

Transportation NEWS

July 1996 Volume 21 Number 11

Surveyors define the lay of the land Crews meld ancient art with modern technology on varied projects

Meredith Whitten
Editor

Long before ground is broken on any project or the first yard of concrete is poured, a surveyor is on the job.

As one of the first steps in any project, surveying is an essential part of the department's operations. TxDOT's surveyors perform right of way verification and mapping, design surveying, construction staking, setting alignment for roadways, setting elevations and grades for structures, and more.

"We're usually the first and last employees to be on a job," said Mike Szurgot, land surveyor specialist in the Fort Worth District.

Surveyors determine the exact position of a roadway, as well as the amount of land needed to build it.

"We can't build a highway until we have the property to build it on," said Michael Shelton, survey coordinator in the El Paso District. "A survey tells us the shape and width of right of way, and from that we can determine how much property we need to purchase."

Using global positioning satellite (GPS) equipment, surveyors tie a potential roadway into an established state coordinate system with control points. The control points are used throughout the project, from designing a highway to determining right of way, so the entire project hinges on the accuracy of the surveyors' work.

"If the survey is right to begin with, the roads are going to be right. But if the survey is wrong, then you've got major problems," said Dennis Friedrich, survey party chief in the Austin District.

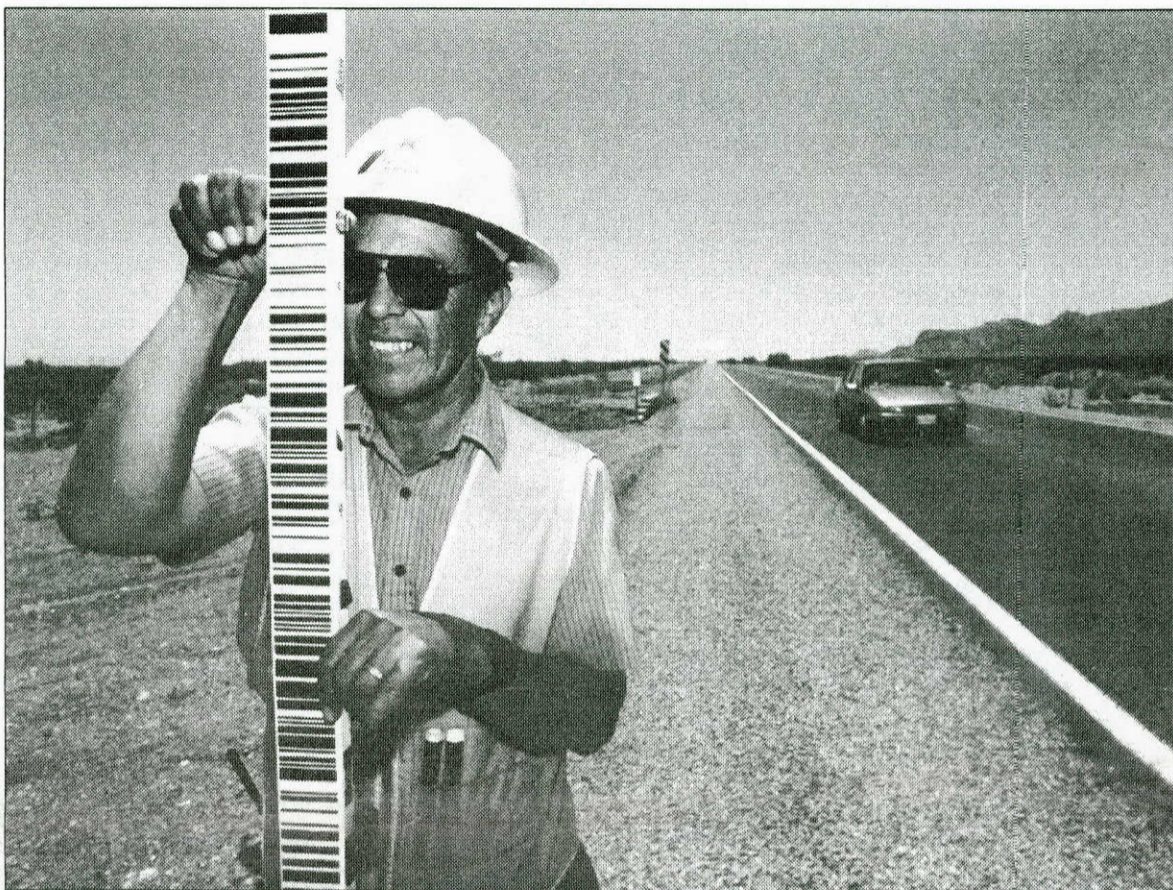
Like many fields, surveying has changed over the years. Today, computers, satellites, lasers and other developing technologies radically have altered the way surveyors do their jobs.

"I think the most exciting part of surveying today is GPS, or satellite, surveying," Szurgot said.

The federal government developed the GPS system for the military, but it's now used by others for navigation and surveying. Surveyors collect signals from several of the 24 satellites to pinpoint exact position. GPS equipment has proven more efficient than conventional methods.

"Before GPS, you had to run everything on the ground, so this is a big shortcut," said Coleen Johnson, a land surveyor in the Austin District.

Johnson added that in addition to saving time and money, the new equipment is more accurate. In fact, with equipment such as the electronic total station and the data collector, a surveyor doesn't



Griff Smith, TRV

have to write anything down; all calculations are done by computers.

"Before, we had to send all our information to Austin, but the GPS surveying gives you coordinates on the spot," Szurgot said.

Shelton said it takes only a few seconds to get a measurement. "You can measure up to two or three miles and have the measurement accurate to about one-sixteenth of an inch," he said. "Basically, your survey is drawn for you."

The conversion to metric will also affect surveyors. They work in metric on new projects, but old ones need to be converted.

"If we have a job on a rehab on an existing road that's in English units, then that rehab has to be in metric. So we're restationing those right-of-way maps in metric," said Roger Wheat, survey coordinator in the Austin District.

Miguel Fresquez, a field survey technician in the El Paso District, ensures that the digital level bar code staff is perfectly vertical. If the staff is not level when the bar code is read, the measurement will be incorrect. On the left is the Chihuahuan Desert; to the right are the Franklin Mountains. Elevations reach 7,200 feet in El Paso. Fresquez is at 4,200 feet.

Please see **Surveyors**, page 15

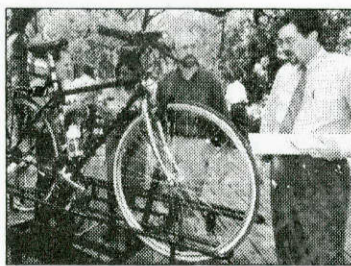
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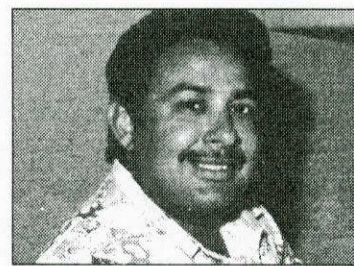
The Interstate System was created 40 years ago. Amarillo is just one Texas town that will never be the same. **Page 4**



Larry Thormaehlen and Dean Gatlin didn't let a little 'ol snow plow stop them at the national Rodeo. **Page 5**



Employees statewide celebrated Try Transit Week by teaching motorists the benefits of public transportation. **Page 9**



Thanks to Manuel Vela, Captain Ozone comes to life to fight ozone in the Corpus Christi District. **Page 13**



Q I have two questions. First, why do TxDOT employees have to pay the annual vehicle registration fee when these funds go back to TxDOT? And secondly, has anyone approached the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department about giving state employees and their families free admission to state parks? State employees would possibly use them more and the personal advertisement would be to their advantage.

These would be two nice fringe benefits that could be offered to all TxDOT employees.

Richard Williammee
Fort Worth District

A To answer your first question, Richard, the department does not have the authority to waive registration fees, except those that are waived according to statute. For example, registration and license plate fees are specifically waived in statute for disabled veterans and former prisoners of war.

To answer your second question, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is a user-supported operation. Admission fees are used to keep the parks open, and for maintenance and renovations. It is important for the citizens of Texas to have safe and maintained parks. We need to support our parks so we may have them today and for generations to come.

.....

Q On May 14, I was a pallbearer at my great-grandmother's funeral. I was told I would have to take vacation time because the Human Resources Manual states that an employee may take other leave in the case of the death of an employee's or spouse's real or stepparent, brother, sister, grandparent, child or grandchild. But not great-grandparents.

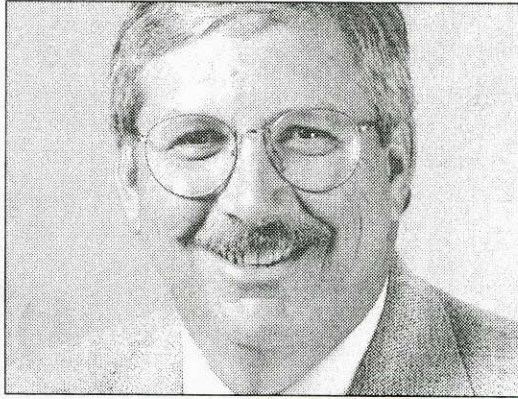
I don't mind having to take vacation time, but I would like to know what the policy is toward great-grandparents. Were great-grandparents left out because Human Resources thought no one had them, or are they just not important?

Patrick M. Neely
Dallas District

A Patrick, let me extend my sincerest sympathy to you and your family for the loss of your great-grandmother.

While it is understandable that an employee will take leave from work to attend to family matters at a time like this, we are constrained by the General Appropriations Act, which outlines explicitly the types of leave that can be granted for immediate and extended family members. Our leave policy complies with provisions outlined by our Legislature. Unfortunately, it does not include the use of emergency leave for the death of great-grandparents.

Again, my sympathies, and thank you for taking the time to write me regarding your concern.



Bill Burnett

Ask Bill

Q I attended a presentation on MODECOST, otherwise known as Research Project #1356 - Evaluating Full Costs of Urban Passenger Transportation. This computer model attempts to analyze the full cost of transportation alternatives within a transportation corridor. It considers agency costs, user costs and external costs such as pollution. MODECOST, or its derivative, seems to be "just what the doctor ordered" in terms of multimodal analysis. To further make TxDOT a true DOT, shouldn't something like MODECOST become standard when analyzing capacity expansion trade-offs?

Also, TxDOT has long been at the forefront of the technical and engineering aspects of roadway design and construction. However, I learned that other state DOTs are on the cutting edge of statewide transportation legislation, usually out of necessity. Examples include Florida, whose Transportation Concurrence Doctrine requires that transportation funds be earmarked before land development can begin; and Colorado, which has mandated that all state highways (I assume only those in urban areas) have raised medians to facilitate traffic flow and reduce congestion. Is TxDOT seeking to exercise or acquire expanded authority?

Reuben O. Scott
Management Services Office

A MODECOST and tools like it will help us address the state's future transportation needs in a financially responsible manner. The MODECOST model was applied, on a limited basis, in the San Antonio and Houston areas. Results were promising and several of the state's metropolitan planning organizations are interested in using MODECOST in their planning. The University of Texas Center for Transportation Research (CTR), has gotten metropolitan planning funds to refine the MODECOST model. CTR will work with TxDOT to expand the model's focus from corridor analysis to network analysis, further enhancing MODECOST's value as a planning tool. The enhanced version of MODECOST should be available statewide by the end of 1997.

As I interpret your second question, you ask if TxDOT is seeking legislation to

expand our authority, particularly land-use controls as a transportation planning tool. In short, the answer is "no." State law prohibits using state funds to influence legislation. The department does, however, research potential legislative issues which may serve as the foundation for initiative on the part of the Legislature and the Transportation Commission during legislative sessions.

During the past several months, the department has worked with the Sunset Advisory Commission to identify potential legislative issues which, if implemented, would move TxDOT forward. Some of the more significant issues include establishing a State Infrastructure Bank, moving the point of collection of gas taxes, authorizing the Transportation Commission to issue revenue bonds for infrastructure investments, and potential consolidation of the Texas Turnpike Authority within the department.

As far as land-use controls go, I think it would be difficult to pass legislation like those you mention. The state's recently enacted private real property rights legislation has made government address the backlash of public resentment over overly burdensome regulation. I believe that it would be unwise for the Transportation Commission to pursue such authority at a time when just the opposite is the trend.

.....

In the May issue of Transportation News, you answered an inquiry about pay raises for state employees. You mentioned the last pay increase was 3 percent in 1992.

What seems to be forgotten is the Legislature approved a 3 percent increase in 1991 and '92. In September '91, the comptroller's office determined there were insufficient funds to cover this increase and reduced it to 2 percent in '91 only. Through the concentrated efforts of many employees, acting individually and through various organizations like Texas Public Employees Association and Texas State Employees Union, the extra 1 percent was reinstated in August '92 and the approved 3 percent was granted in September '92.

I realize this is not a question, but a statement. The purpose is to encourage all employees to take an interest in the way things work and get involved with organizations dedicated to keeping state employees' interests in front of the Legislature. Employees have the right to let their legislator know the rate of inflation has out paced the rate of employee pay raises by more than 2-to-1.

Thanks for the opportunity to sound off on this topic.

Steven P. Warren, P.E.
Lubbock District

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*Got a question for Bill? Send it to the Public Information Office, Main Office. We'll withhold your name upon request, but all letters must be signed and a work address included. Questions may be edited due to space restraints. **

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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IRM's Icard a stickler for the rules

Outgoing employee credits upbringing for values, flexibility

CeCe Icard is too good to be true. The secretary to the director of the Information Resource Management Office loves her job, gets along well with others, respects her elders, honors her parents, and believes in the importance of rules and standards.

"Lots of young people today just aren't responsible," Icard said matter-of-factly. "Now, no one's perfect, but some people aren't taught responsibility at home. Home training is the most important education you'll ever receive. The fundamentals your parents teach you at home will be traits you carry over into work and will serve you well the rest of your life."

Pretty sage wisdom for someone who's a youngster herself, I thought. But as the day rolled by, I found I was learning a lot from "this kid."

"I have cool parents," Icard said proudly. "They set standards for me and taught me to think for myself and discipline myself. My dad always said, 'You can play now but you'll pay later.'"

Icard is so disciplined that her mother, Carolyn Icard, who is secretary to Legislative Affairs Office Director Coby Chase, sometimes tells her she is too strict. But that doesn't change Icard's belief that the purpose of rules is to make us more efficient.

