry, Payne's leadership is expected to play a key role in shaping future initiatives and educational efforts. **CS**





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WHERE'S MITA BEEN LATELY



MITA's VP of Engineering, Rachelle VanDeventer poses with Joe Goodall, Dan's Excavating, Inc. at the ACEC Partnering Workshop.



One last ACEC Conference together — Rachelle VanDeventer with recently retired Laura Mester (MDOT) and Glenn Bukoski (MITA).



MITA's Safety Director, Greg Brooks, recently took the stage at the Great Lakes Damage Prevention Conference & Expo, where he shared his expertise during a session titled "Damage Prevention and Damage Investigations for Excavators."



It's training season, and MITA's Safety Director, Greg Brooks, has been making the rounds.

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Founded in October 1936 in Dearborn, Michigan, by Remi L. Coolsaet and his wife, Amanda, the company's roots trace back to Remi's journey as a Belgian immigrant and migrant laborer who found opportunity within Detroit's Belgian community. Following the completion of the Michigan–Wisconsin Pipeline and the resulting expansion of natural gas infrastructure, R.L. Coolsaet Construction began installing natural gas pipelines for Michigan Consolidated Gas Company—establishing a legacy grounded in hands-on leadership and field-driven excellence.

Since its founding, the company has successfully delivered projects ranging from small service installations to residential work and large-diameter pipelines up to 42 inches. Today, R.L. Coolsaet Construction is known for tackling complex infrastructure challenges, including inter-city pipeline projects, extensive station fabrication, and work involving significant design hurdles—projects that highlight the expertise and dedication of its workforce.

As the company looks to the future, R.L. Coolsaet Construction remains focused on safety, quality, innovation, and investing in its people—honoring its past while continuing to deliver excellence across the energy and infrastructure sectors. CS



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MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

KAMMINGA & ROODVOETS CELEBRATES 75 YEARS IN BUSINESS

For 75 years, Kamminga & Roodvoets, Inc. (K&R) has been shaping the infrastructure that keeps Michigan — and beyond — moving forward.

Founded in 1951 by Elwin "Al K" Kamminga and Roger "Rog" Roodvoets, the company began with a simple mission: dig basements to meet the demands of the post-World War II housing boom. When the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 transformed the nation's transportation landscape, K&R seized the opportunity and expanded into MDOT construction, laying the groundwork for decades of growth.

Innovation quickly became a hallmark of the company. In the 1970s, K&R developed and patented some of the first grade lasers used in the excavating industry — a bold step that demonstrated the founders' forward-thinking mindset. That spirit of innovation carried the company through significant challenges, including the passing of both founders in the 1970s. Through conservative leadership and a commitment to long-term stability, K&R not only endured but continued to grow.

The 1981 expansion into Tampa, Florida, marked another pivotal moment, positioning the company in a year-round construction market with soils similar to those in West Michigan. From there, K&R built a reputation for delivering complex, high-profile projects — from I-69 in 1967 to the Kent County Airport expansion in 1995, and, more recently, the US-131 and 100th Street Bridge project in 2020.

Over the decades, K&R has constructed countless miles of highways, city streets, airport runways, and underground utilities across Michigan and Florida. Yet through every milestone, they have remained grounded in the values set by its founders: put the company first, promote innovation, and keep an eye on the future.

Seventy-five years later, K&R stands as a testament to resilience, vision, and the dedication of generations of employees who continue building the roads — and the legacy — that will carry the company forward. **CS**



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Reith-Riley's Grand Rapids team spent the day volunteering with Hand2Hand, packing weekend food bags for students facing food insecurity.

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SAFE ACTIONS SAVE LIVES: MICHIGAN'S WORK ZONE AWARENESS WEEK



Each spring, as construction season ramps up, Michigan's infrastructure industry pauses to recognize Work Zone Awareness Week. The 2026 national theme, "**Safe Actions Save Lives**," is a powerful reminder that the decisions made by drivers and workers alike determine whether everyone makes it home safely. Across Michigan, MITA members build and maintain the roads, bridges, and underground infrastructure that keep our state moving. This work often happens just feet from live traffic. Crews face speeding vehicles, distracted drivers, ignored lane closures, and unexpected intrusions into restricted work areas. Even with proper signage and traffic control, one careless decision can have devastating consequences.



Nationally, hundreds of lives are lost each year in work zone crashes. Many victims are motorists—but too many are road workers. Behind every statistic is a family, a crew, and a community.

Michigan's 2026 Awareness Event

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will host the state's primary Work Zone Awareness Week event on April 20 at Dow Diamond in Midland. Vendor exhibits showcasing traffic safety innovations open at 9:00 a.m., followed by an 11:00 a.m. media event and tribute honoring those impacted by work zone crashes. Representatives from MDOT, Michigan State Police, MIOSHA, ATSSA, MITA, and Dow will participate.

Shared Responsibility

Safe actions apply to everyone.

For drivers:

Slow down. Eliminate distractions. Follow traffic control devices. Expect changing conditions.

For contractors:

Implement proper traffic control plans. Conduct daily safety briefings. Maintain clear crew communication. Wear high-visibility PPE. Stay alert.

At MITA, work zone safety is a year-round priority. Through training, jobsite inspections, and safety resources, we support members in strengthening their safety programs. But public awareness remains critical.

