

Transportation NEWS

March 1998 Volume 23 Number 7

FTW's Wes Heald takes top post

37-year TxDOT veteran takes department's reins March 1

Charles "Wes" Heald, a long-time state transportation engineer, has been named executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) by the Texas Transportation Commission.

Heald who has been in charge of TxDOT's Fort Worth District office since 1993, is the 18th person to head the transportation agency since it was created in 1917. He took office March 1.

As district engineer in Fort Worth, Heald was responsible for the planning, design, construction and maintenance of the transportation system in a nine-county area. From 1987 to 1993, Heald was in charge of TxDOT's nine-county Brownwood District. He began work for the transportation department in 1961.

"Heald is committed to moving TxDOT forward," said David Laney, Texas Transportation Commissioner. "He has the unique skills and talents to lead this agency into the 21st century and keep Texas as one of the world's transportation leaders."

Heald said his mission will be to "refocus on providing citizens of Texas with the best transportation system we know how. I want to focus on our core functions: planning, designing, building, maintaining and operating the highway system."

"I am excited about the new responsibilities and the opportunity to serve the citizens of Texas in this new capacity," he said. "The opportunities are immense and I am confident TxDOT has the employees who can get the job done."

The reorganization he has implemented upon taking his new post might, at first glance, look like a step backwards. Heald said that is a mistaken impression.

"It may appear that we're going back to being a highway department but that's not the case at all," he said. "We're going to build on what's already there and go forward."

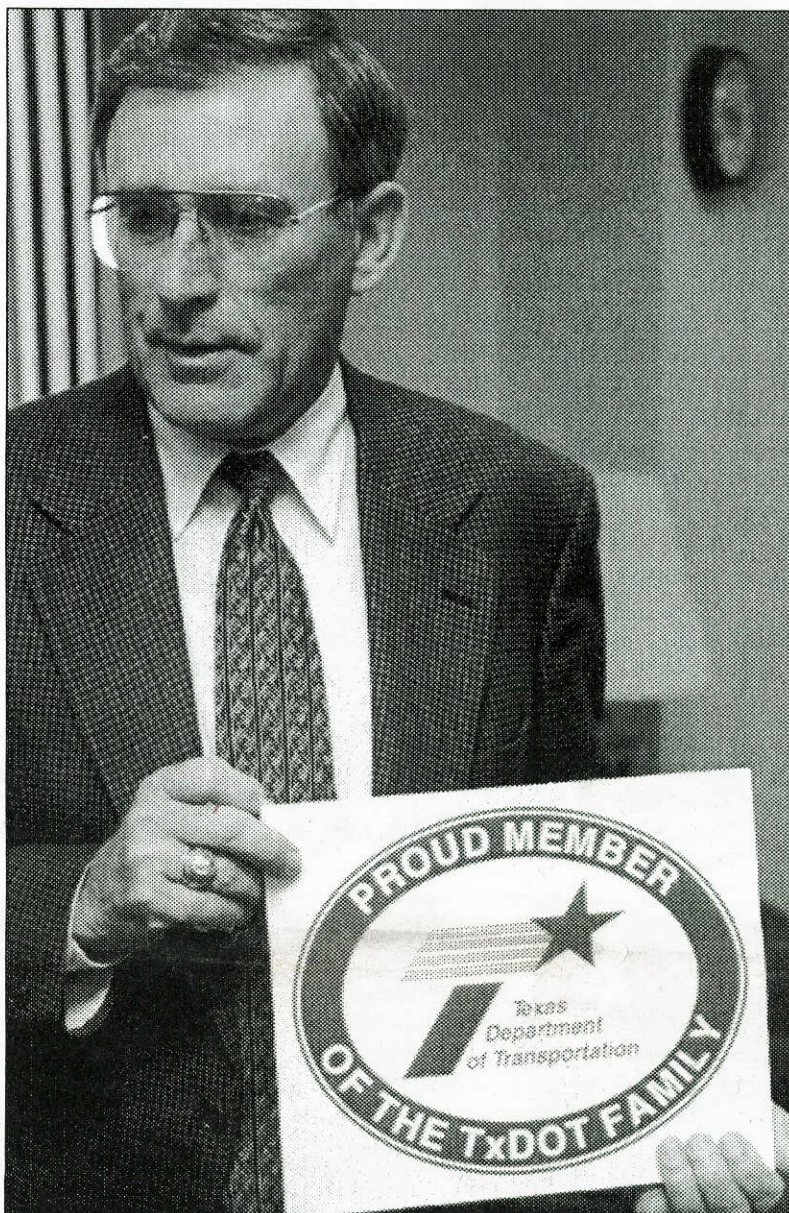
Focusing on highways, he said, does not mean that other aspects of the department, such as aviation and public transportation, will be neglected.

