

NON-CIRCULATING

Transportation NEWS

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Atlanta man helps memorialize Bessie Coleman Co-op student's work puts national spotlight on America's first black female aviator

Marcus Sandifer
Atlanta District

An Atlanta District co-op student has gained national recognition for his work in promoting black history. Tommy Thomas, a student employee in the district warehouse and a senior at Atlanta High School, was chairman of a Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) public relations project memorializing Atlanta native Bessie Coleman on a U.S. postage stamp.

During his research, Thomas discovered that Coleman, who was born in Atlanta in 1892, was the first black woman aviator.

She moved to Waxahachie with her family at an early age and worked in her father's cotton fields until a teen. She later moved to Chicago where she worked as a beautician.

It was in Chicago that Coleman was exposed to aviation and her desire to fly was kindled. However, no one in the United States would teach a woman or a black person to fly.

Coleman saved her money and went to France, where she spent three years working and learning to fly. She earned her wings in June 1921 and returned home.

After touring the U.S., Coleman returned to France for two more years of training.

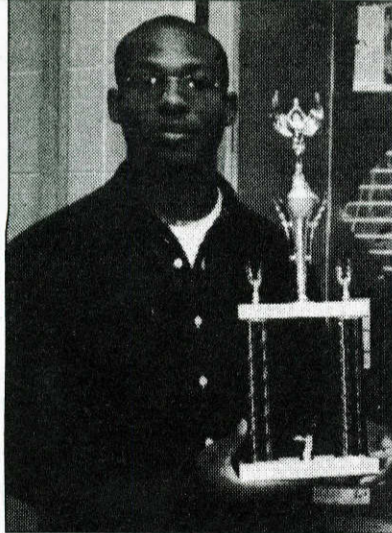
After earning her stunt-flying permit, Coleman traveled in flying shows until 1926, when she fell to her death during a routine flying stunt in Jacksonville, Fla.

The remarkable trail she blazed for blacks and women was a project worth remembering for Thomas. He spent hours of research and correspondence to get a stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service.

Thomas was notified in February that the Bessie Coleman stamp would be one of this year's Black Heritage stamps series memorializing five notable African Americans annually.

To commemorate the issuance of a pictorial stamp, the U.S.P.S., through the request of the Atlanta Post Office, received permission to open a temporary post office for one day. It opened May 12 and was named the Bessie Coleman Post Office. Here, new stamps could be purchased and cancelled with a special stamp.

Tommy Thomas, an Atlanta District co-op student, conducted research that helped lead to Bessie Coleman appearing on a series of U.S. postage stamps memorializing five notable African Americans.



Marcus Sandifer, ATL

BLACK HERITAGE



US Postal Service

Included in the events of the day were appearances by Coleman's relatives and Doris Rich, author of *Queen Bess, Daredevil Aviator*. "This has been an big learning experience for me. Who would have thought the first black woman to fly would be from Atlanta?" said Thomas. "Everyone knows how famous Amelia Earheart was, but

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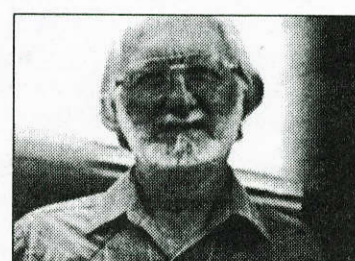
Partnering may be a new concept to some, but to Jerry Williams, it's been a way of life for the past 17 years. **Page 3**



To encourage Texans to try transit instead of driving, TxDOT promotes the benefits of public transportation. **Page 5**

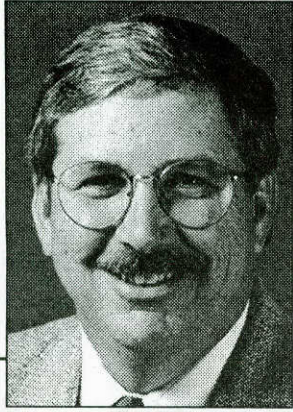


One TxDOT employee has gone further than most to help our environment — he recycled his car. **Page 7**



Despite recognition for his art, Bobby Vernon's values still center on the people around him. **Page 8**

Ask Bill



On Oct. 1, a new bridge management system called PONTIS will begin, as mandated by the Federal Highway Administration. At the district level, bridge inspections, pavement management systems, etc., are usually done by the same office, which only has one or two FTEs. Accordingly, the districts are encouraged to contract out the new and existing bridge management systems inspections.

I have researched what it would cost the Paris District to let contracts for this work, and what it would take for it to be done in-house. Letting contracts to consultants would cost the Paris District an estimated \$840,000 every two years for bridge inspections. Doing the inspections in-house would cost an estimated \$260,000.

From what I have seen, PONTIS is not ready for a full-scale implementation, nor are the districts prepared for the additional workload involved. With cutbacks in personnel and hiring freezes, how is this to be done efficiently?

If the PONTIS system is contracted out, how can TxDOT stay true to its vision? How can we be recognized and respected, responsible and cooperative to the citizens when

tax dollars will be wasted? How can we say that we are using efficient and cost-effective work methods when TxDOT would be throwing away money? How can TxDOT be a desirable workplace if the work is done by outside contractors and only paperwork or pencil-pushing is left for the state forces? TxDOT should do the right thing: Hiring, buying equipment and doing whatever it takes to make PONTIS and BRINSAP an in-house inspection and management system.

If we do not act immediately, the additional workload of PONTIS will require that all bridge management inspections be performed by consultants. TxDOT has a strong foundation for creating an in-house inspection system for PONTIS and BRINSAP. TxDOT could save millions of dollars every year and be an example of efficiency, prudence, pride and quality that could set new standards of excellence for bridge management systems nationwide.

Kobin Reynolds
Paris District

I appreciate the research you have done, as well as your sincere concern for the department and the taxpayers of Texas.

The department needs management systems to track these large programs. We must be sure our bridge inspections are being carried out in a timely and efficient manner.

The department chose to use PONTIS, a system that is available off the shelf from AASHTO, instead of trying to recreate the wheel spending TxDOT resources. The use of consultants is in line with today's Texas and meets the desires of elected officials and private citizens. This also is stated in the fourth bullet of our vision: Promoting a higher quality of life through partnerships

with the citizens of Texas.

By outsourcing routine, repetitive assignments such as every-other-year bridge inspections, our TxDOT team members who used to do this can grow professionally by overseeing the contracts (contract management), or they can grow into more challenging assignments.

Finally, we don't want TxDOT employees to be relegated just to "pushing pencils" — we want them to be challenged and have the opportunity to grow. Outsourcing does this and meets the mandate to downsize government.

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Hey Bill! What's this about an anticipated merger with the Texas Turnpike Authority? What effect will such a merger have on the four-month-old career of an engineering aide III over the next decade?

Bob Brown
Beaumont District

Bob, I wish I could tell you something definite, but to be honest with you, I can't.

In 1991, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 9 that provides for the consolidation of the Texas Turnpike Authority (TTA) with TxDOT by Sept. 1, 1997, subject to approval by the voters of a constitutional amendment. That amendment was approved by the voters of Texas in '91, but the merger is not a done deal. The Legislature will still have to pass legislation in '97 to make the merger a reality.

In the future, as in the past, TxDOT will remain committed to providing Texas motorists with a safe, efficient and environmentally sound transportation system.

TxDOT leading the way in work zone safety

Bill Burnett
Executive Director

Like many of you, I do most of my work in an office. Offices are designed around the concepts of efficiency, convenience and comfort. Safety usually is not a conscious consideration because offices basically are safe places.

But for most of the people who build and maintain our state's transportation network, safety is a constant consideration — or at least it should be. For these people, the "office" is a few feet—sometimes a few inches — from a moving stream of traffic.

Far too many people are injured or killed in our work zones. I could spin off the numbers, but ultimately only one number has any meaning. That number is zero. Our goal must always be no injuries, no deaths in work zones. There is no reason we shouldn't get as close to perfection as possible. In matters of life and death, the stakes are too great for anything but the highest standards.

What does this mean for the people in the work zone?

It means taking safety standards seriously and abiding by them even when it would be much more convenient to just let it slide. The standards in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) exist for good reasons. They are the result of many years of research into what works and what doesn't, and they are a work-in-progress because there is always room for improvement.

The dangers are many. A barricade panel that has lost its reflectivity is practically invisible at night. A badly executed lane taper can be an open invitation for even an attentive driver to plow into your work zone. A guard rail lapped the wrong way is another disaster

waiting to happen. Faulty mounting hardware can turn safety devices into projectiles. Traffic control designs that confuse the drivers can be more dangerous than none at all.

What does this mean for those of us who drive a desk and seldom need steel-toed footwear?

It means taking the lead in making safety a high priority from the top executive to the people in the work zones. It means making sure that work zone safety is a major consideration in every project design. It means recognizing those who do the job right, who don't cut corners when it comes to safety. It means working with other leaders to multiply the effect of safety consciousness.

