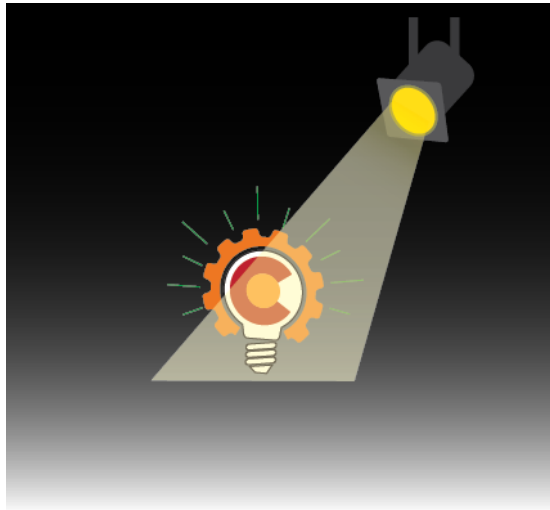


Welcome Page



Innovation Highway



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A Message from the Office of Process Improvement:

This edition of the Innovation Highway is dedicated to recognizing all of the hard work that CDOT employees do across the state. The Office of Process Improvement is proud to participate in uplifting and encouraging CDOT'ers from all Regions.

Best regards,

Anna Brady, The Office of Process Improvement, CDOT

New LEI & C2P Submissions

Since the publication of our last Innovation Highway, OPI has received several new Lean Everyday Idea and Concept 2 Project submissions. The new LEIs include:

- Preventing Over-Extension of Coiled Electrical Cables in Winter Operations
- Guardrail Sign Base
- Cone Hanger for Tow Plow
- Top Rail Replacement Core Drill Mount
- Bolt-On Chute System for Sander V-Box
- SMART Cushion Pin Removal Tool
- Lane Closure Variance Request

The new C2P initiatives include:

- SAP - ERP Modernization
- TDM Calculator
- Emerging Research at CDOT
- Performance Migration to Cornerstone



Innovation Station

The 2026 Innovations Challenge is Here!

Hey CDOT problem-solvers! Have you built a clever new tool, streamlined a clunky process, or found a way to make your workday easier? It's time to show off your brilliant ideas in the **2026 CDOT Innovations Challenge!**



We want to celebrate the amazing ways you make our agency better. This year, you can [submit your improvements](#) in the following award categories:

- **Outstanding Tool Improvement:** Did you fabricate or modify a physical tool to boost efficiency, increase safety, or cut costs?
- **Outstanding Business Improvement:** Have your efforts resulted in real improvements for our transportation users or internal operations?
- **Outstanding Productivity Improvement:** Did you create an innovation that levels up our office and field processes, materials, or products?
- **People's Choice Award:** The fan favorite! This goes to the innovation that gets the most votes from your fellow CDOT employees across the department.
- ✨ **NEW CATEGORY - Outstanding AI Innovation:** Have you found a cutting-edge way to use Artificial Intelligence to improve your workflow? We want to see it!

The Fine Print (Submission Requirements)

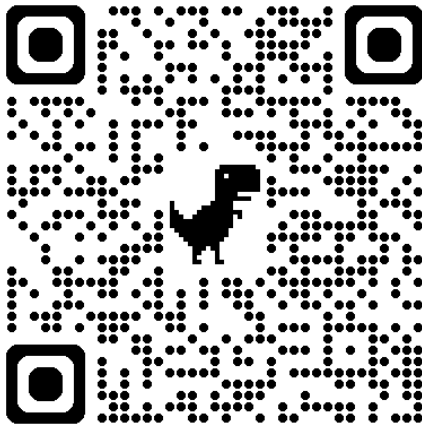
- You must be a current CDOT employee to enter the challenge.
- The open submission period is happening right now, so get your ideas in before the deadline on **June 30, 2026**.
- *Note:* You are welcome to submit your innovations anonymously, but please keep in mind that anonymous entries will be ineligible for awards.



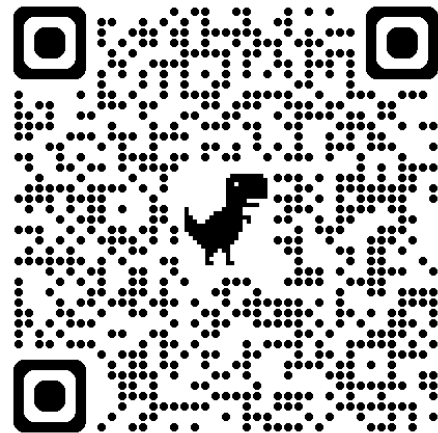
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Don't let your great ideas go unnoticed! [Submit your innovations and improvements](#) to the Lean Everyday Ideas (LEI) Catalog before the deadline so we can celebrate your hard work and share your success with the rest of the agency.