In fact, her boss, Diane Wacker, often tells people that Icard actually runs IRM. And after watching her in action, I realized that would not be a far stretch of the imagination. There's not much that has to do with IRM that doesn't come under at least casual scrutiny by Icard. As she so aptly puts it, "I have my hand in every little thing that goes on around IRM."

Colleagues Jacquelyn Pond and Birdie Legge both heartily agree, telling me they always ask for Icard's opinion because she knows a little bit about every aspect of the office.

"IRM is a small office with a high workload," Icard explained. "So when you ask me what I do, I'd have to tell you 'whatever the day brings.' Since no day brings the same things, I pitch in wherever anyone needs help. We don't have a peak time because every day is peak time for us."

"One thing about this office," she continued, "is that you get lots of opportunities. In fact, we all have a place on our performance plans listed as 'Special Projects' because we all have lots of special projects."

I found myself running just to keep up with this ball of fire.

Icard is the department's World Wide Web site administrator, which means she invests a good bit of her time entering information onto the department's web site, updating information that's already there and answering inquiries from those who surf the Internet.

"About 60 percent of the department's e-mail is really for VTR (Vehicle Titles and Registration Division) and DPS (Department of Public Safety)," she told me. "We get lots of queries from military personnel, particularly those who are overseas, who need information on licenses and titles."

"I try to get these queries routed to a specific person, not just to a division, special office or district," Icard said, "because a lot of the people making inquiries want to vent. Once you've listened to them, though, they're satisfied. I've really honed my diplomatic skills by answering e-mail on the Internet."

She also helps out with TxDOT's Executive Information System (TexIS), Retooling projects, routine administrative paperwork and phone calls. Then, with the time she has left, Icard performs whatever secretarial duties her boss assigns her.

"Really, the biggest job I have is keeping Diane's schedule straight and getting her where she needs to go," Icard said. "Because she's heavily involved in several AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) committees, Diane relies on me to keep her up to date."

Icard has been associated with Wacker since she joined TxDOT as a summer employee in 1988. "I went to work for Diane at ISD (Information Systems Division)," she said. "She's been my only boss. Diane likes to say that I started as a summer hire and never left."

Icard firmly believes TxDOT's summer hire program is "one of the best things the department has going. I wouldn't trade that experience for anything." But her mother is the real reason she works at the department.

"My mom started in the General Services Division about 10 years ago," she said, "so I'm one of those old TxDOT stories about family tradition."

While she worked, Icard pursued her education at Southwest



Eloise Lundgren

A Day in the Life

But Icard doesn't believe that college is for everyone. "If you want to go to college, you should," she said. "But if you don't want to go, you shouldn't because you probably won't learn anything anyway."

As you can probably see by now, Icard is not afraid to talk to people. She said she owes that to her mother, who is her friend but "she's my mother first," and to growing up as part of a military family.

"If I'm outgoing, it's because of my mother," Icard said smiling. "She always taught my brother and me to speak out. She'd say, 'You don't have any business complaining if you don't speak out. You'll know at least you tried, even if you don't always succeed.'"

Icard's father was an engineer in the Air Force, so the family moved every two or three years.

"Growing up on military bases forced me to learn to make friends easily," she said. "I learned how

to talk to people, because if I hadn't, I would have been terribly lonely."

Moving around a lot also taught Icard to be flexible to change. "I like change," she emphasized. "I've seen a lot of changes here at the department. It means we're progressing. We IRM employees retool ourselves and our procedures all the time. If something doesn't work, we change it."

"I mean, how can we expect the department to change if we aren't willing to change?" she asked rhetorically. "My grandmother always told me you have to start housecleaning at home."

Icard put her varied experiences to good use by helping teach a cultural diversity class for Staff Services employees last year. "I hope if I got one point across it was that you can't assume things," she said. "You've got to tell people what's on your mind. You've got to take a step back and walk in the other person's shoes."

The next major change for Icard will be marriage. She and her fiancé, James, are busy planning the big event for "sometime after he's discharged from the Army, but they're not in any hurry."

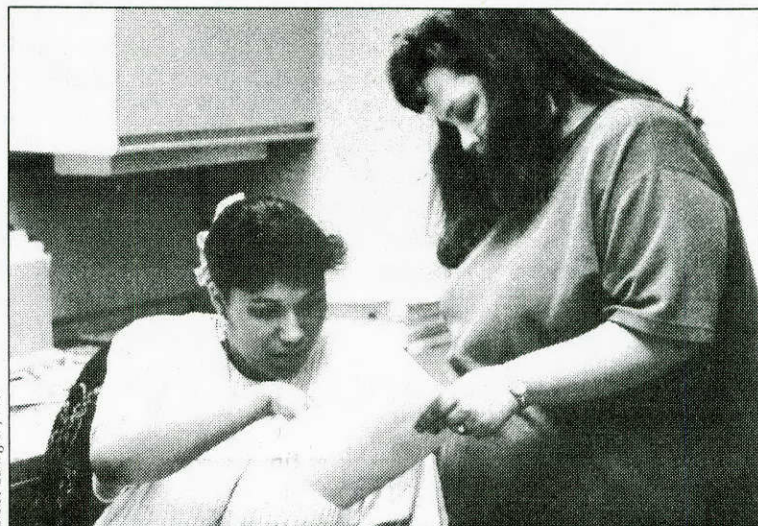
"A lot of people around here tease me and say my wedding will probably be the most planned event ever," she laughed. "I just remind them that James is a combat engineer at Fort Hood, which means he blows things up for a living. That generally stops the teasing."

But just because Icard likes change doesn't mean she'd trade any of her past or her feelings about family. Even after she gets married, the farthest Icard will move is Dallas because James has family there and she'll still be near her parents.

"I wouldn't change any of my life for anything," she said simply.

You know, if I had a daughter, I'd want her to be just like CeCe Icard.★

Texas State University, obtaining a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1993. "I minored in English," she told me, "and I thought about teaching but I really found accounting more interesting. I majored in it because I knew it could develop my life in different ways and would open lots of opportunities for me in the job market."



Eloise Lundgren, PIC

CeCe Icard, seated, and Jacquelyn Pond, both of the Information Resource Management Office, discuss a flier's graphic design. Pond said many IRM employees seek Icard's advice on a variety of subjects because she is knowledgeable about the office's entire operation.

Interstate highway system turns 40

The nation's Interstate Highway System, considered by some the greatest engineering project in history, is turning 40.

"The Interstate is the life blood of our nation," said David Laney, Texas Transportation Commissioner. "We should celebrate what it has meant for the last 40 years in terms of mobility, safety and economic development. But we cannot forget it is a system that is beginning to show its age and must be continually maintained and rehabilitated."

Created June 29, 1956, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Interstate system today includes more than 45,000 miles nationwide, 3,200 of which are in Texas. It links more than 90 percent of American cities with populations of more than 50,000.

While it only makes up 1.2 percent of the nation's total mileage of streets and highways, the Interstate system carries more than 22 percent of all highway traffic. Texas motorists drive nearly 40 billion miles a year on the state's Interstate highways.

Nationwide, however, the Interstate system is beginning to show its age. According

to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), more than 240,000 miles of Interstate and non-Interstate roads are in poor to mediocre condition, and more than 95,000 bridges need repair or replacement. FHWA estimates that the nation's roads need an average annual investment of \$57 billion just to keep them in the current condition.

As the Interstate system was built across the country, it brought profound changes to American's lives. The system played a crucial role in promoting economic development and contributed significantly to making the United States a world economic leader.

The first Interstate contract in Texas was for then-U.S. 75 (I-45) in Navarro County. In 1956, Texas had the distinction of receiving the second Interstate contract in the nation.

On Sept. 3, 1992, Texas marked the last new-location construction of the Interstate system in Texas with the completion of I-27

in the Lubbock District.

Former Highway Engineer Dewitt Greer was instrumental in getting legislation passed. He wanted "interregional" highways that would serve not only those driving state to state, but Texans, too. As a result of his efforts, Texas Interstates have more points of access than most other states. For the same reason, they have more frontage road — about 4,500 miles.

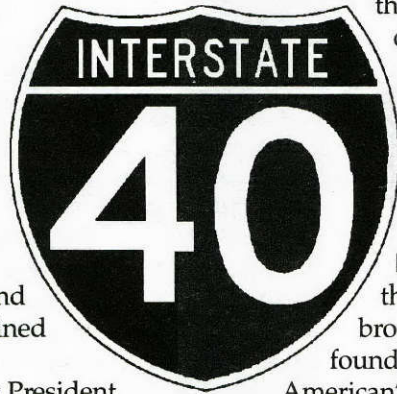
The nation's massive Interstate system has proved to be more than twice as safe as conventional roads, thanks to its design. "Interstates are designed to provide separation from opposing traffic, controlled access, maximum sight distance and

"The Interstate is the life blood of our nation."

David Laney

Texas Transportation Commissioner

no at-grade crossings," said Bill Burnett, executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation. "Interstates are proof positive that quality highway design and construction are investments that pay off in safety." * *Public Information Office*



Interstate system changed rural, urban America Like cities across the nation, Amarillo was transformed by highway

Tonya Detten
Amarillo District

It was 1957, the year the Texas Highway Department revealed three possible routes for a new Interstate Defense Highway scheduled to be built across the Texas Panhandle. The announcement

pleased some, frightened others, and transformed the "small town" of Amarillo almost immediately.

Citizens quickly asked, "How could the Highway Department put a defense highway right in the middle of town?"

The most favored route placed the east-west Interstate just south of downtown Amarillo and required the purchase of entire city blocks for several miles.

Angry residents quickly formed an opposition group. Calling itself the Highway Equity

League for Progress, or HELP, members placed newspaper ads and vocalized their fear that the favored route would hurt Amarillo. They said it would split neighborhoods, that it would be like a "Chinese wall" across the city.

At the same time, other community groups worked just as hard at promoting the central route. Groups such as the Amarillo Jaycees said it was important for I-40 to be located in Amarillo so the town was not sidetracked. Proponents of the route wanted an east-west expressway and welcomed a chance at one with no direct cost to the city.

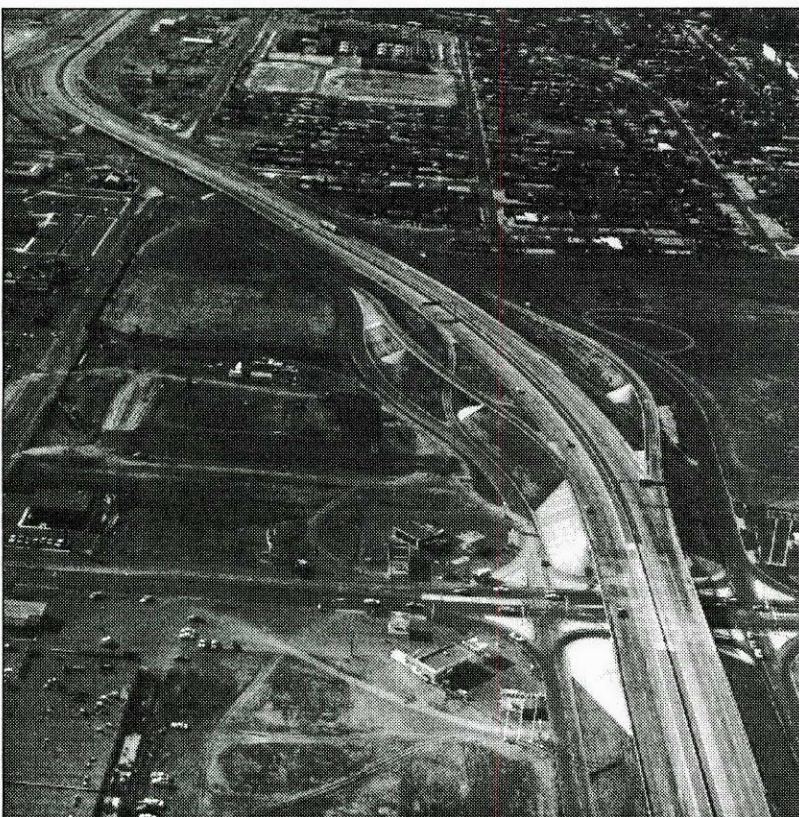
The debate went on for about four years. In 1959, several residents attempted to stop road construction with a court ordered injunction. A district court denied the groups's request. The group appealed to a higher court. In 1962, the 7th Court of Appeals upheld the earlier court's ruling. And in the same year, construction began on the first section of I-40 in Amarillo.

The process was memorably painful for at least two Amarillo residents. In 1964, highway workers called in the Potter County sheriff to physically remove two elderly women from two houses in the right of way. The sheriff hired movers to pack each woman's belongings. The two had refused to leave their homes and refused to talk to anybody. Most people could sympathize with the two women, but, for the good of the masses, the two homes were levelled and construction of the Interstate continued.

On Nov. 15, 1968, the Highway Department joined with city officials to dedicate I-40 in Amarillo in 35-degree weather. Total cost: \$39 million in town.

The final section of the Panhandle's Interstate system was completed in 1985. The Interstate could be credited with turning Amarillo into the town that it is today. Most of the recent growth in the city has been along I-40.

Development in the city has expanded at least two miles west from the "end of town" 40 years ago. Thousands of military vehicles pass through town every day. They are joined by the thousands of trucks, tourists and local traffic using I-40. *



Courtesy AWA

Interstate 40 and its braided ramps were a novelty in Amarillo in 1968, when this photo was taken. Today, an estimated 74,000 vehicles travel I-40 daily through Amarillo.

Snow plow throws Roadeo winners for a loop

Meredith Whitten
Editor

It doesn't snow much in Corpus Christi.

So, it's not surprising that Larry Thormaehlen, a maintenance technician in the Corpus Christi District's Sinton Maintenance Office, has never seen a snow plow, much less operated one.

But when Thormaehlen and Dean Gatlin, a contract inspector in the Dallas District's Rockwall Maintenance Office, arrived in Akron, Ohio, to compete in the national Roadeo May 21, both were introduced to the fine art of snow plow driving.

Thormaehlen, who won TxDOT's state Roadeo last fall, and Gatlin, who placed second, represented Texas at the event, where en route to taking 10th place, both saw their first snow plow. Neither the Dallas nor Corpus Christi District owns one.

The Roadeo consisted of three stages: a pretrip inspection, a written exam and an obstacle

course. A snow plow was used throughout the competition. TxDOT uses a dump truck in its Roadeo.

Thormaehlen and Gatlin agreed that the equipment check was the most difficult part.