TxDOT is joining forces with other state agencies to work on the driver end of the work zone safety equation. Together with the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Health and the Texas Department of Public Safety, we are working on a statewide program called Vital Signs to remind drivers of the meaning of traffic control devices used on the state's roadways, including work zones. The program is based on a study conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute for TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. The joint project will include a media campaign and revision of the driver education curriculum.

TxDOT representatives have met with contractors to come up with strategies to reduce the number of work zone accidents. We are developing a campaign called Give Us a Brake, aimed specifically at making the driving public more aware of how to drive safely in the vicinity of road construction and maintenance operations.

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A Day in the Life of...Jerry Williams

Partnering nothing new to Tyler District inspector



Eloise Lundgren

Partnering may be a new concept to many who are involved in the construction of highways, roads and bridges, but to Jerry Williams, it's been his way of life for the past 17 years.

"I guess I didn't realize when I went to partnering that I'd already been doing it," said the 32-year veteran Tyler District construction inspector. "I've always thought of my job as a give-and-take deal with contractors.

"You have to watch what you're doing out here on construction sites or you'll find out pretty quick you've stepped out of the bounds of your job," he explained.

Williams supervises up to three department employees and anywhere from 50 to 60 contractor personnel, although he's quick to point out he doesn't really "supervise" contractors.

"If you go in and start telling a contractor 'You have to do this and you have to do that,' you're gonna have problems right away," he said. "You have to let the contractor show you what he can do. And then you let him know if that's not meeting your needs. You have to hold him to the line."

Raised on a farm in Mabank, Williams started with the "highway department" when he was 21 years old. He also got married that year. He and his wife, Brenda, who works for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, have two children, a daughter Shawn, and a son, Jeffrey, also a TxDOT employee. The Williams' two grandchildren live with Shawn in Athens.

Williams is proud that he came up through the ranks. "I worked for the department for a year," he said. "I quit for a year and then I came back. A lot of people thought I was crazy."

His first job was being a "tail chain man for a field party. Everything is measured by a hundred-foot chain," Williams continued. "Someone has to head it and someone has to tail it."

He also worked as a ticket writer for construction projects, a lab technician in the area office laboratory and then finally as a warehouse worker for six and one-a-half years in the Athens general warehouse.

A construction inspector since 1978, Williams "inspects the whole job. I have a say in everything that goes on," he said. "I make sure the job is done according to plans and specifications and that the taxpayers' money is spent right."

Williams believes it is important to pass that attitude on to young inspectors. "They need training and real life experience," he said. "You can't just go by the book."

"If I had any one particular complaint, it would be that we don't seem to have enough time to train young inspectors," Williams said.

Currently, Williams is inspecting a construction project in Gun Barrel City that will probably continue for 12-15 months more, depending on the weather. A lot of rain has put the project three months behind schedule, but, according to Williams, "we can make up the lost time if we get three months of decent summertime weather.

"But I don't get upset when things go slow," he stressed, "because before you know it, things start hitting the fan."

It was apparent that it takes more than good weather to help complete construction projects in a timely fashion. The relationship between TxDOT and a project's contractor has a major effect on how fast things get done. And Williams is the kind of inspector who might have had another career as a diplomat with the State Department.

"Personality and attitude have a lot to do with the job," Williams modestly explained. "I could come out here every day and be hard-nosed about everything, but then I probably wouldn't get a lot of cooperation from the contractors."

Part of the strategy in partnering, according to Williams, "is being able to work with contractors you're comfortable being around. It makes our jobs a whole lot easier," he said. "Communication is better and there's less hassle.

"I have learned to cope," Williams continued. "I don't get frustrated and have a fit. I see what's wrong and then go talk it over."

According to Williams, he inspects as much as he can by windshield so he won't be obtrusive.

"I always try not to get in anyone's way," he explained. "Not much of my work is physical — it's all mental. So a lot of people see me driving around in my truck and say to me later, 'Boy, I sure would like to have your job.' They don't understand what I do."

I told him that's because he makes it all look too easy.

As we watched a crew spread lime slurry and form storm sewer inlets, one of the subcontractors, Gregg Kramer, threw in his two cents' worth on the subject of Jerry Williams.

"Jerry understands the difference between what the book says and what really will work," Kramer said. "And that, believe me, makes the difference."

And Williams was just as complimentary toward Kramer. "Gregg's the kind of guy I can trust," he said. "He's reliable. I could leave him here and trust that he would get the job done without me second-guessing him."

Williams also included having a sense of humor as part of his



Tyler District construction inspector Jerry Williams, left, and contractor Gregg Kramer inspect a storm sewer inlet. Williams says he believes that his job, like life, should be enjoyed. "If you can't enjoy life, then it ain't worth living."

secret to success as an inspector.

"I feel comfortable doing my job," he said. "I'm easy-going and I firmly believe if you go through a job without a little bit of fun, then it's not a good job."

"Joking between inspectors and contractors adds to our relationship," Williams chuckled. "If you can't enjoy life, then it ain't worth living."

Williams enjoys life by fishing and helping his wife with a garden. I noticed some pepper plants outside the construction site office, so I asked him about it.

"My wife has a garden, but I take care of it," he told me. "One day, I brought some peppers to work and everybody liked 'em. So I planted some here."

Later, we drove to a different part of the construction site and I got some on-the-job training on what Williams meant by the joking between department employees and contractors. Dale Krigel, the contractor's project manager who Williams refers to as "my German Aggie engineer friend," didn't cut the inspector any slack.

"We're completely adversarial," Krigel quipped while trying to hide a smile. "Partnering didn't do us any good."

Tim Latham, one of Krigel's associates, added, "Now we know why Jerry's been so nice to us the last couple of days. He's been setting us up so we'd say something good about him."

Krigel set the record straight. "All joking aside," he said, "with inspectors like Jerry Williams, partnering isn't necessary."

EAC gives division employees input at top

Formed in '44, committee gives 'average' employee voice with TxDOT management

Jeff Carmack
Editor

Have you ever had what you thought was a great idea about how department operations could be improved, or had a question about your rights or benefits as a state employee, but didn't know where to go with your idea or query?

If this describes you, you need the Employees' Advisory Committee (EAC).

Jim Cotton, a planner in the Traffic Operations Division and the EAC chairperson, said the EAC represents division and special office employees in the Austin District to give them a voice with TxDOT management. Districts have their own advisory committees.

"The EAC was formed in 1944 by the engineer director," Cotton said. "The idea was to give the average employee a voice with management, with the committee acting as the go-between and the employee remaining anonymous."

The 11-member body consists of division and special office employees. Members serve two-year terms and are selected by a nominating panel of existing EAC members. The chair and vice chair are chosen from second-year members. Selections are approved by TxDOT's executive director.

"Although the EAC was formed in the '40s, its function is the same today," Cotton said. "If an employee has a question on just about anything, the employee can send it to us and we'll send it to the appropriate person, from Bill Burnett right on down, and the employee can remain anonymous."

Cotton emphasized that the EAC is not a grievance committee; it does not settle employee beefs.

Although the committee goes straight to the top when the situation merits, most of the questions it gets can be answered at a much lower level.

"Most questions we get are related to facilities or benefits," Cotton said. "These are forwarded in writing to the (General Services or Human Resources) division director level or above, whatever is appropriate to get the question answered." But sometimes questions are policy related, "and these go as high in management as necessary to get them answered," Cotton said.

Questions for the EAC can be submitted in writing, by telephone or in person to any of the members, or they can be dropped in the suggestion boxes located in the buildings housing divisions and special offices. Queries can also be submitted via e-mail," he said. And, best of all, it can be done anonymously. "That's a great benefit," he said. "The names of those who submit a question or a suggestion are held in confidence, and that gives them a little cover."

Cotton said that although questions and suggestions can be submitted anonymously, it is to the employee's benefit to sign them. "We would like to get people to sign these things so we can track them, and get back to people to let them know what's going on" with their query.

The committee usually handles between 60 and 80 queries annually, Cotton said, but that number is going down. "It's been decreasing some in the past five years or so, partly because the committee keeps a low

profile and partly because there are more avenues for people to express themselves, more of an open-door policy than there was in the past," he said.

Submissions to the EAC don't just languish on some bureaucrat's desk either, Cotton said; they are acted upon. Some of the committee's recent accomplishments include establishing legal insurance as an employee benefit option; developing an employee sick room at the Riverside Campus; revision of the TxDOT travel policy requiring "zero balance" hotel receipts; installation of safety mirrors at Building 5 at Camp Hubbard; the installation of security cameras at the Training Center; the use of DaVinci e-mail for legislative review and comment; and the installation of accessible crosswalks at Riverside and other accessibility improvements.

The EAC also organizes and operates several blood drives during the year in conjunction with the Central Texas Blood Center. The committee also releases credits for blood products when requested by TxDOT employees or dependents.

