

Transportation Manager and Mastermind: Dan Mulder Oversees the Trucks that Move Our Goods

With Four Decades of Logistics Experience, Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Chief of Oversize and Overweight Permitting Can Handle Any Truck Fleet

Dan Mulder, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) chief of oversize/overweight permitting and outdoor advertising, considers his work in transportation management for more than 40 years to be “highly rewarding.”

“I enjoy the results from logistics and operational challenges and the satisfaction from providing the needed movement of goods and services to business and the public,” he said.

Originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota, Mulder has always had a keen interest in large project management, including facility design, construction, and maintenance. Yet his captivation with basic system organization and facilitation began in the military.

“While serving in the U.S. Navy, I ran a supply depot and was fascinated by the supply chain aspects,” Mulder said.

Consequently, after he completed his service, Mulder became a distribution manager for a large manufacturer. He then decided to pursue a formal education in transportation and distribution management.

After receiving his degree, Mulder began his career as a fleet consultant in the private sector. For 13 years, he founded and managed Fleet Facts, a nationally recognized consulting firm in Minneapolis, as president and CEO before moving on.

A New Challenge Incites New Passion

Mulder discovered his true interest in asset management when he oversaw a truck fleet of more than 6,000 assets for Northern States Power (NSP), a gas and electric public utility. As the fleet maintenance manager, Mulder was responsible for about 80 fleet technicians dispersed at 18 fleet facilities over four states. He developed and implemented a lifecycle strategy that increased the value and resilience of the entire fleet. When Colorado Public Service purchased NSP to form Xcel Energy, the utility expanded to serve 12 states.

“I had to completely rebuild the Northern State Power fleet maintenance program, which had been outsourced for several years,” Mulder said.

This project involved the complete renovation of several fleet maintenance facilities, with main operations based out of Minneapolis and crew and fleet operations based in a northern suburb.

Mulder proposed that the company fund the construction of a new, state-of-the-art fleet facility at the suburban location to eliminate the cost and time spent transporting vehicles between two sites. After the board agreed on the solution, Mulder hired a design consultant, and he managed

the project from proposal through construction. The facility eventually became the utility company's regional maintenance depot.

Beyond the gratification of solving an operational problem for the company, saving money, and reducing fleet size due to increased asset performance, Mulder was proud of the legacy he left behind.

"I found it extremely rewarding as I took a concept to design and construction, which was subsequently expanded in later years to support market growth by the utility," he said.

The Next Steps

After working at Xcel Energy for four years, Mulder became the president and CEO of Madison Freight Systems, where he managed over 220 employees. After five years, Mulder sold the company to Saia, a USD 800 million, publicly traded company before moving on to the public sector.

Mulder has spent most of his eight-and-a-half-year tenure at WisDOT managing the department's roadside facilities. He designed and implemented a lifecycle plan for Wisconsin's 28 rest areas and 13 safety and weight enforcement facilities, as well as managing the state's freight/OSOW programs.

Most recently, WisDOT sought to implement a server-hosted, browser-based oversize and overweight (OS/OW) vehicle permitting system due to an influx in permit volumes and load sizes. With different states having disparate load requirements, an automated system makes it easier for truck drivers crossing state lines to quickly obtain all the requisite permits. WisDOT no longer wanted to be responsible for in-house development and maintenance of permits, so they obtained a hosted system where the vendor was responsible for the work 100% of the time.

On this project, Mulder was the program manager and secured project funding from department executives and the legislature. He also facilitated the request for proposals, structured the project team, and managed the schedule and budget.

"The project was the most comprehensive undertaking for the program in the past 16 years," Mulder explained.

WisDOT wanted the permitting system to be accessible from any mobile device and include e-permits, automated registration, and monthly renewal capabilities. They chose Bentley Systems' SUPERLOAD application to meet these asks. The application has intelligent permitting, routing, analysis, and restriction management for oversize and overweight vehicles. Bentley configured SUPERLOAD to meet WisDOT's specific state requirements, giving them the opportunity to leverage their investment in other data systems.