"We went in not knowing what all the equipment was," Gatlin said. "One of the things that was wrong was the back strobe light was out. Well, we didn't even know it had a strobe light." The two held their own though, getting two of the three items correct during the check.

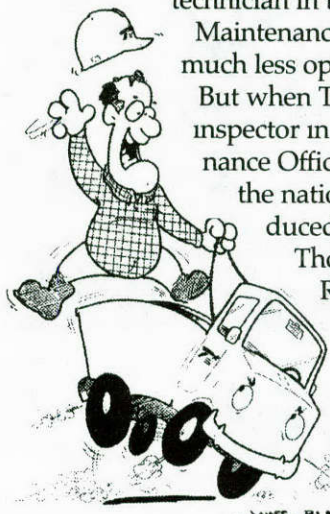
For the obstacle course, they had minimal time to check out the snow plow, but weren't allowed to drive it until the competition started.

"They took us all out there before it started and everybody was crawling all over it," Thormaehlen said. "Everybody said Texas ought to get a test run."

On the obstacle course, Texas finished 40 seconds over the allotted seven minutes, which cost the team points.

"We're not accustomed to maneuvering an 11-foot blade with a salt spreader on the back," Thormaehlen said, "so, we did it a little bit slow. It was like driving a school bus from the center seat. I sure respect snow plow drivers now."

What they lacked in knowledge about snow plows, the two made up for on the written exam, which they aced — literally. The 50-question test is similar to the commercial driver's license exam. Combined, they missed only one question. However, names were not released with the scores, so they don't know who scored the 100.



"I told Dean he could claim it in Dallas, and I'd claim it down here," Thormaehlen said.

TxDOT owns 457 snow plows, the bulk of which are in the Amarillo, Childress, Lubbock and Wichita Falls districts. Thormaehlen and Gatlin beat teams from Michigan and Canada, areas more than familiar with snow plows and salt spreaders. Ohio won the Roadeo.

About 5,300 TxDOT employees have a commercial driver's license, so the Roadeo is a valuable way to emphasize safety.

"You make judgment calls every day as far as distance, turning, backing up. The Roadeo makes you aware of your safety skills," said Thormaehlen, who is on the district's safety committee.

Jackie Knox, Thormaehlen's supervisor, agreed.

"It promotes safety, plus it's just good competition. Just going through the obstacle course makes them more aware of things they're going to encounter in everyday driving," said Knox, roadway maintenance supervisor in Sinton.

Diane Havlik, safety officer for the Corpus Christi District, said that's exactly what the Roadeo is designed to do.

"Every obstacle that those employees go through in the Roadeo is related to what they do in the field or on the roadway every day," she said. "The whole goal is safety in operating their equipment."

Art Clendenin, Sinton area engineer, agreed. "It's a good chance for them to compete and display their skills," Clendenin said. "It helps them to be more aware of what's going on on the road."

Gatlin said he would have benefited from the Roadeo even if he hadn't made it to the national level. "The more you practice, the better off you are," he said. "Even if you don't win, you've practiced enough that it becomes instinct."

This fall, the competition starts over. Gatlin has his eye on a second shot at the snow plow. "Dean said he's going to get the dimensions, make one out of wood, bolt it to the front of a truck and practice," Thormaehlen said.

As for Thormaehlen, he said he will be back at the local level looking to defend his title. Knox has provided some incentive if Thormaehlen makes it to the finals.

"If he wins the state again, I'll see that he gets the experience with the snow plow," he said. "I'm going to have to send him to Amarillo to practice."★



A competitor maneuvers a snow plow through the obstacle course at the national Roadeo in Akron, Ohio. It was the first time TxDOT's participants had seen a snow plow.

Work site safety the aim of new campaign

When many of us go to work each day, the last thing on our minds is being involved in an accident. Sure, they happen. But spilled coffee and paper cuts aren't quite in the same league as being run over by a driver going too fast or not paying attention.

To cut down on such scenarios, TxDOT kicked off a campaign to make roadway work zones safer.

The "Give Us a Brake" campaign is designed to make highway work zones safer, both for highway workers and motorists. A joint effort by TxDOT, the Texas Department of Public Safety, Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Texas and the American Traffic Safety Services Association, the program "emphasizes the need to obey posted speed limits and pay attention when driving through work

zones," said Lewis Rhodes, Traffic Operations Division.

Last year, there were 9,337 work-zone accidents in Texas. These accidents claimed 112 lives. These figures are made doubly tragic by the fact that a good number of these accidents could have been avoided; more than 19 percent were caused by drivers either speeding or driving too fast for conditions. The campaign kicked off May 20 to coincide with the start of summer, the busiest time for highway construction work.

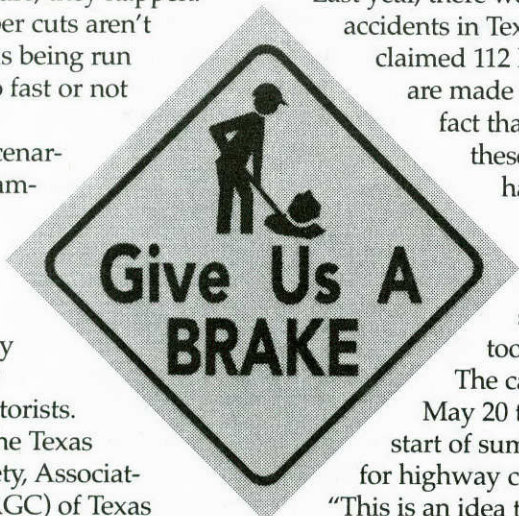
"This is an idea that has been kicked around for a long time," Rhodes said. "Other states have similar programs and we've been aware of their successes and we tried to do the same, but it's been hard to

find the time and place to do it. The department's administration is receptive to ideas like this," he said.

The campaign is one part of what TxDOT does to make highway construction sites safer. TxDOT also plans to use improved road construction flagging methods, lane markings that improve nighttime visibility and better materials for barrels and barricades that help reduce the severity of collisions.

"We coordinated with AGC since we both realize some benefit from the campaign," Rhodes said. "We also talked with other companies like 3M and ATSSA. They were really fired up, and contributed time and money."

Rhodes said the department plans to continue the campaign for 2 or 3 years. "We still have lots of ideas," he said, "and we hope to expand it next year."★ *Public Information Office*



TxDOT helps bridge gap for Sanger students

James Black
Dallas District

TxDOT recently bridged an important gap for students in the small Denton County community of Sanger.

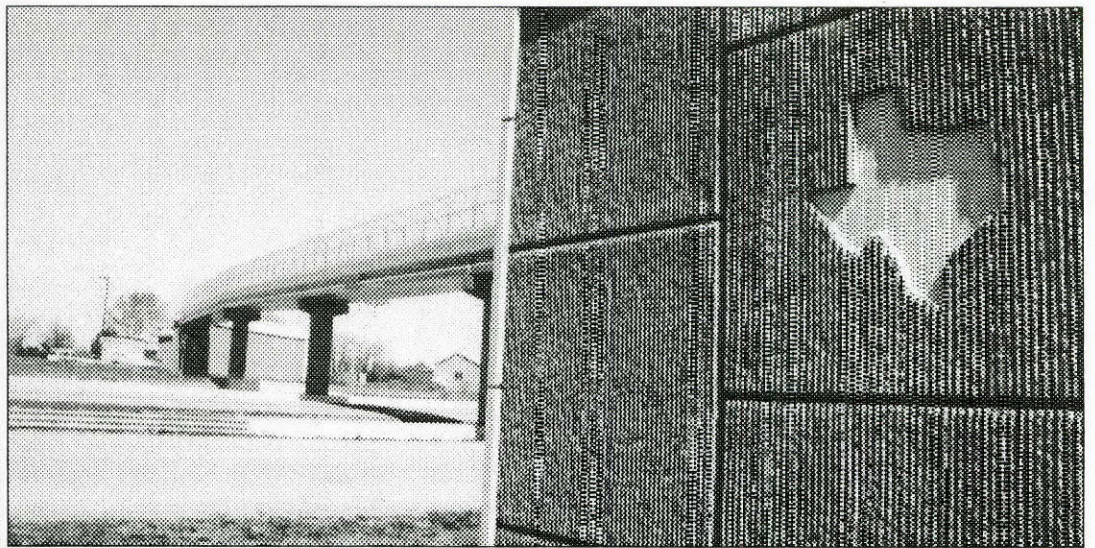
Sanger ISD students faced a predicament: their school was on one side of Interstate 35 and their practice field on the other. While safe passage was available at the next underpass, most students opted for a more direct and hazardous one. Students would instead race across the lanes of oncoming Interstate traffic to reach their school and practice field.

The Dallas District stepped in to resolve the problem. Headed by the district's Denton County office, construction on a new pedestrian bridge started in August 1995. The newly completed overhead walkway now safely spans all four lanes of I-35 and both frontage roads. Ramps on each side make the bridge accessible to all students. Lights along the ramps and bridge, as well as high security fences on the upper ramps and over the walkway, provide added safety.

According to Chris Behnke of TxDOT's Denton County office, the project was a cooperative effort among Denton, Dallas and Austin offices. Denton County personnel designed the walkway, the district's Bridge Design Section designed and completed plans for the bridge, and Austin personnel designed the safety lighting.

"A lot of different sources came together; along with the Sanger City Council and school board, to get this project off the ground," Behnke said.

Said Denton County Area Engineer Buz Elsom, "This is the completion of a necessary safety project. We made a lot of progress in a relatively short time on this bridge construction."



James Black, DAL

A new pedestrian bridge, above, spans Interstate 35 near Sanger, allowing Sanger ISD students to cross the highway safely. At right, two students take advantage of the walkway.

When Sanger officials first learned of the bridge's construction plans in mid-1995, they eagerly welcomed the project.

"We're pleased that it actually happened," said Sanger ISD Superintendent Mike Rosenberg when construction began. "It will create a much safer environment for students who attend classes on either side of the highway."

Since its completion, Sanger ISD students have flocked to the bridge, proving that there is truth in the movie adage, "If you build it, they will come." Student athletes are already using it to get back and forth from track and field practice, minus the hazardous four-lane Interstate dash of years past.

Said Behnke, "Students in Sanger started using it as soon as it was open, so we know our work's being put to great use." *



James Black, DAL

Opportunity to review benefits offered this month

Trina B. Miller
Human Resources Division

The annual insurance summer enrollment period for plan year '97 runs through July. Employees can anticipate changes to the state's Uniform Group Insurance Program (UGIP) effective Sept. 1.

Premium rates for HealthSelect of Texas will remain the same for plan year '97 and health maintenance organization (HMO) rates will decrease an average of 1.8 percent. Optional coverages such as the dental indemnity plan (Provident Life), optional term life, disability, and voluntary accidental death and dismemberment coverage rates will remain the same for plan year '97.

Effective Sept. 1, HealthSelect network areas and HMO service areas will expand into additional areas of the state, with about 6,500 more state employees and retirees becoming eligible for HealthSelect's in-area access. Fifteen of 16 currently participating HMOs were approved to continue in the UGIP, and employees and retirees in the El Paso area are eligible for a newly approved HMO, Prudential HealthCare.

A new HealthSelect option, HealthSelect Plus, will be available in several areas of the state. Enrollment in HealthSelect Plus will not require employees to apply through the evidence of insurability process, and pre-existing conditions will be covered. Rio Grande HMO/EI Paso will become a part of the HealthSelect Plus service area, so employees and retirees in the El Paso area will be eligible for both HealthSelect Plus and Prudential HealthCare.

The dental maintenance plan (DMO) was rebid for plan year '97.

Prudential Dental Maintenance Organization Inc. was selected to replace American Dental Corporation. This selection will result in a 15 percent decrease in premium rates for DMO participants. Dental benefits will remain the same for plan year '97; however, Prudential's dental provider network is likely to be different from that of American Dental. Employees should review their summer enrollment materials to determine if their current dentist is participating in the Prudential network.

During the summer enrollment period, employees can change their TexFlex elections. Premium Conversion will automatically roll over unless an employee completes a multipurpose form during summer enrollment to elect out of it. Whether employees currently participate in a TexFlex Reimbursement Account or wish to enroll in one or both of the TexFlex Reimbursement Accounts (Health Care Reimbursement Account or Dependent Care Reimbursement Account) for plan year '97, they must complete a multipurpose form during summer enrollment. Employees are advised to be conservative in estimating how much money they redirect into these accounts, as the money remaining in individual accounts after the close of a plan year is forfeited.

Employees are encouraged to attend summer enrollment meetings conducted by their regional insurance coordinator. These meetings provide more detail into UGIP options as well as assistance in completing forms. If employees do not fully understand the benefits available to them through the UGIP or the TexFlex Program, they should consult their regional insurance coordinator or refer to their ERS Summary of Benefits Booklet. *

McLennan Co. cracks down on sign theft

Helen Havelka
Waco District

A report over the department's radio that some highway signs are down or missing at a certain location is all too familiar to maintenance offices across the state.

One county in the Waco District is fighting back, and TxDOT is a beneficiary of the effort.

A year ago, McLennan County Commissioner Fred Binner wanted to crack down on sign theft in his precinct, so he hired Ralph Briscoe, a retired state trooper. During the past 12 months, Briscoe has recovered more than 720 signs in the county, many belonging to the state.

Tommy Gaskamp, McLennan County maintenance supervisor, said Briscoe's efforts are helping reduce sign vandalism.

"He has found quite a few of our signs. We have been able to reuse some, but many are damaged beyond repair," Gaskamp said. "What's making the biggest difference is that the public knows Ralph is out there. He has gotten some publicity about his work, and they know he is following up on information about people who steal signs."

"It's one thing to say you are cracking down on violators," continued Gaskamp, "but dedicating a law enforcement official to the effort shows the county is serious."

Briscoe contacted TxDOT in May, seeking assistance with his public awareness effort. Cindy Parks, Waco District traffic specialist, realized that Briscoe's effort could improve safety and used local traffic safety funds to produce 800 four-color posters.

"If a stop sign or a yield sign is taken, we have a real problem. We knew that if Mr. Briscoe's effort could curtail this vandalism, it was worth spending some of our local funds," said Parks, who worked with Mike Vincent from the district's Traffic Section to produce the poster. "I think most people steal signs without realizing what effect it can have on others. The poster was able to send that message."