So, if you have an idea or suggestion, don't keep it to yourself; share it with the EAC.

EAC members include Jim Cotton, chair, TRF, 416.3104; Margaret Brown, vice-chair, BUD, 463.8694; Scott Bennett, blood drive, VTR, 465.7602; Joan Lee, blood drive, ISD, 465.7306; Yolanda Alvarez, AVN, 476.9262; Monty Chamberlain, CPO, 465.3573; Zellena Jay, MVD, 476.3587; Larry Long, HRD, 483.3626; Pam Swain, PIO, 463.8609; Sandy Thornton, OCC, 416.3397; Greg Quinn, ENV, 416.2616. EAC's e-mail address is trf@onr.com.

Project first to partner for 'green' public input

Becky Kureska
Corpus Christi District

The Corpus Christi District is taking a novel approach to planning the completion of the Texas 35 Relief Route in Aransas County — partnering.

While partnering is not new to the department, this is the first time it has been used to address environmental and public involvement issues.

The district is preparing to perform studies on the continuation of the Texas 35 Relief Route from FM 3036 to the Copano Bay Causeway in Aransas County. To prevent delay and to work toward common goals, a partnering session was held April 24-25 in Rockport.

Workshop participants identified specific issues and concerns associated with the project and agreed upon the approach to address those issues and concerns throughout the environmental planning process. The group developed project objectives as well as a mission statement to guide partners in working together toward successful project completion.

In the early 1970s, TxDOT proposed the

Texas 35 Relief Route from Spur 202 in Gregory to the Copano Bay Causeway to relieve increased through traffic volumes and traffic hazards in Aransas Pass, Rockport and Ful-

While partnering is not new to the department, this is the first time it has been used to address environmental and public involvement issues.

ton. Existing Texas 35, which extends through these cities, was to be designated as Business 35 upon completion of the new relief route.

A Final Environmental Statement was prepared for the proposed project and approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in 1972, with supplemental statements approved in 1974 and 1980. Right

of way acquisition was substantially completed in 1991. The first phase of construction on the new route began in 1983, and included two lanes parallel to existing lanes between Gregory and Aransas Pass. The second phase, completed early this year, extends the route on new location from west of Aransas Pass to FM 3036 in Rockport.

The next stage of development is extending the route along new alignment from FM 3036 to the Copano Bay Causeway. An alternative study and an environmental document will be prepared with a primary focus on the unconstructed route. In addition to considering alternatives, the new study will include input from the "partners" as environmental effects are determined.

TxDOT has contracted with Quadrant Consultants Inc. of Houston to perform route location studies for the unconstructed portion of the Texas 35 Relief Route and the project reassessment. Quadrant hired Patrice Stevens of Stevens and Associates to facilitate the workshop. Forty individuals representing various resource agencies, local government and departmental representatives attended the partnering workshop.

TxDOT gets on the bus with 'Try Transit Week'

Clare Hagerty

Public Transportation Division

To encourage Texans to try transit instead of driving alone during the American Public Transit Association's national Try Transit Week campaign May 15-19, TxDOT's Public Transportation Division (PTN) hosted a variety of promotional events to raise awareness of the benefits of taking transit.

Gov. George Bush proclaimed Try Transit Week statewide, and many TxDOT districts initiated their own Try Transit Week promotional campaigns.

In Austin, the Try Transit Week theme boiled down to one simple message throughout the five days of heavy transit promotion: "Don't Be an S.O.V.!" — or single-occupant vehicle.

To coax drivers out of their cars and into the public transportation habit, TxDOT's Try Transit Week '95 Continuous Improvement team joined forces with the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Capital Metro offered free rides throughout Try Transit Week on all of its fixed-route service, and riders received discount coupons to local grocery stores and restaurants, as well as a 13-week free subscription to the *Austin Business Journal*.

"Our Try Transit Week campaign was a huge success this year, thanks to the enthusiasm, support, and creativity of our division staff and to the efforts put forth by many TxDOT district employees throughout the state," said Richard Christie, PTN director.

Among the Try Transit Week activities was a one-day "How to Ride the Bus/Ridesharing" campaign held simultaneously at various Austin TxDOT locations. The event was part of the "Transit in our Community Day" and featured representatives from Capital Metro and the TxDOT Employee Trip Reduction Task Force, who visited staff offices and gave ridesharing and public transit presentations.

On "Breathe Easier Day," PTN joined several other state agencies in hosting an environmental fair on the Capitol grounds. Visitors stopped for transit information and environmental literature, and to see exhibits promoting Try Transit Week.

Austin FM radio station KGSR 107.1 broadcast its morning show live from a Capital Metro 'dillo bus on "Try It! Day," May 18. The 'dillo was parked at one of the busiest intersections near downtown Austin, and local radio personalities encouraged listeners to get out of their S.O.V.s and "give transit a try." The duo of radio hosts repeated the "Don't Be an S.O.V." theme throughout the broadcast, and KGSR fans flocked to the 'dillo bus for prize give-aways. TxDOT and Capital Metro representatives were interviewed during the broadcast to promote Try Transit Week as one way to decrease air pollution and traffic congestion in Austin.

In the Lubbock District, TxDOT employees focused on preventive maintenance of public transportation vehicles. District staff organized Appreciation Day activities for maintenance workers, who were recognized for their contributions to keeping well-maintained transit vehicles running smoothly and polluting less. Door prizes were awarded to employees who shared a ride, rode a bike, took the bus or walked to work that day.

In Fort Worth, more than 300 TxDOT employees participated in a "Don't Drive Alone Day" challenge, with local merchants providing prizes for the winners. One hundred percent of the Fort Worth District's Central Design Section employees participated in "Don't Drive Alone Day," barely beating the competing District Design Section, which came in second with 99 percent of employees participating. A closing awards reception was held to honor transit providers,



Gay Shackelford, TRV

who received certificates of appreciation, and three Fort Worth District sections, which received plaques in recognition of outstanding efforts during the 1994 Ozone Alert season.

Austin employees competed in a "Ridesharing Challenge" competition among all Austin office locations on "Try It! Day" to encourage fellow employees to try an alternative to driving alone. TxDOT Employee Trip Reduction coordinators monitored the competition, which prompted one employee to ride his horse to work. Prizes were awarded for the longest bike ride (12 miles), the longest walk (3 miles), the largest car pool (4) and van pool (8), and the "most unique" mode of transportation. PTN and the Environmental Affairs Divisions (ENV) were the leading contenders in the Ridesharing Challenge competition among divisions, with 67 percent of PTN employees and 65 percent of ENV employees either biking, walking, carpooling or riding the bus to work that day.

On "Working for America Day," the last day of Try Transit Week, TxDOT teamed up with the Texas Department of Aging and Capital Metro to host a personal mobility day for senior citizens. Volunteers escorted nine elderly bus passengers to destinations throughout Austin using Capital Metro's fixed-route bus service. The goal of this project was to encourage these passengers to use the fixed-route service rather than the more expensive demand-response service that many elderly passengers often choose.

"Our goal throughout Try Transit Week was to increase awareness of public transportation as a viable alternative to driving alone," said Christie, "and on that score, I'd say we were quite successful."



Gay Shackelford, TRV

Above, PTN director Richard Christie talks to KGSR DJ Ed Mayberry as part of Austin's Try Transit Week activities. At top, PTN employees Demetria Fairley and Laura Canales staff the Try Transit Week table at the Capitol.

Doris Howdeshell tapped for TRV director position

Doris Howdeshell will spearhead the TxDOT's tourism mission as director of the Travel and Information Division.

Howdeshell is a 16-year veteran of the division, which supports tourism through travel information centers and travel literature. During her tenure, Howdeshell has done everything from certifying travel counselors to serving as the division's deputy director. She now oversees the division's 12 Travel Information Centers; *Texas Highways*,



Howdeshell

the official state travel magazine; other travel material, such as the official State Travel Guide and map; the department's nationally-acclaimed Don't Mess with Texas and Adopt-a-Highway anti-litter programs; and the division's audiovisual section, which provides multimedia support for

the entire department.

Howdeshell also coordinates with the Texas Department of Commerce and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to promote Texas as a tourist destination. Since 1988, she has coordinated with state agencies each biennium to develop the state's Strategic Travel and Tourism Plan. Howdeshell also oversees the development of TOURTEX 2000, a computer-based system that collects and distributes free travel information.

Questions about metrication answered

TxDOT, in conjunction the Federal Highway Administration and the Association of General Contractors, held a series of six, one-day workshops to inform TxDOT's construction partners about our metric conversion plans. The workshops generated a number of questions about the metrication effort. Here are some of the more general interest questions and the answers to them.

What training is available for industry?

Metric design training is available. TxDOT has coordinated its internal training efforts with the Texas A&M Local Technical Assistance Program, which is funded by the Federal Highway Administration. For assistance and information on training, call 409.845.4457 or fax 409.845.5726.