Heald said he hopes to "provide a strong direction, to trust managers to do their job and hold them accountable if they don't."

Heald also hopes to bring back a sense of pride in and respect for the department, he said.

"Our predecessors have built a 77,000-mile system of highways through their loyalty and sense of dedication to the department," he said, "and I want to work toward restoring that strong sense of dedication to this agency."

"I want former generations of TxDOT to know they are appreciated. Because of them we will be able to move forward into the 21st century with the confidence to provide citizens with the best trans-



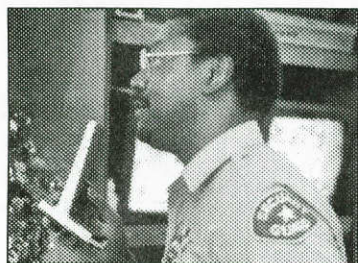
New Executive Director Wes Heald displays the new TxDOT sticker.

portation system possible."

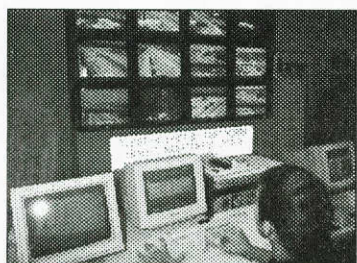
Heald earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Texas A&M University in 1960. He joined TxDOT in 1961 as a senior engineering assistant. Heald worked in the Houston urban area before moving to the Brownwood District where he advanced in engineering and supervisory positions. He was named district engineer in Brownwood in 1987 and Fort Worth District Engineer in 1993.

Heald and his wife, Dorothy, have a daughter, Debra Lynn, and a son, Darrell Wesley. ★

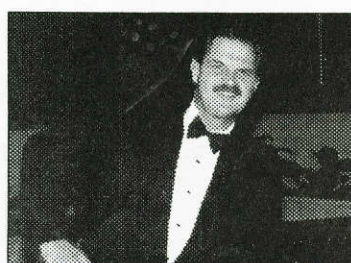
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Security officer Ernie Dones saved the day, month, year for Eloise Lundgren, but he was 'just doing his job.' **Page 3**



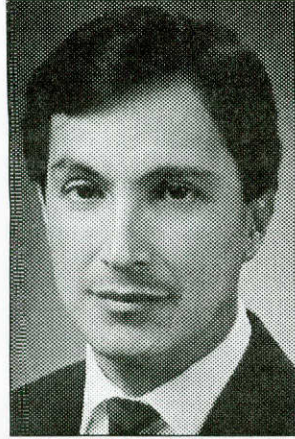
Travelers in Texas will benefit from the awarding of the Intelligent Transportation Systems contract. **Page 4**



Paris District supervisor Paul Hutchins is a singer who lent his voice to a commercial. **Page 7**



TxDOT participates in programs to make the streets safer for children. **Page 11**



Bob Cuellar served as interim executive director before the appointment of Wes Heald.

A Message from Bob Cuellar

For the past four months it has been my pleasure to serve you as Interim Executive Director. I want to thank all of you for the dedication and effort you displayed during this period to ensure the citizens of Texas continued to receive a quality transportation system.

Reviewing the current performance measures by which the state Legislature evaluates our department gives an impressive testimonial: the number of completed construction contracts, the number of lane miles overlaid, the number of lane miles seal coated, the number of right of way parcels acquired plus many of our other business activities exceed goals set for TxDOT. We are also ahead of the construction letting pace of last year when we had a \$2.1 billion letting. You should be proud, as I am for you, of your commitment to carrying out this department's mission.

Outside the TxDOT family, I do not believe much of the public even knows we have been in an interim situation. It has been business as usual, truly a sign of the strength of your dedication to getting the job done.

It has been an honor to work with you in my interim capacity. I look forward to a bright, productive future for TxDOT under Wes Heald's leadership. ★

Retired General Counsel Ed Shaddock dead at 65

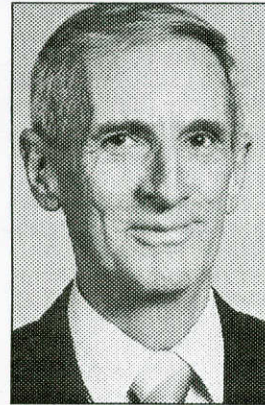
Ed Shaddock, who provided legal guidance and expertise to TxDOT for more than 33 years, died at his Austin home Feb. 3. He had retired from his position as TxDOT's general counsel in August. He was 65.