Briscoe distributed the posters to almost every school, church, city government, law enforcement agency and fire department in the county. He also worked with the police departments at Baylor

McLennan County Maintenance Supervisor Tommy Gaskamp, right, looks over some of the stolen signs recovered by Constable Ralph Briscoe, left.



Helen Havelka, WAC

University and Texas State Technical College.

"The help I have had from other agencies is what has made the effort successful," said Briscoe. "Working together, we can cut this tremendous cost of the taxpayers."★

Tyler District opens its doors to community, media

Tammy Stidham
Tyler District

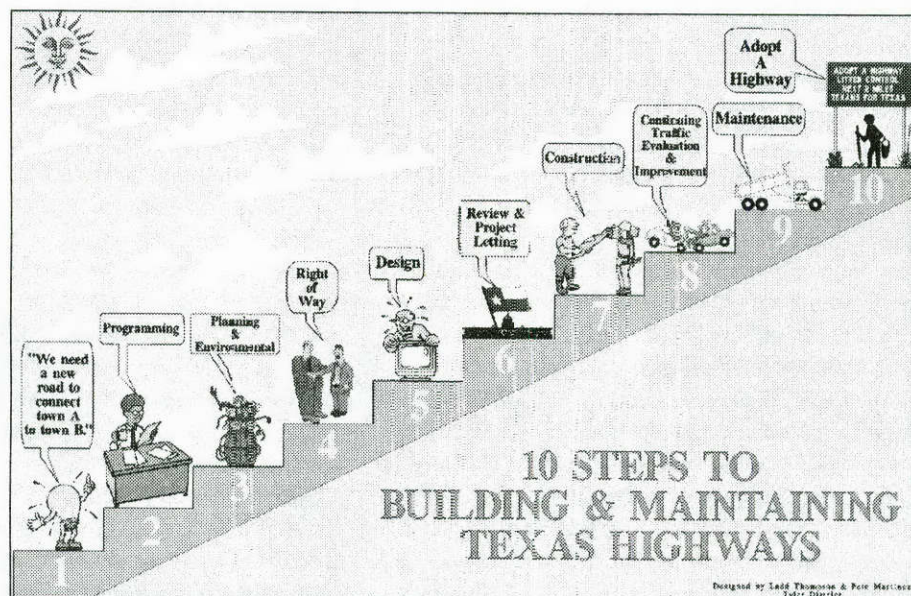
It all began as a question posed by Tyler District Engineer Mary May: "What experience have you had in developing media relationships, and how would you improve them?" One response stood out: Host a media day to promote TxDOT. The idea was to get news media representatives to come out and see what the department does.

The media day idea was expanded and evolved into an open house. Not only were news media invited; the district invited the entire community. Invitations were sent to elected officials, state legislators and their staffs, schools, and other guests such as employees and their families.

A committee of 14 volunteers from every area of the district met weekly for two months to plan the event. Members volunteered to write invitations, serve refreshments, write ads for newspapers, print fliers and more.

The day of the event, two local radio stations did live broadcasts from the district office and one at the Athens Area and Maintenance Office. The district office broadcast live interviews every 15 minutes.

More than 300 citizens visited the district's nine locations. Special guest Eloise Lundgren, director of the Public Information Office, said, "Open houses are the cornerstone for any district's community relations efforts. It's really applying TxDOT's partnering philosophy to the public information program."★



TYL employees created a handout, above, to show visitors how a highway is built in Texas. At left, David McDaniel, a Dallas District retiree, displays his license plate collection, which dates to 1917.

'Recycled' playground a hit with Austin kids

Linda L. Ribble
Public Information Office

There's more to this playground than meets the eye — lime-green posts, banana-yellow slides, tangerine-orange loops and apple-red domes. But all it takes is one step to know this is no ordinary playground.

What looks like an asphalt path yields and feels like a multipatched tire when walked on. At Allan Elementary School in East Austin, fewer skinned knees is only one benefit of the new fall-zone materials and playground equipment showcasing recycled-content products.

As a result of combined efforts of the community and Capital Area Recycling Council (CACRC) members, including TxDOT, the new Recycled Playground Project uses recycled materials and reduces waste generation. The project includes an outdoor classroom area and replaces an unsafe and unsightly play area, which included old tires, cracked wood and exposed nails.

A goal of the Recycled Playground Project is stimulating interest in recycled-content products by demonstrating their versatility. According to CACRC President Rebecca Lallier, a recycling specialist with the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, the Recycled Playground Project is achieving this goal. She said inquiries about the project's recycled-content products are coming from not only Austin, but throughout Texas and other states as well.

Lallier credits TxDOT Recycling Coordinator Rebecca Davio with the success of CACRC's project. "Davio was the special project chairwoman last year, supplying a considerable amount of time to coordinate the effort. She was the heart and soul of the project. She made it happen," she said.

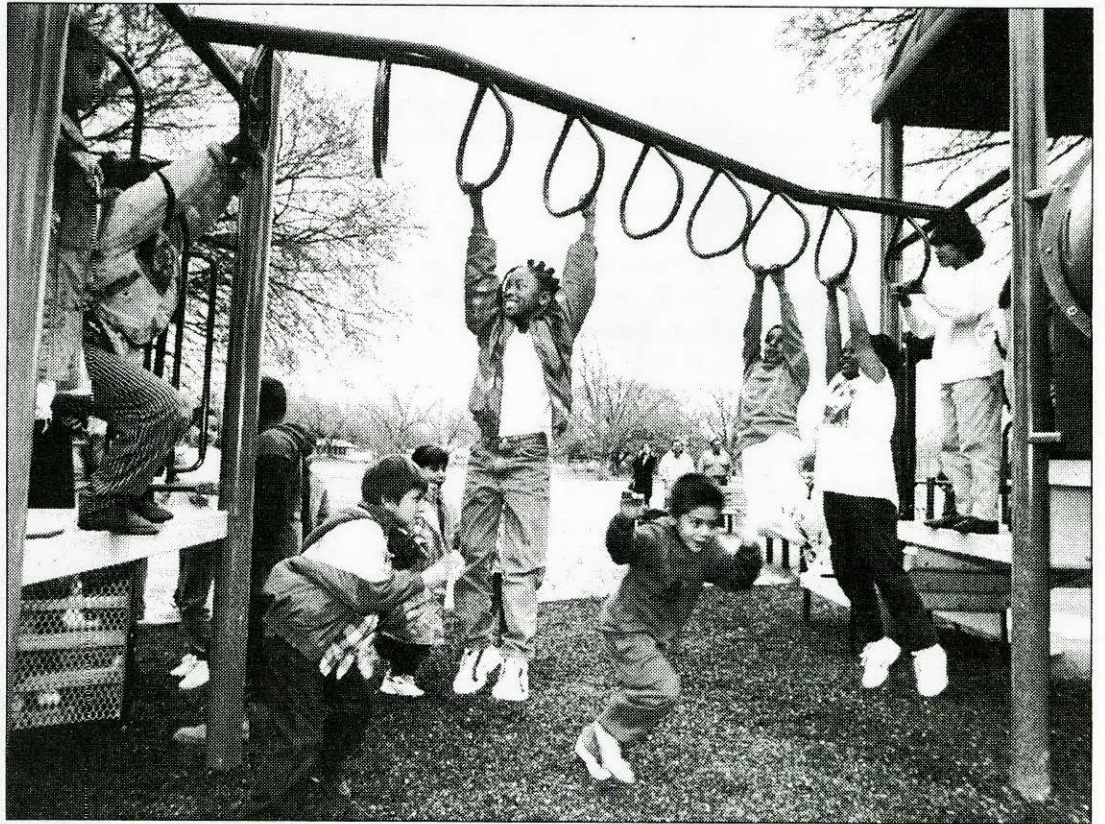
Formed in 1992 as the Austin-area chapter of the Texas Corporate Recycling Council, a statewide network, CACRC is a volunteer, nonprofit organization composed of corporations, government agencies, environmental organizations and individuals supporting recycling and waste reduction. TxDOT joined in 1994.

In the short time since its debut in March, the Recycled Playground Project has gained high-profile status. The project was featured at a Texas General Land Office conference in Dallas and received attention at the Environmental Trade Fair in Austin in May.

Other recycled materials constituting the playground's recycled-content products include plastic, steel, aluminum, ground-up tires and fly ash. In the main playscape structure and balance beam alone, the percentage of reground plastic materials in various components ranges from 5 percent in colors such as white to a high of 100 percent in black. Depending upon the size and color of the product, cost savings of using recycled materials range from \$5 to \$30.

About 65 aluminum cans per foot make up the content of the aluminum uprights in the playground area, while about 1,250 post-consumer milk jugs constitute each of two six-foot park benches.

The yielding "asphalt-looking" pathway is a product called Playbound, a poured-in-place surface derived from old tires, windshield wiper blades, gaskets and a urethane



Michael Amador, TRV

adhesive binder. About 50 tires constitute the poured-in-place surface area of the playground.

The two types of loose fall-zone materials used in the playground contain recycled scrap rubber and 100 percent post-consumer scrap truck tires. The final product derived from the truck tires provides a soft cushion with a better impact attenuation rate than sand, gravel or wood chips. Other uses for this material include an equestrian riding surface or permanent landscape mulch. The scrap rubber — waste from automobile aftermarkets — is granulated to make one-half inch chips.

Parent Training Specialist Marie Velasquez of Allan Elementary School said students enjoy using the new playground and outdoor classroom areas.

"With the old play area, we frequently had hurt kids because of the disintegrating, steel-belted tires and broken or splintered boards, but not anymore," she said. "Both teachers and students like the new outdoor classroom. Classes use it to hold debates. It's a natural setting for drama and encourages interaction between the students."

Playground equipment made from recycled-content products is popular with kids at Austin's Allan Elementary School. The project was a joint effort of the community and the Capital Area Recycling Council, of which TxDOT is a member.

Before the new playscape could be installed, the school was required to have a plan for upkeep of the playground, including the removal of graffiti. While students raised funds for installation and maintenance, they poured over catalogues of playscape equipment in the school's library, selecting pictures or drawing specific features they wanted the architect to include in the playscape's design. The school raised \$40,000 for the project, including cash donations and donations of materials, services and products.

Allan Elementary School is a year-round school and operates an after school-hours extended care program for children.

"The playscape has been, and will continue to be, put to good use," Velasquez said, "not only by students, but by other children in the community."*

Bridge projects increase in first half of 1996

The pace is picking up on bridge replacement projects on Texas' county roads and city streets. Under the federal-aid bridge program, bridge projects have been let to contract at a faster rate in fiscal year 1996 than in previous years.

During the first half of fiscal year 1996, 42 bridges were replaced or rehabilitated for a cost of \$10.2 million. For the same period in 1995, 30 bridges were repaired or rebuilt at a cost of \$7.057 million. The comparable five-year average is 26 bridges at a cost of \$6.763 million.

This increased rate of federal bridge program work on county roads and city streets is encouraging to TxDOT. Concern about the low pace of such work being let to contract in previous years prompted the department to go to the current selection process, which is based on statewide prioritization and state fund participation. The new process has resulted in more bridge restoration and repair on county roads and city streets.

Officials hope this trend will continue, resulting in a significant impact on the statewide bridge sufficiency posture for county road and city street bridges.

Regarding similar work on the state highway system during the first half of fiscal year 1996, contracts were let to replace or rehabilitate 34 deficient bridge at a cost of \$17.33 million.* **Ralph K. Banks, Design Division**

Try Transit Week targets solo drivers

Clare Hagerty
Public Transportation Division

Try it! You might even like it! That was the message resounding throughout many TxDOT districts during the annual statewide Try Transit Week promotional campaign May 13-17.

With the Public Transportation Division (PTN) leading the effort and encouraging each district to host its own Try Transit Week promotional events, Texas drivers got a taste of just how easy — and beneficial — it is to get out of their cars and into a bus, a car pool or a van pool. For those living closer to their offices, bicycling or walking to work were also encouraged as smart alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle.

PTN and the Austin District teamed with Capital Metro, Austin Transportation Study and several state agencies to host a transit fair in Waterloo Park. Austin radio station KGSR broadcast live from the fair, where Capital Metro unveiled new bike racks for buses, aimed at accommodating Austin's growing cycling population.

"This year's Try Transit Week campaign was a real success, thanks to the partnering efforts of all the agencies involved in promoting public transportation," said PTN Director Richard Christie. "Public transportation and other alternatives to driving alone can become a big part of the solution to our growing traffic congestion and poor

air quality problems — that's the message of Try Transit Week. I think we got that message across through a successful statewide team effort by TxDOT district employees."

Try Transit Week is an annual national campaign sponsored by the American Public Transit Association (APTA) and promoted by state departments of transportation. With Gov. George W. Bush proclaiming May 13-17 Try Transit Week statewide, many districts hosted local promotional events.

In San Antonio, TxDOT joined with the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) and VIA Metropolitan Transit to promote Try Transit Day May 16. Buses and vans from AACOG's rural public transportation program brought participants from seven surrounding counties to San Antonio's Misión Concepción, where they boarded VIA Vistas buses for a cultural tour of the city. Following a Try Transit Day ceremony and press conference at the Alamo, the group boarded buses bound for the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, where they were treated to a picnic lunch.

The Laredo District and the Laredo Municipal Transit System commemorated Try Transit Week with a May 17 celebration in Jarvis Plaza, where colorful balloons decorated the transit terminal and the Laredo Community College guitar ensemble provided music. Mayor Saul Ramirez signed a proclamation recognizing the importance of public transit and its employees.

El Paso District headquarters staff hosted a Try Transit Week trivia contest. Employees were e-mailed transit trivia questions each morning and awarded prizes for the first two correct answers. During lunch, staff was treated to the movie "Speed" to encourage them to eat in instead of driving.

A reduced fare on Waco Transit increased ridership 30 percent on Try Transit Day, while Lubbock distributed free bus tickets on the Citibus transit system. One of the Lubbock District's rural transportation providers, South Plains Community Action Association, also offered free rides during Try Transit Week and provided staff and vehicles at a local health fair to raise public awareness about transit. Passengers using Corpus Christi's Regional Transit Authority and Abilene's CityLink transit system during Try Transit Week also rode free.

Waco District staff and Waco Transit employees hosted a Community Services Fair to kick off Try Transit Week. Employees staffed a booth at a mall, which featured contests, drawings and other activities.