TxDOT is just beginning to develop a course for construction inspectors. The materials for this course can be furnished to TEEX if they choose to offer this course as well.

Has TxDOT established a panel to work with local municipalities to ensure compatibility of plats, development plans, utility plans, etc.?

No. TxDOT has sent letters to both the utility companies and to the local governments in Texas, advising them of the federal mandate for projects to be in metric units by Sept. 30, 1996. Since TxDOT districts in the past have done most of the plan development for local government projects, an extensive coordination effort was not considered necessary.

TxDOT has coordinated its internal training efforts with the Texas A&M Local Technical Assistance Program so local governments and industry could use the training and material.

Why metrication? If it's to open a world market, why do we have a "Buy American" program? If it's because FHWA says so, don't we have enough guts to say no? If they threaten to cut off money, can't we cut off money going to them? Change is good when done for a good reason. We have no good reason for metrication.

We appreciate your guts to

express your feelings, but we are convinced that the conversion to metric is necessary for our nation and for Texas. It's not a question of "buy American," but one of "sell American." Since the 1950s, our nation has slipped from being the leading industrial nation, exporting more than 25 percent of our gross national product, to a distant third, with less than 10 percent of our GNP being exported. Metrication is a step to change this trend. We realize the transition will cause some problems and will cost money, but in the long run, money will be saved and using metric units will be much less complicated than the inch-pound system of units. Now we need your assistance, through innovation, to make the transition to metric as efficient as possible.

Is October 1995 still the goal for letting the first metric projects?

Yes. We have six projects scheduled to be let in October 1995.

What is TxDOT's time frame for completing the transition of standards, specs, and design programs (particularly bridge design programs) to metric?

Standards are being prepared now. The details for the conversion of these activities are provided in the TxDOT Metrication Guide and also were covered in the workshop. However, the districts need to coordinate, as far in advance as possible, with their design division offices and identify the standards and programs they will need to support their projects.

Construction and maintenance specifications have been published and are available through the General Services Division, 512.465.7326.

Will there be an effort to develop uniform standards internationally that will allow us to exchange information with our neighbors to the south on projects that affect both of our communities?

The U.S. Department of Commerce, which has been charged with coordinating our nation's metrication efforts, is investigating how government could get involved in the establishment of national and international standards. This has not been done in the past, but they do recognize the need for it.

The only problem I anticipate is that we will be constructing projects in the English system and in the metric system at the same time. Going back and forth will make it very difficult.

This is why we want to encourage the use of metric units on English projects. But we also need to take precautions during the transition period that we otherwise would not need to take.

Are traffic control signs both for construction zones and normal traffic signs going to be required to be metric (ie. 45 mph vs km/h)?

No. TxDOT does not want to take any steps to convert sign legends to metric until the Federal Highway Administration fosters national policy requiring the change, combined with a national public awareness effort.

Metric update

Texas Metric Construction Workshops completed: Hosted by TxDOT, FHWA and AGC, these workshops were held in Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Odessa, McAllen and Austin. These one-day sessions were designed to inform TxDOT's construction partners about metric conversion plans. Additional workshops will be scheduled.

First metric projects to be let in October: Six projects will be let using metric specifications during the October '95 letting.

Metric training for construction inspectors set for November: A committee is currently developing criteria and materials for this course. Maintenance inspectors are also being encouraged to attend this training.

Maintenance contracts and state force maintenance work to convert by October 1996: The Construction and Maintenance Division has informed districts that the two primary computer systems, Maintenance Management Information System (MMIS) and the Material Supply Management System (MSMS), are being made metric-ready. MMIS will be able to accept both English and metric values by Oct. 1, 1995, and MSMS can be switched to the metric system district by district as the change is requested.

Mastering Metrics in Minutes still available: This four-hour training session offered by the department, is aimed at familiarizing employees with the metric system and teaching thinking in metrics. This course can be presented in the district through the district training coordinator.

For information about TxDOT's metrication conversion efforts, contact Richard Rogers, 512.465.3690.

James Dossett named to head Business Opportunities Office

James Dossett has been named director of the Business Opportunity Programs (BOP) Office, effective July 1.

Dossett, a certified public purchaser, currently manages the Purchasing Section and Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) program for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

As director of TxDOT's BOP Office, Dossett will oversee the department's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and HUB programs. His job duties include establishing HUB program goals and objectives; developing operational manuals,



Dossett

development of a HUB program for each district.

Through past work as a contractor for the

education materials and information programs to educate TxDOT employees regarding HUBs; and assisting contractors with the state HUB program and offering assistance as needed to identify HUB firms. He will also coordinate the

DBE Supportive Services Program, Dossett has extensive knowledge of the construction industry and of TxDOT's federal DBE program.

He has experience in both the private sector as well as state government.

In 1972, Dossett earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Oklahoma State University. He earned a master's in organizational behavior and administration from Southern Methodist University in 1975.

Electric Rabbit is no hare-brained idea

Employee currently commutes in zero-emission, battery-powered Volkswagen

Kathleen M. Jones

Research and Technology Transfer Office

Many TxDOT employees help improve the quality of our environment by recycling paper and cans or by using a car pool or mass transit. One TxDOT employee, Chris Harris, has gone further than most — he recycled his car.

Harris, a computer programmer in the Traffic Operations Division's Traffic Management Systems Laboratory, converted his gasoline-powered 1984 Volkswagen Rabbit to electric power.

"This type of conversion really is recycling," said Harris. "You reuse not only the body and axles, but the drive train and much of the electrical system as well. All this engineering is proven and reliable. You're just making it better by making it zero emission."

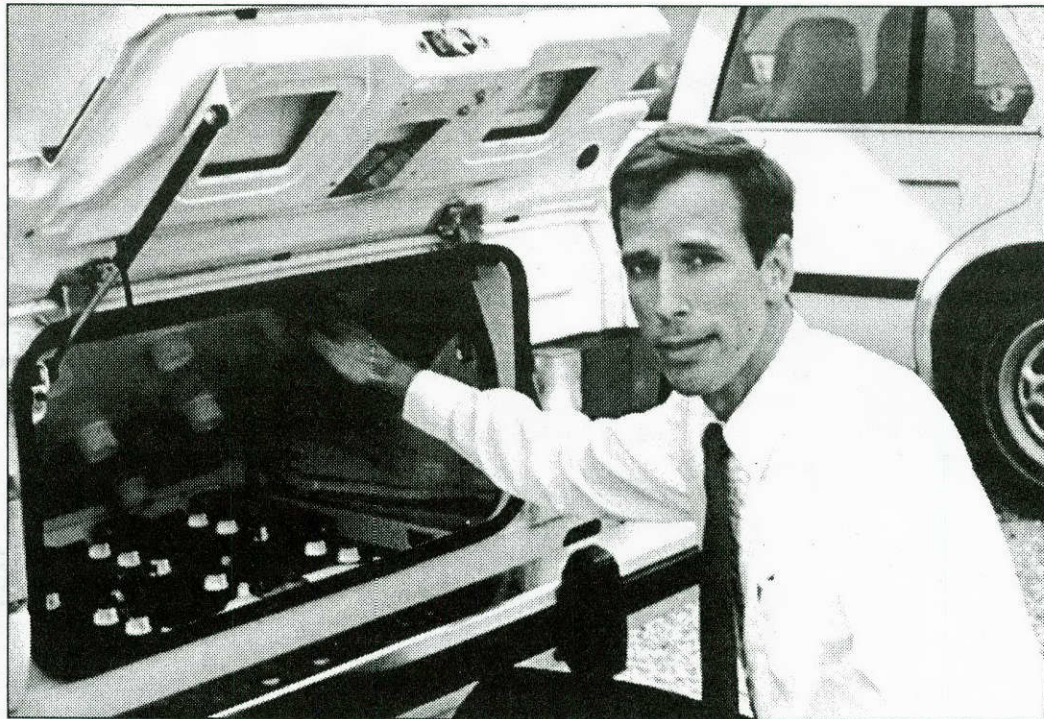
Since October 1994, Harris has commuted every day from Buda to TxDOT's Bull Creek complex in Austin in his zero-emission Rabbit.

Why convert your own car now when the major automobile manufacturers are promising long-range electric cars in the next five to 10 years? For one thing, it is less wasteful to convert an existing car than to junk it and buy a new one. Also, conversion costs less — \$7,000 to convert a 1984 VW Rabbit valued at \$2,000, compared to a projected \$30,000 to \$50,000 for the first American mass-produced electric cars. The conversion took Harris about 60 hours over several months.

The technology of all the conversion components — mainly the controller, the electric motor, and the batteries — has been proven over the past 20 years in industrial settings. The conventional automotive technologies, such as manual transmissions, that make up the rest of the converted car have had more than 80 years to mature.

Harris bought the conversion parts from Electro Automotive, a California-based company that's been refining its conversion techniques since the 1973 gas crunch.

