

Roads

From Page 1A

3,800 YouTube views and almost 400 Twitter followers for the Road Connection. The website, www.theroadconnecton.org, garnered more than 4,000 hits and sent more than 3,000 letters to Congress from people across the country.

Through these efforts, the Road Connection added more than 30 national trade media and industry partners to its cause.

KPI-JCI president Joe Vig said that as an industry leader, KPI-JCI had to do its part to spotlight the need for infrastructure funding.

“The highway bill continues to be right at the front of what we need to accomplish and get done, and the Road Connection started that,” he said.

MAP-21 is the first long-term highway authorization enacted since 2005. The last bill expired in 2010, and since then, nine short-term extensions have been passed to continue funding for the nation’s highways.

Daugaard said the problem with short-term extensions is that it is difficult to commit to long-term projects when future funding is in doubt.

“It’s just no good for business certainty, and when businesses don’t have certainty, they freeze up,” he said. “They don’t want to take risks because they don’t know what the horizon is. They

don’t know what their landscape is.”

District 18 Rep. Bernie Hunhoff (D-Yankton) echoed the same sentiments, stressing that roads play a vital role in South Dakota’s economic development.

“You look at our economy — there’s agriculture, mining, manufacturing ... all those things rely on roads to get the product from South Dakota to around the state and around the country,” he said.

Daugaard applauded the work of KPI-JCI, saying its initiative with the Road Connection program played a large part in getting a longer bill passed.

“It was the first company to organize all these manufacturers and say, ‘We’ve got to get something permanent. We’ve got to

get something certain,’” he said. “Those manufacturers like you got together and urged Congress to a successful bill last June.”

The rally Thursday was held in conjunction with KPI-JCI’s National Dealer Conference. Several pieces of new equipment were on display, and the factory hosted approximately 150 dealer principals from across North America. KPI-JCI also hosted a career day for individuals to learn about the opportunities available to them in Yankton.

While those in attendance celebrated the passing of the new multi-year highway bill, several of the speakers acknowledged that plenty of work remains ahead.

Sen. Jean Hunhoff (R-Yankton)

summarized many of those thoughts when she stressed the importance of continuing the push for more infrastructure funding.

“Right now we are in a mode of maintenance, and you know what maintenance means — you try to keep the roads going as long as they can,” she said. “But unfortunately even maintenance has its endpoint, and we’re coming to that point. We need those federal dollars to come back and have a comprehensive bill that’s going to really impact South Dakota so that we can keep that infrastructure and so that we can keep working together.”

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at twitter.com/d_bartos



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Employees from Kolberg-Pioneer in Yankton inspect a GT Series three-deck screening plant, which is capable of screening aggregate in construction and other projects, during Thursday’s KPI-JCI’s National Dealer Conference in Yankton.

Sapa

From Page 1A

if we don’t have a good foundation of health and safety.”

He said the number of recordable accidents at Sapa North America locations has been reduced by 70 percent in the last two years.

“How we’ve achieved that is really through you guys,” Lawlor stated. “It’s extremely important that we have a safety-conscious workforce. It’s not just for the business reasons. We want you guys to go home to your families and loved ones in the same way you came to work. If we all have that viewpoint in our head, I think safety becomes extremely obvious.”

Lawlor acknowledged that the Yankton plant has had challenges.

“Last year, we had nine recordable accidents at the plant,” he said. “This year, we’ve had eight already, and there have been some nasty ones.”

That has included two incidents where individuals lost the tips of their fingers.

Speaking to the *Press & Dakotan* after the presentation, Yankton plant manager John Clifton said an influx of new employees has played a role in those mishaps. The plant currently has 142 people with less than a year’s experience out of its approximately 430 employees. Production has been ramped up to near full capacity in the last year to deal with demand, he added.

“We have a very good training program, but we have to watch those new people closely,” Clifton said. “The charge I’ve got for all my people is, look out for yourselves and the guy alongside you. We’re not there yet.”

During his comments, Daugaard said Sapa Extrusions’ commitment to health and safety is impressive.

“That is a leadership kind of thing that not every company does, and every company should,” he stated. “It’s smart business and good human resources caring. In South Dakota, I wish all companies would do that.”

Nonetheless, Daugaard said companies in the state have had a good health and safety record. In the last 15 years, he said there was a 25 percent reduction in worker’s compensation injuries and a 38 percent reduction in lost hours of work.

Another reason for the governor’s visit to the plant was to sit in on a presentation by Sapa and its customer, Conductix, discussing the growing role of aluminum as a material for third rail systems. Third rail is typically used for mass transit services.

According to Sapa officials, aluminum third rail is more conductive than steel, offers savings in electrical costs and requires less sub-stations. As a result, it is a growing market and one of several that are served by Sapa’s Yankton location.

“We’re asking for the help of the government to get the focus in the United States on aluminum third rail versus steel,” Clifton said.

Clifton also told the *Press & Dakotan* that Sapa is planning to invest a few million dollars to upgrade the Yankton plant’s cast house. That work is expected to be done by next June.

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage

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