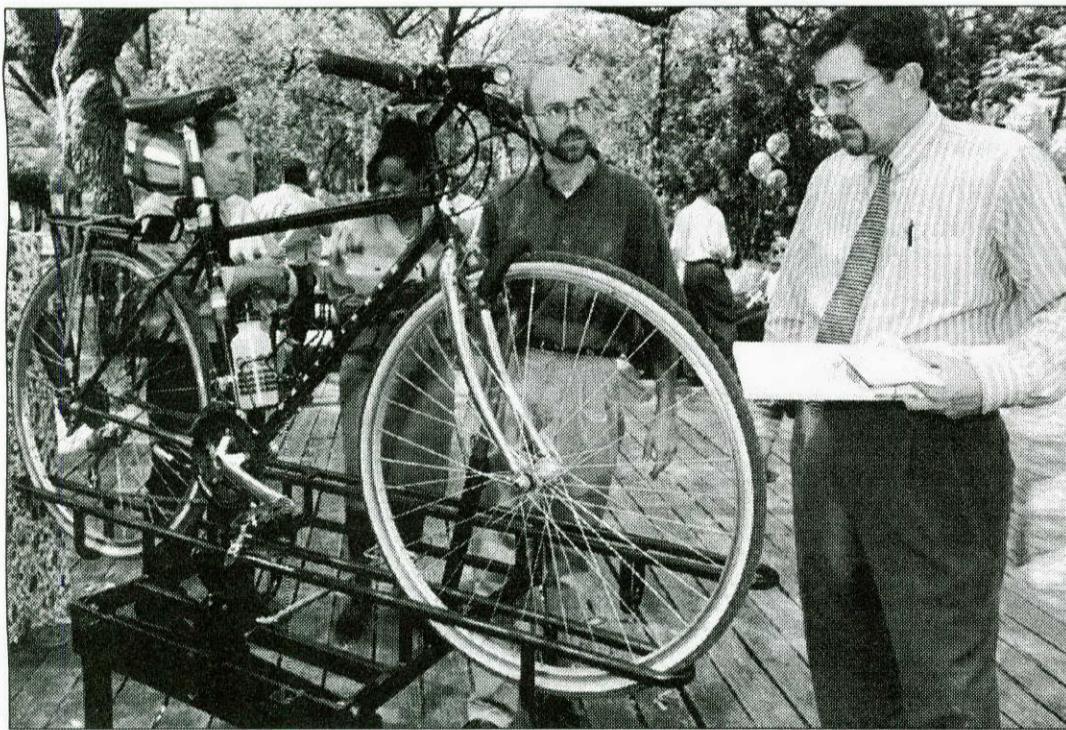
The Fort Worth District hosted Don't Drive Alone Day, prompting 209 employees to carpool to work, 11 employees to walk and nine employees to ride their bikes.

The Yoakum District and one of its rural transit operators, Golden Crescent RPC, staffed a public transportation booth at the Victoria Mall, where two recent PTN videos were shown — the animated "Don't Be An

S.O.V.!" (single-occupant vehicle) public service announcement and the rural transportation video "Traveling the Back Roads of Texas." The district also sponsored a door decorating contest in which employees designed their doors to depict a mode of public transportation.

Transit fair-goers in Austin's Waterloo Park examine one of the bicycle carriers which the city's transit system is installing on its buses to accommodate the growing cyclist population.

"Raising public awareness about the benefits of using public transportation is the key to a successful transit campaign," Christie said. "If we can coax even a few commuters out of their cars and get them to try transit for just one week, then maybe they'll start to make a habit of it — and that's what this promotional campaign is all about."★



Gay Shackelford, TRV

National Park Service team documenting Texas bridges

An International team of architects, historians and a photographer sponsored by the TxDOT's Design and Environmental Affairs divisions is documenting 41 historic bridges across Texas this summer. The group will be visiting 15 districts between the beginning of June and mid-August.

The team, working for the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a division of the National Park Service (NPS), is researching, measuring, and photographing some of the most unique bridges in the Lone Star State. Among the more notable structures to be studied are the Rainbow Bridge over the Neches River, the suspension bridge over the Brazos in Waco and the old Galveston Causeway.

Team member Mark Brown of Homestead, Pa., said the National Park Service is involved in the bridge documentation project because "NPS is interested in the nation's heritage and culture. Why

Texas? Texas has a remarkable collection of bridges."

Other bridge studies are being conducted across the country this summer by HAER, in places such as Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and historic bridges in Iowa. These surveys will be used to provide a permanent record of the states' most significant bridges, in both the respective state's archives and in HAER's permanent collection at the Library of Congress.

Team member Christianna Raber of Alexandria, Va., explained the purpose of the project. "Our primary goals are to document these bridges for historical posterity, and to insure that the bridges remain a significant part of our country's heritage."

At the conclusion of the survey, a report containing the history, photographs and detailed drawings of each bridge will be presented to TxDOT and the Texas Historical Commission. ★ *Jim Dobbins, Environmental Affairs Division*

Design technician squeezes art into busy life

Jeff Carmack
Public Information Office

If he didn't have to make a living, Todd D'Spain might be able to get some of his work done.

D'Spain, who works in the San Angelo District's Kimble County Area Office, is a design technician by profession. But he's an artist at heart.

"I've been drawing since I knew I could draw, since the second grade," D'Spain said. "So, I've been doing this for more than 30 years."

"This" includes portrait work, charcoal and pencil drawings, and pastels.

D'Spain has worked for the department for about two years. Before joining TxDOT, he was a welding engineer in the nuclear industry. He and his family live in Junction, D'Spain's hometown. "I spent my first 18 years in Junction, and I never wanted to leave here," he said, "but once I left, I discovered there was life outside Junction, Texas."

Before settling down, D'Spain and his family spent 13 years as virtual gypsies, moving as often as every nine months.

"We lived in Florida, Virginia, Tennessee and a lot of places in Texas," D'Spain said. "We really enjoyed the traveling. The moving around was great, and we met a lot of people, but we got tired of it and moved back here to raise our kids."

D'Spain said he gets plenty of encourage-

ment. "My biggest supporters have been my family, but my co-workers are also very encouraging. Everybody here says, 'Why are you sitting behind a computer drafting? Anyone with your talent should be using it to make money.' But the art world's a tough place to be."

D'Spain has eyes to sell his work but says it's difficult to find the time. His TxDOT job takes up a big chunk of his week, and his second job eats up some more. Trying to break into the art world selling his work would take up time he doesn't have.

"For the little I've tried, I've done pretty well," he says of selling his work. "I've exhibited in galleries, but there again, you need 25 to 30 pieces for an exhibit. But whenever I get three or four done, I'll have someone ask to buy something, and I hate to say no."

One avenue he is exploring is the cyber-world of the World Wide Web. "I'm thinking about putting my art on the Internet," he said. "I could put up a home page on the 'net and keep my work on-line — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week of worldwide advertising. I think it's worth pursuing."

D'Spain describes his style as "realistic." He said, "I don't care for the abstract. I see very little that I like."

What he does like is artists such as Charles Russell and Fort Worth native Robert Sommers. "Sommers makes a living at it (art)," D'Spain said, "so he's a little like a legend to me."

D'Spain met Sommers once and was encouraged by the man's critique of his art. He said Sommers told him to visit his gallery in Fort Worth. "We've tried to get together several times, but something always comes up with one or the other of us to prevent it," he said.

Between his two jobs and the time devoted to his family — he and wife Patti have a daughter, Misty, 13, and a son, Shane, 9 — D'Spain doesn't have a lot of time for art.

"Normally I like to spend 30 or 40 hours a month, if I can, but it's been more like 25 the way it's been going lately," he said. "I work at TxDOT, and I also work at a fabricator shop, bending metal. It doesn't allow much time for art when you work all that in," he said. "So the artwork has been on the back burner."

The medium he works in changes from time to time. He might work in charcoal for a period, then switch to pastels, as the spirit moves him.

D'Spain said he works mainly from photos, but not just any photo inspires him. "It's a 'wanna-do' kind of thing he said. "I've been given photos that people want me to work from, but if it doesn't catch my eye, doesn't intrigue me, then I can't do it," he said.

D'Spain also practices scrimshaw, the art of carving intricate designs into ivory or bone.

"Scrimshaw I picked up from a knife-maker who worked at the Comanche Peak (nuclear) plant in Fort Worth," D'Spain said. "He was at the house and I asked him about it. So he made me a little set of tools and polished a piece of bone and got me started on it."

D'Spain said this delicate and intricate work requires him to use a magnifying glass to see what he's doing. "When you're working on a piece like a knife handle," he said, "you don't have much area to work on."

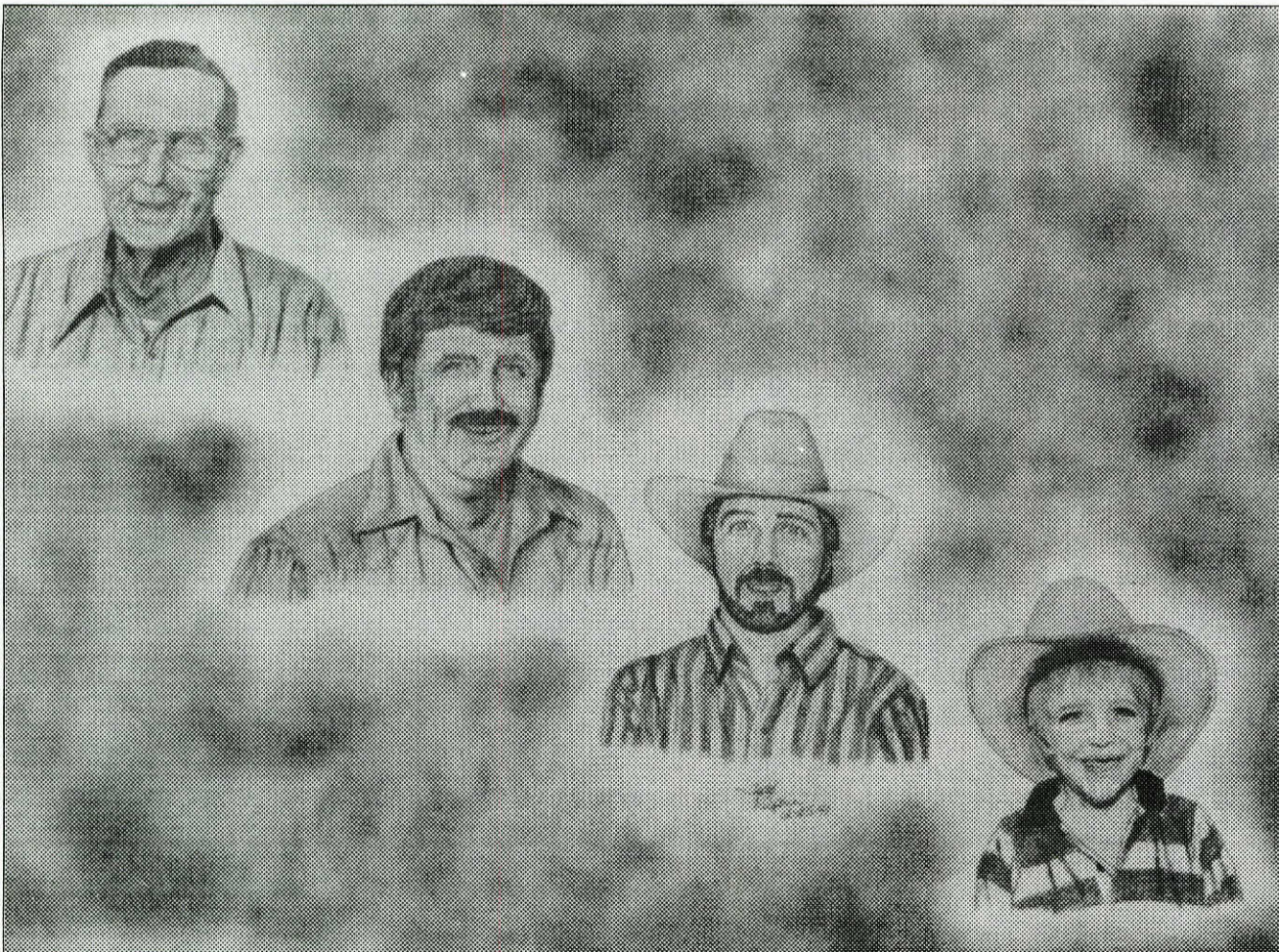
The process starts by outlining the design, carving the detail then using a colorant to highlight the details.

"You basically draw with a pencil what you want to carve, then carve the outline and rub it with India ink. Then you keep working it until you get the details you want."

The first piece he did was on the stock of his deer rifle. "I inlaid a piece of ivory, an oval about 2 by 3 inches, and scrimmed it with a picture of a wild boar hog's head," he said.

"I used to do a lot more of it but I have lots of other things that need doing, like making a living," he said.

D'Spain recently had his first set of prints, a pastel of a nine-point whitetail buck reproduced. Those are now hanging in several Junction businesses. "I don't have any hanging in galleries yet, but I'm working toward that," D'Spain said. "I'm looking for someone to promote my work. I hope to some day turn it into a successful part-time thing." *



Todd D'Spain, a design technician in the San Angelo District, did this charcoal drawing of four generations of D'Spain men as a gift for his father. Pictured are his grandfather, Les; father, Hubert; the artist; and son, Shane.

TxDOT accessible to the world via Internet

Meredith Whitten
Editor

You're about to leave downtown Houston during rush hour, what are your chances of getting home before the 10 o'clock news? You want to spend the Fourth of July fishing in Corpus Christi, where should you stay? Someone wants information on a funding category in the Project Development Plan, do you have to make a copy of the whole document?

The answers to these — and an infinite number of other inquiries — can be found on TxDOT's World Wide Web site on the Internet (<http://www.dot.state.tx.us>). Since the department went on-line July 14, 1995, TxDOT's Internet site has evolved into an interactive information tool. As a result, the department can provide public information more quickly and serve a wider audience.

Internet users can access information about the department's operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Information already on-line includes contract information, job postings, real-time traffic maps, vehicle titles and registration information, tourism information and more. And, with technology changing every day, the department is constantly updating, adding to and fine-tuning its site. Department information is accessible to anyone hooked up to the Internet.

"The Internet is just about universally accepted these days and it's growing at an exponential rate," said Brian Rawson, director of Executive Information Management in the Information Resource Management Office (IRM). "It's a way to communicate and get information out very quickly and very cheaply to an immediate audience."

TxDOT customers can include someone across town or someone across the world. The department averages about four thousand "hits," or file access to the department's site, a day. Users come from private, governmental, educational and commercial industries.

