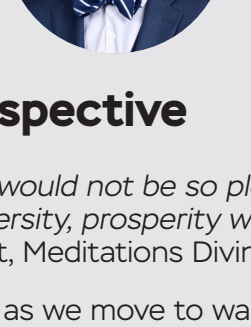


from the desk of  
**TIM SMITH**  
ADMINISTRATOR



## Maintaining our Perspective

*“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant. If we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.” – Anne Bradstreet, Meditations Divine and Moral*

A good perspective to maintain as we move to warmer days and are now seeing brighter outcomes ahead as more vaccinations are distributed to minimize the impact of the ongoing pandemic. Spring is a time to re-energize! It is time to move beyond those wintery blues, see the world the view of optimistic eyes, and get out there and do what we do best -- connecting our people to life's opportunities. We want each of you to achieve your goals and be successful, because by doing that we will constantly improve as an organization.

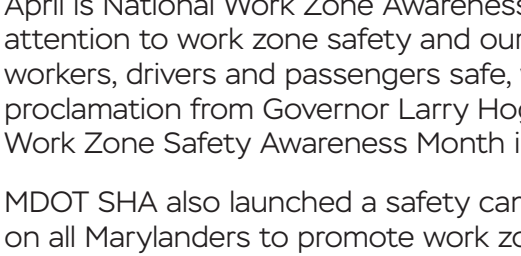
Our efforts also will continue with our Northbound Strategic Plan and Northbound Ten teams. This month, I'd like to highlight our "Advance Highway Maintenance 2.0" team, which is a very important team considering nearly 70% of our employees work in the maintenance arena. Our maintenance workers are boots on the ground and the first point of contact for many of our customers. This team is taking a look at how technology can help us deliver system maintenance and optimize the way we manage our staff, equipment, services, and other resources to provide the great services our customers expect. They are looking at how we can improve the workforce skills set, make more resources available, improve training and potentially expand MDOT SHA's permanent staff to be able to perform more duties in-house.

The Maintenance 2.0 team has set its one- and five-year goals, has developed its Road Map, has discovered some opportunities and challenges, and has set action steps for its next check-in with the Northbound Ten Council. Another team already making progress!

I'll keep saying this for emphasis purposes – we are focusing on progress, not perfection. We'll continue to highlight the Northbound Ten initiatives in upcoming newsletters. Thank you to those of you who are participating on a team and keep up the good work! As I've mentioned before, take the time to look for the opportunities YOU can take to help MDOT SHA to move us from good to great.

Thanks for your efforts as we head northbound together! And don't forget to continue to do your part and "Keep Your Guard Up" to protect yourself, your family members and your MDOT SHA family from COVID-19. While vaccine distribution is moving ahead and more and more are being vaccinated every day, numbers are trending up again and it's up to each and every one of us to do our part to keep wearing our masks, maintaining physical distance whenever possible, and washing our hands thoroughly and often.

## Go Orange with Us in April for Work Zone Safety Awareness Month



Although COVID-19 has changed our lives as we knew it, two things remain constant– the dedication of MDOT SHA's employees and the record number of projects our roadways and construction crews are working during the pandemic. And, just as our crews

are committed to making our roadways safe and accessible to all users, MDOT SHA is committed to reducing work zone crashes and increasing awareness of responsible driving in work zones.

April is National Work Zone Awareness Month. To bring further attention to work zone safety and our efforts to keep highway workers, drivers and passengers safe, we have secured a proclamation from Governor Larry Hogan designating April as Work Zone Safety Awareness Month in Maryland.

MDOT SHA also launched a safety campaign on April 1 calling on all Marylanders to promote work zone safety and its drivers to follow safe driving practices in work zones. Work zone safety banners are hanging in each of our facilities, and the Office of Communications is posting daily work zone safety messages on our social media platforms reminding motorists to focus, slow down, stay alert and drive like you work in a work zone.

This year Go Orange and Roadway Worker Appreciation Day is scheduled for April 28. It is a day when transportation agencies, their employees, employees' families and partnering agencies across the country are encouraged to wear orange – the color of cones, traffic barrels and signs found in work zones – to proudly show their support for work zone safety and the appreciation we have for our roadway workers.

We ask you to join our efforts by sharing our month-long safety messages on your own social media platforms, leading by example when driving through work zones and Going Orange with us on April 28.

- Share photos on your Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and social media pages of yourselves, family members and colleagues wearing orange on Go Orange Day.
- Use the hashtag #GoOrangeMD, and tag MDOT SHA.

If you do not utilize any social media platforms, you can still participate by sending your photos to Tina Register at [tregister@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:tregister@mdot.maryland.gov). Office of Communications will share your photos on Go Orange Day.

Together, we can heighten awareness on social media with our photos and our important safety messages.

