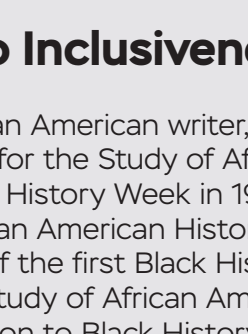


from the desk of
TIM SMITH
 ADMINISTRATOR


Our Commitment to Inclusiveness

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, an African American writer, historian and founder of the Association for the Study of African American History, created Black History Week in 1926 to encourage the study of African American History. In 1976, on the 50th anniversary of the first Black History Week, the Association for the Study of African American History expanded that recognition to Black History Month. Black History Month celebrates and honors the heritage, achievements, and sacrifices of African Americans, so that all Americans have a better understanding of our shared history.

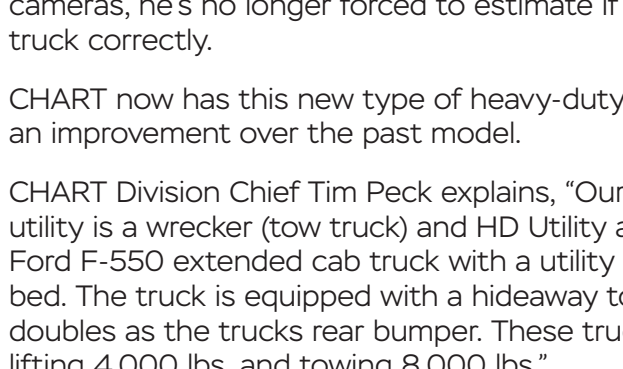
As we celebrate Black History Month, let's also be reminded that MDOT SHA's culture is a differentiating factor that contributes to our success and makes our agency special. One key element of our culture is the commitment to create an inclusive environment where we invite and encourage diverse perspectives, ideas and people. It is this inclusive approach that allows us to remain competitive and innovative – now and in the future – and why it's such an important part of The Northbound Ten.

In this time of social change comes our opportunity to lead and fully commit to creating the inclusive, just, and fair culture that all employees deserve. Our employees are our greatest resource, and we feel valued when our voices are heard and our contributions are respected. We will create an environment to hear, respect, empower, and engage every person from every level of the organization so they can reach their full potential. That being said, as we continue to highlight The Northbound Ten, this month we will take a look at our "Create a Culture of Inclusiveness" initiative.

Under the leadership of Navigator Kenya Lucas, this team's mission is to determine the pathway for MDOT SHA to transform into a more inclusive workforce. The group began by sharing what team members thought inclusiveness meant both professionally and personally. From there, two teams were formed to look internally into what efforts had already taken place at MDOT SHA in terms of inclusiveness and externally for new ideas to incorporate inclusiveness into the agency. Team members are thinking outside of the box for ideas to create an agency-wide inclusive culture that is valued Statewide and believe that inclusiveness is a primary stepping-stone from moving the agency from good to great. (That's what I like to hear!) The team is working on an employee led initiative that will work towards creating a culture where employees feel heard, valued and respected. I can't wait to hear what they come up with!

Remember, we are focusing on progress, not perfection. We'll continue to highlight The Northbound Ten initiatives in upcoming newsletters. Thank you again to those of you who are participating on a team and keep up the good work!

Hybrid Wreckers Improve Safety, Offer Extra Storage



The remote function of CHART'S new wreckers keeps drivers safe by letting them remotely connect the tow to a disabled car.

When CHART drivers find a car stalled in a highway lane with cars speeding past at 65 mph, they feel just a little safer if they can stand on the side of the road and use remote controls to connect the truck to the auto.

That's the advantage of the new wrecker.

"You can be 20 feet off the road in a safe location connecting the car to the tow," explains Eric Meredith, a highway operations technician IV. "That's a major safety improvement."

He recently led a Mustang with a popped wheel off the road. "It was quick and easy," he says, noting that with backup cameras, he's no longer forced to estimate if he's guiding the truck correctly.

CHART now has this new type of heavy-duty utility truck that's an improvement over the past model.