One way the Internet has made TxDOT more accessible is in employment opportunities. Department job vacancy notices are updated on the Internet nightly, so anyone can scan TxDOT job openings anytime from anywhere.

Another example involves global positioning satellite (gps) data.

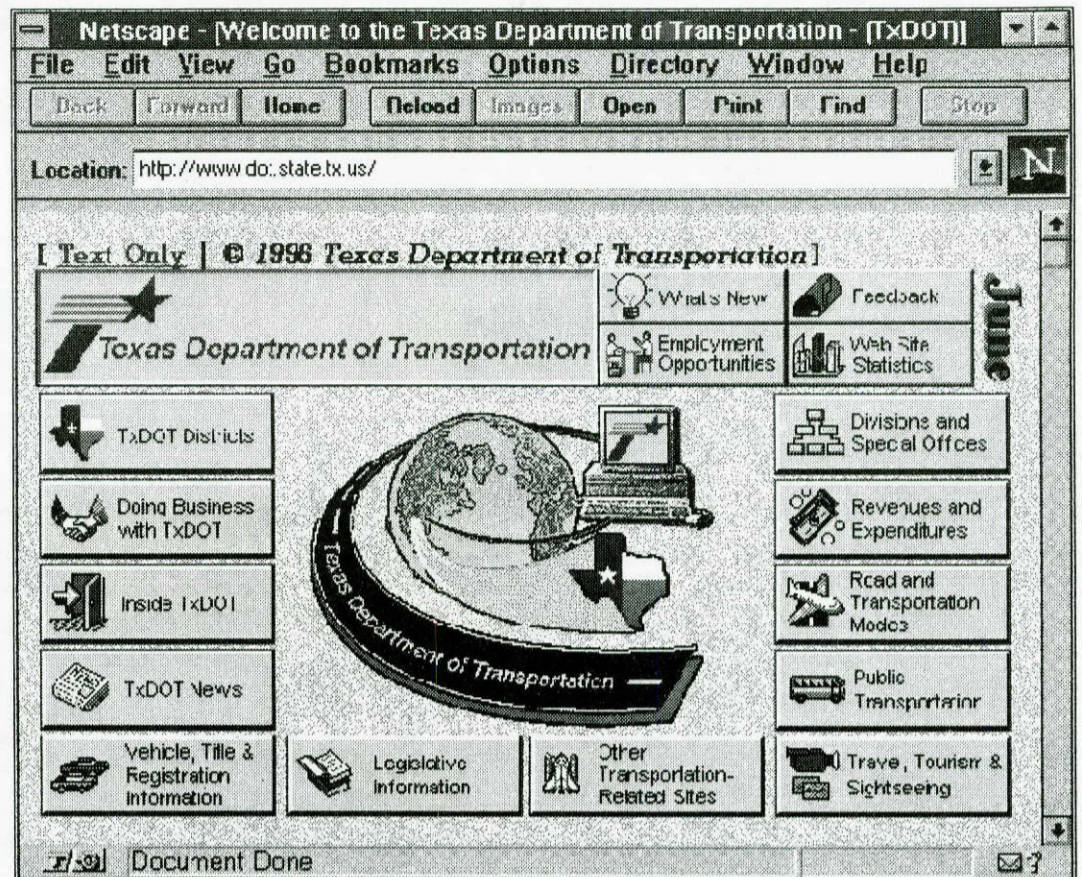
"ISD (Information Systems Division) has GPS data that surveyors all over the state use," said John Clark, a business analyst in IRM. "So, as far as access, a surveyor in Austin can just drive over and pick up a diskette, but a surveyor in Amarillo has to make a long distance phone call, request the information and wait on the mail. With the Internet, they're both the same distance from it."

The Internet can save time and money as well as reduce duplication of effort.

"Anybody anywhere can put information on the Internet and then we can simply link to the areas that are of interest to TxDOT," Clark said. "A good example is ISTE (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991). The complete text of ISTE is already on the Internet, so rather than us loading that document on to our Web site, we just linked to that location."

James Pennington, technical analyst in IRM, cited monthly commission agendas, minutes and transcripts as a way the Internet already has benefited the department and the public. "We publish the commission agenda on the Internet as soon as it goes to the state register," he said. "At the same time, we start mailing copies, but if people know it's out there, they can pull it up immediately; they're not dependent on the postal system or a fax."

TxDOT's Web site is maintained jointly by IRM and ISD. IRM coordinates the development of the Web site's content, while ISD provides technical assistance and maintains



the technical infrastructure.

TxDOT Executive Director Bill Burnett recently chartered a

standing committee on Internet business strategy, which identifies business opportunities that will enhance TxDOT's presence on the Internet. The committee also defines and approves information for TxDOT's Web site.

To place information on TxDOT's Web site, the office of primary responsibility for the information must provide a one-page Internet Information Proposal. The committee reviews the proposal, and if it's approved, IRM and ISD work with the office to package the information. As TxDOT's Internet involvement expands, it will have a sweeping effect on department operations.

"My personal belief is that the Internet will have a profound impact on the way we conduct business with the citizenry in the state of Texas, the contracting community and other TxDOT customers," Rawson said. "In terms of future direction, we're seeing a frontier out there for potential application."

For more information about TxDOT's Web site, contact Brian Rawson at (512) 505-5206 or GroupWise BRAWSON.*

People around the globe can access department information on the Internet. TxDOT's home page, above, provides a window into the agency.

"My personal belief is that the Internet will have a profound impact on the way we conduct business."

Brian Rawson
Director, Executive Information Management

TxDOT allows selected roadside baling to help with drought

Ranchers struggling to feed livestock in the state's continuing drought could find help as near as the closest road.

TxDOT is making some of its right of way available for ranchers for mowing and baling of roadside grasses. Under authority granted by the Texas Legislature in 1977, TxDOT can allow ranchers to mow and bale vegetation along the department's 77,000 miles of highway.

Written permission from the appropriate TxDOT district engineer is required before any mowing and baling take place. Owners of property adjacent to the right of way have the right of first refusal before others are allowed to mow or bale. The district engineer has the authority to deny any request.

Persons granted permission to mow or bale must not receive compensation for performance of these operations but may use or dispose of the hay or other materials produced. Mowing and baling will be limited to appropriate rural roadways.

"When disaster strikes, we do everything we can to help," said Bill Burnett, TxDOT's executive director. "If ranchers can make use of the grass without endangering the public or harming the road system, we will do our best to be accommodating." * *Public Information Office*

AUS pulls off double closure without a hitch

District simultaneously closes I-35, U.S. 183 for bridge construction

John Hurt
Austin District

When you talk about closing a major highway in the state's capital, you should think seriously about what you are doing. But what about closing two major intersecting highways simultaneously on

two consecutive week-ends? That was the decision the Austin District had to make in late April and early May.

The district is improving U.S. 183 to a freeway section, and part of the construction includes building an elevated segmental bridge which will carry the main lanes across Interstate 35 in north Austin.

When the time arrived for crews to bring the bridge across the top of the Interstate, it meant closing portions of I-35 and U.S. 183 to traffic.

Ron Garrett, traffic control coordinator for the North Travis County Area Office, knew the day would come when the highways would close and spent a lot of time preparing for the event.

"Right now, U.S. 183 crosses under I-35. It's one of the biggest intersections in Austin," said Garrett. "It took about six months to develop the traffic control plan for this operation."

Originally, plans called for closing the two intersecting roadways nightly and reopening during the daylight hours. But that would have taken 20 nights to complete the construction of the bridge spans across the north- and southbound lanes of the Interstate. Instead, the decision was made to do the work round-the-clock over two weekends, resulting in a closure of less than four full days.

The biggest concern was the amount of traffic the two highways carry at this point. Nearly 60,000 vehicles a day pass under I-35 on U.S. 183. The Interstate accommodates just under 170,000 vehicles daily at the intersection. The district has closed each highway individually in the past, but never closed both at the same time.

Garrett said modifications were made in the area before the big weekends even arrived. "We widened the entrance and exit ramps in the area so that traffic leaving and re-entering the Interstate could do so on two-lane ramps," he said. "If we had left the single-lane ramps in place, traffic would have had to choke down to one lane and things would have really slowed up."

Meetings were held with the Austin Police Department and the city of Austin Urban Transportation Department months ahead of time. The traffic control plan called for vehicles detouring off the Interstate and from U.S. 183 to use the same frontage roads. That meant police had to be spread throughout the detour area to ensure traffic kept moving. It also meant that the signals along the frontage roads and adjacent areas would need to be rephased.

A week before the closure, changeable message sign boards were placed on I-35 and U.S. 183 alerting motorists of the coming detour.

Finally, the weekend of April 27-28 arrived and it was time to implement the plan. At 11:45 p.m. on the 27th, rolling road blocks along I-35 slowed traffic as crews worked to block off entrance and exit ramps. And how did things turn out? "Everything fell right into place," Garrett said.

Twenty-two Austin police officers were employed round-the-clock to close specific ramps as part of the detour and to make sure motorists didn't get confused about where they wanted to go. Garrett gave a good deal of the credit to the officers who worked round-the-clock to ensure things went smoothly. APD officers also facilitated the movement of emergency vehicles through the detour. Two ambulances and a woman on her way to the hospital in labor were all allowed to come through the construction area.

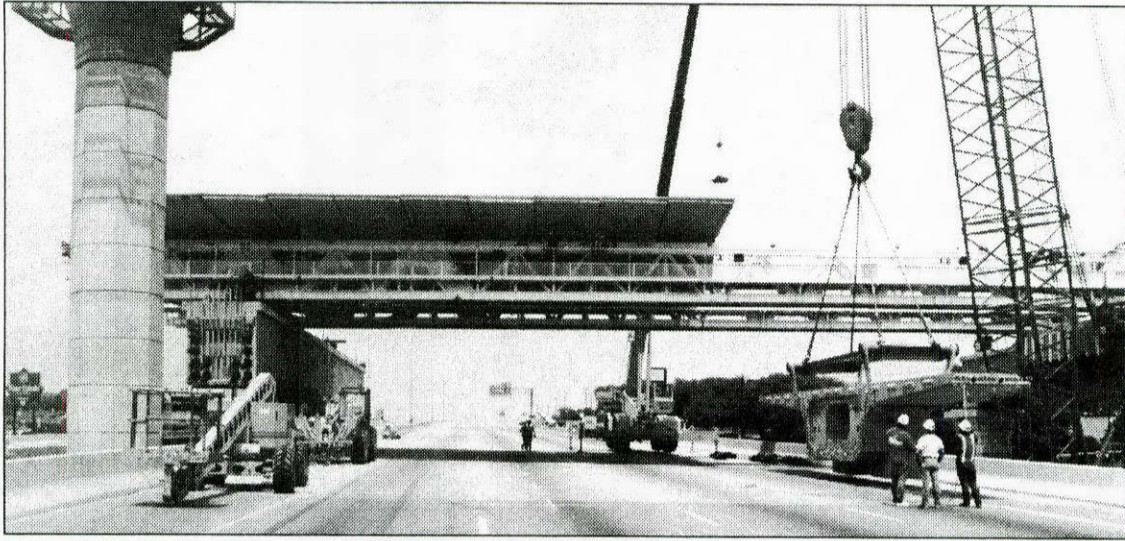
As traffic flowed off the Interstate onto the access roads, signals at U.S. 183 were set to remain on green. District Signal Shop crews were on hand to make necessary adjustments, but traffic handled the detours without incident.

"Good engineering and planning prior to implementation was the key to success," Garrett said, adding that the bridge is a partner

project between TxDOT and the contractor, Martin K. Eby Construction. "John Zaleski, Eby's traffic control coordinator, and I worked closely on this project. Northbound traffic never did back up, and the average delay for southbound traffic was eight to 12 minutes both weekends," he said.

The district will close the two highways again this summer. But the feeling is that the original traffic control plan was good enough that no modifications will be required for the later closures.

Garrett, who has been doing traffic control for 19 years, obviously enjoys his work. "Satisfaction comes from getting the traveling public through safely," he said. "When it's over, you know you made a difference." ★



A segmental bridge section is prepared for placement on a temporary truss over the northbound lanes of Interstate 35 in Austin.

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HOU lauded by Clean Air Texas for use of CNG in vehicle fleet

The Houston District's commitment to compressed natural gas (CNG) as an alternative fuel was recognized with a Clean Air Texas environmental award May 7 in Austin.

Clean Air Texas presented the awards to those who have made an outstanding contribution to improve air quality.

With more than 400 CNG and about 80 liquefied propane gas (LPG) vehicles, the Houston District operates more alternative-fuel vehicles than any other TxDOT district, and one of the largest fleets in the state. State Senate Bill 740, enacted by the Legislature in 1989, sets goals for state agencies to convert their fleets to alternative fuels. By Sept. 1, 1996, the goal is 50 percent. The Houston District will have no problem meeting this goal, said District Shop Supervisor Lenert Kurtz.

"In Harris County, the fuel of choice is CNG because of the refueling facilities infrastructure, which allows for the convenient availability of fuel," Kurtz said. "In the rural areas of the other five counties, we're going with liquefied propane because CNG just isn't available."

The district's heavy use of CNG created an opportunity for TxDOT to directly improve the CNG refueling infrastructure by opening a first-of-its kind leased CNG station on TxDOT property. The station, built by American Natural Gas Power Inc. on the district headquarters grounds, opened to the public in January 1995. TxDOT receives a 15-cent royalty on each equivalent gallon of CNG sold to a non-TxDOT customer, reducing TxDOT's CNG cost from about 86 cents to 80 cents per equivalent gallon. In 1995, TxDOT used more than 25,000 equivalent gallons of CNG from the station. With unleaded gasoline pushing \$1.30 or more this year, CNG is not only good for the air, it's good for the pocketbook.

"When American Natural Gas Power first opened the leased station, they intended it to be a showplace for the state of the art in natural gas refueling. We regularly have visitors from all over the world coming by to look at it," said Kurtz. ★ **Victor Tsai, Houston District**

Vela's illustrations bring ozone fighter to life

Meredith Whitten
Editor

Forget Batman, Superman and the Thing.

The Corpus Christi District has its own superhero.

Captain Ozone has arrived to help the district tackle its ozone concerns. He springs to life in a coloring and activity book targeted at schoolchildren.

Manuel Vela, a design technician in Corpus Christi's Special Design Office, illustrated the book. Vela's creative side was well known around the office, so he was the natural choice for the project.

