

NON-CIRCULATING

Transportation NEWS

March 1996 Volume 21 Number 7

Traffic circles outlive usefulness Experts agree: They've been 'roundabout' long enough

Meredith Whitten
Editor

In the movie "European Vacation," the Grizwald clan ventures overseas and hits the highways of London, eventually encountering a traffic circle, or a roundabout as the British call them. Clark Grizwald maneuvers and weaves, but can't steer the family car off the roundabout. Stuck, they circle for hours.

While the scene, with Clark pointing out Big Ben and Parliament as the family repeatedly passes the landmarks, is humorous, it emphasizes a point: many traffic circles have outlived their usefulness.

With only a handful left on Texas' state system, traffic circles, it seems, have gone the way of the dinosaurs. Once an engineering marvel, they are all but obsolete now, giving way to extensive interchanges and complex signing and signaling.

But what caused the demise of traffic circles?

In the days before massive, multilevel interchanges, traffic circles — officially dubbed rotary intersections — effectively served a valuable purpose. They brought travelers from the outskirts into the hub of town. They also facilitated travel: You could take a road into the city, hook up with a different leg and head off in another direction. But as towns — and traffic — grew, circles became more of a problem than a solution.

Texas hasn't built a circle on its state system in decades. In fact, instead of building them, TxDOT has been removing them.

"In Texas, they are considered undesirable from an operational standpoint," John Thornton, field coordination engineer in the Traffic Operations Division, said. "They are rarely included in newly designed roadways."

One obvious reason why circles aren't used anymore is capacity. With multiplying traffic volumes, circles — most of which were designed for a maximum of 3,000 vehicles an hour — simply cannot handle increasing mobility needs.

Motorists also can find traffic circles confusing.

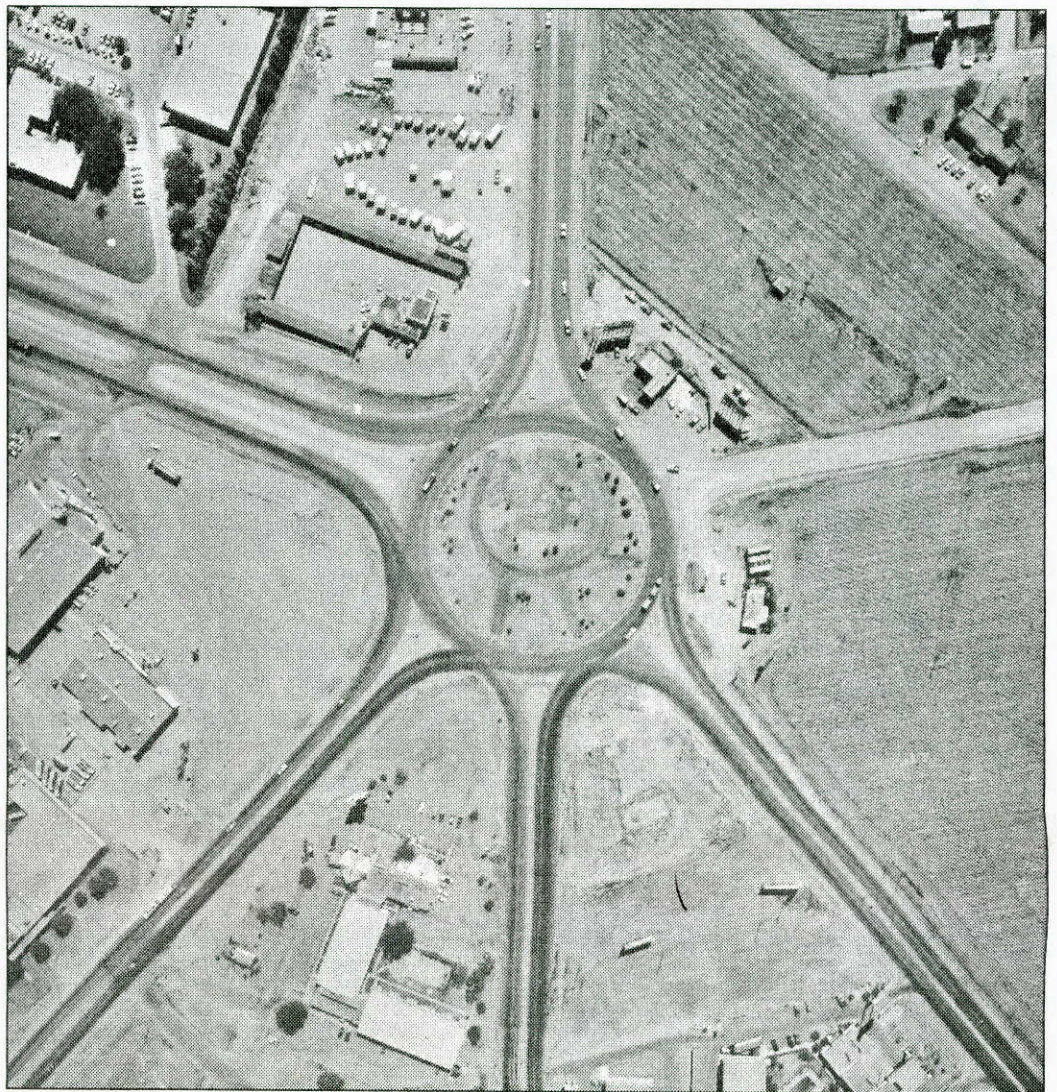
"There is quite a merging condition going on," said Mark Marek, geometric design engineer in the Design Division. "Motorists have difficulty maneuvering in a short radius."

Difficulty maintaining and signing the facilities can cause problems, too. Because of circles' short length — or diameter — there is limited distance in which to place signs, resulting in a number of signs close together. Drivers miss signs and, consequently, their exit. Like Clark Grizwald, motorists can literally get stuck on a circle.

"Motorists are primarily concerned with staying on the road and not being run over, so they may miss signs and end up going around several times before maneuvering off the circle," Thornton said.

These hazards add up to increased opportunities for collisions.

"At higher traffic volumes you can generally expect some rear-end and sideswipe collisions," Thornton said. "Many can be attrib-



uted to local motorists who know their way and move quickly mixed with confused out-of-town motorists who are being careful and moving slowly."

TxDOT does not keep records on the number of circles. A quick survey revealed a few remaining on the state system, all of which have flirted with removal.

...

The 63-year-old Waco traffic circle has been at the center of controversy for years. The circle stands where five roads — LaSalle Avenue, Circle Drive, Valley Mills Drive (Loop 396), US 77 and the Interstate 35 north frontage road — converge.

In the late '80s, the department began widening I-35 through Waco. Plans called for northbound frontage roads and a traffic

This view of Lubbock's traffic circle shows the typical spoke-and-hub design. A three-level interchange replaced the circle in 1989.

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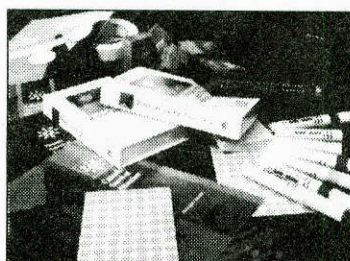
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New procedures outlined for Workers' Comp

Despite recent changes, workers still must report injury to supervisor promptly

Melynda Olivares
Occupational Safety Division

Last year, the 74th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1089, which made changes to the Workers' Compensation Law. Consequently, TxDOT's Occupational Safety Division (OCC) has implemented new procedures to comply with the new statute and the resulting rules passed by the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission (TWCC). The changes put more responsibility on supervisors and help employees better understand their rights and responsibilities.

One thing, though, has not changed: To preserve the right to make a workers' comp claim, employees must promptly inform their supervisor of any injury. According to the statute, employees must report the injury within 30 days of the date the employee knew, or should have known, of the injury or disease. Failure to report an injury on time can lead to benefits being denied.

New procedures:

- In cases concerning lost time, occupational diseases, death, or a third-party or questionable injury, employees should contact OCC at 512.416.3400 during work hours. In the case of a fatality or severe third-party accident, calls should be made as directed in the OCC manual for after-hours accidents.

After contacting OCC, the employer's First Report of Injury must be faxed to OCC at 512.416.3420 within 24 hours. If a fax is not available, the report must be mailed immediately to OCC. OCC now becomes involved in the claim process earlier than in the past. Under the new rules, employers must mail the First Report of Injury directly to OCC, not to TWCC as in the past. Originals of all completed reports ultimately must be sent to OCC (P.O. Box 149148, Austin, Texas, 78714-9148).

- According to HB 1089, the supervisor will provide the employee (or mail to the employee's last known address) with a written copy of the First Report of Injury and a summary of the employee's rights

and responsibilities at the time the claim is reported to OCC. A summary of employee rights and responsibilities will be distributed to supervisors within 30 days.

Supervisors must maintain a record of the dates that all reports are sent to OCC and of the dates the reports are provided to the injured employee. A place for the date is provided on the new forms.

- A supervisor also now must file a Supplemental Report of Injury (Form 490) within three days of the employee's return to work, or when the employee experiences additional days of disability. The employee will receive a copy of the report at the same time it is mailed to OCC. Once again, the supervisor must maintain a record of when the form was provided to the employee. This should be noted on the bottom of the forms. Failure to comply could result in a \$500 fine.

OCC introduced the new procedures and responsibilities in a new Workers' Compensation Section Reporting Guide (revised in January 1996). The guide, which will be distributed to all districts, divisions and special offices, will provide more detailed information of the procedures as well as a supply of revised forms. After receiving the new guide, the old forms become obsolete and should be recycled.

On a clerical note, when forms are filled out, all blanks must be completed, especially on the First Report of Injury. OCC needs as much information as possible to process these claims efficiently. TWCC is serious about complying with their procedure, and specifies a timeframe for distributing forms to involved parties. Failure to comply may result in fines.

With all the rules and forms, filing a workers' compensation claim can be overwhelming and frustrating, but OCC has staff ready to help. Questions should be directed to OCC (512.416.3400). OCC staff members are available to visit any district, division or special office for on-site training. ★

Commission OKs maintenance program for airports statewide

A state airport maintenance program, designed to assist local governments in the repair and maintenance of general aviation airports, has been authorized by the Texas Transportation Commission. The program will begin on a pilot basis in 55 counties in the Abilene, Amarillo, Lufkin, Pharr and Tyler areas.

Under the program, TxDOT will expand existing roadway maintenance programs to cover publicly owned airports, and will match local funds to pay for airport maintenance.

"We know local governments are strapped financially and they are having a hard time taking care of the many airport maintenance needs," said Bill Burnett, TxDOT executive director. "We think it's a good investment of state resources to help out and keep this part of our transportation system in good shape."

Some of the maintenance activities that TxDOT will assist in include pavement

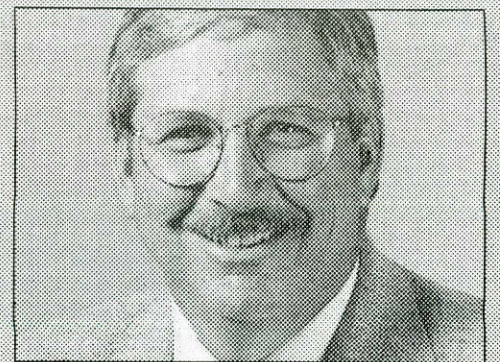
maintenance, pavement striping and vegetation management.

Matching funds will be on a 50/50 basis up to a \$10,000 maximum per airport, and will not exceed \$500,000 in total state funds.

As the state's transportation agency, TxDOT administers a \$20 million annual Airport Capital Improvement Program to improve and upgrade the aviation system in Texas.

"Not only will the pilot program enhance our overall aviation efforts, but it's also good business," said Tom Griebel, TxDOT's assistant executive director for Multimodal Transportation. "An aggressive maintenance program will help to protect the taxpayers' investment in our airport system."

The airport maintenance program will enhance TxDOT's ongoing aviation program, optimize the use of available resources, and enhance communication and coordination with local officials, all of which are goals of TxDOT's strategic plan. ★



TxDOT Answer Man seeks correspondents

TxDOT employees have been noticeably uninquisitive lately, as the mail for "Ask Bill" has dwindled the past few months. So, if you've got a burning question for Bill, now's your chance.

Just jot down all your questions, your name and where you work, and send it to "Ask Bill" c/o Public Information Office, Main Office, Austin, or 125 E. 11th St., Austin, 78701.

We'll withhold your name in *Transportation News* if you request it, but Bill doesn't respond to anonymous letters. ★

Transportation News is published for employees and retirees of the Texas Department of Transportation. Contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, TxDOT.

Published by the Public Information Office, 125 E. 11th, Austin, TX 78701-2483.
E-mail: pio@onr.com
Circulation: 19,500

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Dadian-Williams sees Partnering as tool

11-year vet says, 'Do it because you want to, not because you have to'

What can you say about an employee who is part engineer, part manager, part secretary, part facilitator, part consultant and part dynamo, and is articulate, enthusiastic, engaging and completely unafraid to speak her mind?

Annie S. Dadian-Williams, P.E. (as is printed on her business cards) not only manages the Partnering Program for TxDOT's Continuous Improvement Office, she lives, eats and breathes the Partnering Program.

