



Milton R. Sees, P.E., (BS 75)
Secretary, Illinois Department of Transportation

BY LESLIE SWEET MYRICK

Illinois residents are most likely to notice the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) when they travel through a work zone, see an orange truck, or need a snowplow. But this often-overlooked agency is responsible for moving people and goods safely through an elaborate transportation network that ranks third in the nation in number of highway miles, includes 8,000 bridges, and serves as a crossroads for the nation's commerce. Additionally, IDOT oversees several public airports and is the first responder for all natural disasters, which have recently included record amounts of ice and snow, the flooding of the Mississippi River, and a surprising earthquake. As Secretary of Transportation, CEE alumnus Milt Sees (BS 75) heads this agency.

Sees' path to this position began right after high school when he worked at the state's transportation agency (now known as IDOT) as an engineering technician. However, his journey to his current position—like a typical Illinois roadway—had some twists and turns.

After leaving IDOT for the Air Force, he then attended the University of Illinois on the G.I. bill, focusing on pavement design and drainage. He returned to IDOT for a period of time after college, but then he was recruited for a variety of professional positions that included working on a railroad relocation project, serving as a lobbyist for the precast concrete industry in Springfield and later as a lobbyist for

the steel industry, which manufactures concrete reinforcement, in Washington, D.C. He then moved back to Illinois, to Mt. Vernon, where for 15 years he managed a corporation that had several precast concrete plants. He was elected a city councilman and later mayor—civic roles that required interaction with IDOT and provided exposure to state government as he pursued transportation upgrades for his community.

Through this combination of professional and civic experiences, Sees found a passion for the funding, political, and community relations components that are so important to the implementation of infrastructure projects.

"I realized that funding would always be critical to ensure that infrastructure was available to support economic growth for communities and the state," he says.

These experiences also resulted in an invitation to return to IDOT in 2006, where he says, "The biggest challenge I face is providing an acceptable level of services for users of the system given the reduction of revenue needed to maximize benefit using minimum resources."

Overall, Illinois has fared well, he says.

"The old cliché of getting more for less—we've gone way beyond that. We've been able to use technology and experience to maintain that ever-growing system and ever-growing needs. Both in the state of Illinois and nationally, there is a real crisis with our infrastructure. And although I wouldn't call it a success, I would say that Illinois has fared very well in adapting to that environment. We continue to be ahead of the curve in being able to provide a level of service that is

capable of providing economic growth and development for the state."

In a speech at a recent traffic and safety conference in Champaign, Sees discussed the challenges his agency faces in competing with other crises and how infrastructure always seems to get pushed back.

"[Infrastructure] is a tough message to sell with wars, financial crisis, etc., but keeping our infrastructure up is necessary, and not doing that will cause the economy to suffer," he says.

Although he must constantly stress infrastructure needs, Sees is pleased to note the progress Illinois has made in terms of traffic safety and engineering, including positive results on a recent motorist survey. The state is on target to have significantly fewer fatalities on state roadways in 2008.

Sees' fond memories of Illinois include working with such committed and dedicated faculty members as Moreland Herrin and Marshall Thompson, whom he still has the pleasure of seeing at transportation conferences and events. And because of his role at IDOT, he still runs into many of his U of I classmates who are now employed by IDOT, local agencies, the Federal Highway Administration, or who work as engineering consultants and contractors. Sees cherishes his memories of Illinois and credits his education with his career successes. He is proud that a new scholarship program introduced by IDOT will allow more people to have similar experiences. The agency re-

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cently announced it will provide scholarships for to up to 20 students per year. By doing this, IDOT hopes to build relationships with civil engineering students and provide exposure to the agency.

"It is very competitive trying to recruit young engineers to state government," he says. "Competing with the private sector is difficult, and there is a sense that government may not afford the best career path for success. However, I would say that IDOT is a great place to start your engineering career. You get such a broad spectrum of experience in a compressed timeframe."

Sees lives in Springfield with his wife, Kathy, a vocalist and pianist, who teaches private piano and voice lessons. They have two grown daughters.

For more information on the scholarship program, visit <http://www.dot.il.gov/scholarships/>.

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of the American Society of Civil Engineers in 2008 and to Diplomate of the American Academy of Water Resources in 2008. He is also a Fellow of the Institute of Engineers, Australia.

Polat Gülkan (PhD 71) was elected president of the International Association for Earthquake Engineering (IAEE) during its Fourteenth World Conference in Beijing. Gülkan will serve from 2010-2014, and will be president-elect until he takes office. Gülkan has served IAEE as Director (1996-2004) and Executive Vice President (2004-2008). He is editor of EERI Earthquake Spectra.

James E. Monsees (PhD 70) received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Underground Construction Association of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration Inc. The award was given in recognition of Monsees' outstanding contribution to the U.S. underground construction industry over his 48-year career. He is an expert in the design and construction of underground structures and in soil and rock mechanics. He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and was named a Distinguished Alumnus by the CEE Alumni Association in 2000.



James Monsees

Sergio "Satch" Pecori, P.E., (BS 73, MS 74), president and CEO of Hanson Professional Services Inc., has been selected to serve as a member on the Industry Advisory Panel of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Building Operations. As one of nine members, Pecori will serve in an advisory capacity with respect to industry and academia's latest concepts, methods, best practices, innovations, and ideas related to project management.

Melvin G. Spiese (BS 76), a Brigadier General in the U.S. Marine Corps, is the commanding general of the Training Education Command at Quantico, Va.

Makram T. Suidan (MS 73, PhD 75), the Herman Schneider Professor of Environmental Engineering, University of Cincinnati, was awarded the Frederick George Pohland Medal given by the the Association of Environmental Engineering & Science Professors and the American Academy of Environmental

Engineers. The medal honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions to bridging environmental engineering research, education and practice.

Lawrence E. Thomas (BS 76 MS 77), vice president and chief operating officer of Baxter & Woodman Inc. Consulting Engineers, has been named an honorary member of the American Water Works Association.

1980s

Thomas Bartolomucci, P.E., S.E., (BS 82, MS 83), a vice president with Hanson Professional Services Inc., recently celebrated 25 years with the company.



Thomas Bartolomucci

Pascal G. Luciano, P.E., S.E., (BS 83, MS 84) recently joined Hanson Professional Services Inc.'s Tinley Park regional office as a senior project manager serving Hanson's railway market.



Pascal G. Luciano

David A. Sabatini (BS 81), a David Ross Boyd Professor and the holder of the Sun Oil Company Endowed Chair in Civil Engineering and Environmental Science at the University of Oklahoma (OU), has been named a co-Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of Contaminant Hydrology (JCH). JCH is an international journal publishing scientific articles on the physical, chemical and biological processes influencing the behavior of organic and inorganic contaminants in the subsurface. He has also been selected to receive the 2008 Outstanding Educator Award from the Association of Environmental Engineering and Science Professors. The award is given annually to "recognize and honor the development of innovative teaching methods, including the application of these methods in the classroom and the dissemination of methods to the academic community." The award is sponsored by John-Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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