"I think everyone recognizes his talent as an artist," said Design Engineer Bob Leahey, who is Vela's supervisor. "As part of the educational process, the idea came up to do an activity book to distribute to the kids, and Manuel came to mind."

Vela was given the text for the activity book, and the rest was up to his imagination.

"My role was to do the illustrations, to come up with some kind of action hero who fights ozone," Vela said. "So I brainstormed until I got this one. Drawing is no problem; coming up with the idea is the hard part."

In the activity book, Captain Ozone explains what ozone and ozone action days are, what can be done to prevent ozone levels from rising and what harmful effects ozone causes. Captain Ozone is seen riding a cloud, planting trees with children and getting rid of low-level ozone blanketing the city.

Vela drew the book with a local touch, including the Harbor bridge and a bus from the local transit authority. He said the book will teach children — and adults — the importance of clean air.

"I think it will help children understand about ozone. Some of that stuff I didn't even know until I read the story," Vela said.

The activity book is a project of the Ozone Task Force of Corpus Christi, which is made up of area agencies, including TxDOT. The project was funded through a minority grant from Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

Vela, who was born and raised in Corpus Christi, never has taken an art class. He's known around the district for his caricatures of employees.

"I just mess around here and there," he said. "At home I never sit and draw except for maybe on a rainy day when I can't fish."

Fishing is one of Vela's passions, and recently he had the opportunity to combine it with his artwork and his work at the department. On U.S. 181 in Portland, the Corpus Christi District is working on a project that will have 25-foot retaining walls. As a first-time

effort in the district, the walls will sport designs of local attractions. When it came time to design the graphics, the district again turned to Vela. His drawings include a whooping crane, a skimmer, a trout and a fisherman.

"The patterns that I drew reflect the area. I had to do a little research, like if the trout's lower jaw extends further than its nose, and how close the fins are to the head. A fish lover will notice if it's not right," Vela said.

Leahey said combining talents such as Vela's with TxDOT's operations enhances the department's image in the community.

"The perception of TxDOT is construction and highways, so this may shed more light on the talents of the folks here at TxDOT," he said. "It shows that we're trying to provide an aesthetically pleasing structure that fits in with the local community."

Leahey said he hopes to have more projects like Captain Ozone and the Portland retaining walls for Vela in the future.

"It's not part of his job duty per se, but when the opportunity came about to do the concrete graphics or the activity book, there was no discussion about who would do it," Leahey said. "Manuel loves to draw and he's really good at it."

The bulk of Vela's day is spent doing design work. And, although he enjoys his job, Vela said he relishes the moments when he gets to do something different.

"It's a nice break from my normal duties," he said. "With design work, all lines have to meet, so it's very precise compared to a free drawing, where you can let loose with your pencil. There are no rules with this. It's like letting your hair down." ★



The Captain Ozone character was created by a task force in Corpus Christi. Manuel Vela, left, a design technician in the Corpus Christi District, illustrated the superhero in an activity book.

Employee Incentive Program awards record numbers

Kimberli Hall
Human Resources Division

TxDOT's State Employee Incentive Program (SEIP) has awarded 11 employees for nine suggestions that have improved department operations. Eight of these suggestions produced a cost savings for the department for which the suggestors received a bonus of 10 percent (up to \$5,000) of the certified savings for the first year of implementation of their suggestion.

- For the first time in SEIP history at TxDOT, an employee was awarded the maximum bonus of \$5,000. Gustavus Morgan III, a radio repair technician in the El Paso District, developed an electromagnetic compatibility test to detect radio frequency interference in the VHFFM mobile radio equipment. He saved TxDOT \$207,000 in the first year alone. Problems with radio frequency interference have plagued TxDOT's fleet and can interfere with vehicle functions, including the ability to brake. This test has resulted in the correcting of the RFI problem by the manufacturers and has been

incorporated into the 1996 MAT Manual as Texas Test Method 899-B.

- Robert Stone, Project Development Branch manager in the Design Division, and John Clark, a business analyst in the Information Resource Management Office, each received \$1,436 for their joint suggestion to print review plan prints at half-scale (except 8.5-inch-by-11-inch plans), saving \$28,731.

- Robert Hidalgo, preventive maintenance coordinator in the Tyler District, proposed a design to make picnic tables wheelchair accessible to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This saved \$2,325; modifications are planned.

- Carl P. Porath, a sign technician in the Dallas District, saved TxDOT more than \$500 when he suggested printing the Equipment Use Log (Form 1771) on both sides.

- John Gilbert Jr., manager of Administrative Services & Human Resources, saved \$528 by suggesting canceling the Motor Vehicle Division's lease on mail metering machines and processing mail at the Main Office.

- Charles George, a former department employee, saved TxDOT \$3,189 with a pro-

cedure he designed for repairing multimail-box supports with minor footing damage.

- John Sitton, field supervisor for the Transportation Planning and Programming Division, suggested TxDOT discontinue paying contractors for traffic counts not done due to road closures. Since there was usable inventory information on the reports, the suggestion was modified and resulted in paying the contractors half of the regular contracted count amount, saving TxDOT \$2,584.70.

- James Sommerfield, formerly of the Information Systems Division, presented a method to produce quality aerial photography mosaics by allowing direct enlargements. His suggestion saved time, space and \$4,250 in materials.

- Jay Kelley and Kent Corbello, Beaumont District sign technicians, submitted a suggestion to design and build a lift system to lift and turn large signs. This will benefit the agency by saving time, manpower and possibly reducing injuries.

Awards for suggestors this year total more than \$12,235 and saved TxDOT more than \$279,097. ★

Service Awards

July

Abilene

15 years
Billy K. Stennett

Amarillo

30 years
John E. Hudspeth
25 years
Lorenzo Jaramillo
15 years
Jackie L. Fowler
Phillip R. Keener

Atlanta

30 years
Robert E. Davidson
John C. Hudson
20 years
Robert H. Crooms
15 years
Michael D. Bassett
James C. Landers
10 years
Danny C. Weathersby

Austin

30 years
Larry R. Cavaness
20 years
Michael E. Barnard
10 years
Steven D. Bohuslav
James S. Voigt

Beaumont

20 years
John S. Jones
15 years
Charlene S. Kent
Jeffrey B. McNeil
George G. Oge III
Rodney D. Thraikill
10 years
Bobby R. Akehurst
Jackie D. Apshire
Carlene R. Corbello
William R. Graves
Lila L. Peveto
5 years
Lester Guidry

Bryan

30 years
Roy B. Schroeder
25 years
Helen K. Paul
Roy C. Pilgrim
15 years
Steven M. Huff

Corpus Christi

10 years
William H. Reitmann

Dallas

35 years
Robert L. Watkins
30 years
Charles W. Farmer
15 years
Raymond L. Lacaze
10 years
Kenneth D. Byrd
Richard L. Darrell
Steven P. Lamar

El Paso

30 years
Ed L. Wagner
15 years
Mark N. Crews
10 years
Jose Corral

Fort Worth

30 years
George M. Brown
Marvin K. Mills Jr.
15 years
John C. Purpura Jr.
Robert D. Robinson
10 years
Kim R. Baker
Roy K. Lankford
Chris W. McLain *
Chester R. Neal
5 years
James E. Cockerell
Freddie G. Esparza
Shirley K. Griffin
Patrick A. Scruggs

Houston

30 years
Jimmie N. Lowery
20 years
William A. Cargile
Glena L. Dawson
Timothy D. McGaughran
15 years
Bobby J. Evans
Sylvia A. Ricicar
Alan L. Robertson
Darrell D. Vanover
Carlos E. Villalta
Rosetta W. Walker
10 years
Jack D. Allbritton
Carl G. Holzwarth
Richard T. Lumpkin
Ernest W. McCoslin
Joseph A. Posas
Eugene F. Roberts
Jack Sherrod
Charles R. Southerland
5 years
Edna F. Blanton
Audra G. Marek

Laredo

10 years
Roberto R. Hidalgo

Lubbock

30 years
Nolan E. Roach
20 years
Robert D. McBride
10 years
Stevan Perez
Kelly J. Roberts

Lufkin

30 years
Cloyce G. Evans
Verron W. Shepherd
15 years
Ronald L. Cook
Cheryl P. Flood

Odessa

20 years
Richard K. Hopkins
15 years
Suzanne Franklin
José G. Morales

Paris

15 years
Billy G. Lomax
5 years
Phyllis R. Chandler

Pharr

15 years
Arnoldo A. Martinez Jr.
10 years
Oscar Garcia
Joaquin Gonzalez III

San Angelo

15 years
Joe W. Garmon
Emilio L. Gutierrez
Curtis A. Wyman

San Antonio

40 years
Kenneth D. Turner
30 years
George G. Acosta
Darrell J. Jalufka
Arthur B. Maspero
Domingo R. Rodriguez
Ignacio C. Villarreal Jr.
25 years
George Fernandez Jr.
15 years
Gregory A. Biediger
Robert A. Gonzales
10 years
Ricardo Castaneda
Peggy J. Hooper
David R. Scheel
John A. Tarro

Tyler

35 years
Billie B. Bonner
15 years
George J. Beddingfield
Randall C. Ralson
Lynn E. Simmons
Timothy J. Thompson

10 years

Jerry Blackburn
Bruce W. Bradley
Linda P. Carile

5 years

Roderick A. Allen

Waco

30 years
Samuel W. Davis
15 years
Larry W. Smith

Wichita Falls

30 years
Jerry M. Holzer
Kenneth W. Nichols
15 years
Richard R. Fenoglio
10 years
Jim L. Keck
Tommy D. Price
Terry A. Symank
5 years
Curtis L. Senn

Yoakum

30 years
Julius E. Belicek
Cuba J. Burselon
20 years
Allen R. Hoerig

Budget and Finance

30 years
Roland M. Breitschopf

Construction and Maintenance

10 years
Robert J. Hundley

Design

30 years
James C. Wall
15 years
Sandra S. Carmona

Environmental Affairs

10 years
William F. Curra

General Services

10 years
Gary L. Baisden
Albert J. Fairchild

Information Systems

15 years
James K. Olinger
George M. Shields
10 years
John C. Pratt
5 years
Michael D. Clarkson
Elizaveta B. Karjavina
Jennifer Pennington
Frank A. Russell

Audit

20 years
Teri H. Sullivan

Right of Way

10 years
Roger M. Dreessen

Senior Management Team

35 years
Bobbie F. Templeton

Traffic Operations

25 years
Alfred H. Kosik

Transportation Planning and Programming

25 years
Monroe A. Hawkins

Travel and Information

15 years
Brenda N. Murray

Vehicle Titles and Registration

30 years
Larose J. Plentl
15 years
Patricia K. Combs
Kathy R. Guy
Charlotte E. Rhone
5 years
Rose M. Anderson
Monica C. Hernandez
Alma C. Piper

Retirements

March

Beaumont
Shirley C. Zigler, 18 years,
Administrative Technician II

May

Houston
Lillian M. (Gayle) Walker,
31 years, Program
Administrator I

June

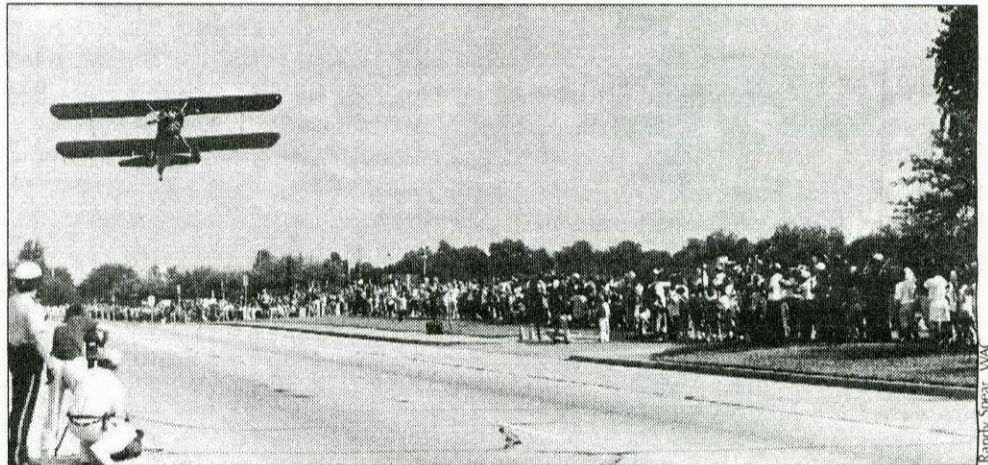
Austin
John A. Miller, 27 years,
Maintenance Technician IV

Bryan

Thomas P. Finto, 29 years,
Maintenance Technician IV

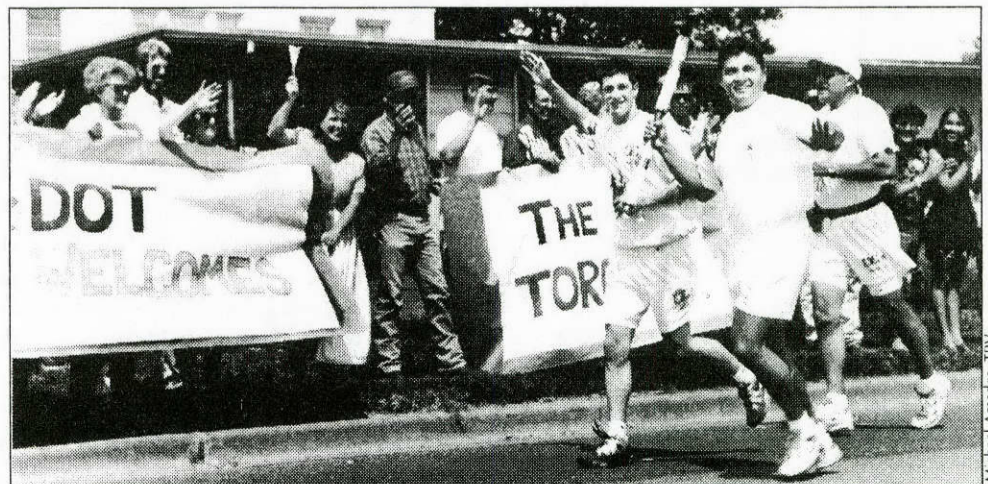
Budget and Finance

Helen M. Swenson, 6 years,
Accounting Clerk II



Olympic torch passes through Texas

The Olympic Flame passed through Texas on its way to the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta. After being lit in Olympia, Greece, it arrived in Los Angeles April 27, to begin an 84-day, 15,000-mile cross-country journey known as the 1996 Olympic Torch Relay. In Texas, the flame was transported by airplane in the Waco District (top). Runners carried the flame in Fort Worth (left) and past the Bryan District headquarters (below), where district employees turned out to witness its passage.