"My whole experience with partnering has been good," the 11-year department veteran said. "The program had already started in the Construction and Maintenance Division when I came on



Eloise Lundgren

A Day in the Life

make better grades in chemistry if I wanted to go to medical school."

So she switched to engineering as a major, "but I started without knowing what kind of engineer I wanted to be," she continued. "I finally picked civil engineering because you can see what you're doing. You know, like with concrete — you can watch it go from one form to another; it's something tangible. I don't think I'd like being an electrical engineer; you can't see an electrical current."

Born in New York, Dadian-Williams moved to Miami at age 10 when her father was transferred there by his employer. "I attended a junior college in Miami and then I transferred to Texas A&M," she said. "Does that make me a double whammy — both a Yankee AND an Aggie?" No comment, I told her.

"I came to Texas to check out A&M, and I really thought there was more to Bryan-College Station than there is," she related. "Boy, was I wrong. A&M is the town. At first I thought, 'what have I done? Have I made a mistake in coming here?'"

Dadian-Williams rapidly changed her mind, and then really sealed her fate when she met, during her last semester, another Aggie who was to become her husband. "Ken and I were married on Valentine's Day," she said, smiling. Ken, an architect, and the outgoing partnering guru have a son, Zachariah, who is 4.

Upon graduation, Dadian-Williams got a job in the centralized design section of the Houston District, where she praised both the facilities and management.

"The Houston District had, for that time, state of the art equipment," she remembered, "and my supervisor was so understanding and flexible he allowed me to work from 4 a.m. until noon so I could get computer (CADD) time.

She was also given the opportunity to work on several special projects before she moved on to her next assignment, which was in the San Antonio District working at an urban residency on the city's south side.

"Raymond Stotzer was still the district engineer in San Antonio at that time," Dadian-Williams said. "Actually, he was on his way to Austin when I arrived, but the most amazing thing was that any time I met him after that he always remembered my name and knew what I was working on."

Annie S. Dadian-Williams manages the Partnering Program for TxDOT's Continuous Improvement Office. "Partnering is a tool," she says, "just like a hammer or a screwdriver or a hand-mixer. But partnering's not it; people are it."

She spent time in this residency as a design and construction project engineer. Then, ever on the move, she left to go to the New Braunfels Area Office, "where I really got to see the maintenance side of the

department," she said. "I guess working in a rural environment, you get to see more of that side and can really appreciate the amount of work they perform with limited personnel, and the close relationship they develop with their community."

Noting that her time in the field provided her good experience, Dadian-Williams then took advantage of massive department retirements to grab a job in the Construction and Maintenance Division, where she got involved in the partnering program.

"I've worked my way up from the bottom and I think that's important — to come up the hard way," she said. "That way, I know I can do any task myself. This is the best way I know to earn respect from others, because, you know, you can't demand respect; you have to earn it.

"I learned every time I was the new kid on the block," Dadian-Williams continued, "that respect always does not go hand-in-hand with position and experience; it always had to be earned in every situation."



Eloise Lundgren, PIO

board, but I've added a few more responsibilities since moving to Continuous Improvement."

Prior to the partnering concept, according to Dadian-Williams, the relationship between TxDOT and contractor was "OK in some cases and, in others, uneasy at best. We didn't spend much time getting to know one another," she explained.

By 1992, TxDOT officials realized something was needed to make the agency/contractor relationship more efficient and cost-effective, and the process, as Dadian-Williams put it, "needed to be more than a bunch of guys going to a deer lease together. We realized that we don't have to like each other, but we do have to work together."

So partnering was born.

"Partnering is a tool," she said, "just like a hammer or a screwdriver or a hand-mixer, and it's constantly evolving. But partnering's not it; people are it."

"I have to remind people constantly," Dadian-Williams continued, "that sometimes partnering doesn't work, but that's OK. You shouldn't do things because you feel you have to — you should do it because you want to."

Please see Dadian-Williams, page 15

TxDOT continues 'Eye on Earth' role

Richard Goldsmith
Environmental Affairs Division

If the third time's the charm, perhaps the same holds true for the third year. The environmental education television series "Eye on Earth" embarked on its third year Oct. 18.

The program, produced by the Texas Environmental Awareness Network — of which TxDOT is an active member — and the Texas Education Agency's T-Star network, airs monthly via satellite to schools all over Texas. Due to an interesting set of circumstances, the program was watched by a growing audience of schoolteachers, administrators, students and the general public — this year.

The Texas Legislature approved funding to equip school districts statewide with satellite dishes. This will make access to "Eye on Earth" easier for teachers who can ask librarians to tape the show if they can't watch it live from 3:30 to 4 p.m. one Wednesday a month.

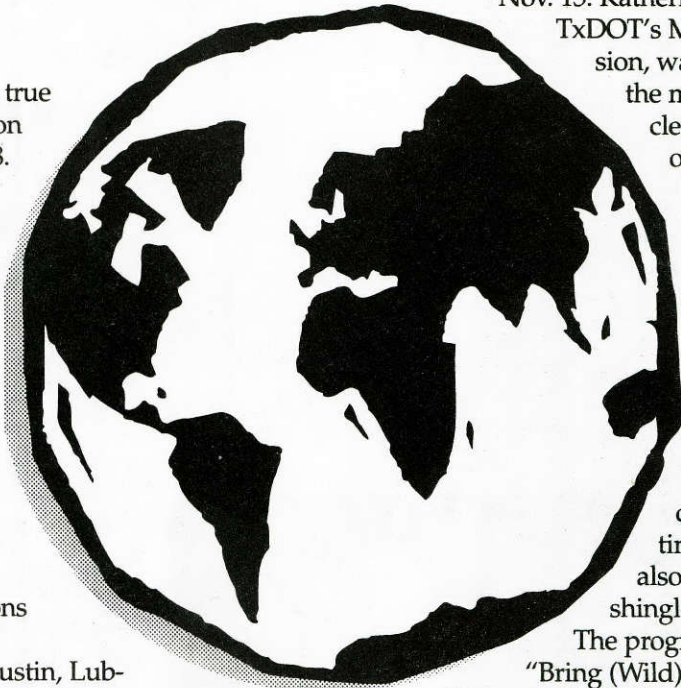
Also, the program has been picked up by cable stations across the state.

Communities such as Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, Lubbock, McAllen and Laredo broadcast the show on local access stations while others carry it live.

There is even an effort to raise funds to make copies of the past two years' programs and distribute them to teachers.

"Eye on Earth's" format includes such segments as Environmental Events, Career Corner and Classroom Connection. These will be oriented increasingly toward required learning objectives and activities teachers can use in the classroom.

This year's season premiere, "What to Do with Waste," aired Oct. 18 and focused on recycling and Texas Recycles Day, which fell on



Nov. 15. Katherine Hargett, director of TxDOT's Materials and Tests Division, was on hand to talk about the many ways TxDOT recycles. Hargett recapped one of TxDOT's activities for last year's Texas Recycles Day — a toilet-crushing demonstration — and told how the porcelain material is mixed with crushed rock to form road base. She discussed successful research that has allowed TxDOT to use crumb rubber from used tires for seal coat and may also allow use of old roofing shingles as well.

The program schedule included: "Bring (Wild) Life to Your Classroom,"

"Energize Your Classroom," "Careers That Make a Difference," "The Hows and Whats of Environmental Education," "Wising Up to Waste," "Water, Water, Everywhere" and "Animals, Air and Eco-Affairs."

The Environmental Affairs Division (ENV) served as host and coproducer of several shows. In addition to Hargett, TxDOT guests have included Don Clark, former director of the Travel and Information Division; Paul Northcutt of the Construction and Maintenance Division; Imelda Barrett of the Austin District; Doris Howdeshell, director of Travel and Information; and Carlos Swonke of ENV. ★

Accountant facade belies performer's heart

Meredith Whitten
Editor

By day he's a mild-mannered accountant in the Austin District. But when the 5 o'clock whistle blows, Brian Moody becomes a vivacious entertainer.

For the past 5 years, Moody has spent much of his after-work hours as an active member of River City Pops, an amateur community "pop" music group in Austin. The group's 40 members share a passion for music and performing.



Brian Moody, right front, is an accountant for the Austin District. Off the clock, he trades numbers on paper for musical numbers on stage with River City Pops.

More than a choral group, River City Pops combines fast-paced choreography and imaginative staging with exciting costumes and original medleys.

Members come from all walks of life.

"The group is made up of very few, if any, 'music' people who perform professionally. We all have other jobs. There are

lawyers, apartment locators and teachers. But we all have a love of music in common, and everybody brings a different strength to the group," Moody said.

River City Pops holds semi-annual concerts and performs at numerous public and private community events. The group has developed a loyal following and frequently sells out shows. Performances also run on Austin Access Television, and last year the group released its first CD. Funded by the city of Austin under the Austin Arts Commission, members — with the exception of the director and the band — volunteer their time and talents.

Moody joined River City Pops almost by accident.

"A friend called and said he was going to listen to them sing, but I backed out of going with him," Moody said. "I'd seen what I thought were groups like this before and I didn't really enjoy it."

A few weeks later, the director called Moody and said his friend had mentioned that Moody might be interested in auditioning. Moody agreed; then the audition appointment slipped his mind.

"I don't know what happened, but I missed that audition," Moody said. "But the director called me back and asked if I was still interested. So I went and auditioned. Now I'm glad I did."

Moody started singing in junior high, eventually earning a bachelor's degree in music education from Southwest Texas State University. For 5 years he worked as the choir director at Leander Junior High School, but "I found out that teaching wasn't for me," he said. So, he came to work at TxDOT.

Not long after he started at the depart-

ment, he joined River City Pops. Although he had musical experience, this style of performing was new to him.

"All my experience came from choral groups so it was a learning experience for me to start dancing," he said. "When you say choreography, people think, 'They get up there and turn around a little bit.' But we actually do some intricate dance steps."

Moody said that although he joined the group as an outlet for his music, the members have come to mean more to him.

"We're like a family. We go to the movies, golf tournaments, to each other's homes. I've made some real good friendships. These are people that I probably never would have met and been friends with any other way."

Moody has displayed his talents for his TxDOT co-workers. When Claude Garrett, assistant district engineer in Austin, retired, Moody sang at his retirement party.

"I did a song called 'Can't find the street where I live' to tune of 'Street where you live' from 'My Fair Lady' about all the street name changes here in Austin," he said.

Many of his co-workers have been to River City Pops performances. Moody said River City Pops' performances offer a variety of entertainment, so the shows appeal to a wide variety.

"I've never known anybody who didn't enjoy the show," Moody said. "There was this guy who came up after one show and shook my hand and said, 'Great job. I wish I could do that.' It's nice to be able to get people in that probably would never go to the opera or the symphony because it costs so much or they think they wouldn't like it. And then, to have them come to our show

Please see Moody, page 12

Peek inside facilitator's bag of tricks

Right combination of tools, users is heart of Continuous Improvement initiative

Glen Larum
Odessa District

In any job, the right tools can make all the difference. Just ask a carpenter, mechanic or a plumber.

Or a meeting facilitator.

Facilitators have their own toolbox crammed with the implements of their trade.

There are tools to generate ideas, tools to collect data, tools to display data, tools to analyze data, tools to promote reaching consensus or reaching a mutual agreement, and tools to help plan actions.

The department at one time relied on the Governor's Center for Management Development to train employees in Continuous Improvement (CI) and facilitation skills. Since September, TxDOT's CI Office, armed with a pool of instructors from around the state, has been providing a four-day course on a request basis to train department employees in facilitation skills.

"The CI Office already has trained nearly 100 TxDOT employees from across the state on how to put those tools to use," said Tom Love, who oversees the CI facilitator training. "In addition, there were 42 people who participated in the Texas Quality Service Train-the-Trainer 13-day program offered by the Governor's Center."

The combination — facilitators and their toolboxes — is at the heart of TxDOT's Continuous Improvement initiative to improve the TxDOT business process.

"I think using facilitators and the tools can make meetings more efficient and effective," Love said.

During meetings, when trained facilitators see the need to move the process along, they open the CI toolbox to one of its six compartments.

To generate ideas, they can pull out the brainstorming or brain-writing tools. If it is data collection they are after, they can use check sheets, interviews or surveys. For displaying that data, there are bar charts, frequency distribution charts, histograms, pie charts, Pareto charts or time charts.

"Tools can be used for a specific purpose, or in conjunction with other tools, depending on the situation," said Love.

Data analysis tools include cause-and-effect analysis, force-field analysis, cost-benefit analysis and Pareto analysis (determining major causes). A fifth set of tools helps

groups reach consensus. These tools include a balance sheet, criteria rating form and weighted voting, among others.

"These tools help teams focus and select an issue or issues from a larger list," said Love, explaining the consensus reaching tools. "They can also assist the team in reaching agreement on the issue or issues themselves."

A final group of tools is designed to aid in planning action.

"Flow charts, Gantt charts, pert charts and action-planning worksheets help the team in planning any actions they need to take to resolve the issue they have been working on," he added.

To the untrained, those tools can sound like just so many items in a box, but the entire set will improve meeting productivity, according to facilitation advocates.

There are some dramatic converts to their use. The Lufkin District is using facilitators for all its team meetings, according to Jim Athey, one of the nearly 100 trained TxDOT facilitators and the district's director of administration.

