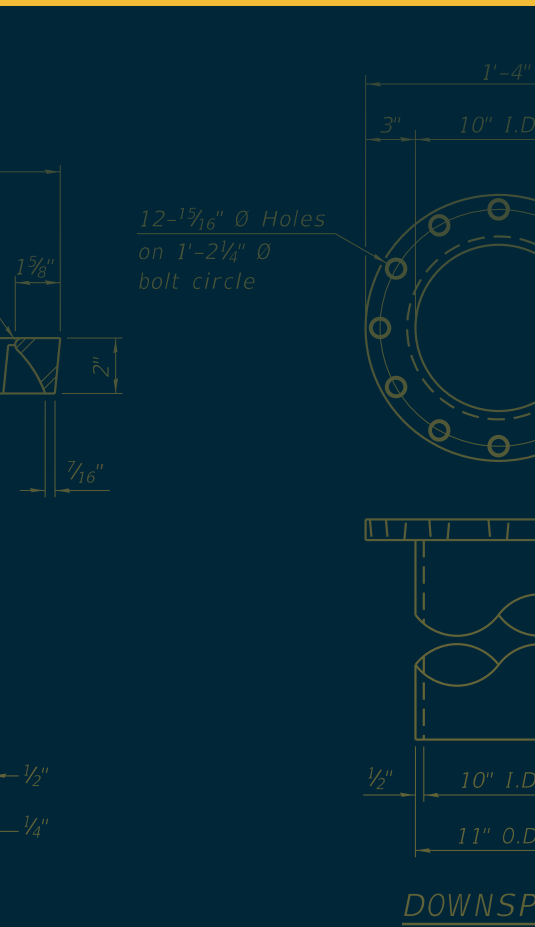




OMER OSMAN

Illinois Transportation Secretary

Illinois Department
of Transportation



EWEEK 2022

Q. How did you become interested in engineering?

A. I grew up in the Sudan. In Third World countries, there is a lack of infrastructure in general and a huge need. That helped fuel my interest – you could improve lives and enhance the quality of life in your community.

Q. What aspects of engineering have you been most focused on at IDOT?

A. Mainly highway engineering, the actual construction of projects. At IDOT, you really do get exposed to all aspects of transportation engineering, the multimodal aspect of our profession. You start seeing the big picture, each mode of transportation and how they click together.

Q. Does your engineering background continue to play a role in your job leading the department?

A. You do see things from a different vantage point as an engineer. Engineers are taught how to focus on an issue and resolve it. At IDOT, I learned not only how to do that, but also how to anticipate the next one.

Q. Do you continue to rely on it during a typical day?

A. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills – you develop those as an engineer and put them into practice all the time. Not just looking at projects, but all aspects of running a department.

Q. How important is teamwork to the work of an engineer?

A. You are part of a team at IDOT. I like to say we are a family. I grew up in IDOT with the concept of committing to the accuracy and quality of a project – it takes a team to do that. It cannot be emphasized enough.

Q. One thing you'd like the public to know about the work of an IDOT engineer?

A. The impact of our engineers is immediate and visible. Construction can be difficult on the public, but the end result is you have improved someone's quality of life. That can be very satisfying and rewarding.

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