

# PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES

PAVING THE WAY FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE BY EDUCATING, ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING OUR EMPLOYEES.

2012 August / September  
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## VoIP

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is slowly reinventing the world's phone systems. Current City of Lincoln phones rely on circuitry similar to circuitry invented in the late 1800s.

VoIP phones are unique devices placed on the same network as computers and do not require a specialized network of wires. Each conversation is treated as data, similar to a Word or an Excel file.

An advantage of the unique identifier (IP address) of the VoIP device allows you to take your phone with you almost anywhere on the computer network. Another advantage is the ability to integrate video conferencing to multiple locations. One of the most exciting changes coming will be the ability to integrate voice mail with e-mail. This feature will put an end to listening to several voice mails before getting to the one or two needing immediate attention.

Information Services will start installing the VoIP system later this summer.

## Public Works and Utilities Runs Defense

Fall means football in Lincoln – cars and pedestrians everywhere as the red-clad masses converge on Memorial Stadium. As the 85,000 fans arrive and leave happily after each win, most don't take into account the amount of effort it takes to get them smoothly to and from the game.

Just like the Huskers, the team from the Traffic Operations Section of Engineering Services puts in countless hours to prepare for game days. Time is devoted in the off-season to fine-tuning traffic control plans and improving traffic operations. A "playbook" is developed showing what signs, barricades, fencing, signal changes and personnel are needed for each game.

**"There aren't many cities around that run a sophisticated football traffic plan like Lincoln does,"** says Larry Jochum, long-time quarterback of the Traffic Operations team effort.

Meetings with Lincoln Police Department, Urban Development (Parking), Nebraska Department of Roads, University Athletics, University Police Department and the Nebraska State Patrol are held throughout the season and in the early summer. They discuss what worked and what didn't, just like the Huskers dissect game film to look for improvements.

The game plan for Traffic Operations' staff kicks off on Fridays when signs are erected, meters hooded and traffic control devices set out. Preparations continue early on Saturday mornings and last until several hours after the game when all traffic control devices are returned to the shop.

Controlling traffic signals is one of the biggest efforts. On game day, 160 signals along 10 corridors run on different patterns than normal Saturdays. Five different signal control plans are used, in addition to strategically placed Police Officers, to help move pedestrians safely and to get traffic into and out of the downtown area before and after the game.

Dynamic message signs are used to provide additional information to motorists. They notify drivers of parking availability, [StarTran Big Red Express](#) shuttle lot locations, and unexpected traffic conditions. These signs can be changed from the office by field personnel or automatically programmed in advance.



GO BIG RED!  
GO BIG RED!

# STRONG LINCS

**"THERE IS NO 'DIVISION' AMONG OUR DIVISIONS."**

Miki Esposito

PWU Director Miki Esposito is pleased to announce the June/July Strong Linc Award recipients for the workplace principle of **safety**. Please congratulate these Strong Lincs for their valued service.

## Bus Operators (*StarTran*)

David Albright, Duane Peterson, Gene Anderson, Alex Pikelis, Steve Bennett, Buddy Ray, Colin Clark, Jose Regueira, Tom Danahy, John Rivera, Kathy Day, Gary Schneider, Joyce Evans, Larry Scranton, Mike Foreman, Dan Sis, Randy Hass, Mark Sovereign, Tom Hoppes, Robert Spencer, Laurie Hoyt, Jason Stege, Rick Ihde, Jerry Urwiller, Jeff Janda, Marvin Ward, Pam Jensen, Joni Watson, Chuck Kaiser, Janis Wick, Steve Kasper, Lori Wyatt, James Kendrick, Mike Kennedy, Toni Kent, Carmen Larson, Troy Lehl, Wayne Leshner, Tom McCain, Greg Michaelson, John Miller, Bobby Mills, Bob Norval, Scott Nunn, John O'Brien, Karen Overturf and William Pate.

During 2011, these 47 bus operators recorded no on-duty preventable accidents. That's about 64 percent of all the bus operators. They were presented safety award pins at the May 31 StarTran safety meeting.

Overall, StarTran's safety performance has been excellent over the past three fiscal years:

- StarTran drivers averaged only 30 preventable accidents per year. Only 20 preventable accidents were recorded in 2011-2012.
- StarTran drivers drove 1,795,773 miles per year, with 59,859 miles between accidents.

## Treatment Plants (*Wastewater*)

The Lincoln Wastewater Division has reached a safety milestone by going 100 days without a recordable accident (an accident requiring more than first-aid treatment). Considering the hazards of some jobs and the round-the-clock operation of both treatment plants, this is a commendable accomplishment. It is the first time the system has ever seen 100 consecutive accident-free days. This award is inclusive of all Wastewater employees.

## Steve Schmalcken and Jon Wollam (*Wastewater*)

On July 12, while driving back from the Northeast plant, Steve and Jon spotted a fire in a median caused by a truck dragging something in the road creating sparks. They put out the small grass fires before they became uncontrollable.