CHART Division Chief Tim Peck explains, "Our new heavy-duty utility is a wrecker (tow truck) and HD Utility all in one. It is a Ford F-550 extended cab truck with a utility body and an open bed. The truck is equipped with a hideaway tow stinger that doubles as the trucks rear bumper. These trucks are capable of lifting 4,000 lbs. and towing 8,000 lbs."

The fleet currently includes three new trucks; an additional three are being built and should be available in late spring or summer. The trucks are equipped with a diesel engine that has a longer life than the old gas-powered trucks.

"I love the new truck," says CHART driver Barry Stonestreet. "It has room to carry more equipment – a cutoff saw, hand tools, a pry bar. It handles the road great and does well in the snow."

A little tweaking would make the wrecker even better, says Meredith, noting that the new truck's fuel capacity is lower than the old one's, and that he sometimes has to fuel up three times in a day.

"If I'd improve anything," he says, "I'd do that."

KEEP YOUR GUARD UP TO KEEP COVID-19 CASES DOWN

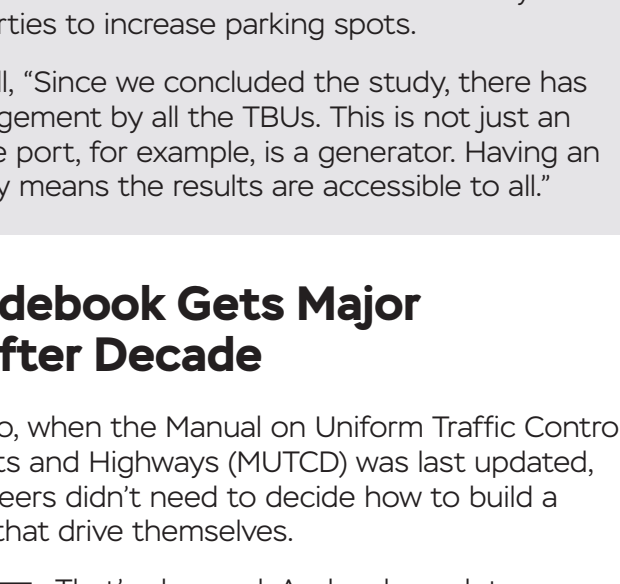
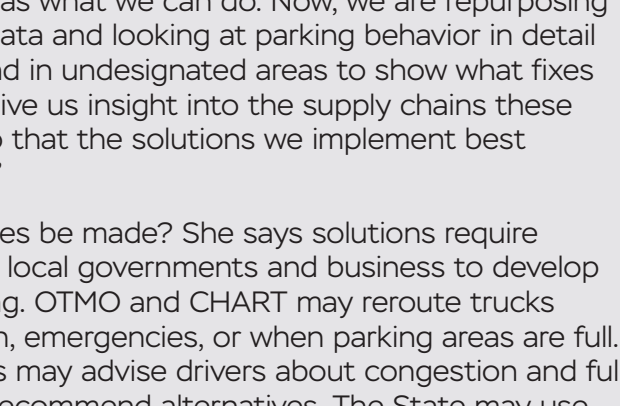
- Stay Home When Possible
- Wear a Mask in Public Places
- Wash Your Hands Frequently
- Practice Social Distancing

Please stay safe to keep our MDOT SHA family safe.

MDOT MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Truck Parking Violations are Critical Safety Hazard, Say MDOT & Researcher

America's food supply chain stretches from farm to store to home, but almost nothing makes it through without the trucking industry, which transports a large percentage of consumer products. With the volume of traffic increasing over the years and especially during the pandemic, the pressures of delivery are leading many truckers to park more often on roadsides and in other dangerous locations.



Road Hazards: Truckers often park beside highways because truck parking lots, like those depicted in this map, are full.

"It's the biggest transportation problem you've never heard of," explains MDOT SHA consultant Nicole Katsikides of the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI), who supported a study recently published by MDOT. "The issues aren't as relatable as mass transit. But they touch all of us. Think of it this way: If you have something, it's because a truck brought it to you."

Using geofencing and global positioning system (GPS) truck probe data from INRIX via the Eastern Transportation Coalition's vehicle probe marketplace (with access to INRIX, HERE Technologies and TomTom data), the study identified truck routes, congested truck parking lots and roadsides that are frequently used for breaks or naps.