Using his own time and money, he traveled to Santa Cruz, Calif., in March 1994 to attend Electro Automotive's one-week training course in conversion. The company usually reserves its training for professional mechanics, but Harris proved that he was sufficiently



serious and had a solid enough technical/mechanical background to tackle the course.

One goal of converting a gasoline car to electric is to use as much of the original system as possible. Harris removed the engine, bolted the DC electric motor to the original manual transmission, installed the batteries, then wired to the existing 12-volt system (for headlights, radio and other nonmotive electric devices).

Installing the 16, six-volt batteries is the bulk of the engineering. The total battery pack weighs about 1,000 pounds. The added weight meant adding custom springs and shocks to his car.

The same key is used in the ignition and there is still a steering column lock. The ignition becomes the "on" switch that enables the 12-volt system and powers up the controller. The controller, a huge

Please see Electric, page 11

Chris Harris, a computer programmer in the Traffic Operations Division, converted his gasoline-powered 1984 Volkswagen Rabbit to electric power.

New programs help recycling effort expand

Jeff Carmack

Editor

TxDOT's recycling program continues to grow, and if a couple of pilot projects pan out, the Austin headquarters may soon be able to recycle nearly every piece of paper that comes through the door.

Rebecca Davio, TxDOT's recycling coordinator, said, "We're just beginning discussions with the U.S. Postal Service recycling coordinator about recycling junk mail, and hope to have a pilot program in place this calendar year. If that comes to pass," Davio said, "almost 100 percent of paper that comes through TxDOT's Austin offices could be recycled."

Austin offices will soon be able to recycle newsprint, too. "In Austin, we will be offering cardboard and newspaper recycling this summer," Davio said. "Weyerhaeuser, the paper company that recycles our white office paper, has a contract for cardboard and newsprint, as well as white paper, in Austin."

Another new program is the Reduce Your Waste campaign. The aim of this program, Davio said, is "to get people to think about reducing the amount they waste," she said "This may mean they actually recycle less, but that will be because they're wasting less in the first place. That's good, because it means they're making the best use of our

natural resources."

To this end, TxDOT is selling sports bottles and insulated coffee mugs to employees. "Our mug and sports bottles are designed to cut the amount of paper and styrofoam waste going to the landfill," Davio said. "These mugs will also serve as a gentle reminder to people to think about recycling. This program has been a long time in the works and we're glad it's finally come to fruition," said Laura Benningfield, the Materials and Tests Division recycling coordinator.

Another move to cut down on the amount of waste going to the landfill is the use of recyclable envelopes for confidential information. The ones currently in use are pink and are not recyclable, Davio said. The new ones, which will be pink and white, are printed on recycled paper and are recyclable with white office paper in the WOW box, Davio said, "as long as they don't have tape or sticky labels on them." Davio stressed that these envelopes are for confidential information only. The familiar "holey" envelopes should be used for non-confidential correspondence. These envelopes can be used about 50 times before all the address slots are filled, Davio said, and their use can significantly cut down on the amount of paper going to the landfill.

The division is also looking into some recycling efforts that are not quite so obvi-

ous, such as recycling building materials.

Davio said the program is focusing on reusing materials from demolished buildings, instead of sending the old materials to the dump. "One project we may be involved in is the demolition of buildings at Bull Creek," she said. "We're trying to make sure as much of those materials that can be salvaged are salvaged, instead of just wrecking it and throwing it all in the dump."

Other projects are focusing on roadway construction.

"TxDOT has nine research projects looking into a wide variety of recycled materials in all aspects of roadway construction," Davio said. "For instance, we are examining how glass might be used in roadbase, or possibly in drainage around pipes. We're also looking at roofing shingles for use either in hot mix or in cold patch materials."

"In conjunction with this program, we're also looking at a number of materials for use in roadbase or embankments," Davio said. "One material we're examining is fly ash, a by-product of coal burned to produce electrical power," Davio said. "Tires might be another material considered for use in roadbase or embankments."

Highway signs are another area that might benefit from the use of recycled materials, Davio said. "We're looking at recycled

Please see Recycling, page 11

Vernon merges artistic talent, TxDOT career

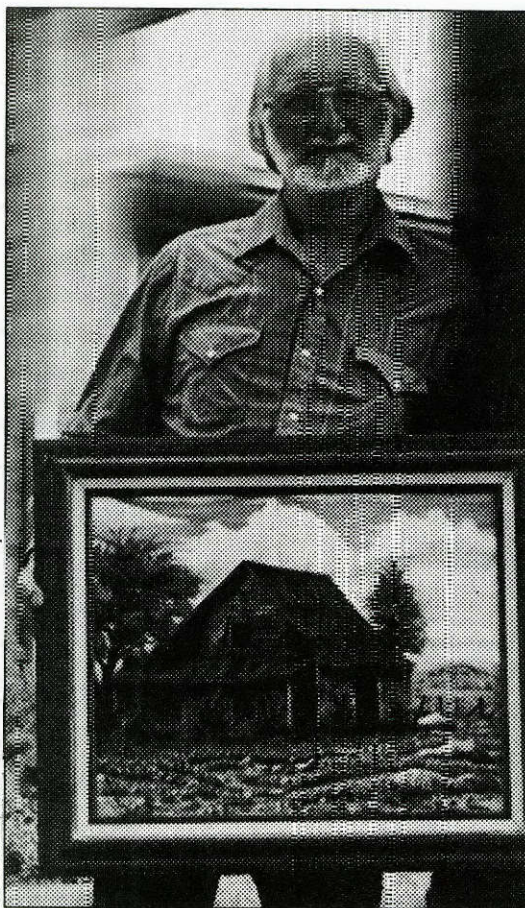
Denise Fisher
Bryan District

Bobby Vernon remembers a special day in his 31-year career as a TxDOT employee. It was the day that legendary department photographer Jack Lewis came to the Bryan District, where Vernon works, to photograph bluebonnets and other wildflowers. For Vernon, a self-taught artist and photographer, it was a defining experience. "I was only with him for eight hours," Vernon explains, "but he influenced me quite a bit in my photography and art. He was a great artist with the camera."

Vernon recently found himself recast from the role of admirer to the admired, when he was honored as the featured artist for May and June by the Brazos Valley Art League, which exhibited several of his works at the Brazos Center in Bryan, including oil paintings, watercolors and sketches.

A quick review of his work illustrates that Vernon doesn't restrict himself to any one medium or subject. His paintings are diverse, ranging from landscapes of fields of wildflowers, studies of white tail deer, lush green Texas piney woods complete with log cabins, and seascapes with inviting surfs, among others. But he feels a particular connection with scenes from the southwest, and his most haunting pieces include landscapes of desert scenes and portraits of Native Americans. His interest in the southwest and the tribes of 19th century America comes from a family history passed down from Texas frontier days. His maternal grandmother told him he was distantly related to Cynthia Ann Parker, who was kidnapped as a child by Comanches during the massacre at Fort Parker in 1836.

Back in the days when the late Jack Lewis had a profound influence on him, Vernon was the Bryan District's "reproduction man," in charge of all district photography and the district darkroom. But in his career he's worn other hats, including those of paint stripper operator and warehouse clerk, as well as his present position as engineer technician overseeing the district's railroad



Bobby Vernon, an engineering technician in the Bryan District, has seen his painting evolve from a pastime to an avocation.

crossing program. Through it all runs the thread of Vernon's development as an artist, as painting has evolved from his pastime to his avocation.

And Vernon has managed to blend his artistic talents with his TxDOT career at least once. In 1971, he was asked to paint a watercolor landscape as a binder cover for the Bryan District's nomination for the annual Lady Bird Johnson Award (now called the Highway Beautification Award). He chose a bucolic scene featuring a cotton gin in rural Brazos County. "That was really a highlight of my career. It was a real honor that I got a chance to do that," he says proudly, untroubled that the district's nomination was not selected for the award that year.

His work has been recognized often over the years at local art shows, and the proof hangs on the walls of his office, which are decorated with the ribbons and accolades he has collected. A district headquarters hallway is adorned by the fruits of his labor as well, with the beautiful framed watercolors and oil paintings he shares with his co-workers.

Vernon says art has been a part of his life since the beginning, and that fact sometimes posed problems during his school years. "I used to get in trouble when I was supposed to be doing my English or math, and I'd be sketching in my notebook instead," he says. Although he quickly adds that his penchant for art did once rescue a floundering English grade when he turned in an illustration inspired by the medieval novel *Idylls of the King*, which was assigned reading.

In the intervening years Vernon received most of his art instruction in junior high school and high school, where he developed a distaste for working with pastels and charcoals. "We used to wear white shirts a lot back in those days, and I'd end up a mess in art class using pastels and charcoals. I was glad when we finished with those and moved on," he remembers.

He tried taking more formal instruction as an adult student of art, but discovered within a few lessons that the teacher wanted to make over his style into hers. That was his last class, and he hasn't looked back.