"We use facilitators at every team meeting and what makes these facilitators effective is their use of these tools," said Athey.

"The tools that I really enjoy using the most are the brainstorming tools — trying to capture as much information as you can to attack a problem," he explained. "They encourage participation from each member of the team, then the facilitator uses other tools to evaluate all their ideas, which helps them come up with a viable solution to an issue."

The use of these tools is not an entirely new idea, according to Athey, but widespread education throughout the department in their use is new — especially combined with the team problem-solving concept.

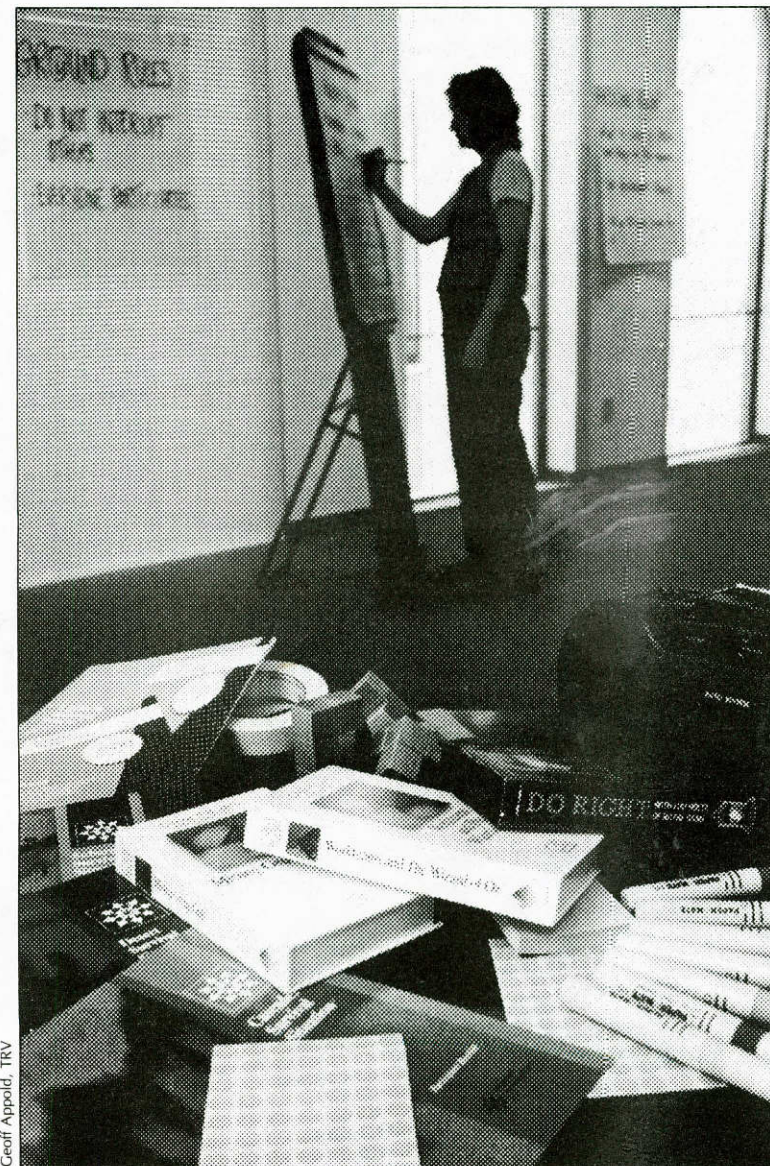
"They (the tools) are easy to learn to use," Athey emphasized. "And team members can have a lot of fun learning how to use them. Plus, they can be useful for any organization, not just TxDOT. I have applied the tools to church group meetings."

Gary Ray, a right-of-way employee in the Houston District who has been trained as a facilitator, echoed Athey's endorsement of the Continuous Improvement toolbox.

"These tools really help a team to zero in on the nature of the problem," said Ray. "For example, if you have a lot of measur-

able criteria to evaluate, then there is one tool — the Criteria Analysis Scale — that is a good one to use to assess the possible solutions and prioritize them.

"The biggest benefit is that these tools create a systematic approach to solving problems that replaces the intuitive or gut-feeling approach," he said. "Where, in the past, maybe three or four people would reach different solutions based on those feel-



Facilitators attend team meetings armed with more than just pens and paper. Hours of preparation and a bag full of materials, or tools, are necessary.

ings, using these tools can help a group reach consensus on one solution."

TxDOT facilitators are spreading the message throughout the department. The right tools can make all the difference. ★

Safety-sensitive employees now subject to drug testing

As of Feb. 1, the department requires pre-employment and post-accident testing of all employees who perform safety-sensitive activities.

This broad category includes any activity which could cause catastrophic consequences to another employee or the traveling public if performed under the influence of drugs. Examples include flagging, repairing signs or signals, and performing lab tests using hazardous materials.

All employees are required to complete a Safety Sensitive Certification form. Employees who perform one or more activities

identified on the form will be subject to testing.

TxDOT began alcohol and drug testing in 1989 for ferry boat crews in Galveston and Aransas Pass. Crewmembers are subject to pre-employment, post-accident, reasonable cause and random testing.

Commercial drivers, including heavy-equipment operators and maintenance employees became subject to pre-employment, post-accident, reasonable cause and random testing in 1995. Contributed by the Employee Relations Section, Human Resources Division ★

Map project at end of the road

Digital version will be boon to anyone who now uses a paper map

Jeff Carmack
Editor

Imagine that you had to draw a map of Texas that included all 254 counties, all 25 TxDOT districts, every highway, every farm-to-market and ranch-to-market road, and bridge on the state system. Then, imagine you had to turn your map into a digital format that could be used by computers. Then, imagine you had build a computer file that included all those features, plus the conditions of all those roads and bridges — their length, number of lanes, status of pavement and how rutted they were. Then, imagine you had to link the map and the file so you could ask your computer to show you, for instance, all the farm-to-markets with a daily traffic volume of 2,000 vehicles per day.

Kinda makes your head hurt, doesn't it?

Well, this is pretty much the chore that the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) will wrap up at the end of March.

The end product is an intelligent geographic information system (GIS) basemap.

Lorraine Stryjak, director of data management for TPP, said the project began when TxDOT converted 4,400 USGS quad sheets (United States Geodetic Survey maps) of the state into digital format.

This chore, just the first step in the herculean task, was finished in 1992, and took seven department cartographers six years to complete. Stryjak described this step as basically tracing the maps with a pen-like instrument that feeds the information into a computer.

Once this was done, Stryjak said, the next logical step was to convert these maps into a basemap. So, in June 1993, TxDOT formed the GIS Basemap Team to determine how to convert these digital maps into an intelligent basemap. The team comprised employees from TPP's Mapping Branch and the Information Systems Division.

Another step in the process was "line cleaning," a tedious process of connecting map lines that overshot or undershot their connec-

tions. Inmates at the Ferguson Correctional Facility in Midway performed this work (see story below), at a savings to the department of \$187,000.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice broadened the scope of work by line cleaning not just all the roads on the state system, but all of the roads in the state. The original scope of the project encompassed about 77,000 centerline miles of roadway; including all the roads in the state boosted this figure to 293,000 miles.

A crucial step in making the map work the way it's supposed to is "tagging, or adding intelligence," Stryjak said. Tagging ties records in the data base to physical markers in the field, she said.

"Each little segment of road has to be told who it is and where it is, using the Texas Reference Marker system as physical references," she said. "For example, you have to tell a line that it is Highway whatever, and it begins at reference marker 122 plus 150 feet and goes to marker 200 plus 300 feet."

The team got the go-ahead from TPP Director Al Luedecke, and should be finished by the end of the month.

A major benefit of the GIS basemap, Stryjak said, is that it uses a map on a screen to deliver analytical information that in the past would have been delivered as a computer printout. Just within the department, she said, the digital map will be an invaluable tool to anyone who currently uses a paper map.

A GIS and the base map can be used to deliver enormous amounts of information of an almost infinitely variable diversity, Stryjak said.

"A user can tell the computer 'show me all the four-lane highways in the state, in a given district, a given county, and show me their surface type,'" she said. "Or, 'show me just the FMs in the state with a daily traffic volume greater than 20,000 vehicles,'" all those kinds of conditional statements."

To display this kind of information in the past, Stryjak said, users had to hand-color maps. "We had lots of people hand-coloring," she said, "and we just don't have the luxury of taking that kind of time anymore." ★

Inmates help on map project, save TxDOT \$187,000

Jeff Carmack
Editor

In the movies, convicts are sometimes pictured working on a rockpile, busting stones to make gravel for roads. Making little ones out of big ones, the practice is called.

In Texas, some cons helped make little maps of our big state.

Inmates at the Ferguson Correctional Facility in Midway, guests of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), completed a project for TxDOT doing tedious, time-consuming work that would have cost the department thousands of dollars.

Lorraine Stryjak, director of data management for the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP), was instrumental in getting the job done.

In 1992, the department had just converted 4,400 USGS quad sheets (United States Geological Survey maps) of the state into digital format. Stryjak described this chore as basically tracing the maps with an instrument that feeds the information into a computer. The conversion took seven department cartographers six years to complete.

In June 1993, TxDOT formed the GIS Basemap Team to determine how to convert these digital maps into an intelligent

basemap. The maps contained errors that had to be corrected before they could be converted.

Stryjak had determined that the most expensive component of such a conversion was data development, and the most expen-

“It's not often in our work that we get a chance to give something back to society this way, and I found it gratifying to be able to do so.”

Lorraine Stryjak
Transportation Planning
and Programming Division

sive component of data development was labor. She discovered that in Texas prisoners don't have to be paid for their work, so the answer to this problem was a no-brainer.

This is where the Ferguson inmates come into the picture. Their task was "line-cleaning" — electronically connecting map lines that overshot or undershot their connections.

Stryjak had earlier met with members of TDCJ's Industries Division to explain her needs. Within months, TDCJ had approved the formation of a GIS training program.

Two TDCJ civilian managers took a week of training at TxDOT to learn about linecleaning, and TxDOT personnel went to Ferguson to assist with software acquisition and installation. To see if inmates could do the job, they were given a sample of maps to line-clean. These samples were compared to work done on identical maps by TxDOT personnel, and Stryjak was certain they were up to the task.

Stryjak said, "We send them digital files on tape; they run software and look for anomalies, which they correct and return." Anomalies are mainly "overshoots" and "undershoots," Stryjak said. She illustrated each by drawing a "T." If the vertical stem of the T goes past the horizontal top bar, that's an overshoot. If the stem and top bar fail to meet, that's an undershoot.

The Ferguson inmates not only completed the task on time, but saved the department \$187,000 in the process.

The GIS training program was begun by TDCJ's Texas correctional Industries Division. Vocational training is a cornerstone of the division's work. Through training, TDCJ hopes to ease inmates' transition back into mainstream society upon their release. Stryjak was pleased to have played a role.

"It's not often in our work that we get a chance to give something back to society this way, and I found it gratifying to be able to do so." ★

WFS man in right place at Wright time

Dale Terry
Wichita Falls District

L.B. Spikes is a maintainer operator in the Bowie Maintenance Section in the Wichita Falls District. On the side, he runs an auction business and looks forward to retirement. His weekday mornings generally run about the same. He gets up, cooks some breakfast, eats and exercises a while on the treadmill.

But, his weekday routine changed on Jan. 11.

Spikes met a new friend that morning — something he hadn't planned on. In fact, he'd never even been in Randy's Kitchen in Bowie for breakfast. He was just sitting there enjoying breakfast before going to work when he heard the waitress scream for help.

Sid Wright works as a car salesman at one of the Bowie dealerships. Wright is a talker and he's good at it. His outgoing personality makes listeners hang on his every word. But that morning, Wright had a problem at Randy's Kitchen. He couldn't talk — he was choking.

Spikes didn't know what was wrong, but he could tell the waitress needed some quick help. He jumped from his chair and when he saw Wright, the car salesman was already blue and sliding from his chair. Spikes has taken first aid classes several times during

his TxDOT career and he knows the Heimlich maneuver. He quickly positioned himself behind Wright, made a fist and pulled. It worked. The matter that had clogged Wright's airway popped out. Immediately, he returned to his natural color and started getting better.

Then, Wright and Spikes formally met.

Neither man eats breakfast away from home very often. Neither had been in Randy's and they had never seen each other. But on this morning, both were in the right place at the right time.

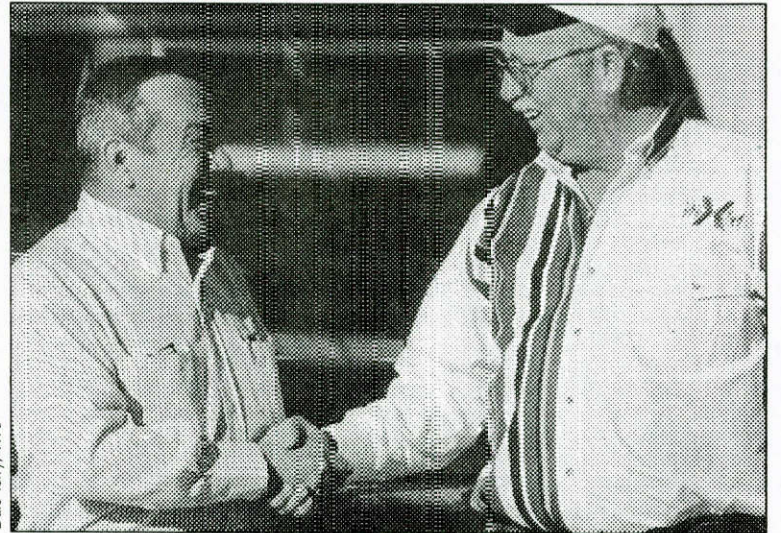
"I heard him coughing, but I couldn't see him. I thought he was OK," Spikes said. "But when I heard the waitress scream, I had an idea I'd better get there and do what I could."