## Spring Pothole Season Starts Light

The start of spring for MDOT SHA shop workers usually means one inescapable thing: It's pothole season, the time of year when customers file numerous reports of small and large potholes that make it hard on cars and trucks.

As of mid-March, reports D4 ADE Maintenance Terry (Wil) Clark, pothole reports were manageable. But, he said, "We haven't had the freeze/thaw cycle we usually get in late winter and early spring."

That cycle has water seeping under pavement during the day, then freezing and breaking sections of pavement overnight.

We were all a little spoiled last year, when there were less rain, snow and ice, and crews received fewer calls. In Fiscal Year 2019, there were 3,828 potholes on MDOT SHA roads. In FY 2020, by contrast, the number fell to 2,402.

Pothole repairs are driven by CCMS tickets. When a stretch of highway is identified in a substantial number of calls, crews respond.

"In a typical pothole tour," says Clark, "a foreman gets his assignment to do spot patching, he gets a route."

That was the case in late March when a crew from the Owings Mills shop began their day at the I-70 East Park and Ride near Security Square. FMT Rodney Trumpower, a 45-year veteran, slowly drove a truck carrying a supply of cold patch and shovels. FMT 4 Walter Calp led the fleet of four trucks – only one worker per vehicle to prevent the spread of COVID – driven by FMT III Ryan Trott, FMT Jordan Evans and, in the backup position driving an attenuator to protect the crew, FMT Andrea Carter. They crawled at about five miles per hour, stopping frequently when Trumpower identified potholes. Then they took their shovels, carried the cold patch from the rear of the lead truck, and patted it down.

"We try to get in an entire route over the course of a day," says Clark.

Cold patch is the default surfacing applied during cold months, although hot mix is a longer-term solution. Hot mix can only be used when temperatures reopen after the winter, and when outdoor temperatures remain warm, allowing the material to settle properly.

Under limited wintery conditions, crews apply a recently developed asphalt patch, Aquaphalt.

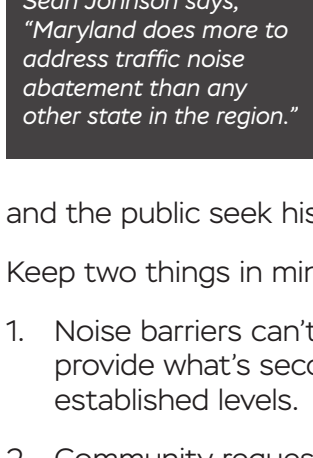
"You put Aquaphalt in a hole and add water; it holds better, it's a better product," explains Clark. Because it's expensive, and because it's packaged in containers and isn't sold in bulk, MDOT SHA reserves it for repairs in hazardous spots where crews shouldn't risk returning with hot mix later in the season.

Dangerous potholes, of course, get a more rapid response. Says Clark, "Anything important we repair within 24 hours of notification. If SOC gets a report, they call the shop."



Among the Owings Mills crew members who recently applied cold patch to a stretch of I-70 near Security Square were (from top) Walter Calp, Andrea Carter and Rodney Trumpower.

## MDOT SHA Sound Engineers Maintain Esprit During COVID Times



Sean Johnson says, "Maryland does more to address traffic noise abatement than any other state in the region."

Here's a point of pride that isn't well known, says Office of Highway Development Project Manager and Noise Abatement Team Leader Sean Johnson, who heads the mean, lean noise abatement team at MDOT SHA: "Maryland does more to address traffic noise abatement than any other State in the region," he says.

Sean's staff of three, which is responding with limited funding during COVID-era belt tightening, is the key point of contact when the public raises concerns about the volume of highway traffic noise. District staff and the public seek his department's help.

Keep two things in mind, he says:

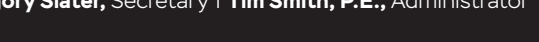
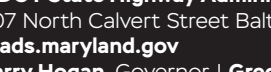
1. Noise barriers can't totally eliminate traffic noise. They provide what's second best: they reduce noise to industry established levels.
2. Community requests for noise barriers must clear federal and State eligibility criteria. District workers who receive pleas from residents can direct questions to Sean and his staff.

It takes a lot of professional knowledge to run a noise abatement program, including structural engineering expertise to construct barriers; transportation design engineering knowledge to research, create policy, provide documentation and draft policy; and training to inspect sound barriers and interpret policy. The department stays alert for Federal Highway Administration guidelines and the latest specifications from AASHTO.

The department stretches its resources to do the kind of regular maintenance that is the key to MDOT SHA's asset management approach – and to perform repairs after bad weather and vehicular crashes damage barriers. Still, the department takes pride in their service to the public.

"Direct people to my team if they have questions," says Johnson. "We can help."

Learn more about our noise abatement program on the [MDOT SHA website](#).



## PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Flooding causes more damage in the U.S. than any other weather-related event. MDOT SHA staff use tools like a Climate Change Vulnerability computer app to prepare short- and long-term responses.