Because Vernon identifies so strongly with his works, they are neither offered for sale nor given away casually. When he does present his art to someone, Vernon likens it as giving a piece of himself. "They are really a good friend if they've got something from me," he says.

Despite the recognition and admiration for his art, Vernon remains unpretentious, and his values still center on the people around him rather than self-glorification. "I've been blessed by the good Lord, not only with my talent, but with my family and friends," he insists.

"Besides," he adds, "the good Lord is the real artist, and I just copy it."

Cutting water pollution in construction earns EPA nod

TxDOT has earned a Certificate of Appreciation from the Environmental Protection Agency's Dallas Region 6 office for efforts to minimize storm water pollution during highway construction.

The certificate singled out TxDOT's Storm Water Management Task Force and a subcommittee called the Storm Water Advisory Team (SWAT).

The Storm Water Management Task Force provided guidance to TxDOT on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and specifications for managing storm water on transportation projects.

SWAT members went into the field to gather information and advise districts on better methods to control storm water during construction.

The certificate reads: "In recognition of your contributions toward the goals of Non-point Source Management and the Clean Water Act and for benefits to our environment resulting from your efforts."

Environmental Affairs Division professionals involved were Carlos Swonke, David Dunlap and David VanGorder. Personnel from the Construction and Maintenance and the Design divisions were also part of the effort.

Bryan District Rodeo winners advance to state competition in Austin

Some 25 finalists competed in the 1995 Bryan District Truck Rodeo, and two drivers emerged as the district's top scorers.

District equipment shop mechanic Martin Dyer took first place with a score of 315, while Washington County maintenance technician Paul Gurka placed second with a score of 305. A perfect score is 350.

The finalists, representing 10 area counties and three Bryan work groups, took turns testing their skills maneuvering a six-yard dump truck through an obstacle course mirroring situations TxDOT drivers face each day.

Dyer and Gurka now advance to the state truck rodeo finals, which will be held in Austin in conjunction with the Human Resources Management Conference in November.

TxDOT volunteers 'share the warmth' at Special Olympics in Austin



Volunteers from TxDOT and other state agencies and the private sector were on hand to help out at the Special Olympics held May 23-26 at the University of Texas at Austin.

Dear Melissa,

Our thanks to you and your group for a tremendous show of support at the Summer Games. It was a pleasure to have TxDOT as part of the 1995 Special Olympics family. It was so good to talk with you about your volunteer experience and hear that it was positive one. Thank you for donating your time to be with the athletes. Please thank all of the volunteers for their patience and flexibility at the volunteer tent during the placement process. We loved TxDOT's enthusiasm. Melissa, you did a great job of coordinating at your end.

Sincerely,
Laurie Bennett and Cathie Gail
Special Olympics Committee

TxDOT employees shared their warmth by volunteering for the 1995 Special Olympics Summer Games at the University of Texas at Austin's Memorial Stadium May 23-26.

With more than 4,000 athletes competing in 16 events, the Special Olympic Committee needed as many volunteers as possible. TxDOT showed its support by lending 32 employees to help with timing events, set up and competition. Yet, TxDOT employees helped in other ways as well.

During the track and field events, volunteers performed a duty called hugging and greeting. Volunteers gathered at the end of the track where the athletes would finish and cheered on the participants of each race. When they reached the finish line, the athletes ran into the volunteers' arms.

Melissa Watt, Public Information Office

Service Awards

July 1995

Abilene
30 years
 Celso Rubio
25 years
 Melvin L. Norris
20 years
 William L. Wells Jr.
15 years
 Nancy W. Holland
10 years
 Michael L. Hardy
5 years
 Amy J. Hart
 Laurie A. Wood

Amarillo
30 years
 Raymond G. Weller
10 years
 Bruce D. Nipp
5 years
 Joe W. Talley

Atlanta
25 years
 Doyle G. Nugent
5 years
 Jim W. Teel

Austin
30 years
 Jesus G. Munoz
10 years
 Leo R. Bush
 Dwayne A. Collins
 Thomas R. Nelson
 David E. Thomson
 Charles R. Vaughn Sr.
5 years
 Elizabeth C. Willson

Baumont
25 years
 Raymond L. Hatch
30 years
 Leo H. Barriere Jr.
10 years
 Thomas H. Caldwell
 Gregory K. Casmire
 Virginia A. Foley
5 years
 Joe A. Felan

Brownwood
25 years
 Jackie R. Arrowood
10 years
 Edward D. Jones Jr.

Bryan
10 years
 Paul A. Huddleston
5 years
 Mary C. Easterling
 Gary W. Mitchell

Childress
10 years
 Edwin L. Atchley
 Mark A. Hightower
5 years
 Dwayne A. Culpepper
 Gene Garcia
 Dennis K. Seal

Corpus Christi
25 years
 Ismael B. Galan
 Arthur Garcia
5 years
 Sam W. Steen III

Dallas
30 years
 Roy R. King
25 years
 James E. Nash Jr.
 Richard T. Spear
20 years
 Linda C. Taylor
30 years
 Arthur R. Nance
10 years
 Wesley G. McClure
 Santiago S. Ortiz
 Douglas J. Reiter
 Gary L. Swindle
 Sylvia S. Tolbert
 Michael D. Wellman
5 years
 Timothy T. Abbey
 David R. Carr
 Christine M. Gilmore
 Christophe E. Gregory
 John T. Inman
 Jimmie R. Thrash Jr.

El Paso
25 years
 Donald L. Denham
 Mary L. Johnson
10 years
 Roberto Cardoza Jr.
5 years
 Reymundo Sepulveda Jr.

Fort Worth
35 years
 Harold R. Taylor
30 years
 Ronnie T. Davis
 James C. Sawey
25 years
 Lester B. Cummings
 Baltazar T. Fierro
 William E. Gartrell
10 years
 Lisa C. Ferguson
 Richard L. White
5 years
 Phillip E. Branch
 David W. Martin

Houston
30 years
 Pedro Guerrero
 Yreneo A. Negrete
25 years
 Miguel A. Garcia
 Raymond A. Just
 Miguel Rincon
20 years
 Arnold B. Haynes
30 years
 Leslie J. Davis
 Alvin B. Scott Jr.
10 years
 Seyed M. Alavi
 Kenneth W. Baird
 Albert F. Brewster Jr.
 James O. Dempsey Jr.
 Jesse M. Gutierrez
 Stephen L. Kichtan
 James M. Latimer
 Sharon L. Maxwell
 Norman B. Norris
 Mark D. Patterson
 Carl T. Reilly
 Anthony L. Sienkiewich
 Arthur J. Stayton III
 Edward C. Stelchek
 Billy R. Warren
 Joyce J. Wu
5 years
 Don C. Bollwinkel
 Bobby B. Cayton Jr.
 Raquel L. Chappell
 Freddie L. Franklin
 Ellen A. Jones
 Charles A. Othon
 Jesus R. Salinas Jr.
 Ronnie L. Wusterhausen

Laredo
10 years
 Stephen P. Blake

Lubbock
25 years
 Bill C. King
20 years
 Gregory N. McNabb
15 years
 Taina Y. Barrett
10 years
 Ricky L. Nieman

Lufkin
35 years
 Carlilse D. Dickerson
25 years
 Herbert F. Daw
30 years
 Donald R. McBride
 Barry E. Walker

Paris
30 years
 Jerry W. Goldsmith
 Gerald Washington
25 years
 Jon Briggie
10 years
 Ricky J. MacKey
 Glen A. Williams

Pharr
30 years
 Jose A. Lopez
10 years
 Carlos Cantu

San Angelo
30 years
 Farrell K. Hardiman

San Antonio
35 years
 Sam J. Pennartz
25 years
 Charles H. Arnold
 Gordon D. Kirkland
 Jerome J. Lindig
 Reynaldo Ramirez
15 years
 Steven C. Cordell
 Jerry W. Reavis
10 years
 Keith A. Braddock
 James D. Chambers
 Victor H. Gil
 Robert J. Gutierrez
 Marguerite S. Rodgers
 Cheryl J. Waid

Tyler
30 years
 Daniel C. Wilbanks
10 years
 Larry O. Bass
 Kenneth M. Jock

Waco
40 years
 Charlie D. Herrell
30 years
 Johnny R. Blakley
 Dick Ford
25 years
 Leslie D. Cook
 Wilburn R. Geltmeier
 Rhuben K. Weeks
20 years
 Glenn D. Christian
10 years
 Leslie W. Campbell
 Robert A. Chane
5 years
 Brenda L. Franklin
 Billy M. Tweedle

Wichita Falls
35 years
 Tommy L. Langston
25 years
 Jimmy A. Howry
30 years
 James A. Woods
10 years
 John A. Barton
 Carl T. Sims
 Russell A. Stafford

Yoakum
30 years
 Rita M. Pullin
 Hugo H. Richter Jr.
25 years
 James A. Otto

Budget and Finance
10 years
 Margaret I. Brown
 Velma J. Polivka
5 years
 Martha I. Norwood
 Helen M. Swenson

Central Permit
15 years
 Elma M. Rodriguez

Construction and Maintenance
10 years
 Malcolm R. Arnold

Design
25 years
 William P. Byers
10 years
 Scott D. Armstrong
5 years
 Carl B. Bertrand Jr.