Shaddock joined TxDOT in 1959 as a staff attorney in the right of way section of the San Antonio District. In 1976, he re-entered the private sector, practicing general law in San Antonio and representing Wilson and Bexar counties in right of way litigation. He then joined the legal staff of the U.S. Department of Energy.

In 1982, Shaddock returned to TxDOT as assistant general counsel. He was named general counsel in 1987. The Office of General Counsel renders legal advice to the Texas Transportation Commission and all TxDOT districts, divisions and offices, assists in drafting rules applicable to department functions, reviews legislation, presides over public hearings, serves as counsel at commission meetings and acts as the liaison to the Secretary of State.

Shaddock was a member of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' Administrative Subcommittee on Legal Affairs, and a member of the State Agency Coordinating Committee's Subcommittee for Legal Affairs, which he chaired for three years. He was a member of the State Bar of Texas, and served in various state bar sections, such as Administrative Law, Environmental Law, Labor Law and General Practice. Shaddock received the meritorious service award from both the U.S. Department of Energy and AASHTO.

Shaddock earned a bachelor's degree in pre-law from Rice University in 1954, and a doctorate of jurisprudence from the University of Texas School of Law in 1957. He was licensed by the Supreme Court of Texas that



Shaddock

year. He was a contributor and member of the San Antonio botanical gardens, museum association, and the archaeological, zoological and symphony societies. His legal decisions on innumerable topics guided the department

through construction and maintenance of the Interstate System and the mergers with other state entities that added the aviation, public transportation, motor vehicle, motor carrier and turnpike divisions. He provided counsel on toll roads, state infrastructure banks and intelligent transportation systems. Shaddock was honored in October with the Raymond E. Stotzer Jr. Award.

Said Bob Jackson, who is the acting general counsel, "Ed not only had a tremendous impact on the department, he had a positive personal influence on and was a mentor for many of us. He defined, developed and personified the Office of General Counsel. He took on the burden of being known as the 'conscience of the department' because he cared about the future of the department. His legacy is a legal office known for its integrity and professionalism, and we in OGC will do our utmost to uphold the high standard he set. He will be greatly missed by all in the department. There is no sufficient way to express the depth of our loss in this office." ★ *Public Information Office*

Randall named interim head of Public Transportation

Bicycle, pedestrian coordinator Douglas tapped to fill top slot at MMO for duration

James L. Randall, director of the Multimodal Operations Office (MMO), has been named interim director of the Public Transportation Division. Randall will serve in this capacity until a new director is named.

Randall, a registered engineer, graduated from the University of Texas where he earned degrees in business administration and civil engineering. He began his TxDOT career in December of 1977 in the Transportation Planning Division, where he helped develop the department's first Strategic Plan, the Master Plan for Public Transportation in Texas and the Texas Transit Statistical Report.

Before coming to TxDOT, Randall

worked for the Austin Transit as transportation superintendent and was responsible for the daily operations of the regular transit routes, special transit services, charter operations and park-and-ride services.

In Randall's absence, Paul Douglas will serve as interim head of MMO. Douglas is TxDOT's State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, and has been with MMO since its creation in 1994. In addition to his bicycle and pedestrian duties, he has been involved and is familiar with all aspects of MMO operations, including rail and waterway functions.

With 12 years of TxDOT experience, Paul has worked at the district, division and spe-

cial office levels and is well-versed in department operations. He began his career in the Planning and Policy Division, where he worked as a planner. In August 1987, he accepted a position as the Paris District public information officer. While in Paris, he also served as the district traffic safety specialist. In 1991, he became the department's first bicycle coordinator and transferred to the Traffic Operations Division. This function now resides in the Multimodal Operations Office. ★

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.

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Transportation News March 1998

Published by the Public Information Office, 125 E. 11th, Austin, TX 78701-2483. Circulation: 17,850

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'Uh-oh, I bet somebody is missing this pretty thing'