## Gerardo Martinez (*Water/Wastewater*)

Over the past six years, Gerardo has positively influenced workers in the Water and Wastewater Division. When he began, there were no guidelines on how to improve safety. He has helped coworkers recognize that personal safety is a mindset not only at work, but also at home. The number of days without injury is a testimony to his commitment.

## Kirk Drake (*Engineering Services*)

On July 9, in route to a construction project, Kirk ensured that a refrigerator box lying in traffic was properly disposed of and did not pose a further threat to the traveling public. His willingness to make sure it was taken care of makes Lincoln's roads a better place for drivers.

## Jim Chiles (*Street and Traffic Operations*)

Jim is recognized for his leadership on a safety alert involving our traffic signal "boom trucks." After hearing of safety issues on similar trucks in another agency, Jim immediately had our two signal shop trucks brought in for inspection. Our trucks ultimately checked out okay, but we appreciate that Jim didn't take any chances.

## John Rausch (*Street and Traffic Operations*)

John initiated the first formalized stretching/exercise program within Street Operations. He rallied over 20 individuals from the Baldwin shop to participate in a daily 30-minute stretching and exercise program.

The next workplace principle will focus on **sense of humor**. Nominations are due to Miki no later than **September 14**.

## Leadership Link Manager of the Year

Thomas Shafer, Engineering Services, received the Leadership Link Manager of the Year Award at the organization's annual awards ceremony on June 13 at the Governor's Mansion.



Thomas stays on top of issues, meets deadlines, tracks expectations and deals pro-actively with employees. He communicates well and fosters great relationships. He acknowledges employees' strong qualities and recognizes jobs well done. Staff appreciates that Thomas follows the adage of "praise in public, discipline in private." He continually promotes education and staff training.

Thomas' exceptional employee interaction contributed to his nomination and earned him this award. Congratulations, Thomas!

## July Mayor's Award of Excellence

Gail VanSlyke, Utilities Service Supervisor, was presented the Mayor's Award of Excellence at the July 15 City Council meeting.



Gail does a superior job assisting customers in a professional manner. An example is his response to an elderly woman who called at closing time asking about a letter she received. Concluding that she possibly had a leaking toilet and worried that she could not afford a plumber, he went to her home after work, found the problem and helped her avoid some large bills.

Gail continuously sets a great example. He is a "difference maker" in the workplace.

**Congratulations, Gail!**



**Thursday**  
**SEPTEMBER 13**

Antelope Valley  
Union Plaza Dedication  
21st Street from "P" to "Q" Street

**Saturdays**  
**SEPTEMBER**  
**1, 15, 22, 29**

Big Red Express  
Husker Football Shuttle  
Six locations

**UPCOMING**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**PROJECTS**

The 2012 construction season is still in full swing. Keep informed on City projects at [lincoln.ne.gov/pworks](http://lincoln.ne.gov/pworks) (keyword: projects)

**ARTICLES ON THE WEB**  
**Winners Announced in City**  
**Employee Art Contest:**

<http://www.artscene.org/nap-2012-winners/>

**Drought Water Use**  
**2002/2012**  
**Comparison Graph:**

<http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/pworks/water/usage/drought-comparison.htm>

# Taylor Buss: Public Works and Utilities Ambassador



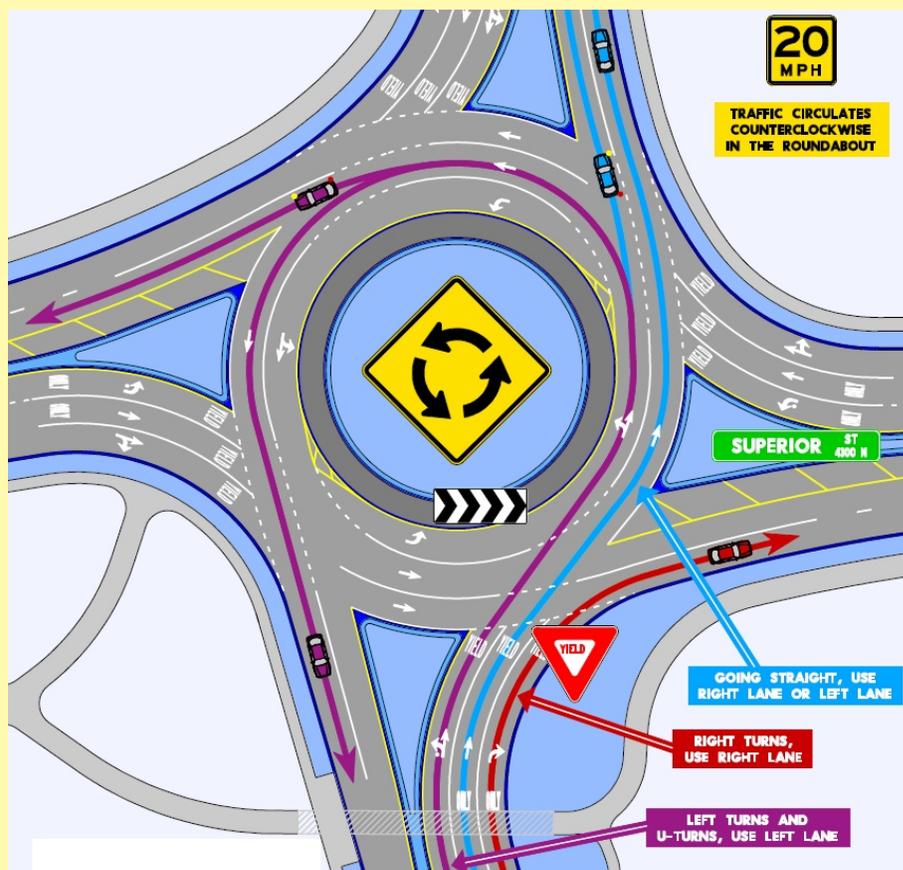
According to the dictionary, an "ambassador" is 1. an authorized representative or messenger or 2. an unofficial representative. Taylor Buss from Engineering Services is a great example of an ambassador for PWU. Earlier this construction season, Taylor was working as a project technician on a residential rehab project in the Belmont area of Lincoln. A couple of neighbors approached Taylor interested in what he was doing. Soon their conversation centered on the new **14th and Superior project**. Both neighbors had heard so much negative information about the project that they too were now skeptical.