General Counsel
25 years
 Diane L. Northam

General Services
10 years
 Marie R. Cabello
 Brenda R. Casmire
 Rozelba D. Hazlett
5 years
 Francis L. Bowers
 Linda L. Wehmann

Information Systems
25 years
 Donald L. Putman Sr.
15 years
 Michael E. Kieke
10 years
 Terry L. Marcus
5 years
 Renee D. Beseda
 James W. Estes
 Yvonne M. Heath
 Marilyne D. Rowland

Materials and Tests
25 years
 Timothy D. Stagg
30 years
 John M. Reedy
5 years
 Stewart H. Dewitt Jr.
 Christine M. Reding

Occupational Safety
5 years
 Danny K. Sanders

Right of Way
10 years
 Carol L. Damron

Traffic Operations
10 years
 Willis W. Odell

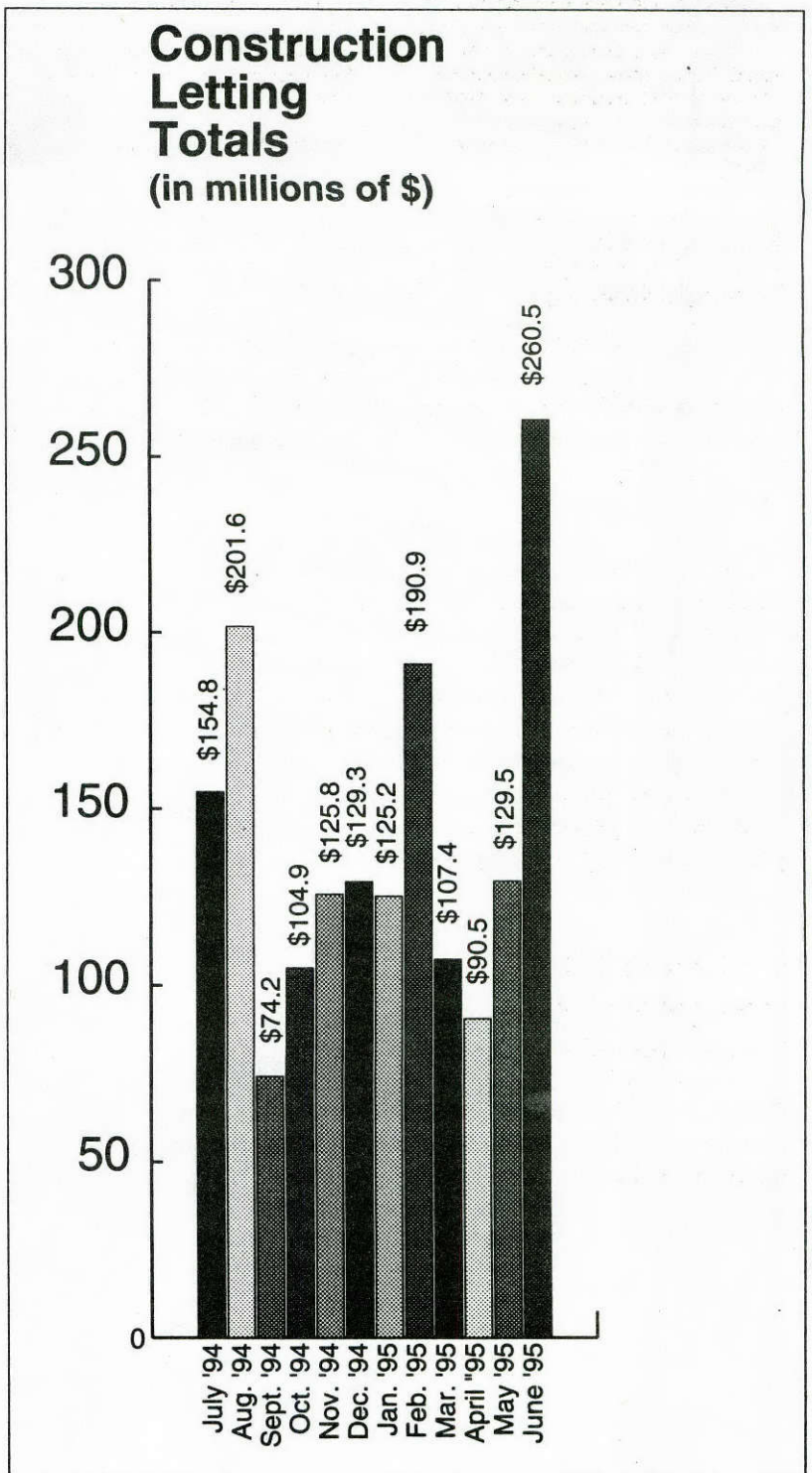
Transportation Planning and Programming
20 years
 Jacqueline S. Tutt
15 years
 Mark S. Hodges
5 years
 Laura T. Perez

Travel and Information
15 years
 Samuel A. Martinez
 Lucia V. Weaver
10 years
 Jane P. McNally

Vehicle Titles and Registration
25 years
 Janis W. Norie
 Janet V. Oliver
15 years
 Virginia V. Stuessy
10 years
 Patricia S. Biddle
 Judy E. Gibson
5 years
 Virginia F. Love
 Deborah C. Love Slade
 Toby T. Towery

Transitions

Effective May
 Bobby Steeds, Rural Area Engineer, El Paso District



Retirements

March

Fort Worth

Richard Blevins, 22 years
Maintenance Technician IV
Teddy L. Pickrell, 24 years
Maintenance Technician IV

May

Corpus Christi

Frank R. Mfms, 30 years
Engineer V

Fort Worth

Hubert P. Fletcher, 29 years
Engineering Technician V
Benito D. Munguia, 10 years
Maintenance Technician II

Pharr

Arnoldo A. Venecia, 27 years
Administrative Technician IV

San Antonio

Ernest R. Barrientes, 29 years
Engineering Technician IV
Robert S. Lopez, 15 years
Maintenance Technician V

Waco

Donald R. Lehmann, 30 years
Staff Services Officer IV

Wichita Falls

C. J. Howard Jr., 9 years
Engineering Technician III

June

General Services Division

William D. Lemburg, 29 years
Reproduction Equipment Operator III
Evelyn K. Parker, 29 years
Reproduction Equipment Supervisor I

In Memoriam

Retirees

Myram A. Coleman, The Woodlands, retired from Bryan District in 1976, died April 24, 1995.

Fritz P. Dietert, Boerne, retired from San Antonio District in 1974, died March 30, 1995.

Manuel Garcia, Brownsville, retired from Pharr District in 1979, died March 16, 1995.

Teodoro F. Garcia, San Angelo, retired from Odessa District in 1977, died March 16, 1995.

Grover M. Howell Jr., Austin, retired from Vehicle Titles and Registration Division in 1982, died March 29, 1995.

Lillie H. Lowe, Fort Worth, retired from Fort Worth District in 1984, died May 6, 1995.

Hal G. Newell, Lancaster, retired from Dallas District in 1989, died March 23, 1995.

Juan C. Nunez, Manor, retired from Austin District in 1971, died February 8, 1995.

Alejandro Ortiz, Port Arthur, retired from Beaumont District in 1994, died March 18, 1995.

David R. Robinson, Carthage, retired from Atlanta District in 1971, died May 3, 1995.

Felix Romo, Carrizo Springs, retired from San Antonio District in 1985, died April 7, 1995.

Van E. Sams, Denton, retired from Wichita Falls District in 1975, died May 6, 1995.

Roy D. Schuchardt, Boerne, retired from San Antonio District in 1977, died April 10, 1995.

Clyde E. Schulz, Wharton, retired from Yoakum District in 1991, died September 23, 1994.

Walter L. Sharp Jr., Crockett, retired from Lufkin District in 1983, died March 19, 1995.

Wesley A. Walker, Huntsville, retired from Bryan District in 1990, died March 23, 1995.

Norton D. Westbrook, Hondo, retired from San Antonio District in 1982, died April 16, 1995.

Culous W. Wiley, Waco, retired from Waco District in 1976, died April 12, 1995.

Calendar

July

4 Independence Day (holiday)
10-12 Management Team Meeting
11 Center for Transportation Research/TxDOT Symposium, Austin, RTT
27 Commission Meeting, Austin

August

27 LBJ Day (holiday)
31 Commission Meeting, San Angelo

September

4 Labor Day (holiday)
28 Commission Meeting, Austin

October

16 Management Team Meeting, College Station
16-18 Transportation Conference, College Station
26 Commission Meeting, Austin

November

6-10 Annual Human Resources Management Conference, Austin, HRM
23-24 Thanksgiving (holiday)
30 Commission Meeting, Austin

Electric

Continued from page 7

transistor, feeds current to the motor when the driver depresses the accelerator.