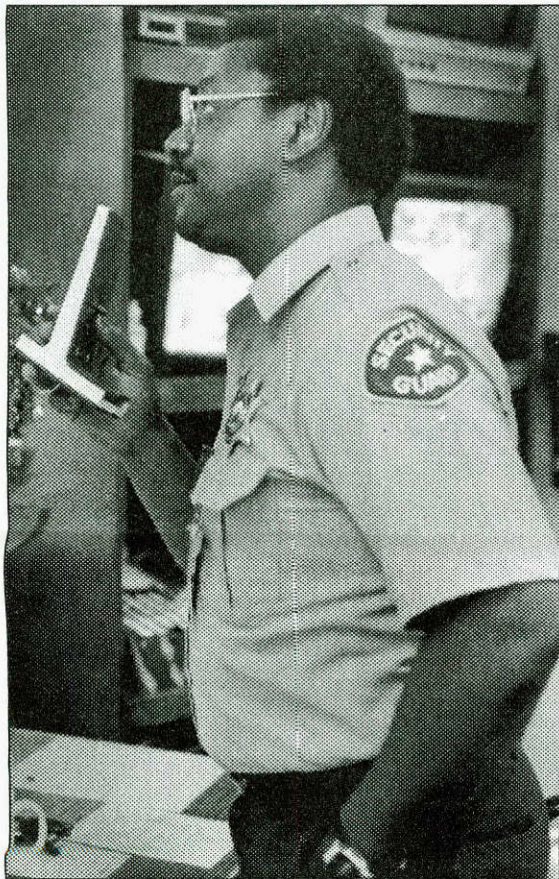
Alert security officer recovers keepsake

"I was just doing my job," a bashful Ernie Dones assured me as I effusively thanked him for making not only my day, but certainly my week, month and possibly year.

Dones, one of General Services Division's nine security officers, had just saved me from having to upset my parents with some bad news—I had lost a bracelet they had given me as a Christmas present many years ago.

You know how these things are — you can replace the item but not the sentimental value. I had narrowed down the time and location of the loss to a Friday afternoon when I was returning a TxDOT vehicle to Camp Hubbard. I had even walked the terrain and checked with auto shop employees. The bracelet did not turn up.

After several days, I accepted that the bracelet was gone. I was agonizing over what action to take — buy a new one and act like nothing happened or come clean and tell my parents the truth (I don't care how old you are, it's still hard to tell your parents you screwed up).



Eloise Lundgren, PIO

Ernie Dones, a General Services Division security officer, spent 25 years as an Air Force military police officer before coming to TxDOT. He is now the department's security supervisor.

the day with a TxDOT security officer anyway, so not only did I get my bracelet back, but I also got a subject for this column.

Dones came to TxDOT in 1993 after 25 years as an Air Force military policeman. His many duty assignments included tours in England — where he met his wife, Sheila — as well as Alaska, North Dakota, Kansas and Vietnam, but never Texas.

"I was born in Temple and raised in Cameron," he said (which immediately forged another bond with me since Temple is my hometown), "so I looked forward to getting a Texas assignment that would put me closer to my family.

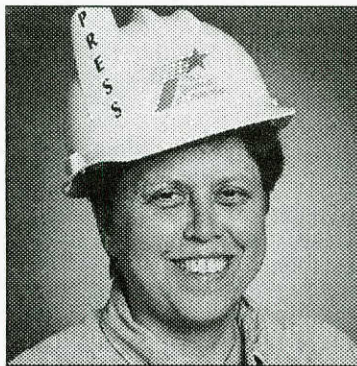
"I almost got to come to Wichita Falls, but they closed the base and I was sent to Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota," Dones said.

After retirement, he picked up a bachelor's degree in management from Park College and a master's degree in human resources management from Houston Baptist University, thinking some day he might get into human resource management.

He was also working while attending college, but not in law enforcement. "After working in this field for 25 years," Dones said, "I thought I had had enough and needed a change."

Instead of working for the Austin Police Department, he worked as a trade school maintenance technician, a Pinkerton security guard and a computer manufacturer's employee.

But in 1993, TxDOT had an opening for a security supervisor, and



Eloise Lundgren

A Day in the Life

not assigned to patrol it."

TxDOT security is also responsible for overseeing department contracts with security firms like the one that staffs the Greer Building.

So what kind of action does a TxDOT security officer see?

"Anything that happens on TxDOT property, we handle first," Dones said. "Then we contact the Austin Police Department for assistance or for a case number."

Dale Stone, the day shift supervisor who was about to clock out, chimed in, "Obscene phone calls, thefts, stranded motorists, CPR, restraining orders, domestic disturbances — we handle all that kind of routine police work."

But the major mission, according to Dones, is administering the electronic card entry system that "tells us who is going in and out of all the headquarters buildings in Austin.

"The Security Branch has just purchased a receiver which gives us the capability to monitor burglary/alarm systems for the districts," he continued. "The Bryan District is on-line now, to be followed shortly by the Tyler and Laredo districts."

With Dones and crew serving as the central station, district burglar and fire alarm systems can be monitored. When something comes up, the Austin-based security officers will contact district on-call personnel who will then determine what local response is necessary.

This service will save districts money because they won't have to pay a security company a monthly fee for monitoring their systems. Dones' boss, Tony Olvera, TxDOT security manager, is spending a lot of time on the road assessing district security needs.

"Our feeling is that TxDOT employees monitoring TxDOT assets is preferable to having private firms do it," Stone said.