Wright expressed his appreciation for Spikes' quick reflexes, especially in a situation where every second counts.

"Boy, it really happens fast," Wright said. "I had just taken a swallow of water and I was choked. I tried to get my head back and open my airway, but I couldn't. You feel yourself going out and you just can't do anything about it."

It was probably one of the few times in Wright's life he was speechless and he quickly sank into unconsciousness.

Wright added, "I sure am glad that Spikes



Dale Terry, WFS

Sid Wright, left, likely owes his life to L.B. Spikes of the Wichita Falls District. Spikes performed the Heimlich Maneuver on Wright in a diner in Bowie when the car salesman choked on a piece of food.

was there to help me. I don't think I'd have made it."

Spikes said everyone blamed the cook at Randy's for making bad biscuits. Then the morning's excitement gave way to the routine of another workday. He said he never thought his training would be needed, but then you never know when you'll meet a new friend either. ★

Dallas PIO gets academic with police course

James Black
Dallas District

Mark Ball knows what it takes to go after the bad boys.

Ball, public information officer in the Dallas District, recently completed a citizens police academy, gaining new insight into the real-life hazards and obstacles faced by officers in law enforcement.

"It certainly opens your eyes and clears up a lot of misunderstanding that people have about police work," Ball said. "It makes me more sympathetic to what police have to endure and go through."

Plano police say that's exactly the point. The 12-week citizens academy, sponsored by the Plano Police Department, is designed to give residents a revealing glimpse into how the local police department operates.

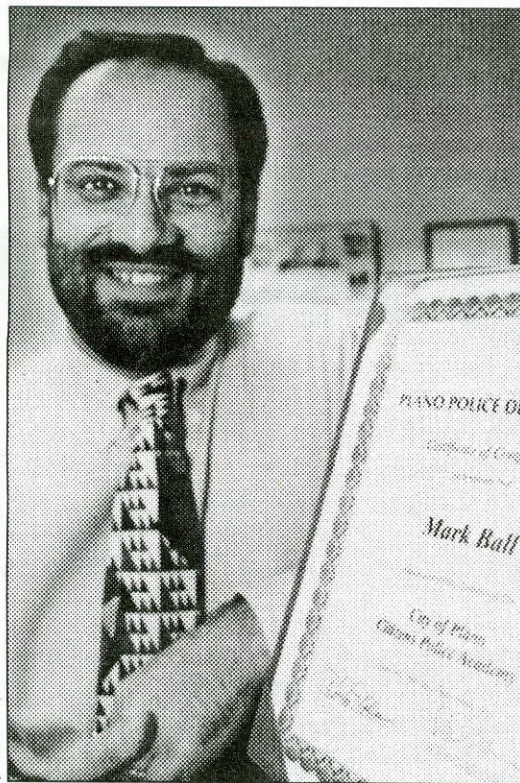
"Our biggest problem is that most people don't understand what a police officer does or what being an officer entails," Sgt. Kirby Miller of the Plano Police Department said. "That can lead to a great deal of misunderstanding between the police and the public."

Over the course of 12 weeks, Ball and 35 classmates in the Plano Citizens Police Academy were introduced to various segments of law enforcement. Plano residents comprised the class, which received demonstrations on police communications, arrest procedures and firearm safety.

For Ball, the most interesting section of the once-a-week class was the canine unit. Officers brought in their four-legged counterparts, introducing the class to the history and success rate of Plano's canine program.

"The canine patrol demonstrations were incredible," Ball said. "I never knew so much went into training these police dogs."

"Of course, when they brought the dogs



James Black, DFL

“Plano is my home and I want to be as involved in my community as I can.”

Mark Ball
Dallas PIO

“into the classroom, the first thing you want to do is pet them, but you can't,” Ball remembered. “The dogs are working police officers and have to be treated as such.”

Ball also learned first-hand that police vehicles are not built for comfort.

“The space in the back seat is very

cramped,” said Ball, who jammed his 6-foot-2-inch frame into the seat for the experience. “But then, it's not made for the comfort of the person who's been arrested.”

“After a while, the course leads you around to that way of thinking,” Ball said. “You want these officers to go home at night and you want them to be protected in any way possible.”

Sgt. Miller said that's the goal of the citizens academy.

“That's exactly what we want,” he said. “We want people to come away with a different attitude about police work. When they see an officer making a traffic stop, we want them to rationalize and think things out before they rush to judge. Their knowledge is really going to help us.”

It also helps class participants.

“I feel a lot more secure living in Plano now,” Ball said. “Knowing how extensive their training is, it reassures me to know that these officers are there.”

Ball's involvement also provided a learning experience for Plano officers.

“When they found out I worked for TxDOT, they were asking me questions about speed limits, construction, you name it,” he said. “They wanted contacts for state information just like I wanted to network with them for future information.”

The future holds another opportunity for Ball to share information between agencies: he's enrolled in a 12-week Plano Citizens Fire Academy.

“The police academy was such a positive experience that the fire department decided to start one of its own,” Ball said. “I figured it's to my advantage to learn as much as I can about the department. Plano is my home and I want to be as involved in my community as I can.” ★

Teamwork key to incident management

Conference focuses on keeping traffic flowing through multi-agency cooperation

Meredith Whitten
Editor

A little ice on Texas highways can bring traffic to a grinding halt, as much of the state witnessed last month. In Austin, where an ice storm hit during morning rush hour Feb. 1, motorists chalked up more than 600 collisions by the lunch hour.

What frustrates many traffic engineers, though, are the daily incidents — vehicle accidents and breakdowns that tie up highway traffic.

The National Incident Management Coalition (NIMC), an ad hoc group of public and private sector organizations across the country, works to solve some of these problems. On the eve of Austin's recent ice storm, TxDOT's Austin District, in conjunction with NIMC, hosted an Incident Management Conference. Transportation officials from local and state agencies as well as representatives from the private sector met to examine incident management, the extent of incident problems, the benefits of proactive incident management, current programs under way in the Austin area and steps to take. The conference ended with several state and local officials signing a cooperative accord to work as a team in managing incidents.

Incident management aims to alleviate the problems and costs associated with incidents by responding timely and effectively. Examples of incidents vary greatly.

"An incident isn't just an accident, a spill or a rollover, it's anything that causes reduction of capacity on a roadway network," said David Gerard of the Austin Department of Public Works and Transportation. "It's something that causes an abnormal increase in traffic flow."

This can be anything from a multi-car pileup to a traffic jam caused by an animal loose on the road.

Nationwide, these incidents cause approximately 60 percent of the billions of vehicle hours lost annually to congestion on urban highways. Last year, Americans spent more than 2 billion hours to traffic jams — the equivalent of 22,800 years. The result, however, is more than just a waste of time; it's a huge economic cost to local, state and national economies.

Paul Lawrence, regional public affairs manager for United Parcel Service, said vehicles aren't all that come to a standstill in traffic jams — commerce does as well.

"We have a vested interest when our vehicles are stuck in traffic," he said. Lawrence told conference participants that having UPS vehicles caught in congestion accounts for a loss of \$51 million a year to the company.

Ken Williams, deputy chief with the Austin Police Department, said what may seem like a small-scale incident actually can have a large-scale effect.

"Incidents interrupt local national and, now with NAFTA, international traffic," Williams said.

For example, a traffic jam on Interstate 35 in downtown Austin affects more than area motorists; trucks carrying goods from Mexico can experience costly delays.

Attendees discussed how to use incident management to clear collisions and breakdowns quickly, while minimizing the resulting traffic jams.

They addressed the three phases of incident management: detection and verification, response and clearance, and traffic management and recovery.

Ismael C. Soto, assistant director of transportation planning in the Austin District, organized the conference. He said the conference focused on the need for an incident management program in the Austin area.

"There are towns smaller than Austin that are more prepared to handle incidents from a DOT point of view," Soto said. "The conference emphasized our need for incident management."

All speakers agreed that communication, cooperation and coordination are imperative if the various agencies are to provide an inci-

dent management plan that keeps traffic flowing and allows a timely and successful response. Having agreement on issues such as recognizing overlapping jurisdiction and responsibilities increases the effectiveness of every incident response, and ensures more prompt flow recovery.

Soto cited the recent ice storm as an example of a need for communication. APD closed the upper deck of I-35, unaware that TxDOT's ice plan called for keeping it open.

"With an incident management program, the preplanning would have prevented that conflict," Soto said.

Representatives discussed putting aside "turf" issues in developing an incident management plan. The signing of the cooperative accord symbolized the various agencies' commitment to that goal.

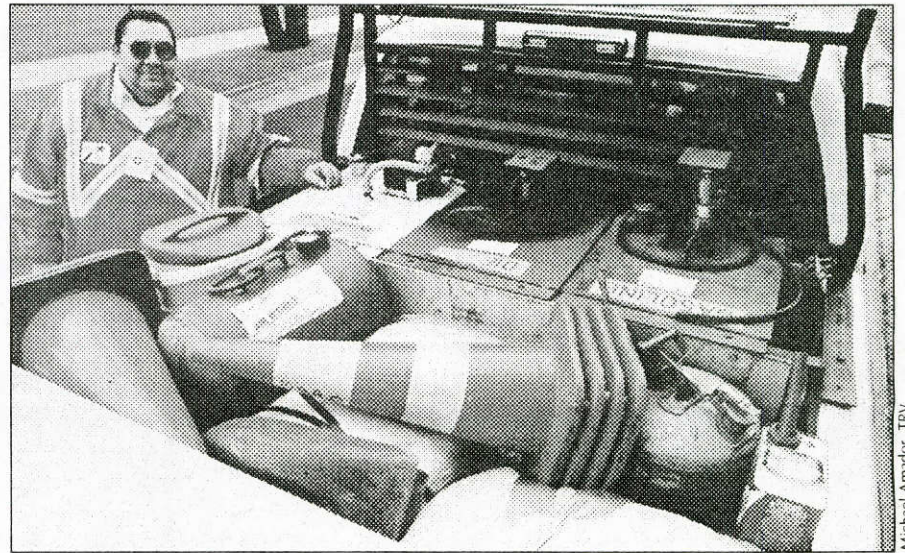
"All agencies involved have to work as a team, and get rid of turf," said APD Sgt. Sam Cox.

Cox, who also does traffic reports for KLBJ radio and KXAN-TV, stressed that it is vital for agencies to act quickly.

"The question is not if we're going to have an incident management program in Austin, but when," he said.

Statewide, TxDOT already has many incident management tools under its belt, including courtesy patrols, call boxes, media advi-

At right, Richard Salinas of the San Antonio District Courtesy Patrol displays the tools of his trade. Below, Austin District Engineer Bill Garbade signs a cooperative accord among the department and several state and local agencies, pledging to work as a team in managing incidents.



sories and variable message signs.

Soto said the conference emphasized the need for such tools in Austin.

"I think we attracted more attention and support for a courtesy patrol or transportation management center in Austin," he said.

With Austin's exploding growth, mobility and transportation will continue to be hot issues, making the need for an incident management plan designed to deal with situations from every day incidents to winter storms even more crucial.

"We're near an emergency situation with transportation in terms of keeping people moving," said Michael Aulick, transportation planning director for the Austin Transportation Study. "Incident management is at least as important as building a roadway. What's the point in building a road if we're not able to maintain it?" ★

Conditional Grant applications now available

Application materials for TxDOT's Conditional Grant Program are available for high school seniors and college students statewide. The expanded program includes females and more professional disciplines where minorities and females are underutilized in the department. Applications will be considered for civil engineering, computer science, communications/journalism and accounting degree areas.

Deadline for submitting application materials is 5 p.m. April 1. Mail applications to 125 E. 11th Street, Austin, 78701-2483. For information, contact Sherry Werneking at 512.706.6379. ★

RWIS a leap forward in winter maintenance

Tonya Detten
Amarillo District

"Couldn't you just look out the window to see if it's snowing?"

It's a question that has come up more than once when explaining the new Road Weather Information System (RWIS) recently installed in the Amarillo District.

The RWIS is a computer forecasting system that consists of sensors installed in the roadway, weather monitoring stations, and a computer network that gathers data at each site and compiles it for use. It can tell you if it's snowing, raining, foggy, windy, icy or dry on a selected roadway. It represents a revolution in the way transportation departments tackle winter maintenance.

At first, the RWIS may be hard to swallow for maintenance crews who traditionally have concentrated their winter maintenance on de-icing after a snow or ice struck the Panhandle. But Groom Maintenance Supervisor Randal Patterson said the system shows just how far the department has advanced in fighting slick roads.