Harris said a 96-volt electric car typically has a maximum range of 60 to 80 miles per charge. His commute to work is 45 miles round-trip in hilly terrain. The car is running low on power by the time he gets home to Buda.

Although Harris' converted car can reach and maintain 65 mph, he averages about 45 mph on his daily commute. An advantage of electric cars is that if they get low on power, the driver can stop for a few minutes and the battery pack will rebound for several miles.

Harris charges the batteries each night for about 10 hours using the on-board charger. It automatically steps down to a trickle charge when the batteries are full. The plug is under the old gas cap.

Using wind energy to recharge his car (making it independent of the utility company and zero emissions in its generation as well as consumption of power) may be Harris' next step. He is planning a wind survey to see if wind generation is feasible at his home.

Fuel costs for gas-powered cars run between 3 and 7 cents per mile. Electric fuel costs run 3 to 5 cents per mile, so fuel costs are not significantly lower. However, including battery pack changes every three to four years, electric cars total operating costs over 100,000 miles average 8 cents a mile. Gas-powered vehicles average 28 cents.

Unlike conventional cars, electric cars' operating costs are consistent regardless of traffic. When an electric car comes to a stop, it consumes no energy, so it runs as efficiently in start-and-stop urban traffic as it does on a rural highway. Since today's conversion car is most suited to interurban short trips, this efficiency is an advantage.

Harris' converted car handles much like any '84 Rabbit. It shifts and steers the same. The driver, however, must resist the temptation to jam the throttle to the floor on hills — doing this eats up power and does not speed the climb.

Recycling a sound running car as a zero-emission electric vehicle is an idea that's beginning to appeal to more motorists. A majority of daily commutes in the United States are in the 25 mile or less range — acceptable for today's electric-converted car. Conversion technology is no longer as crude as it was in the early 1970s. Any proficient mechanic can convert a suitable car to run on electric power.

Most Volkswagens, Toyotas and Hondas are suitable for conversions whereas many sedans and sports cars are not. Small pickup trucks also make good conversions. A car's curb weight before conversion should be 2,500 pounds at most.

Harris has proved that with the desire and initiative, anyone can become part of the clean air solution by converting a suitable car to electric power for interurban travel. For more information about car conversion, contact Harris at 512.302.2132.

Recycling

Continued from page 7

materials to be used as sign blanks for highway and stop signs," she said. "These signs might be longer-lived (than metal signs) and would be less likely to be stolen." Davio explained that when metal prices are high, signs and guardrails are prime targets for thieves, who steal them and sell them to recycling centers that don't ask a lot of nosy questions.

Davio hopes to one day have the results of all this research on a CD-ROM. "Having the information on CD will not only reduce the amount of paper needed to publish all these reports, it can also make that information more useful because it will be more accessible," she said. "Instead of a user thumbing back and forth trying to find something he saw on fly ash, for instance, he would be able to just point and click and find the information much more quickly." Davio said she expects to have the CD available next spring.

"With these projects, we're trying to ensure that every TxDOT employee can participate in our recycling and recycled products program and help make it a success," Davio said.

Coleman

Continued from page 1

Coleman received a flying license two years before her. "

The accomplishment has also been rightfully noted by the Texas DECA Club. Thomas' project was selected as one of five public relations projects across the state that were chosen to compete on a national level in April.

Letters

I want to commend one of your employees, **Tomas Beltran**, for coming to our rescue Mother's Day Sunday when my two children and I had the unfortunate experience of having a flat tire on Texas 281 — out in the middle of nowhere!

Although my 15-year-old son made a brave attempt to change the tire, he could not get the spare tire loose from below the bed of our pickup. I knew we were in quite a predicament, with no experience changing a tire and with no way to call for help. Cars kept whizzing by, but none stopped to help us. I was getting very worried.

Looking down the road, I saw two "country-looking" vehicles with flashers and lights, and I prayed they would stop to help. Mr. Beltran later told me he saw a male figure (my 15-year-old son) underneath the truck and figured it was my husband and that we would be OK, but as I saw him slowly go by, I flashed a "damsel-in-distress" look and bless his heart, he immediately stopped.

He cheerfully proceeded to change the flat tire for us and when he was through, wished me a happy Mother's Day!

I am grateful for Mr. Beltran's sense of duty toward his fellow man and deeply appreciative of his efforts in getting us safely back on the road again. I just wanted you to know what a special employee you have and how impressed I am that stopping to help disabled motorists is, apparently, encouraged by your department.

Melinda L. Garza
San Antonio

Tomas Beltran is a maintenance contract inspector with the Hebronville Maintenance Section, Pharr District.

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I am writing to express my thanks to you and one of your employees for providing assistance to me when my car broke down last week on the old Claude Highway. Within a few minutes of my car quitting, **James Oles** pulled up in a state pickup and offered assistance.

Mr. Oles was very courteous and sincere in his efforts to provide assistance. He even stopped and checked on me on his way back from his job site. When I apologized for keeping him from his job, he said, "This is part of my job."

It is comforting to know that state employees are so eager to help a stranded motorist. It speaks very well of your leadership and your philosophy. I sincerely appreciate the courteous assistance which I received.

Bettie Lunsford
Amarillo

James Oles is an assistant maintenance section supervisor with the Claude Maintenance Section.

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On Wednesday, March 22, at about 2:30 p.m., the Palo Duro Inn was consumed by fire. This apartment complex housed about 100 people, mostly college students.

Please convey my heartfelt thanks to your staff for all the assistance they provided to the city of Canyon. Your staff came to our

aid, assisting with traffic direction and control.

I cannot thank the above persons enough! They were wonderful, giving of their time, resources and expertise to help us.

Bobby Griffin, Chief of Police
Canyon

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This letter was received by Mineola Maintenance Office Manager Penny Tiner:

This is just to say "Thanks." I have been to about a dozen places in town putting in applications for a job. Everywhere I went everyone was so cold to me, as if I was nobody, but thank God I came by there. You made my day. I have worked in public service and I see in you how I am with each person who comes to see us.

So again, thanks for being so nice. Please let your supervisors read this so they will know you are an asset to their office.

Jo McCarty
Mineola

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You and your staff are to be congratulated! I personally have had great experiences with the Texas Department of Transportation.

I was County Commissioner in Precinct 3 in Bexar County when we first passed the bond issue to acquire rights of way for FM 1604 and worked with your people then (most have retired, I am 75 years old) and accomplished the purchase of the rights of way very easily, with your people's help.

Recently, we visited a small park just west of Johnson City and were simply amazed at the beauty of the park, the wonderful condition of maintenance there and the cleanliness.

The restrooms were very clean, a waste-basket was in the toilet room and all of the trash was in the waste basket.

I explained to my fellow travelers that the conditions of the park were simply samples of the day-to-day operations of the Texas Department of Transportation.

Sam Jorrie
San Antonio

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We believe that credit should be given where credit is due. This letter of recommendation is for **Joe Kibodeaux** and **Roy Floyd**, two of your employees who are two fine gentlemen who came to the aid of four senior citizens.

On Wednesday, March 15, my wife and I, along with a sister and brother-in-law, were on I-10 enroute to Houston from Lake Charles. Just east of Vidor, we had a tire blowout. Upon stopping on the shoulder and opening our trunk, one of your large white trucks pulled up behind us. The two men approached and offered their help in our dilemma which we gratefully accepted. They jacked up our car and put on our spare tire. Joe Kibodeaux and Roy Floyd directed us to a tire dealer to purchase a new one. I tired to give the two men money, even putting it in a shirt pocket. They both adamantly refused the money saying they were just doing their job of helping to keep Texas highways safe.

Thank you, Texas, for hiring good and

courteous people who came to our aid.

W. Bryan Lumpkin
Lake Charles, LA

Joe Kibodeaux and Roy Floyd are maintenance technicians in the Beaumont Maintenance Section.

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I want to inform you of the kindness shown me and my baby daughter on our way back to Mississippi by way of Livingston. The rear tire on my van blew and your employees **Gary Harrison** and **Lamar Duff** stopped and asked how they could help. They proceeded to change my tire, made sure I understood that I needed to buy a new tire, told me where to buy the tire, approximately how much to pay for it and then escorted me to the tire store.

These men put into practice a "random act of kindness" on my behalf. I am so grateful for their assistance. It is comforting to know there are some really good people around still willing to take a risk and help a stranger. You are to be complemented for hiring such exemplary employees. Livingston and the Texas Department of Transportation are lucky to have them.

Layne M. Dearman
Vicksburg, Mississippi

Gary Harrison and Lamar Duff are roadway maintenance technicians in the Polk County Maintenance Section, Lufkin District.

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