Surveyors

Continued from page 1

Many of a surveyor's tools are already equipped for metric. Only some equipment, such as tapes and chains, will need to be replaced.

The department employs about 100 surveyors statewide. However, contractors do much of the department's surveying. Still, the work department surveyors do is vital.

"TxDOT used to do all the surveying. Now, we're responsible for some right-of-way surveying and the initial control. But, if that control is not right to start with, it's going to cost us money," Wheat said.

A surveyor can be licensed as a registered professional land surveyor after passing a state exam and fulfilling other requirements. This is required if the surveyor will be signing and sealing documents.

Many surveyors agreed that the field attracts certain types of people.

"Somebody who wants to go into surveying has to be somebody who enjoys the outdoors," Wheat said.

Johnson added, "And generally likes math, because math is a big part of surveying."

After 19 years of surveying for the department, Andrew Sanchez, assistant party chief in the Austin District, has experienced a lot.

"For a while I was thinking, 'what am I doing, cutting brush and stomping around in the woods?' But it gets under your skin and you don't want to leave it," he said.

Once, as Sanchez worked in a heavy traffic area, wind from a passing truck blew his hard hat into the highway. No sooner did that happen than another truck barreled

down the road, crushing the hat. "See, you learn not to chase hard hats," Sanchez concluded.

On the flip side, surveyors often find themselves in rural settings.

"There's always the potential for finding snakes, water moccasins, chiggers, ticks — any kind of insect or animal," Friedrich said.

Wheat said it's the variety of the job that lures many to surveying.

"One thing that keeps people in surveying is the jobs don't last that long. A project gets completed and you go to another one. There are

never two projects that are the same. You might be out there one week

wading in water knee deep and the next week you'll be out on I-35," he said.

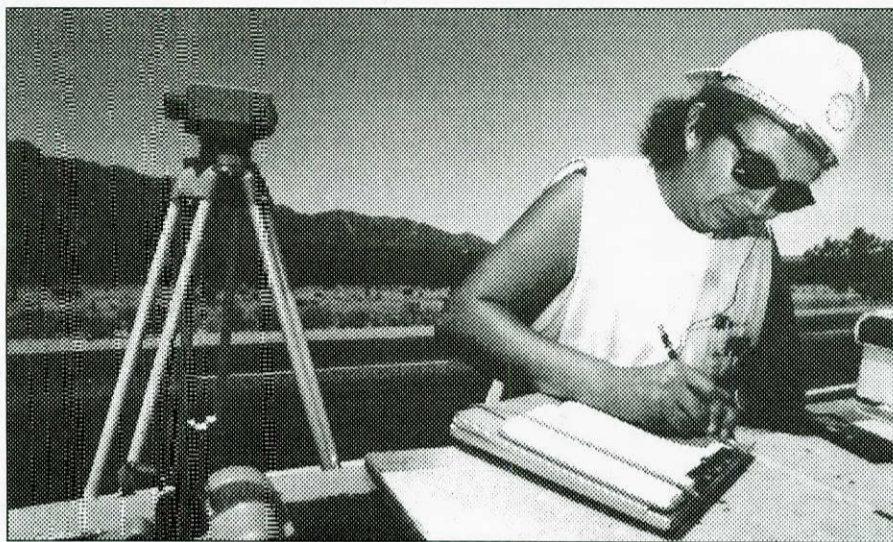
As the cost of construction has increased, surveying has become more recognized.

"As the value of the land increases, the demand for accuracy increases," Shelton said.

Wheat agreed. "We've looked at old deeds where we bought an easement for

about \$50. Nowadays, on projects like (U.S.) 183, right of way costs about as much as construction," he said. "The more right of way costs, the more accurate surveying has to be."

TxDOT's Standing Committee on Surveying monitors the department's surveying efforts. The eight-member committee keeps



Gregory Ayala, survey instrument technician in the El Paso District, records a log of his daily field survey activities.

in contact with the Texas Board of Professional Land Surveying, stays up-to-date on new equipment and technology, and focuses on survey-related issues, such as procedures and employee training.

As the foundation for projects, an accurate survey is essential.

"A lot of people over the years have made fun of surveyors. It used to be that the survey crew was considered the dregs of the department," Friedrich said. "But the fact is, if you don't have a good survey to start with, you don't have a good job to finish."★

In Memoriam

Retirees

John H. Albright, Stephenville, retired from Fort Worth District in 1979, died March 6, 1996.

Alfred F. Barcak, Richmond, retired from Houston District in 1981, died Feb. 12, 1996.

Ethel R. Bundick, Littlefield, retired from Lubbock District in 1992, died March 25, 1996.

Raul Cantu, Harlingen, retired from Pharr District in 1977, died Feb. 20, 1996.

Paul T. Cook, Jasper, retired from Beaumont District in 1995, died March 4, 1996.

Tommie T. Criswell, Heflin, retired from Odessa District in 1975, died March 13, 1996.

J. C. Dawson, Decatur, retired from Fort Worth District in 1967, died March 1, 1996.

Horace L. Denkins, Houston, retired from Houston District in 1984, died February 7, 1996.

Robert H. Duke, Burnet, retired from Austin District in 1974, died March 23, 1996.

Verbal Duke, Houston, retired from Houston District in 1985, died March 11, 1996.

Carl W. Eller, Corpus Christi, retired from Corpus Christi District in 1993, died March 15, 1996.

Carl O. Eppes, Marlin, retired from Waco District in 1978, died March 9, 1996.

Frances E. Fain, Plano, retired from Traffic Operations Division in 1973, died March 4, 1996.

Earl B. Faulk, Crosby, retired from Materials and Test Division in 1968, died March 28, 1996.

Frances D. Goodloe, Corpus Christi, retired from San Antonio District in 1976, died March 11, 1996.

Joseph A. Huggins, Elgin, retired from Austin District in 1976, died March 6, 1996.

Wayne W. Jackson, San Angelo, retired from Lubbock District in 1975, died March 19, 1996.

Earl M. Kinnison Jr., Lubbock, retired from Lubbock District in 1994, died November 21, 1995.

Tommie J. Malek, Alvin, retired from Houston District in 1994, died March 19, 1996.

Pat N. Mericle, Woodlake, retired from Lufkin District in 1984, died Feb. 14, 1996.

Joseph R. Mitchell, Austin, retired from Transportation Planning and Programming Division in 1978, died Jan. 20, 1996.

William F. Moehlman, Yoakum, retired from Yoakum District in 1985, died April 10, 1996.

Porfirio Moreno, El Paso, retired from El Paso District in 1980, died April 1, 1996.

Anna B. Murchison, Austin, retired from Transportation Planning and Programming Division in 1970, died March 17, 1996.

Mackie J. Pounds, Wells, retired from Lufkin District in 1982, died March 12, 1996.

Lee S. Reese Jr., Austin, retired from Senior Management Team in 1988, died March 7, 1996.

Grady L. Rogers, Marble Falls, retired from San Angelo District in 1983, died March 3, 1996.

Floyd G. Self, Austin, retired from Austin District in 1980, died March 6, 1996.

Rodney L. Streater, San Antonio, retired from San Antonio District in 1984, died March 26, 1996.

Benton C. Walker, Waco, retired from Paris District in 1976, died March 6, 1996.

Frank E. Willihoit, Emory, retired from Paris District in 1995, died March 31, 1996.

Maurice Williams, Phoenix, Ariz., retired from Houston District in 1979, died March 23, 1996.

Alice Wood, Giddings, retired from Transportation Planning and Programming Division in 1977, died April 1, 1996.

Calendar

July

2-3 Introduction to Superpave, Fort Worth, MAT

4 Independence Day (holiday)

9-11 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Austin, DES

10-12 Keep Texas Beautiful 1996 Convention, Irving, TRV

16-18 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Corpus Christi, DES

16-18 Regional Traffic Safety Strategic Planning Meetings, Bryan, TRF

23-25 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Austin, DES

27-31 National Transportation Public Affairs Workshop, Austin, PIO

30-8/1 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Abilene, DES (through Aug. 1)

30 Regional Traffic Safety Strategic Planning Meetings, San Antonio, TRF (through Aug. 1)

31 Commission Meeting, Texarkana

August

2-7 51st Annual Professional Development Forum & Products Exposition, Austin, GSD

6-8 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Austin, DES

13-15 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Beaumont, DES

13-15 Regional Traffic Safety Strategic Planning Meetings, Odessa, TRF

20-22 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Austin, DES

25 Best Practices in Contract Management, Austin, GSD

27 LB's Birthday (state holiday)

29 Commission Meeting, Austin

September

2 Labor Day (holiday)

3-5 Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) Visual Training, Dallas, DES

16-17 Falling Weight Deflectometer User's Group Meeting, Austin, DES

23 Yarn Kippur

26 Commission Meeting, Austin

October

14-16 Transportation Conference, College Station, STF

31 Commission Meeting, Austin

November

11 Veteran's Day (holiday)

13-14 Accident Prevention Management Meeting, Austin, OCC

21 Commission Meeting, Austin

28 Thanksgiving Day (holiday)

29 Holiday

Letters

The following letter was received by Executive Director Bill Burnett:

Recently your Courtesy Patrol on I-10, just out of El Paso, rescued us.

It was one of those nightmarish situations that you can't believe is happening to you. George, my husband, changing a tire with 18-wheelers fanning him. Just then your Courtesy Patrol with lights flashing drove up. They put the "lights on" arrow to direct traffic around us. They changed the wheel and, thank goodness, were still behind us when another tread turned loose and another tire blew.

Michael R. Salvatti took George into Sundown Shopping Center and waited while he purchased two new tires. **Rafael M. Delgado** waited with me on the highway with the car.

Your employees Michael and Rafael are the epitome of courteous and gracious assistance. We need more like them.

Your Courtesy Patrol meant so much to us and is so important in the lives of those traveling the highways that we want to thank you for the instigation of your idea for this wonderful service.

In addition to El Paso, Dallas, San Antonio and Houston, we are asking our trusted public servants to fund and see that the Courtesy Patrol service covers the state. It is a lifesaver.

Gloria and George Watkins

Austin

Michael R. Salvatti and Rafael M. Delgado work as El Paso District Courtesy Patrol.

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The reason for this letter is to notify you that you have a caring and helpful employee.

I was on my way to Florida when my car overheated between Taft and Sinton. As you may know, there is nothing but farms and fields as far as the eye can see in that area. I crossed my fingers, slowed down and watched my temperature gauge creep up into the red. I pulled up to the first occupied-looking building I came upon which was the Sinton-area Texas Department of Transportation. I smiled to myself in spite of my tension and steaming engine — what better place to pull an overheated car into than the Department of Transportation? Right, I thought to myself, they're going to laugh me right out of there.

A gentleman by the name of **Frank Jozwiak** filled a jug with water at the back of the building and pulled around front where I was parked. He then spent as much time as it took for my engine to cool and to ensure it would stay that way until I could move on to Sinton. His manner was kind and neighborly. He recommended a dependable mechanic in that town, and since he was headed that way anyway, lead me there and continued on to his own destination.

I hope you have a way to recognize outstanding employees. Frank Jozwiak at the Sinton-area Texas Department of Transportation is one. My thanks to him and to your department.

Darrien L. Ward

Portland

Frank Jozwiak is the assistant maintenance supervisor for San Patricio County in the Sinton Area Office, Corpus Christi District.

I was stranded Thursday afternoon, March 21, when one of your employees stopped to help me. I know it is your job to stop and help, but I just can't forget the comfort I felt and I'm forever grateful. I know that God was watching out for me and I'm thankful He sent you!

You all do a great job and are such a blessing!

I just wanted to you to know you are appreciated very much. Thanks again!

Sandy Carson

Luis Herrera is a maintenance technician in the Lampasas Maintenance Office, Brownwood District.

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As this is the only address I have I am sending it in care of the Transportation News, and if it is not correct, I am sure you will get it to the proper people.

Recently in returning from San Antonio to my home in Yorba Linda, Calif., I experienced a fuel pump failure 30 miles west of Fort Stockton. Fortunately, the failure occurred near an area where one of your employees was working. As the weather was a very uncomfortable 105 degrees, and it was a very isolated area, Mr. **Sam Jackson** took it upon himself to drive me four miles to a telephone so I could call AAA Auto Club. He returned me to my car where my companion waited; she had a sprained ankle and could not walk. He finished his job and assured us he would check on us on his return trip.

Two hours later, he did stop by, made sure we had water and waited a few more minutes until the tow truck arrived.

I would think Mr. Jackson is a conscientious and dedicated employee and should be commended for his extra effort for helping a stranded motorist in time of need.

Frank O'Leary

Yorba Linda, Calif.

Samuel F. Jackson is a maintenance technician in the Iraan Maintenance Section, Odessa District.

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This letter is to inform you about one of your employees, Ms. **Anette Moss**. I would like you to know how she went over and above her job function as a signal technician. Last week when I took my grandchildren to school, my car keys and driver's license were missing. I was very upset, not so much about the keys as I was about my license. After several hours of trying to remember what I did with them, I had Ms. Moss at my door with my bent keys and driver's license in hand.

It is very rare nowadays for anyone to take the time to return something found, but for someone to take the time to deliver what they found is unheard of. My husband was home, and we offered her all the money we had on us at the time, which was only \$5. She would not take it. We only hope that this letter, at least, will reward her in some way with our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale F. Massey

Anette Moss is a signal technician in the Fort Worth Signal Shop.

Thank you for your assistance in providing the highway right-of-way information requested. The courteous, professional attention was much appreciated. It is uncommon today to receive such extraordinary service!

Carl Griffin

Winnsboro

Stephen K. Littlefield is a design technician in the Mineola Area Office, Tyler District.

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The following letter was received by Sulphur Springs Area Engineer Ernest Teague:

I wanted to take a few moments to thank you, your department and staff for all of your hard work on the recently completed projects in my district.

The new lights at I-30 and Texas 37, the resurfacing of FM 115 and Texas 37, and the on/off ramps for the Lowe's distribution center are all projects that enhance the quality and safety of our daily lives.

People are quick to complain about state agencies and employees and reluctant to praise them. I want to thank you, not only as a state representative, but as a resident of Franklin County, for your dedication.

Tom Ramsay

**State Representative, District 2
Mount Vernon**

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