"Employing GIS technologies and accurate, real-time data allow informed decision-making on routing in conjunction with asset conditions and infrastructure lifecycles," Mulder said.

Additionally, the new system automates the permit review process and allows reviewers to assess a visual representation of their route. Route network and bridge information is uploaded whenever changes occur, and the data updates automatically. This ensures the safest travel conditions for truckers because the permits are issued on up-to-the-minute infrastructure information.

Ultimately, reducing turnaround time for permit issuance and automating the renewal and review processes will save WisDOT money. The new system will additionally cut costs for the entire trucking industry because the system saves information, helping them spend less time applying for permits.

The most critical phase of the project occurred in 2021, when the organization was working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program staff at WisDOT conducted beta testing and became trained on the new system all while facilitating normal OS/OW workloads.

“It was a remarkable undertaking,” Mulder said. “However, the staff performed flawlessly keeping the project on schedule and in budget while maintaining excellent public service.”

For more information, contact Christine Byrne at christine.byrne@bentley.com.

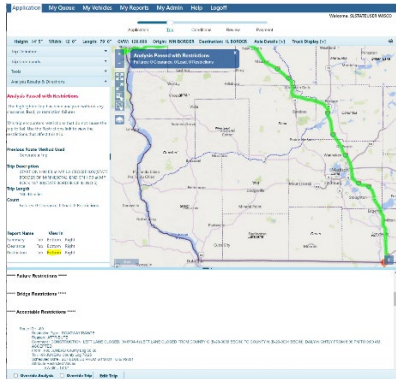
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[Image 1:](#)



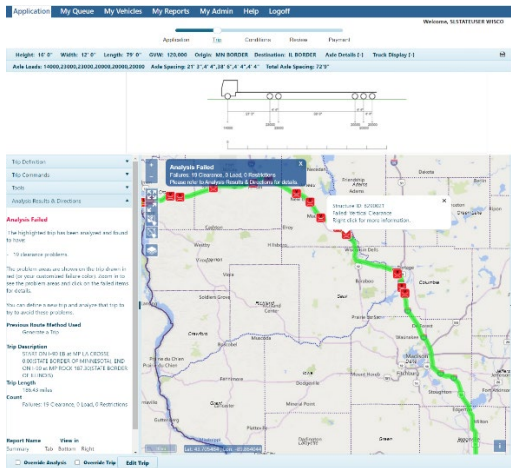
Caption: WisDOT sought to implement a server-hosted, browser-based oversize and overweight (OS/OW) vehicle permitting system due to an influx in permit volumes and load sizes. With different states having disparate load requirements, an automated system makes it easier for truck drivers crossing state lines to quickly obtain all the requisite permits.

Image 2:



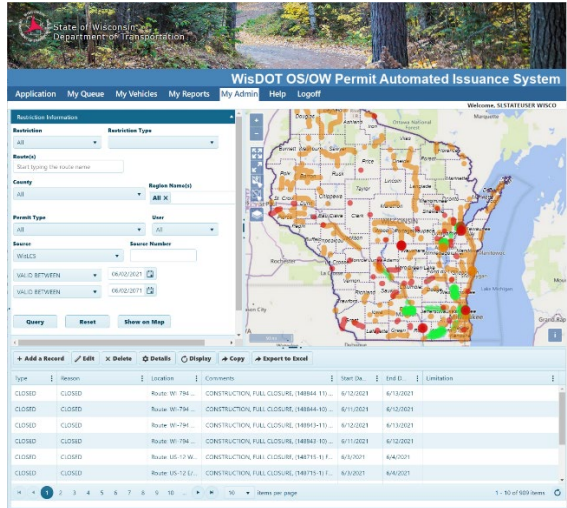
Caption: The new system automates the permit review process and allows reviewers to assess a visual representation of their route. Route network and bridge information is uploaded whenever changes occur, and the data updates automatically, ensuring the safest travel conditions for truckers because the permits are issued on up-to-the-minute infrastructure information.

Image 3:



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Image 4:



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