To Submit an Innovation, Scan Here:



For more information on the Innovations Challenge, Scan Here:



Round of Recognition



For this month's Round of Recognition, we've interviewed Jim Gonzales, an Electrical Trades III from Region 5. Jim's Lean Everyday Idea submission came runner-up in the Outstanding Productivity Improvement category of the statewide Innovations Challenge for FY25! Read and learn more about Jim's innovation and how it improves CDOT safety.

Hi Jim, what is your role here at CDOT? What kind of work do you do?

I am a traffic signal electrician in Region 5; my title is actually Electrical Trades III. I'm in charge of the traffic signal crew and I did get a few more guys on my team for signing and striping so I oversee them, too. So I'm not just doing the traffic signal side of it. I'm learning the signing, what goes into that process and ordering signs and 105s and all of that. It's always nice to learn new stuff.

I'm going on my 18th year here, now. I started as a signal electrician and then I got promoted about three years ago, so I'm just stepping into that role. It's nice when you get a little more seasoned, but I still like to get out there and help the guys with all the stuff that they have going on and getting to be more hands on. You know that's not always possible, but it's been rewarding taking this job.

Can you tell us about your submission? What led you to come up with this innovation and what kind of problem does it aim to solve?

I kind of try to go by a saying my dad used to tell me, "necessity is like the mother of invention." Sometimes you get faced with stuff that you [either] have to figure out a way to



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use what you got or make it work. Growing up, I worked jobs where I got a welding and fabrication background, so I kind of know how to do some of that, too. I had a career change about 30 years ago to an electrician, but I still remember some of that other stuff, so it does help me. When I run into a problem I can do stuff to figure it out.

I've submitted other innovations over the years - this is the only one that made it this far - but, out here in rural areas, all these smaller towns started putting up radar signs so people know how fast they're going as an incentive to slow down when going through their town. So, they sent us a bunch of these kits and COVID was going on, so the supply chain was really bad. They sent us the wrong size poles - they weren't big enough to have the two signs we needed: the regulatory sign and the "your speed" sign that flashes on when you go too fast. They have to be high so people don't bump their head on them when walking by and there was no way we could put two signs on there. So, I had to figure out a way to put the solar panel on top of the pole and that's how I came up with this idea. Then while doing that, I came up with a second way to mount solar panels because the kits weren't all the same. So, I had to make two different mounts to serve the same purpose.

It came from solving a problem we had, because we couldn't send them back since the supply chain was so bad during that time. It turned out to be good, because we put up quite a few of them and then in Region 5 in Durango, they used a few of them, too. It was just something that I couldn't find and looked around on the internet for, but then I said, "you know I could do something like that." Solar panels were really the only thing we could use out there because we didn't have utility poles. So, in some of the remote areas where it would cost too much to get utility run out there, we use these solar panels that power a battery that keeps these signs flashing for days. Even, worst case scenario, if you get a week of cloudy days these panels will keep the signs flashing for a week of cloudy days.

Is your innovation submission something that other CDOTers around the state could replicate and potentially implement? How do you envision your innovation being put to use here at CDOT in the future?

Actually, we get together once a year with all the traffic signal electricians and my boss wanted me to showcase this idea at that meeting. There were other regions interested in the



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idea. One of the guys that wanted it, wanted it for bigger solar panels. He works for IPS and uses cameras, like road trip cameras. They had a remote location that they didn't have power to, but they needed a big solar panel on it and he was wondering if we could do the same thing big enough to hold a solar panel two or three times as big as the one I used. They finally decided to do something different, but it definitely would have been a good option. I mean, I could make the tube that goes into the pipe longer, include a few more screws, and beef it up quite a bit.

Do you anticipate there being any significant implementation barriers?

I mean, the supply chain has gotten a little better and they have now ordered more kits with the pole a bit longer to accommodate both signs, but I'm sure there is still a use for this idea somewhere. We put these up on cameras and different stuff all over where power is scarce, because we're in a very rural area where there's not always power around every corner. If they need solar power for something else and require a pole like that for cameras or even devices for checking the weather, this idea would work as well.

Do you have any advice or recommendations for CDOT employees who would be looking to implement this idea?

There might be a few things I would change. I might leave a little lip - the application we have, there wasn't really a seal on top of the pole, but if we made the plate on top of the pole a little bigger the water would shed off [when it rains]. In our case, it didn't require a seal because it didn't matter if water got down the pole, so I didn't worry about that much. But, some of the smaller ones for four inch poles have an overhang so water can't get in it. That might have to be something that's put on there if the idea is used in a location that requires water to not get inside the pipe. That might be something I would suggest. I'll help anyone else that I can.

Regional Rockstars

Welcome Jack Thorpe, new LEI Committee Lead in R1!

Jack Thorpe has taken over as the Regional LEI Committee Leader in Region 1! He is preceded in this role by Robert Bell. Thank you Robert for your dedication to innovation and improvement at CDOT and welcome to Jack as he takes on this new, exciting position!