They expressed concerns about safety and security in the new pedestrian tunnels. They wondered how anyone could ever learn to drive in a **multi-lane roundabout**. They thought drivers would be hitting their brakes and rear-end collisions would be on the increase – concerns that many opponents had already expressed.

Although this was not the project Taylor was specifically working on that day, he happened to have a set of plans in his vehicle. He grabbed those plans, and walked these two neighbors through all of their concerns. When he pointed out the security features on the tunnels, that objection went away. He then showed them how the street alignment would lend itself to merging traffic, helping them see how this roundabout would be safer to travel than a traditional right angle intersection.

That day, Taylor was a PWU Ambassador – taking the time to speak about the facts of the project in a courteous and caring way to two people who were concerned. Thanks, Taylor, for setting a good example for your coworkers. He certainly made a difference for those two citizens.

*"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."*  
– Benjamin Franklin



# DOLLAR\$ & ÇENT\$

## Asset Management: A Commitment to a Sustainable Community

Lincoln residents enjoy great community services that enhance our quality of life. From neighborhood parks to clean drinking water, from an integrated transportation system to safe and sanitary waste disposal systems, these services are often taken for granted until you want to use them and can't. *"The sewer backed up in my basement!" "The water main broke and I couldn't take a shower!" "I had to dodge potholes all across town."*

Two major components are necessary to provide essential services. First is a major investment in infrastructure, such as, pipes, roads and buildings – assets necessary for these services to exist. The second are resources necessary to operate and maintain infrastructure such as chemicals and supplies, energy and skilled employees.

PWU staff work diligently to care for these infrastructure assets. But as assets deteriorate, the levels of service provided may decline to unacceptable levels. This could also lead to risk of property damage, violation of State or federal regulations and increased maintenance cost. Replacement of this infrastructure is estimated to cost between \$4 billion and \$5 billion.

The challenge is maintaining these assets for the optimum life-cycle costs. Asset management tools used in the proper framework will help make Lincoln a sustainable community. These tools will help guide the development of a plan so that **the right projects are built at the right time at the right cost for the right reasons.**

## WASTEWATER FROGS

Wastewater maintenance crews spend their days fighting FROGs (fats, roots, oil and grease) in the sanitary sewer system. FROGs combine within sewer pipes causing blockages, which can lead to backups of wastewater into buildings.

Earlier this year, a blockage occurred at Highlands Golf Course, creating an overflow on the ground. Wastewater maintenance crews immediately worked to contain the overflow and remove the obstruction in the line. The obstruction consisted of roots, grease and debris.

Maintenance crews remove the FROGs by using jet flushing trucks. The trucks use high pressure water, spinning out of a rotating nozzle, to scrub clean the inside of sewer pipe from manhole to manhole. A debris catcher, inserted at the manhole, captures dislodged FROGs and debris.

Prior to modern high-pressure cleaning equipment, much of the City's sewer system had only been cleaned using hand equipment, leading to higher occurrences of backups. Currently, there are about 15 backups per year.

With about 1,000 miles of sanitary sewers, four two-man crews try to clean all pipes at least bi-annually, with problem areas receiving more frequent cleaning.



## Star TRAN Receives Environmental Leadership Award

The [2012 Lincoln-Lancaster County Environmental Leadership Awards](#) honored StarTran for over 100 years of service. StarTran's mission is to provide citizens with a reliable, safe and affordable public transportation system. The City's fleet includes 58 buses that run on bio-diesel and 13 hybrid electric Handi-Vans to transport senior citizens and people with disabilities. StarTran also has installed [bike racks](#) on every bus.

This award recognizes businesses, organizations and individuals who have demonstrated environmental stewardship and dedication to sustainable practices that improve air, land and water quality while protecting public health.

**Congratulations  
StarTran!**

## PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES

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