University of New Hampshire
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PRESS RELEASE: City of Claremont Receives National FHWA Build a Better Mousetrap Bold Steps Award

DURHAM, N.H. — The City of Claremont Department of Public Works has been named a national winner in the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Build a Better Mousetrap Program, earning recognition in the program's Bold Steps category for its innovative Custom Culvert Steamer Hook-Lift Body. The program recognizes locally developed transportation innovations that improve safety, efficiency, and operations. The Bold Steps category specifically recognizes breakthrough solutions that take a new approach to solving transportation challenges and deliver significant benefits.

Claremont's award-winning project reimagined traditional culvert steaming, a winter maintenance operation used to keep drainage systems flowing and protect roads from flooding, icing, erosion, and washouts. Developed in-house by the City's mechanic team, the new system combines the culvert steamer, generator, water tank, and access platform into a single self-contained unit. The design eliminates the need for operators to climb into truck beds to access equipment, reducing slip-and-fall hazards and making an important winter maintenance operation safer for highway crews.

Built for approximately $2,400 using existing equipment and municipal resources, the project demonstrates how a relatively small municipal investment can produce lasting returns in safety, efficiency, and equipment functionality. The custom hook-lift body can be operated on or off the truck and features a steel catwalk with railings and toe guards for safe access. The integrated design reduces setup time, simplifies maintenance, and reduces operators' exposure to slip-and-fall hazards.

"Claremont's project is an excellent example of the creativity and innovation that exists within New Hampshire's public works community," said Lee Cooper, Program Coordinator for the UNH T2 Center. "The team developed a practical, cost-effective solution to a longstanding safety challenge that can serve as a model for municipalities across the country."

As New Hampshire's Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) center, the UNH T2 Center coordinates the state's participation in FHWA's Build a Better Mousetrap program and helps showcase innovative practices developed by local highway agencies.

The UNH T2 Center supports New Hampshire's local highway and public works departments with training, technical assistance, tools and resources to improve the quality and safety of roads throughout our state.

For more information about the UNH T2 Center, visit https://t2.unh.edu/or contact Marilee Enus, Director of the UNH T2 Center, at Marilee.Enus@unh.edu.



The Claremont DPW Mechanic team holding their Build a Better Mousetrap award.

From Left to Right: Chris Bergeron, Kenny Hamilton, Warren Mordenti (holding award), and Bruce Therrien.