A Message from Jack Thorpe:

My name is Jack and I am a PE I in the Lone Tree Residency out at the KOA Building in Aurora, CO. I have been working for CDOT since 2013 and look forward to transitioning into the Region 1 LEI Committee as the Region 1 Representative. PSAT, the Project Specification Assembly Tool, was the original innovation my old Resident Engineer, Dole Grebenik, and I worked on was adopted by the CDOT Specification team back in 2014. This innovation work introduced me to Gary and the LEI mission. I am excited to help the team get more Innovations from Engineers and continue the strides made under Robert Bell.

The Concept 2 Project Change Corner

An interview with Elena Farhadi, Project Manager for the OLOS Dashboard



In this edition we've interviewed Elena Farhadi. Elena is the co-Project Manager of the Operational Level of Service Dashboard (OLOS), a web-based tool to help evaluate mobility and reliability across the state highway system and major arterials. Built to support PD-14 goals, Clean Transportation WIGs, and regional decision-making, the dashboard uses traffic probe data and GIS layers across six use cases (UC1-UC6). Phase II of this project has been recognized on both an organizational and national level - winning the Outstanding Business Improvement category of the FY25 Innovations Challenge and acknowledgement from the AASHTO Innovation Management (AIM).

Hi Elena, what is your role here at CDOT? What kind of work do you do?

I'm a Traffic Operations and Technology Engineer at CDOT Headquarters, and I've been with CDOT for about 4 years. I lead the Traffic Modeling Program, and also support the development of tools like the Operational Level of Service (OLOS) dashboard, speed management tools, and Operational Evaluations.

Can you tell me about your project and how it sought to improve something? What was the problem it aimed to solve?

The OLOS dashboard focused on improving how we measure and understand traffic operations across Colorado. Traditional metrics like level of service, travel times, or speed analysis usually look at one roadway segment at a time. What OLOS does differently is provide more context by comparing a corridor's performance to similar roadways across the state. That helps us see not just if/which road is performing well or poorly, but how it compares within the bigger statewide system. The dashboard gives engineers, planners, and decision-makers a



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better way to identify operational needs, prioritize projects, and support funding decisions using more consistent, data-driven information.

What made you want to take this project on?

What made me want to take the project on was the opportunity to work on something that combined traffic operations, data analysis, modeling, and problem-solving in a different way than traditional traffic engineering projects. My boss, Benjamin Acimovic, deserves a lot of credit here. He led the earlier phase of the project and helped shape the overall vision, but he also trusted me early on to take ownership and grow into a larger role on Phase II after I joined CDOT in 2022. He gave me the guidance, support and flexibility to contribute ideas and help move the project forward. And actually, we just recently kicked off Phase III of the project on 4/13/26.

Who was this project aimed at benefiting? What were the results for those groups of people?

So, I'd say the project benefits a fairly broad group of users across different stages of transportation analysis and decision-making. It starts with traffic engineers and analysts using the dashboard to monitor work zone operations, identify corridors with recurring or non-recurring operational issues, evaluate corridor performance, and better understand system performance and reliability across the network. It also supports planning and design efforts by helping evaluate how potential improvements fit within the broader transportation system.

Beyond the technical side, the dashboard also supports leadership and decision-makers with project prioritization, performance reporting, and funding discussions at a higher level. One of the biggest benefits has been the ability to consolidate and visualize complex operational data in a more consistent, accessible, and data-driven way.

What mechanisms are in place to sustain these benefits? Was this project intended to have longer term benefits or was this a one and done thing?

The OLOS project was definitely not a one and done. The goal is for the dashboard to continue evolving as new traffic data becomes available, roadway conditions change, and traffic characteristics shift over time. One of the biggest benefits is that it brings multiple



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data sources into one place – including speed data (INRIX), Colorado roadway network GIS basemaps (CDOT), statewide lane closure strategies and planned work zone activities (CDOT), and other operational data, measures and targets. Because of that, the OLOS dashboard not only supports historical comparisons, but also streamlines the monitoring and analysis of roadway traffic operations.

With ongoing updates as newer data becomes available, while also maintaining historical records, the OLOS dashboard can continue to support monitoring statewide operational analysis and performance over time. That allows engineers, planners, and decision-makers to evaluate ongoing corridor conditions, monitor system performance, support maintenance and planning efforts, and help prioritize projects.

Who are the people you're hoping to recognize from this project?

I would again recognize my boss, Benjamin Acimovic. He led the earlier phases of the project and has a strong background across traffic operations and safety, speed management, roadway design, smart work zone management and more. From my first day at CDOT on this project, Ben has always emphasized that his goal as a manager and leader is to empower his team to make informed decisions and help them succeed – and that the success of each team member is also his success. That mindset shaped the team dynamics. It created an environment where I felt supported, trusted to ask questions, take ownership, work through challenges openly, and continue growing throughout the project.

I'd also recognize our branch leadership, San Lee, along with the broader CDOT team – including the Office of Data Management and the GIS program team, as well as our consultant partners – since OLOS has really been a collaborative effort from the beginning.

Newsletter Editor: Anna Brady