"I remember when we 'flunkies' used to sit in the bed of a truck with a shovel scooping sand onto the roads because we didn't have enough sanders," Patterson said. "I never guessed someday I'd be using a laptop computer from my home to judge what the road surface is like."

Patterson said his laptop RWIS is basically the first computer he's ever used.

"It's very simple," he said. "If I can pull it up and use it, I think anyone can."

Patterson and dozens of other Amarillo District maintenance personnel can call up the RWIS central processing unit from home to get surface temperature, air temperature, weather conditions — such as ice or rain — and the road's freezing point.

"Some of the most helpful information is the freeze-point reading," Bruce Nipp, assistant director of operations in Amarillo, said. "We've been able to see a big difference in the freezing point after a road has been treated with anti-ice or de-icing chemical. One application reduced the road's freezing point from 31.2 degrees to 20

degrees. We can go back and see what the application was to duplicate it for the next snowstorm."

Amarillo Maintenance Supervisor Russell Luther said the best time to use the machine is long before storms hit.

"We usually have two or three guys out driving the roads when a storm is predicted. This system has the potential to eliminate the man-hours required in surveying the roads," Luther said. "The computer sits by my bedside and I'm able to tell when there's even a slight chance a road surface will freeze. Then I can call the guys out to verify it."

Of course, now that the system has been in use for several storms, the system's users see the need for some improvements. "It would really help to have more sensors," Patterson said. "And a radar system would be even more beneficial."

Nipp said the radar system is an added feature that is being considered. And Nipp sees the potential to add road sensors into road rehabilitation projects. "We think this system will be useful in the summer, too. We can use surface temperatures in several different construction and maintenance applications," he said.

The RWIS is just one new technology to come out of the Federal Highway Administration's Strategic Highway Research Program. Nipp said the RWIS can be used in combination with new anti-icing technology to create a more effective snow and ice removal program.

"The states of Colorado and Kansas went with a different company for their RWIS. So did the Dallas District. We look forward to the day when the programs will be compatible and we can get information from Colorado and share our information statewide," he said.

Nipp added that the Lubbock district soon will be getting several road sensors and will be able to share information with Amarillo. The Amarillo District installed five road sensors. Another sensor will be installed on Amarillo's heated bridge deck, a FHWA research project to be completed in November. The RWIS will aid in the bridge deck's operation by telling maintenance crews when to turn on the heating system. ★

RWIS is a computer forecasting system that consists of sensors installed in the roadway, weather monitoring stations, and a computer network that gathers data at each site and compiles it for use.

As 'blizzard of '96' hits, TxDOT employees react quickly

Meredith Whitten
Editor

65 below zero in Bismarck. A wind chill of -20 in Chicago. Twenty-five inches of snow in New England.

Sounds cold, but not unthinkable. After all, it's supposed to be chilly in such places.

But Old Man Winter hit the Lone Star State hard last month, too.

Temperatures plunged below freezing across the state, as the wind chill in some parts dove as low as 40 below zero. And, cities statewide were paralyzed as blankets of ice, freezing rain, sleet and snow fell.

Although the "blizzard of '96" lasted just a few days, Feb. 1-4, TxDOT's response emphasized the department's vital role in providing safety — even in the dead of winter — to the traveling public.

Maintenance employees had their trucks loaded with sand and their engines revving before the winter weather hit. As temperatures dropped below freezing and roads and bridges became treacherous, employees moved out and sanded. When all the work was done, TxDOT employees had dumped more than 54,000 cubic yards of sand on Texas' highways. Maintenance crews also poured 1,270 tons of salt, 156,595 pounds of

other chemicals and 6,675 gallons of liquid chemicals on the state's frozen roads and bridges.

The sand may have meant an extra trip to the car wash, but without it, traveling would be impossible for many Texans.

This year, a new chemical, calcium magnesium acetate, was tested in several districts. CMA melts ice off the roads, and the department will likely rely more on it in the future. The chemical's success was evident in Austin, where the upper deck of I-35 through downtown stayed open during such a storm for the first time in history.

While maintenance crews worked outside, TxDOT's travel counselors were busy indoors.

No sooner had meteorologists begun predicting the storm than Texans grabbed their phones and called the department's 800 travel information line, which gives out road condition information.

During a normal week, the department receives 3,500 calls a week; between Feb. 1-4, 87,953 callers — an average of 21,988 per day — phoned in.

District hotlines were busy, too. Fort Worth's hotline, which had just been introduced earlier in the week, logged more than 12,000 calls. In Dallas, another 12,000 people called the district's hotline over a four-day period, more than a fifth of the total calls the

Dallas District received in all of 1995. The statewide number, 800.452.9292, was revamped last summer to provide better, faster service. About 90 percent of the callers during the storm received the information they needed using the hotline's automated menu. The record number of calls indicates the public's need for the service.

District and headquarters public information officers worked through the night to relay up-to-date road-condition and road-closure information to the news media and the public.

Efforts were reflected in the relatively low number of weather-related collision reported. Employees worked with representatives from other state and local agencies to ensure the safety of their fellow Texans.

The frenzy ended almost as quickly as it began. A week later, with sunny skies and balmy 70-100-degree weather across most of the state, the ice had melted and many Texans only had insurance claims or snowballs in their freezers to remind them of the blizzard of '96. ★

CATeam lends hand to those in need

Penny Mason
Lubbock District

Some people have all the luck. And then there are those who have no luck at all.

These aren't the people who struggle to make ends meet. Lots of people do that. For some, however, the ends never meet. These are the people who fall through the cracks in terms of government assistance. They make too much to get help and too little to survive.

Lubbock District employees formed a Community Action Team (CATeam) to raise money to help some local families who can't get assistance from other resources. The CATeam's first fund-raiser was a chili lunch held last month in the district offices. The team raised \$225.

"It's not much, but it's a start," said Christy Johnson, CATeam member. "I've always wanted to do something to help people. This gives me the opportunity to get involved and make a difference in someone's life."

The team meets monthly to decide on fund-raisers and how to distribute the money raised. Families are selected based on criteria set up by team members.

Team member Tony Huggins said the most frustrating part of volunteering is knowing that there are thousands of people who are



Penny Mason, LBB

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Christy Johnson
CATeam member

needy and that the team can help only a few.

"There is so much need and so few resources," said Huggins "so we need the guidelines to help us narrow the field."

The CATeam's mission is to provide support — either financial or by donating time or services — to families whose needs are not being met by other resources. The team will assist one family from three to six months, then identify another family in need. The CATeam uses the following criteria to select families:

- Nominations will be accepted from TxDOT employees and from outside agencies familiar with the needs of the public. Cases will be submitted to and reviewed by Lubbock District CATeam members.

“
Applicants must have serious financial need — such as overwhelming medical expenses or an inability to pay rent or utility bills. Assistance is served for families who cannot get help from federal or state agencies or other support agencies or charities.”

CATeam members are planning several fundraisers, including a car wash and garage sale in the spring. "We'll always be looking for ways to raise money," said member Andrew Chavez. "We plan on identifying other community resources that we can fall back on when the need is greater than what we can provide." Other CATeam members are Frank Phillips, Shelby Peoples, Jenny Rucker, William Ferrell, Linda Wilcox and James Chidester. ★

TxDOT honored at TPRA awards

Amidst a celebration of Texas' rich cultural heritage, including ballet folklorico dancers, oompah bands, folk singers, cowboy poets, jazz and mariachi music, the Texas Public Relations Association (TPRA) honored TxDOT in several categories at recent Silver Spur/Best of Texas Awards.

Transportation News Editor Meredith Whitten received the Best of Texas Award for an Internal Feature for her December 1995 *T-News* story, "Speed limits result of careful study."

The Travel and Information Division was awarded a Certificate of Merit in the Audiovisual: Multimedia-Still Image category for "Transportation: The Vital Link," the opening show at the 1995 Transportation Conference.

TxDOT's Watch Your Car anti-auto-theft campaign received recognition for its creators, Dallas advertising agency Oldfield-Davis Inc. The campaign received the Silver Spur Award in the Marketing-Non-profit category and Best of Texas recognition in the Institutional Advertising category.

The awards were presented Feb. 3. at

the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio. This year, TPRA received 213 entries, the most in the award program's history.

TPRA is an alliance of communication professionals from across Texas. It encompasses all fields, including private, government, non-profit, health care organizations and student members. The group's Silver Spur awards recognize outstanding achievement in developing and implementing comprehensive public relations campaigns and programs, while the Best of Texas categories honor achievement using specific communication tools, such as writing, public service announcements and audiovisuals.

"The department should be really proud of the recognition from TPRA. It emphasizes the outstanding job TxDOT is doing to provide information internally and externally," Eloise Lundgren, director of the Public Information Office, said.

"These awards are a testament to the teamwork and talent we have at the department." ★

Speed limits raised on 15,000 more miles of Texas highways

About 15,000 more miles of Texas highways soon will be getting a speed limit of 70 mph, but motorists should wait for the signs to change before driving faster.

The Texas Transportation Commission acted in January on phase three of a four-phase review of the state's 77,000-mile highway system.

Texas law, which took effect when the federally mandated 55-mph speed limit expired Dec. 8, sets a maximum speed limit of 70 mph during the day and 65 mph at night for passenger vehicles, 60 mph day and 55 mph night for trucks. The law allows the transportation commission to set speeds less than 70 mph if the lower limit is determined by engineering and traffic studies.

In total, about 23,000 miles of Texas highways will be posted 70 mph based on studies by TxDOT. Higher speeds already have been posted on many rural divided highways and undivided highways of four or more lanes.

The 40,000-mile Farm-to-Market Road system in Texas is being reviewed, but speed limit changes on the majority of those roadways are not expected until at least April.

As speed limit changes are phased in, motorists on Texas highways should comply with the posted speed limit signs.

"Again, we remind motorists that the safest thing for them to do is obey the posted limits," said Bill Burnett, TxDOT executive director. ★

Fund makes paying for college easier, cheaper

The Texas Tomorrow Fund, administered by the State Comptroller of Public Accounts, gives Texas families the chance to prepay tomorrow's college tuition at today's prices.

Enrolling in the Texas Tomorrow Fund is easy. Payments may be made through standard employee payroll deduction. Prepaid tuition contracts are offered for sale each year with repayment in installments. There is also the option of paying a lump sum.

Enrollment in the program runs from Jan. 2 to March 31, and purchasers have until May 1 to make the first payment.

Texas joins eight other states — Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wyoming — that have implemented prepaid tuition programs.

Questions about the program should be directed to your human resources officer. ★

New program stresses HRM functions

Two-day session provides introductory overview of roles, responsibilities

Donna Simmons
Chris White
Human Resources Division

To bolster understanding of TxDOT human resources functions, particularly by new HRM employees, the Human Resources Management (HRM) team has created a voluntary introductory program, the Human Resources Management Overview Program.

The two-day session provides an introductory overview of HRM's roles and responsibilities to human resources officers (HROs) and staff, division administrative managers, directors of administration, and other professionals who administer human resources and related programs.

Participation is limited to groups of 12 or fewer. Participants meet informally with Daffney Henry, assistant executive director for Human Resource Management, where she shares insight on the latest department human resources trends. Participants also visit work areas and meet representatives from each division and special office in HRM. This allows them to establish contacts who can assist them with questions, concerns or issues.

The team surveyed districts, divisions and special offices to gauge employee interest and determine topics to cover. This was the foundation for a program that best serves customers' needs, determining the level of interest in the program, putting together quality program materials and scheduling overview sessions to enable maximum participation.

A pilot program was conducted in July, with the official kickoff Sept. 13-14. Since then, more than 60 employees have attended. The 1996 season includes two sessions a month through March. Participants have included long-tenured to newly hired personnel, human resources assistants to directors of administration, and a deputy director.

Comments received about the program include:

•"Keep up the good job. I believe everybody should go to a program like this."

•"I have been with the department for 3 1/2 years and I thoroughly enjoyed this overview. It is so helpful to put a face with a name and to see how everyone is situated. I have to admit that I did not want to come but am glad I did. The size of the group was excellent. There was a lot of conversation and networking."

•"Thanks for all the hard work that went into putting this valuable information together for HROs. In our changing times, this was needed. The informal setting was perfect."

