

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF STATE HIGHWAY AND
TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

AASHTO

Transportation Vanguard Award Nomination Form

2016

INFORMATION ON NOMINEE:

Last Name: Kopko	First Name: Mark	Date: July 18, 2016	
Email: markopko@pa.gov		Position Title: Manager, Traveler Information and Advance Vehicle Technology	
Department: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation		Phone: 717-783-1903	
Street Address: 400 North Street	City: Harrisburg	State: PA	Zipcode: 17120
AASHTO Committee Membership (optional)			

NOMINATOR INFORMATION:

Last Name: Tomlinson	First Name: Doug	Date: July 18, 2016	
Email: dtomlinson@pa.gov		Position Title: Chief, Traffic Operations	
Department: PA Department of Transportation		Phone: 717-787-3657	
Street Address: 400 North Street	City: Harrisburg	State: PA	Zipcode: 17120
Endorsement of Member Department Secretary/Director: 			

INSTRUCTIONS:

Using a maximum of 2 additional single-sided pages, please provide reasoning as to why this individual should be selected as the Transportation Vanguard Award recipient. Please include as much specific information about the candidate as possible, including special projects, personal attributes, dedication, etc.

Send nominations by **Monday, July 25, 2016**, via e-mail to mvitale@ashto.org. Nominations must be submitted as a single file in MS Word format using **TVA2016_Nomination_Nominee_Name.doc** as the file name.

**American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
Transportation Vanguard Award Nomination: Mark Kopko
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation**

The Transportation Vanguard Award is intended for an individual who is at the forefront of new developments and technologies, and is leading the way with new ideas. Mark Kopko exemplifies this philosophy within the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). This became apparent soon after he began as a Civil Engineer Trainee nearly six years ago. Within a few months of starting his training, Mark designed the layout for what would become the PennDOT's first 511 mobile application and we knew we had the makings of a PennDOT Vanguard.

Following our attendance at the Road Vehicle Automation Workshop in July 2012, we recognized the need for PennDOT to be involved with this rapidly advancing technology. At that time, we felt an intelligent, motivated, and tech savvy employee would be the best person to lead our efforts and help guide Pennsylvania as the technology matures. Mark was identified as that individual and he has been leading PennDOT's Connected and Automated Vehicle (CAV) efforts ever since. CAV is clearly recognized as the future of transportation and Mark is involved in a wide-array of national committees, pooled-fund studies, and research efforts on the subject. Through his dedicated involvement in this arena, he is routinely asked to speak as an authority on the subject at regional and national conferences and has conducted a number of interviews with the press outlets here in Pennsylvania. To ensure that PennDOT is fully prepared for this game-changing technology, Mark established and leads a CAV Working Group in Pennsylvania consisting of members from PennDOT, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, FHWA, and academia. His knowledge and expertise in this very challenging area has moved Pennsylvania to the forefront on a national perspective.

Along with his work in advancing connected and automated vehicle technology, Mark is responsible for Pennsylvania's Traveler Information Program. In this area, he is constantly identifying ways to improve the service of our 511 phone, mobile, and web services. He does this by gathering customer feedback, examining national trends and best practices, and through discussions with PennDOT and Turnpike staff. Prior to winter 2015, Mark oversaw the addition of PennDOT snow plow locations in 511 which has greatly improved the number of 511 mobile downloads as well as the number of people using the phone and web services. Additional traveler information service enhancements last year included a travel site for the Papal visit in Philadelphia, a template for project-specific construction websites, and holiday travel forecasts to help motorists better plan their travel. Overall, the improvements have generated very positive feedback from the public. An example can be seen in this news report from a TV station in Scranton, PA (<http://wnep.com/2016/01/12/putting-penndots-plow-tracker-to-the-test/>). An expansion and additional upgrades are planned for 511 this winter to include all PennDOT snow plows, a complete overhaul of the interactive voice response system, and a robust user navigation tool. Mark uses performance metrics and surveys to identify trends and patterns to ensure that 511 is routinely enhanced and stays current with an ever-changing technological environment.

As the lead for both traveler information and connected and automated vehicles, the use of technology to modernize our transportation system is a driving force behind Mark's daily activities. Examples include studying national traveler information trends, evaluating 511 usage performance metrics, and understanding traveler information customer needs. The entire CAV program is based on modernizing the transportation system and preparing Pennsylvania for the future. As automobiles with this type of technology are added to the transportation system, we need to be prepared to handle the new

communication needs, infrastructure changes, as well as new technological safety concerns. Mark's work focuses on helping PennDOT and Pennsylvania understand and address each of these challenges.

Mark has received the highest rating his supervisor has ever given to an employee and he routinely shows a willingness to help improve Traffic Operations in all its forms. He is routinely asked to represent both the Department and the Secretary as an expert on the subject of connected and automated vehicles and everyone in Pennsylvania looks to Mark as a leader in the area. Businesses, like AAA, request that Mark speak as an expert at their regional meetings.

Mark has done all of the work over the past year while being short-staffed. One of his employees has been on a temporary assignment as an assistant to the Deputy Secretary and his other employee is currently in the training program and out of the office for months at a time. Despite these challenges, Mark continues to deliver high-quality, innovative products, that are leading Pennsylvania into the future.