When you see orange barrels and flashing lights, remember: you're driving through someone's workplace. A few seconds saved is never worth a life.

Because in work zones—Safe Actions Save Lives. **CS**

April 20 ♦ **Work Zone Safety Training Day
& Michigan's Kickoff Event
at Dow Diamond**

April 21 ♦ **National Kickoff Event**

April 22 ♦ **Go Orange Day**
(Wear orange to show support)

April 23 ♦ **Social Media Storm**

April 24 ♦ **Moment of Silence**



2026 Events Calendar

June 10

**Western Golf Outing
Boulder Creek GC, Grand Rapids**

July 15

**Metro Golf Outing
Twin Lakes GC, Oakland**

July 29-Aug 2

**Summer Conference
Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island**

August 26

**Central Golf Outing,
Hawk Hollow GC, E. Lansing**

September 10

**Northern Golf Outing
Otsego Club, Gaylord**

September 23

**Wild Game Dinner
Palazzo Grande, Shelby Twp.**

December 11

**Central Holiday Party
Joe's on Jolly, Okemos**

December 15

**Western Holiday Party
The BOB, Grand Rapids**

December 17

**Metro Holiday Party
Location TBD**

**For the most up to date event details and
registration information visit thinkmita.org**



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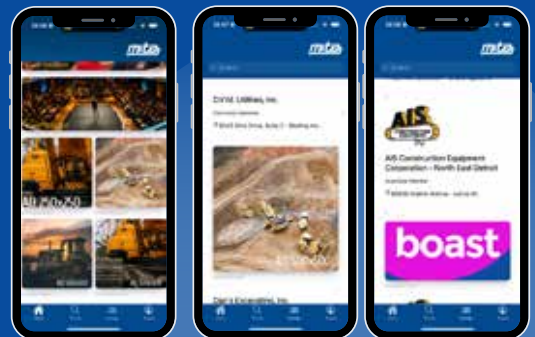
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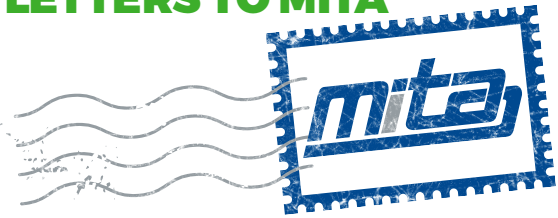
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Matt,

Your efforts yesterday are very much appreciated. One of our employees, who learned the Heimlich maneuver yesterday with you, performed it on his three-year-old daughter last night. She was choking on a jawbreaker. He and his wife sincerely thank you.

Sharon M Sharples, Superior Excavating, Inc.

Continued from page 18

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We understand Michigan contractors. We understand MIOSHA enforcement trends. And we understand what it takes to be ready when a compliance officer pulls onto the jobsite.

Preparation shows immediately — in the slope, in the box installation, in spoil placement, and in your paperwork.

When you're prepared, confidence replaces panic.

Prevention Is Always Cheaper Than Penalties

The purpose of an emphasis program isn't to generate revenue. It's injury prevention.

Trench collapses are preventable. The standards are clear. The protective systems work.

The real decision contractors face is simple:

Will you act before an inspection — or react after one?

Excavation safety isn't just about avoiding citations. It's about making sure every worker goes home at the end of the day.

At MITA, we remain committed to strengthening safety culture across Michigan's infrastructure industry. Through training, leadership development, jobsite support, and real-world guidance, we help contractors stay compliant, competitive, and — most importantly — safe.

When MIOSHA increases emphasis, preparation isn't optional.

It's essential. **CS**

Continued from page 14

worth acknowledging that known Prompt Pay issues under the current system have been very infrequent and have typically been cooperatively resolved.

The transition from MERS to AASHTOWare Civil Rights and Labor represents a significant change in contractor reporting requirements. The implementation of CRL is MDOT's solution for ensuring the department is in compliance with the requirements of 49 CFR 26.29. Hopefully, with thorough testing, targeted pilot projects, and a thoughtful implementation timeline, MDOT is positioning both the agency and industry for a smooth transition to achieve necessary compliance in reporting and contract administration. **CS**

Continued from page 55

said Morris. "This region plays a vital role in the nation's transportation and economic networks, and I look forward to building on our strong relationships with clients, investing in our people and continuing to deliver infrastructure solutions that make a meaningful difference in the communities we serve." **CS**

Continued from page 42

suggests a lack of attention to detail and, by extension, a potential lack of quality in the work being performed.

- **Regulatory Scrutiny:** Safety regulators, such as those from OSHA, view poor housekeeping as a leading indicator of a lax safety culture. A messy site invites closer scrutiny and increases the likelihood of citations and costly fines, as it signals numerous potential violations related to trip hazards, fire hazards, and improper material storage.

To wrap up, establishing a good, clean, and tidy jobsite is not merely a preference; it is a foundational pillar of successful construction management. When this standard is met, a company is **halfway to providing a truly safer, more efficient, and more professional working environment**. It demonstrates a commitment to employee welfare, operational excellence, and uncompromising quality **CS**

Continued from page 24

Inc., of Troy (pavement markings); Pavement Maintenance Systems, LLC (filling shoulder corrugations); Rieth-Riley (HMA paving), and HNTB (inspection). **CS**

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