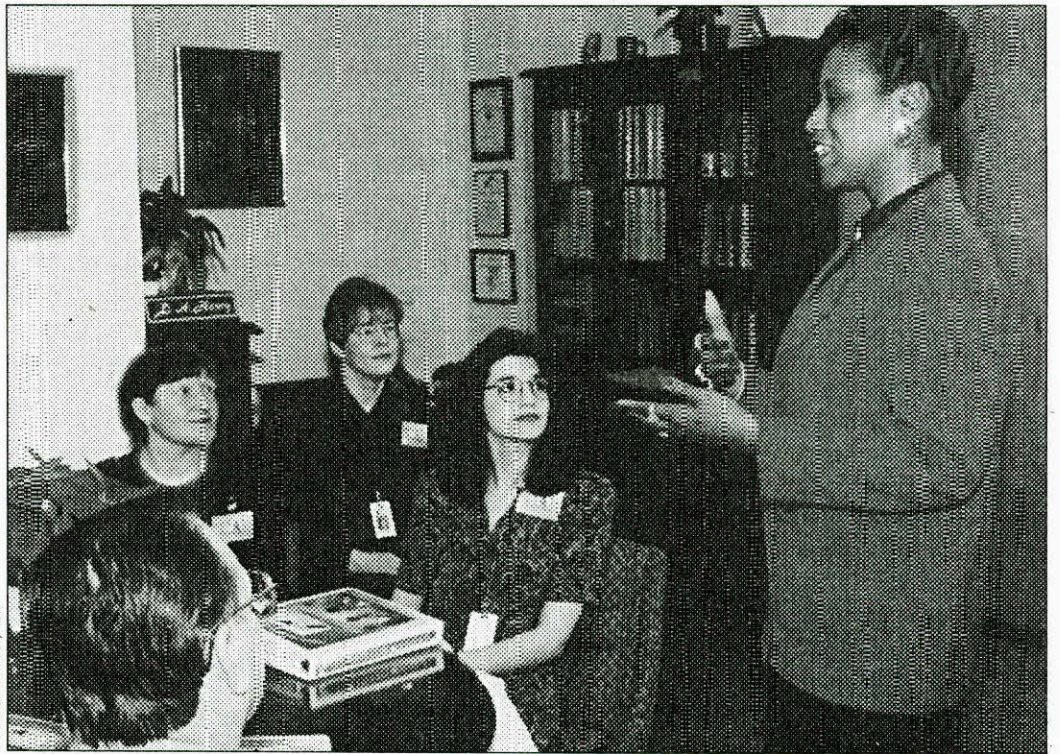
•"Outstanding — excellent overview — fits right in with Continuous Improvement and friendly approach as a customer."

•"It was a great program. — I feel like there are great things on the horizon for HRD and all people in the HRO field. And although there is a lot of work to be done, seeing the effort being put forth is encouraging."

•"Visiting the different offices was beneficial and interesting. Meeting section and division directors was helpful and showed true commitment to the overview and sharing info with HR professionals."

HRM has also created a customer service directory for the division. This directory helps employees determine who to contact on human resources matters and in locating written sources of information. The directory is in its second printing; copies will be distributed soon. All participants of the overview program receive a copy with their program materials.

While the overview program provides participants with a general understanding of the functions of HRM, a program also is



Michael Amador, TRV

being developed to respond to the needs of department human resources professionals for detailed, hands-on training. A new HRO training course will help standardize the application of TxDOT human resources policies and procedures, and improve policy implementation and customer service.

The course will cover topics such as processing personnel transactions, employee relations, job classification, employment law, workers' compensation, employee leave programs and handling public information requests. The course design team includes representatives from divisions and districts statewide. The course is scheduled to begin in August.

The response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive. The HRM Overview Program, the customer service directory and the HRO Training Course share a common goal: improving communications with customers and human resources partners, and creating a network that ensures successful business operations and services for all TxDOT employees. ★

Part of HRM's new Human Resources Management Overview Program is an informal session with Daffney Henry, assistant executive director for Human Resources Management.

Tradition continued with Independence Day golf tourney

Pearlie Bushong
Yoakum District

Continuing the tradition started last year, the Yoakum District held a golf tournament on Texas Independence Day March 2.

Participants fondly remember last year's tournament as the "Siberian Open," as 36 players proved that 25-mph winds, rain and a temperature in the low 30s are not ideal conditions in which to play golf. Finishing nine holes under those conditions certified each participant for membership in the IDTMSTBAG (It Doesn't Take Much Sense To Be A Golfer) club. Each received a certificate as a charter member in the club.

For Larry Howren, maintenance tech in the Austin County Maintenance Section, the Siberian Open was an experience he will never forget.

Howren was paired with retired Yoakum District employee Bill Schweers, an avid golfer who takes the game very seriously. Howren, a beginning golfer, plays more for fun than competition. As the two mismatched players rode in Schweers' spotless golf cart to the next hole, they became mired in a mud hole. Howren, being

the nice guy that he is, got out to push. As he shoved with all his might, the golf cart lunged forward, leaving Howren face down in the mud. Looking like a loser in a mud-wrestling match, Howren calmly walked up to the golf cart, opened the door and climbed in to continue the tournament. By the time he and Schweers finished, most of Howren's mud had transferred to the inside of the golf cart.

"Larry came dressed like Santa Claus — big red coat and green sweatpants," said Howren's co-worker, Frank White, maintenance tech in Austin County. "The next time I saw him was after the tournament started. He had mud dripping from his hat, inside his clothes and down his neck. My first thought was that he swung too hard at the ball and missed and fell down."

The winners felt like losers when it was announced there was a tie for first place. It took three playoff holes to determine the winning team. As the two four-player teams returned to battle the elements for the trophy, the rest of the teams huddled in the dry, warm clubhouse enjoying stew cooked by the course manager.

First place went to the team consisting of Jessie San Miguel, Richard Murr, Bill Klipple and George Schlemeyer. ★

Mark those calendars — Spring full of conferences

Spring doesn't just usher in bluebonnets, baseball and humidity. The upcoming months also bring a plethora of department-related conferences. Note that although some conferences and forums don't have registration deadlines, all attendees are encouraged to make hotel reservations early.

1996 East Maintenance Conference

March 20-21
Dallas, Harvey Hotel-Downtown

1996 West Maintenance Conference

March 27-28
El Paso, Camino Real Hotel
TxDOT sponsor: Construction and Maintenance Division

Provides an opportunity for employees to exchange ideas and information and to discuss policies, guidelines, new products, equipment, mutual problems and solutions. Anticipated topics include: maintenance management, bridge maintenance, contract management, environmental issues, roadway maintenance and roadside maintenance.

Registration deadline: Contact Pat Lewis in Dallas (214.320.6615, or GroupWise to PLEWIS) or Robert Tejada in El Paso (915.774.4330 or GroupWise to RTEJADA) to submit names of attendees

Cost: None
Contact: Jim Daily, 512.416.3187

Field Operations Conference

April 15-16
Austin, Wyndham Hotel
TxDOT sponsor: Construction and Maintenance Division

Engineers will leave this conference with updated methods and procedures involved in construction and maintenance and a clearer understanding of implementation of new specs. More uniformity for inspection of projects statewide will be developed.

Registration deadline: Submit questions and success stories to CMD by March 10; the Wyndham will hold rooms until March 25.

Cost: None
Contact: Judy Mitchell, 512.416.2443

ITS America

April 15-18
Houston
TxDOT sponsor: Traffic Operations Division

Registration deadline: March 15
Cost \$375
Contact: Al Kosik, 512.416.3252

Texas Airport Operators Conference

April 24-26
Austin, Red Lion Hotel
TxDOT sponsor: Aviation Division
Attendees will discuss topics important to aviation officials, receive information on new leadership in the department and division, exchange success stories and seek solutions to common problems. Exhibits will be featured.

Registration deadline: April 23 or at the door

Cost: \$60 for entire conference; \$75 if you register at the door; \$16 for Friday luncheon only

Contact: Nona Gold, 512.416.4511 or 800.68.PILOT

Texas Public Transportation Conference

April 30-May 3
Lubbock, Lubbock Civic Center
TxDOT sponsor: Public Transportation Division

The conference will offer discussion of policies and procedures, and better understanding between transit system providers, industry-related equipment manufacturers, and state and federal government and department personnel with public transportation responsibilities on industry-related matters. Features the Texas Public Transportation Golf Tournament, Vehicle Roadeos and Maintenance Roadeo, and exhibits.

Registration deadline: March 30
Cost \$150; Golf tournament, \$25
Contact: Vickie Vitek, 512.416.2820

Southwest Traffic Safety Workshop and Traffic Records Forum

May 28-31
Austin, Doubletree Hotel
TxDOT sponsor: Traffic Operations Division

The forum provides information regarding programs and resources, promotes inter-agency, public and private cooperation, and provides a setting for professionals involved in traffic safety to showcase their products and services. Nationally and locally recognized speakers will provide current presentations and information to attendees. This year's theme is Technology in Service of Safety.

Registration deadline: Around the first week of May; watch for details.
Cost: Approximately \$100
Contact: Karen Gibson, 512.416.3198

1996 Transportation Planning Conference

June 4-7
Fort Worth
TxDOT sponsor: Transportation Planning and Programming Division

Attendees will develop a better understanding of needed transportation planning requirements and how to develop the most efficient way of meeting those requirements. Department planning personnel, as well as transportation planners from cities, counties and MPOs statewide usually attend. Planning personnel from adjacent states as well as FHWA regions and division and FTA personnel are invited, too. The conference provides an opportunity to discuss transportation planning problems and to share the latest state-of-the-art practices with other participants.

Registration deadline: May 19
Cost: \$85; a \$10 late fee will be charged if you register after the deadline
Contact: TPP, Intermodal Planning Section, 512.465.7466. ★

Moody

Continued from page 4

and say, 'Y'all do some neat things up there.' I think that's why we do such a wide variety of music because it gives something to everybody."

The group travels frequently and, among other events, has performed at grocery store openings, book releases, hospital banquets and sporting events. They even sang at a funeral.

"We've done one funeral. We don't normally do that sort of thing, but this was a loyal supporter of the group and his wife called the director and said he just loved the group and would have loved for us to come out and sing," Moody said.

Practicing and performing consumes a substantial part of his time, which, with two young children, Moody sees as one of the only disadvantages to the group.

"It takes a lot of time from home. There are times when my wife misses me being around to help, but she understands that that's just me and my music," he said. "I enjoy working at the department and, other than my family, River City Pops gives me something outside my job to look forward to."

Moody plans to stick with River City Pops for the foreseeable future.

"I don't see leaving anytime soon. It's fun and it's my musical outlet that I'd been looking for," he said.

"That's what neat about it. I've got a release for that. There are very few places you can go out and do that — except for maybe the karaoke bar." ★

20 years ago in T-News

Here are the highlights of *Transportation News* 20 years ago this month.

Last Section of IH 45 Opened in Sought Dallas — It is finished. With the final segment of IH 45 opened in Dallas during ceremonies Feb. 25, Texas motorists finally have what many of them have been wanting for over 20 years: a nonstop, safe interstate highway from downtown Dallas, through downtown Houston to the beaches of Galveston.

The final segment of IH 45 was a \$6.5 million project in South Dallas between Grand Avenue and Lamar Street.

Southwest Freeway Lengthened — A new four-lane divided section of Houston's Southwest Freeway was opened by Commissioner Dewitt C. Greer and Engineer-Director Luther DeBerry Feb. 19. The new 15-mile section of US 59 extends from SH 6 to Rosenberg.

Transit Conference Topic: Nashville's Economy Car — Among the topics of interest to those who will be attending the Fourth Annual Texas Transit Conference March 23 and 24 in Austin will be the crucial question that faces the whole transit industry: How does one create an exciting, motivating image for public transit?

ETex Wildflower Gets State Recognition — It is now the official State Wildflower Trail. During the past three years, the wildflower trail had been a joint chamber of commerce project for the communities of Avinger, Hughes Springs and Linden in Cass County. New official state signs were unveiled in official ceremonies in Avinger Feb. 12. ★

Circles

Continued from page 1

signal to relieve traffic off the circle.

But community members, especially business owners along the circle, strongly voiced their desire to keep the Waco landmark. With obvious public support for keeping the circle, the department agreed to leave it intact and improve its appearance. But, with a daily volume of 30,000, the circle still is not problem-free.

"The circle is confusing, especially for out-of-town motorists," Helen Havelka, Waco District public information officer, said. "It's hard to stripe and hard to put up signs. To add to the problem, you have a lot of motorists who are driving too fast as they approach it and don't use signals to indicate they're getting off."

Recently, the Waco District held a ceremony marking the completion of the traffic circle landscaping project. TxDOT let the project because, after much research, district staff determined that the Waco traffic circle would remain permanently.

...

In Fort Worth, three circles used to exist along Texas 183. Now, only the 38-year-old Benbrook rotary remains. The circle — which is shaped more like an ellipse — has been slated for removal several times, but budgetary constraints and opposition have prevented the district from progressing much further than just talk.

"We wanted to put in a three-level diamond interchange," said Burton Clifton, district advanced planning engineer in Fort Worth, "but we just don't have the funding."

Clifton, who has worked for TxDOT for 47 years, said the facility was designed to handle increases in traffic, although with current volumes the Benbrook rotary is being pushed to its design limit.

"We designed it bigger than a circle so it wouldn't become obsolete," he said. "It's overloaded now, but it's handling the situation pretty well."

Clifton said that for some systems, rotaries still provide a useful service.

"They still build them in England, and there was one built recently in Maryland, but that was for very light traffic. They work well in those situations," he said.

