

RoadSoft

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RoundUp

RoadSoft's online training makes it possible for more of our staff to participate in the training. With budget constraints and increasing travel costs, the online option just makes sense for us.

- Steve Shultz, Asst. City Engineer, City of Alpena

RoadSoft Online Events Offer Convenience to Users New Online Meeting Technologies Reduce Costs, Increase Opportunity

Online communication and learning is expanding with new technology and a need for increased cost-savings and convenience for *RoadSoft* users. While the Michigan Tech Technology Development Group (TDG) has been conducting online events since 2006, such as training and *RoadSoft* User Group (RUG) meetings, this is the first year that all *RoadSoft* training has been offered online. The success of this year's trainings and RUG meetings has demonstrated that the web-based training and meeting venue provides cost-savings, convenience, and expands users' access to such events.

In the past, *RoadSoft* training for specific topics has been conducted online using a web-based "meeting room." Such topics have included safety analysis and tasks related to requirements defined by the Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC), like reporting and data collection.

"Specific tasks fit really well with the online format because participants are able to leave the training session knowing what they need to do and how to do it," said Mary Crane, *RoadSoft* Software Engineer.

This past year introductory and advanced training have also been held online. The spring introductory *RoadSoft* training was held in May with five, two hour sessions. Each day had an overview of basic tasks like using the Road Module and the Laptop Data Collector. Two advanced training sessions have also been held this year, covering strategy and optimization tasks specific to road asset management.

Changing the training landscape

Online training will not completely replace in-person training, especially for topics like PASER rating that require face-to-face interaction and flexibility. However, it is a useful cost-saving avenue, and with adjustments in teaching style and format it can be just as effective.

"There is a fundamental change in how training is being

provided," said Tim Colling, Michigan LTAP / TDG Assistant Director. "Online training works differently than in-person training and has different rules and constraints involved with it."

For example, in a live class the instructor is face-to-face with students, and is able to get instant feedback to know whether the information is being understood. In an online class this feedback is not as obvious.

The TDG is constantly evaluating its online education program between sessions, looking for ways to increase instructor-participant interaction opportunities and the effectiveness of the web-based formats. For example, several short training sessions are typically offered – instead of a single, in-person, full-day session – so participants are able to take the time between classes to work with the information they are learning. Also, brief quizzes and surveys are often used in to help engage the participants and see how well they understand the content covered in each session.

As with all technology, glitches are inevitable and difficulties with Internet connections and phone lines can happen. Over the past three years that the TDG has been offering online training, the process has been smoothed out through the TDG's constant striving to ensure that training – whether in-person or online – is always a valuable experience for participants.

"We have made changes in our service providers and are convinced that the set-up we have is reliable," said Colling. "The online format actually holds some advantages over in-person training in that it can be easier for participants to contribute their knowledge and give information to other *RoadSoft* users through the chat window, phone or screen sharing. Also, shorter training sessions are more focused and can allow the participants to take away specific knowledge and skills."

Continued on reverse.

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Upcoming Events

RoadSoft Users Group (RUG) Online Meeting
Weds., Oct. 7, 2009 / 10:00 - 11:30 AM (ET)

Intro to RoadSoft Online Training Series
Tues., Nov. 3, 2009 / 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)
Weds., Nov. 4, 2009 / 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)
Thur., Nov. 5, 2009 / 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)
Fri., Nov. 6, 2009 / 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

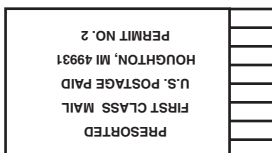
Visit www.roadsoft.org or call 906-487-2102 for details regarding agenda, costs, and registration.

Training Costs

Participants may be required to cover the consumable cost of the online training just as they would for an in-person training or workshop. Online training fees cover the price of the phone services used for online training and meetings as well as web conferencing software and services. However, even with the consumable cost, online training saves the time and resources it takes for people to travel to an entire day of training. Also, one phone and web connection can serve many people at one location, so an entire agency could participate from the comfort of their office.

More Training This Fall

Opportunities for communication and sharing of information among *RoadSoft* users and the TDG are growing with the help of online capabilities. *RoadSoft* User Group (RUG) meetings, focus groups, conferences and one-on-one assistance are also being conducted online. Additional events are planned for the fall, including Introductory and Advanced *RoadSoft* training, and a third RUG meeting.



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