Katsikides is working with MDOT SHA's Meredith Hill, JMT consultants Sean Laine and others to apply study recommendations to solve the problems, especially by using the truck probe data to determine implementation decisions.

These problems are extensive and interstate – witness the numerous trucks that make their way into Maryland from Virginia, West Virginia and the Northeast. Truckers park in dangerous locations for several reasons: because they're in staging and waiting to drop off a load from a customer or pick up at the Port of Baltimore; and because they're driving a long haul and need a place to sleep overnight.

There is potential harm to truck drivers and those in cars. When trucks are parked beside a dark section of highway, motorists may collide with them. Truckers can be robbed or have their trucks hijacked.

The study pinpointed problem areas.

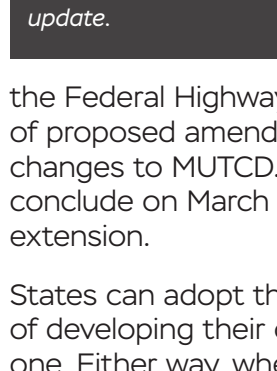
Says Katsikides, "We learned where issues are occurring. The study gave us ideas what we can do. Now, we are repurposing the truck probe data and looking at parking behavior in detail at existing lots and in undesignated areas to show what fixes are needed and give us insight into the supply chains these trucks support so that the solutions we implement best support industry."

How will those fixes be made? She says solutions require partnerships with local governments and business to develop more truck parking. OTMO and CHART may reroute trucks during congestion, emergencies, or when parking areas are full. Mobile travel apps may advise drivers about congestion and full parking lots and recommend alternatives. The State may use its existing properties to increase parking spots.

Adds Meredith Hill, "Since we concluded the study, there has been active engagement by all the TBUs. This is not just an SHA problem. The port, for example, is a generator. Having an MDOT truck study means the results are accessible to all."

Device Guidebook Gets Major Changes After Decade

A dozen years ago, when the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD) was last updated, MDOT SHA engineers didn't need to decide how to build a highway for cars that drive themselves.



New device guidebook: OOTS Director Cedric Ward says the rise of connected and automated vehicles is just one reason MUTCD needed an update.

That's changed. And so has a lot more, explains Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTS) Director Cedric Ward.

"You hear a lot now about connected and autonomous," he says. "That wasn't the case in 2009. Now, not a day goes by that you don't hear about it. Those vehicles rely on signals, pavement markings and other devices."

"And that's only one reason why MUTCD needed updating."

MUTCD is the national standard for traffic control devices – a variety of traffic signals, signs, pavement markings and more – that establish common signals to road users, thus ensuring the safe flow of cars and trucks. Late last year, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a notice of proposed amendments recommending a whopping 600 changes to MUTCD. The comment period is scheduled to conclude on March 15, although AASHTO has requested an extension.

States can adopt the manual "as is;" they also have the option of developing their own version that conforms to the national one. Either way, whether a highway runs through Annapolis, Maryland or Anchorage, Alaska, it must meet this code that is used assiduously by traffic engineers.

For the previous version, remembers Cedric, Maryland elected to develop the Maryland MUTCD to our own State regulations. There were reasons.

"For example, in Maryland you have a law that requires you to stop for pedestrians in a crosswalk," he explains. "That wasn't the case for all states in the U.S. So, when we developed our MUTCD we added a note that other states' "Yield Here for Pedestrian" signs not be used in Maryland because they do not comply with our state law."

It's too early to determine if this time around MDOT SHA will customize its own version or develop a supplement, he says.

The rise of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV) isn't the only motivation for the update. With increased focus on constructing highways that improve safety and accessibility for bicyclists and those traveling by foot, new devices that protect them require standardized regulation.

MUTCD impacts not only departments of transportation but also contractors and others.

"It will affect planning to construction," he adds. "And some of the changes will have fiscal implications."

At MDOT SHA, OOTS is the point of contact, but traffic engineers throughout the administration will comment. Staff at OTMO, OHD, OMT and other departments will review the proposed changes.

The entire process will culminate in the new version appearing in approximately two years. Be prepared for change.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

For February's Black History Month, MDOT SHA leaders explain how three unique people inspired them to pursue their special careers in transportation. Take a look at our videos featuring **Corren Johnson**, **Evan Howard** and **Erica Rigby**.