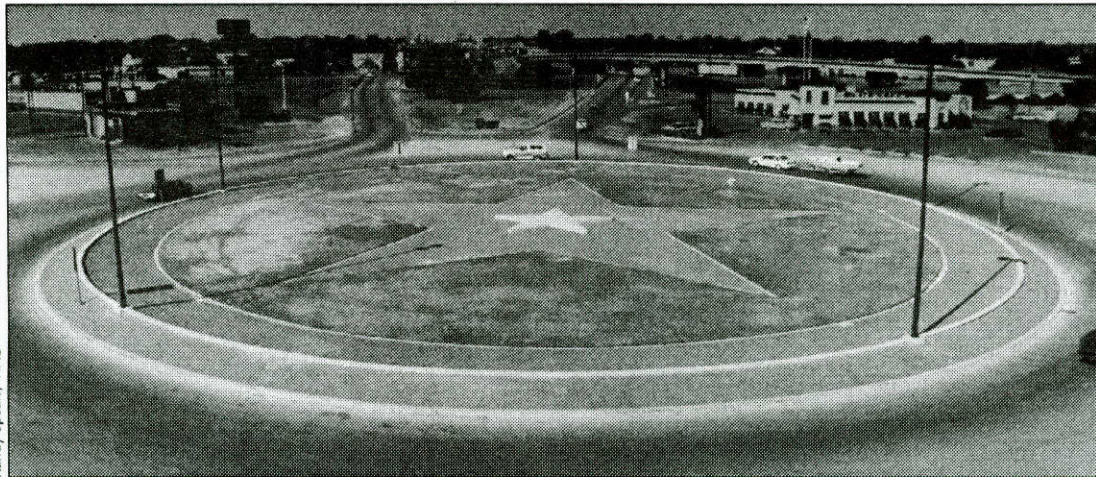
But as for circles' fate on Texas' system, "we probably will not see them built anymore," he said. "The secret likely is to have circles only at places where traffic will not grow much, but there are few such places on the Texas highway system."

"The circle in Waco is unusual. Their fate is more like the two on 183 that we removed," Clifton said. "Even though we build Interstates and route traffic away from circles, growth is making them more unusable and more awkward."

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As Clifton said, the Waco and Fort Worth traffic circles are the exception, not the norm.

In 1989, the Lubbock District removed a 41-year-old circle. Unlike the case in Waco, most Lubbock residents did not oppose



Public outcry saved Waco's traffic circle. In fact, the Waco District recently landscaped the roundabout after staff determined that it would remain permanently.

removing the circle.

"The majority of people were glad to see it go," former Lubbock District Engineer Mel Pope said.

The district replaced the circle — where US 84, US 87 and I-27 converge — with a three-level interchange. The construction of I-27 necessitated the circle's removal, since the Interstate would have bisected the circle, and routing I-27 traffic onto the circle was not an option, said John Rantz, director of operations in Lubbock.

Pope cited a familiar reason for removing the circle: With 35,000 vehicles traveling the circle a day, "traffic volume just exceeded the capacity. A circle just breaks down if it's got that high of a volume," he said.

"Circles were very effective in their day, but once you've got those high volumes and those high speeds, they become, well, less effective," Pope said.

Rantz remembered just one fatality on the circle. But, he said, there were a number of "minor collisions, like rear-end collisions."

Rantz said many resulted from confusion over who had the right of way. (In Lubbock, the traffic exiting the circle did.)

Circles' hazards can be emphasized in other offbeat but serious ways.

"We had several occasions — at least three that I remember — where cattle

trucks traveling at too high a speed overturned on the circle, and we had cattle loose on the town," Pope said. "We even had one run onto the Highway Department's grounds. He went through a glass door and into one of our buildings. When they came to get him out, that bull was mad."

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A similar story occurred in Henderson, where tanker trucks traveling through the East Texas oil fields at high speeds on the city's circle created a hazard.

City officials and residents wanted the circle removed because they thought it was inefficient and outdated. And, after several trucks overturned, they thought it was dangerous.

The city approached TxDOT about doing away with the local traffic circle. In 1995, the department finished removing it. Now, there is a traffic star — a five-legged intersection

— where US 259, US 79, Texas 43 and Texas 64 converge. Signals control traffic flow.

Peter Eng, director of transportation operations in the Tyler District, said traffic is flowing efficiently and local residents are pleased with the results.

"The new design is working really well," he said. "The city is happy with it, and we're getting a lot of positive feedback."

...

The idea of removing Mexia's traffic circle first appeared in the city's Comprehensive Plan in 1970. Twenty years later, Mexia city commissioners decided — by one vote — to go ahead with the removal. Owners of businesses on the circle fought to keep it. Supporters hoped that the 50-year-old circle would be designated as a historical landmark. It wasn't. Now, where US 84 and Texas 14 come together there is a signal. Traffic from the Mexia State School — a major traffic generator — flows easier, and residents seem to have adjusted to life without the circle.

"When traffic volumes pick up, many circles just can't handle the higher volume. That's what happened in Mexia," Larry Stewart, area engineer for Falls and Limestone counties, said. "Traffic tended to overload the circle when they had shift changes (at the Mexia State School). People trying to get on the circle couldn't, and traffic backed up on (US) 84. That's one of the reasons people wanted it removed."

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Traffic circle fans need not panic, though. The design is not extinct.

In Kilgore, the department determined that the existing traffic circle was still the most efficient design for the area.

"TxDOT studied removing it," Eng said, "but we concluded that we couldn't improve efficiency by doing away with it."

Eng added that the traffic volume was not high and that truck traffic is minimal.

Circles also are making a comeback in small communities and neighborhoods, where they are increasingly being used for "traffic calming."

"Circles are looked upon a little more favorably in suburban areas or communities," Marek said. "They force motorists to drive in a more pedestrian-friendly manner. It's a unique application when it's not a high-volume situation." Marek said these conditions generally occur off the state-maintained system, so TxDOT's dealings with circles remains minimal.

Of course, Texans longing literally to circle town can always travel to England, where, as Clark Grizwald demonstrated, a jaunt on a roundabout can be quite an experience. ★

Service Awards

March

Abilene

30 years
Doyle L. Donham
15 years
Thomas R. Bohuslav
Arvol D. Boland
Jimmy D. Clanton
Benigno N. Godina
10 years
James L. Hill

Amarillo

30 years
James F. Davenport
25 years
James R. Oles
15 years
Marilyn B. Morrow
5 years
Roger A. Reed

Atlanta

30 years
Robert E. Scott
10 years
Don R. Carter
David W. Orr
William M. Stillwell

Austin

30 years
Michael N. Borden
Dannie R. Crawford
Waldine A. Hernandez
Marvin W. Stahl Jr.
25 years
Howard J. Waneck
10 years
Imelda L. Barrett
Angela M. Estlack
Wade A. Shaif
Clayton K. Weber

Beaumont

30 years
Frank B. James Jr.
Richard M. Littlepage
Jimmie E. Poplin Jr.
15 years
Rose T. Pugh
David E. Wise
5 years
James L. Strong
Robert C. Warner

Brownwood

15 years
Lyle F. Greene
Jerry A. Lobstein
Claude G. Russell
10 years
Robert B. Ray

Bryan

10 years
Linda S. Steele

Childress

10 years
Brent W. Foard
Jerry D. Reed
Robert L. Snider

Corpus Christi

30 years
Pedro Hernandez
Raul Valdez
20 years
Jack Mircovich
10 years
Armando G. Chapa
David A. Sanders

Dallas

30 years
Raymond L. Lewis
25 years
Clarence B. Laza
Oscar Rogers Jr.
15 years
Johnny M. Haley
10 years
Stephen Vanderslice
Vincent D. Washington
5 years
Ronald B. Gober

El Paso

30 years
Roderick Olivas
25 years
Robert Lagos
10 years
Frank W. Ford
Jorge L. Gomez
Ernesto S. Nigro Jr.

Fort Worth

30 years
Jeff M. Lewis Jr.
Allen E. Smith
25 years
Luis Rodriguez
15 years
Harlan K. Stucker
10 years
John W. Broussard
William F. Gilpin Jr.
Randy D. Moore
Brett D. Riggs
Weldon E. York

Houston

30 years
Keith D. Carlton
15 years
Stephen Gbur
Pilar M. Rodriguez
Stephen L. Shaw
Jimmy A. Turner
10 years
Ricky J. Alcocer
Joe Cantu
Eufemio S. Guerra Sr.
Ronald L. Lorraine
Ramon Navarro
Jimmie R. Rogers
5 years
Maria A. Faria Wade
Vincent M. Pena

Laredo

15 years
Efrain Santana
10 years
Gerardo M. Martinez
Juan D. Villarreal Jr.

Lubbock

30 years
Joe T. Brown Jr.
Carl R. Utley
25 years
Roberto Moreno
20 years
Jose Tijerina
15 years
James H. Gehring
Thomas E. Martin II
John E. Rantz
Jarod G. Withrow
5 years
Kathryn G. Deatherage

Lufkin

15 years
J. I. Brittain
10 years
Weldon K. Gaston

Odessa

10 years
Camilo Aguirre
Ramon M. Prieto Jr.
Gary E. Rumbaugh Jr.

Paris

30 years
Jerry D. Stone
10 years
Deborah L. Howard
Michael L. Smith
5 years
Linda J. Barnes
John D. Wright Jr.

Pharr

30 years
George Barrera
15 years
Sandra G. Bowers
Abelardo Mireles III

San Angelo

25 years
James W. Shipman

San Antonio

30 years
Benno Haecker Jr.
Pedro G. Mainez
25 years
Bobbie L. Biermann
Franklin H. Herber
10 years
Gregorio G. Aguilar
Arturo Canales
Clarence D. Deskin
Ronald M. Gregurek
Carol G. Luschen
William T. Shuler

Tyler

15 years
Danny R. Scott
10 years
Billy B. Fergerson
Barnie M. Trussell Jr.
5 years
Gregory G. Evans

Waco

15 years
Leesa C. Brueggeman
10 years
Charlotte A. Markum

Yoakum

35 years
Leon C. Steffek
30 years
Louis Nunez
15 years
Eduigen F. Rodriguez

Budget and Finance

25 years
Thomas H. Doebner Jr.
Gordon L. Lehman
15 years
Cathy L. Williams
5 years
Peggy W. McGuire

Construction and Maintenance

5 years
Ofelia G. Cantu

Design

20 years
Sostenes Palomo
5 years
Mechelle D. Lewis
Zelma A. Myers

General Services

25 years
Cherry C. Jackson
15 years
Donna E. Bandy
10 years
Guadalupe De La Fuente
Daryl D. Starks
5 years
Karen A. Stone
Marvin C. Stromberg

Human Resources

5 years
Edmund P. Rader

Information Systems

25 years
Roberta D. Conklin
Jerry W. Vinyard
15 years
Severo Castillo Jr.

Management Services

5 years
Evans R. Emelogu

Materials and Tests

30 years
Richard L. Hamilton
15 years
Raymond B. Merrill
5 years
Carol J. Ota

Motor Carrier

10 years
Michelle C. Wirries

Traffic Operations

5 years
Joyce M. Landes
Joyce A. Seebock

Vehicle Titles and Registration

25 years
Joel W. Lehman
Bobby J. Meeks
15 years
Nancy S. Bradley
10 years
Debra S. Taylor
5 years
Debra L. Johnson

Retirements

November 1995

Austin
Michael C. Cates, 11 years,
Maintenance Technician III

February

Vehicle Title and Registration
Michael O. Lansdowne, 27 years,
Investigator II
Troy D. Stubblefield, 12 years,
Maintenance Technician IV

Brownwood

Gene H. Laughlin, 29 years,
Roadway Maintenance Supervisor V

Beaumont

Shirley C. Zigler, 18 years,
Administrative Technician II

Yoakum

Weldon L. Popek, 24 years,
Maintenance Technician IV

March

Abilene
Victor (Scott) Mitchell, 32 years,
Roadway Maintenance Superintendent II

Amarillo District

Robert W. Davis, 28 years,
Maintenance Technician IV

Laredo

Raoul M. Gutierrez, 27 years,
Motor Vehicle Mechanic III

Are you registered to vote?

Remember that 1996 is an election year.

Primary elections are March 12, and if you want to vote, you must be registered. Not only will we be voting in a presidential election, Texas voters will be selecting a U.S. Senator, all 30 U.S. House seats, 150 seats in the Texas House and about half of the Texas Senate. Then there are all of the local offices. ★

Readers requested to fill out survey

The February edition of *Transportation News* featured a reader survey on page 12. The purpose of the survey is to gauge reader interest in the stories and artwork *T-News* features, to see what you like (or don't like) about the paper and what you'd like to see more (or less) of. It is a tool to help us serve you better.

If you haven't already done so, please take a minute to fill out the survey and mail it to Roger Polson of the Public Information Office at the Main Office or 125 E. 11th, Austin, 78701. ★

Dadian-Williams

Continued from page 3

So this independent little cuss does just that, and she doesn't want anyone to cut her any slack.

"I don't have an ego problem," she maintained. "When it's time for me to go on the road for a conference or partnering workshop, I load up my pickup truck myself. I don't ask someone else to do it for me."

"And I do most of the clerical work myself because I don't have a secretarial staff," she said, although she admitted she gets a lot of help from Shirley Macik in Bob Templeton's office when having to execute her Texas Quality Initiative (TQI) duties.

As partnering manager, Dadian-Williams accepts requests from districts, divisions and special offices who need her services. "I act more as a consultant," she explained. "I try to figure out what desired end result the TxDOT contact wants, as well as set up a mechanism to obtain information from all potential participants."

