

DEPUTY CHIEF PICKED TO TAKE UDOT HELM

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John Njord, a 13-year veteran of the Utah Department of Transportation, has been chosen by Gov. Mike Leavitt as UDOT's new executive director, state government sources confirmed Tuesday.

Njord has been the department's deputy director for more than a year after a stint as UDOT's director of transportation planning with the Salt Lake Organizing Committee.

Njord, 40, will succeed Tom Warne, who leaves June 26 after six years at the helm. Warne plans to start his own consulting business.

An official announcement of Njord's appointment was scheduled for 3:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Sen. David Steele, R-West Point, co-chairman of the Transportation Interim Committee, said the choice of Njord was a good one.

"John has been very thorough and very helpful both to the communities and the Legislature," Steele said Monday. "He is very knowledgeable."

Steele said Warne cultivated a strong management team while at UDOT and said he expects no drop-off in what the Legislature has come to expect from the department.

Njord and Warne declined comment Monday morning. But when Warne announced last week he was stepping down, he stressed that Njord, I-15 project director John Bourne and other department administrators were extremely capable and would keep UDOT moving forward.

"The department is an organization with great leadership, and it's not just about Tom Warne," Warne said at the time. "This is as strong a leadership team as UDOT has probably seen in the history of the agency."

Njord takes over as the \$1.59 billion I-15 reconstruction project nears its end. He noted last week that the project's success has set a new standard for UDOT.

"We have hit a peak now, and our challenge is to deliver this kind of project the way we've delivered this one in the future," Njord said last Monday when I-15 was opened to 10 lanes through the Salt Lake Valley.

The reconstruction project is scheduled for completion July 15 — on time and under budget.

Njord is a member of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and is vice chairman of the organization's Standing Committee on Environment. He also serves as Utah's representative on the association's Standing Committee on Highways.

With UDOT since 1988, Njord also has filled the roles of chief engineer, engineer for urban planning, local government liaison and construction field engineer.

Njord received a civil engineering degree from the University of Utah. He is a registered professional engineer and a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Njord and his wife, Sherry, have been married for 18 years and have four children.

Njord will supervise 1,800 employees and a 6,000-mile system of state roads and highways.