"Since I have been too busy to facilitate, I replace myself and hire a facilitator from my RFP (Requests for Proposals), then connect the information, TxDOT contact and facilitator," she said. "I'll set up a pre-workshop meeting with the concerned parties and hired facilitator to make sure everyone is online and all bases have been covered, and then I'll pull myself out of the picture."

"This allows the requestor to have control of the partnering project. I don't really need to know all the minute details," she said. "I just try to be a good provider and put people and things together, which is my favorite thing to do. I like making things happen."

So far, Dadian-Williams has proven to be quite capable of doing just that. She's seen partnering go outside the Construction and Maintenance Division to the Materials and Tests Division and Information Resource Management Office—Retooling TxDOT and is currently running a pilot for Design/Pre-Project Planning Consultant projects with volunteer districts around the state.

The Waco (first enhancement) and Fort Worth (mowing contracts) districts can boast some unique partnering opportunities, and there are a few potential partnering opportunities in the works in Dallas. *Interagency partnering has also entered the scene with partnering between CMD and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), MAT and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC), and, most recently, TxDOT's Traffic Operations Division and the Department of Public Safety, according to Dadian-Williams.*

Never still for a minute, Dadian-Williams co-chairs the Association of General Contractors (AGC)-TxDOT Partnering Task Force. Recognizing the need for improvement in the construction partnering program, this task force supports a cross-functional team of private and public sector transportation experts from all levels of construction involvement.

"We have a subcontractor, contractor, area engineer, construction and district engineers, and the assistant executive director for Field Operations," she said. "This team curiously named itself the GT(P) team."

Collectively, the GT(P) team came up with a new concept—Partnering Plus, or P-squared. "The team established a future vision for the program and out of this an innovative process was conceived," she told me. "Partnering Plus puts the decision-making in regard to the partnering arrangement at the appropriate level — directly in the hands of the contractor and the area engineer."

She also serves as the department's key support element to TQI, another private-public partnership. "I helped plan and coordinate last year's conference," she said. "Last year was the first time for this event, which was held in Houston, San Antonio, Odessa and Dallas. Each event showcased four breakout sessions. This year, we will have only one conference scheduled for February but we're planning seven working breakouts."

She also supervises the partnering program's newsletter, *The Communicator*, and has served as a CI and Partnering facilitator. "Facilitating is hard work," she maintained, "and don't let anyone tell you any different."

All in all, it's a pretty full schedule for one individual, but Dadian-Williams doesn't blink an eye.

"I'll never forget where I came from," she confided; "I'll never forget my days at the southside area office in the San Antonio District. It all helped me formulate my basic philosophy — I just want to try to do the right things and maybe help others in the process."

For my money, that's a philosophy more of us could look into adopting. ★

In Memoriam

Employees

Roy Lopez, Motor Carrier Division, 21 years service, died Jan. 19, 1996.

Retirees

Raymond E. Boyles, Quitque, retired from Amarillo District in 1978, died Nov. 4, 1995.

Robert W. Cannon, Brownwood, retired from Brownwood District in 1980, died Nov. 24, 1995.

Glen R. Chesshir, Clarksville, retired from Paris District in 1984, died Dec. 26, 1995.

Johnnie D. Craven, Matador, retired from Childress District in 1974, died July 5, 1995.

Billy F. Denton, Axtell, retired from Waco District in 1986, died Nov. 24, 1995.

Edward A. Dewitt, San Antonio, retired from San Antonio District in 1986, died Oct. 28, 1995.

Joseph Fogarty, Lubbock, retired from Lubbock District in 1984, died Dec. 1, 1995.

Elias F. Fuentes, El Paso, retired from El Paso District in 1981, died Dec. 10, 1995.

John E. Fulbright, Waco, retired from Waco District in 1980, died Dec. 26, 1995.

Eugene F. Holik, Yoakum, retired from Yoakum District in 1985, died Jan. 10, 1996.

William M. Horne, Buffalo, retired from Bryan District in 1984, died Nov. 18, 1995.

Thurman Lusk, Amarillo, retired from Lubbock District in 1969, died Dec. 8, 1995.

Eudelio G. Maldonado, Eagle Pass, retired from Del Rio District in 1981, died Oct. 8, 1995.

Cesario M. Martinez, Sonora, retired from San Angelo District in 1977, died Oct. 18, 1995.

Woodrow W. Mason, Conroe, retired from Houston District in 1975, died Dec. 23, 1995.

George T. McCown, Jacksonville, retired from Tyler District in 1970, died Nov. 15, 1995.

John T. Morris, Childress, retired from Childress District in 1985, died Nov. 29, 1995.

Henry C. Pounds, Abilene, retired from Abilene District in 1979, died Nov. 8, 1995.

Gaylord Price, Ingram, retired from Abilene District in 1992, died Nov. 22, 1995.

Homer Rachels, Comanche, retired from Brownwood District in 1971, died Dec. 17, 1995.

Marin P. Ragel Jr., Weatherford, retired from Fort Worth District in 1993, died Nov. 24, 1995.

Welton H. Ramsey, Axtell, retired from Waco District in 1985, died Dec. 29, 1995.

Lofton L. Stelter, Troup, retired from Tyler District in 1977, died Nov. 27, 1995.

Dilmous W. Stephens, Cleveland, retired from Bryan District in 1968, died Dec. 15, 1995.

Raymond E. Taylor, Kirbyville, retired from Beaumont District in 1978, died Dec. 15, 1995.

John P. Travis, Rice, retired from Dallas District in 1979, died Dec. 16, 1995.

Anna G. Wiginton, Houston, retired from Transportation Planning and Programming in 1962, died Dec. 15, 1995.

Calendar

March

- 1 Best Practices in Contract Management, Austin, GSD
- 5 PC User Group Meeting, Arlington, MAT
- 5-7 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Childress, CMD
- 5-7 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Odessa, CMD
- 5-7 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Waco, CMD
- 6-7 Annual District Lab Engineers Meeting, Arlington, MAT
- 12-14 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Tyler, CMD
- 12-14 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Yoakum, CMD
- 20-21 1996 East Maintenance Conference, Dallas, CMD
- 25 Best Practices in Contract Management, Austin, GSD
- 27-28 1996 West Maintenance Conference, El Paso, CMD
- 28 Commission Meeting, Austin

April

- 2-4 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Corpus Christi, CMD
- 2-4 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Wichita Falls, CMD
- 5 Good Friday
- 9-11 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Fort Worth, CMD
- 9-11 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Austin, CMD
- 11 Best Practices in Contract Management, Austin, GSD
- 15-16 Field Operations Conference, Austin, CMD
- 16-18 Herbicide Training and Recertification, Dallas, CMD
- 24-26 Texas Airport Operators Conference, Austin, AVN
- 25 Commission Meeting, Wichita Falls
- 29 Administrative Services Conference, Austin, BUD, GSD, ISD, BOP (through May 1)
- 30 Texas Public Transportation Conference, Lubbock, PTN (through May 3)
- 30 Herbicide Training and Recertification, El Paso, CMD (through May 2)

May

- 9 Best Practices in Contract Management, Austin, GSD
- 27 Memorial Day (holiday)
- 28-31 Southwest Traffic Safety Workshop and Traffic Records Forum, Austin, TRF
- 30 Commission Meeting, Austin

June

- 3-5 District Pavement Engineers and Pavement Management Information System Coordinators Meeting, Austin, DES
- 4-7 1996 Transportation Planning Conference, Fort Worth, TPP
- 19 Emancipation Day (state holiday)
- 25 Best Practices in Contract Management, Austin, GSD
- 27 Commission Meeting, Austin

July

- 4 Independence Day (holiday)
- 25 Commission Meeting, Texarkana
- 27-31 National Transportation Public Affairs Workshop, Austin, PIO

Letters

Dear Mr. Burnett & TxDOT Family:

My wife and I cannot find the words to express our sincere gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciation to all Texas Department of Transportation employees who expressed concern and compassion to those of us involved in that terrible accident of July 10, 1995.

We were overwhelmed by the heartfelt support the TxDOT Family demonstrated with their many cards and phone calls from throughout the state. We want to thank everyone for their comforting words, concerns, and prayers. This support has provided the peace and assurance in our healing.

I think back to the sticker given to us that states "Member of the TxDOT Family", now I know what those words symbolize. I can earnestly say I am proud to be part of a wonderful organization and family.

We are grateful, more grateful than word can say. We thank our precious Lord for his many blessings that he gives us abundantly. We pray that he keeps all of us safe during and after work as we are guided by Him.

Again, thank all of you who make up the Texas Department of Transportation Family.

Sincerely

Mr. & Mrs. Jaime Estrada

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During the week of Jan. 5, I left my office to attend a meeting. I layed a folder on the roof of my automobile and drove off. Needless to say, when I arrived I was missing one folder. I figured it was gone forever. That would certainly have been the case if **Richard Spears** hadn't taken the trouble to pick up my folder and return it to my office. Some of that information was irreplaceable.

Richard, thank you. I wanted your organization to know of the kindness you extended to our company and to me personally. You are an excellent reflection on your organization. I wish you every success in your career.

Antony E. Brinlee
AEB, Inc.

Richard Spears is an engineering technician in the Northwest Area Office, Dallas District.

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This might be a rare letter, but I gladly take the time to inform you of an incident involving three of your workers.

Monday, Jan. 21, I was driving down Texas 31 East between Kernes and Trinidad. My left rear tire blew out, and I coasted to a stop where the men were stopped. They asked if I needed help, and while the two older men watched for traffic, the youngest put my spare on my car. Once, an 18-wheeler came within inches of hitting him.

I tried to pay these men and they would not take it. I managed to get the number on their truck and I thought it would be nice to laud them for their service to an 83-year-old man.

I ask that these men be complimented by you, and I also ask that a copy of this letter be placed in their personnel files and a copy be given to them personally.

Thanks, fellers, you made my day!

Lee Roy Neal
Ben Wheeler

Matthew Gipson and Jerry Newsom are construction inspectors and Johnny Rhodes is a sur-

vey party supervisor in the Navarro County Area Office, Dallas District.

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My wife was driving from Eules to Houston on Dec. 20 with two of our grandchildren when she had a flat tire near Hutchins.

A policeman was nearby and my wife contacted him for assistance. He in turn called the Texas Department of Transportation and **Richard A. Carrier** came out to assist them. He took my wife and grandchildren to obtain a new tire and installed the tire on her car. After she was headed for Houston he called to reassure me that everything was OK and she was on her way.

This gentleman went out of his way to be helpful and he certainly deserves praise in every way for the help he gave in a very difficult situation. This man reflects credit on the whole Texas Department of Transportation.

Jap C. Lott

Richard Carrier is an engineering technician in the Hutchins Area Maintenance Office, Dallas District.

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On Dec. 7, in the early afternoon, about 50 miles west of Houston, our car blew a tire. We managed to safely get to the shoulder and within 5 minutes one of your employees, **James Untermeyer**, came to our assistance. He helped us change the tire and then followed us to the nearest service station where we were able to purchase a tire.

We cannot say enough about Mr. Untermeyer's helpfulness and courtesy. It was a godsend to us and got us on our way much more quickly than we could ever have done. We thank him and commend you for hiring such an excellent young man. We shall have good memories of Texas, especially because of Mr. Untermeyer.

Grace and William Pierce
Sun Lakes, Ariz.

James Untermeyer is a maintenance technician in the Colorado County Maintenance Section, Yoakum District.

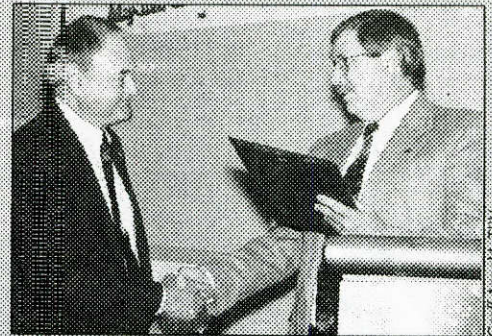
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On Dec. 4, we were traveling on I-35 near the Grandview exit, when we ran out of fuel. We were aware of a faulty fuel gauge but had not checked our mileage as closely as was necessary. We planned to stop in Hillsboro to refuel, but since we had gone further than we had surmised, we ran out of fuel.

As we pulled to the side, we noticed a state maintenance truck and summoned the employee to inquire where we could obtain fuel, how far, etc. A fellow employee (whose name we failed to obtain) advised we could get a gas can from a nearby station to bring fuel back. He assisted by transporting me to a nearby station where we could get a gas can and returned with a can of fuel. In a matter of minutes we were on our way to a station for a fill-up.

We did think to obtain the courteous young employee's name and address: **James E. Clarke**, an employee of the Johnson County Maintenance Section. We want to let you know how much we appreciated the assistance of these two gentlemen.

Mayer retires



Frank Mayer, left, outgoing FHWA division administrator for Texas, is congratulated by TxDOT Executive Director Bill Burnett at his retirement luncheon Jan. 12 in Austin. Mayer's successor is C.D. Reagan, former deputy regional administrator in Albany, NY.

As "Winter Texans" from Oklahoma we spend the winters in Mission, Texas.

George "Salty" McGuire
Pawnee, Okla.

James E. Clarke is a maintenance construction supervisor, and the unidentified employee was Terry Sanders, a maintenance technician. Both men work in the Johnson County Maintenance Section, Fort Worth District.

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