I noticed that while Dones and Stone had patrol cars and hand radios and various other police accessories, they were not armed.

"We'd like to see us become certified peace officers," Stone said, "and not because we're all gung-ho to carry a weapon.

"By being a peace officer, we'd get excellent training that would help us do our jobs better," he added, "and that's what's important."

Dones pointed out that Stone is already a certified non-violent crisis intervention instructor. "We'd like to offer this kind of training to all TxDOT employees," he said. "We do whatever we can to ensure employee safety and sense of well-being."

Off duty, Dones enjoys tinkering with his home PC and weightlifting. "I put in a home gym," he explained, "and Sheila and I enjoy working out together."

The other day I saw a brochure published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration entitled, "What has your patrol officer done for you lately?" That question took on a whole new meaning with regard to Ernie Dones.

(Special note: I never did tell my parents about the bracelet incident. They'll find out when they read this column, and I'll bet my mother will be sending Ernie a box of her jumbo chocolate chip cookies.) ★

ITS contract to be boon to travelers in Texas

Betty Taylor
San Antonio District

Already known worldwide for its highway system and friendly tourist centers, Texas is working to become even bigger and better when it comes to traveling Texas.

On Jan. 5, TxDOT awarded the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Statewide Integrator contract to Southwest Research Institute. Under the direction of a 10-person committee, the San Antonio-based organization will develop statewide ITS standards; develop, integrate, and deploy compatible and uniform systems;

support life-cycle maintenance; and support transition of existing systems to ITS standards. The committee, called the Statewide Development and Integration Working Group (SDIWG) consists of TxDOT, FHWA and research institute officials.

Working together was stressed by Tom Newbern, director of the Traffic Operations Division.

"To improve the quality of TxDOT's operations and programs, we must work together," said Newbern "We can deliver that quality product by continually seeking to coordinate better, cooperate more and communicate more effectively."

Newbern felt the conference provided an excellent opportunity for networking.

Doug Lowe, a systems design supervisor with the TRF, is the project manager. Lowe says the integration contract will ensure that TxDOT keeps up with ITS technology. "It is important to TxDOT to provide long-term, dedicated, high quality system engineering, software development, system integration and maintenance resources needed to deploy compatible and uniform ITS in Texas," Lowe said.

The contract is also expected to help:

- Facilitate efficient and effective utilization of ITS technologies;
- Improve the quality of ITS initiatives;
- Reduce redundant development efforts;
- Reduce overall system cost;
- Maximize the availability, integration and use of ITS data;
- Develop TxDOT expertise in ITS;
- Allow TxDOT to work more effectively with traffic management center partners; and
- Develop stability and familiarity in the contractor/vendor indus-

try that is still evolving to support ITS.

Newbern said the contract will begin efforts toward a coordinated system to improve transportation operation in Texas at the lowest cost by using similar or identical software to operate the traffic management centers.

He said, "The traffic management centers will provide to Texas motorists real-time travel information, including information regarding weather, construction or maintenance work zones, travel speed/delay on freeways, and special events. The system will provide for safer travel on Texas urban freeways by providing quicker response to motorist incidents, such as vehicle breakdowns and crashes."

Service for the 24-month contract began Jan. 15 with an option to renew for an additional 24-month period. Lowe states, "During fiscal 1998, work orders for approximately \$800,000 are anticipated. During the life of the contract, the estimated total amount of the award for the initial 24 months may be up to \$2.5 million dependent upon work orders issued and available funds."

Several traffic management and ITS systems, both current and developing, will benefit from the contract. Traffic management centers and ITS systems are operational in Houston and San Antonio. Interim traffic management centers are operational in Fort Worth, Dallas, El Paso and Laredo. Centers are under construction in Fort Worth and El Paso and are also being studied for Dallas and Austin. Corpus Christi and Pharr also include ITS projects that are in the planning or developmental stages.

Carlton Allen, P.E., freeway operations supervisor with the Houston District, said, "The Houston District would like to improve its current working system so that we will meet our needs now and for the foreseeable future."

He said that systems can be improved through the input of engineers and technicians statewide.

In fact, the idea for the statewide integration committee stemmed from system development efforts by the TRF for the new traffic management system in El Paso. Carlos Chavez, P.E., director of transportation in the El Paso District, said, "We want the Statewide Integrator to review the El Paso Advanced Traffic Management System software...as well as the design of the system...to assure that all field equipment and software will function as intended."



Courtesy FTW

Teresa Doty, an ITS operations technician in the Fort Worth District's TransVISION Traffic Operation Center, works in one of seven such centers around the state using closed circuit televisions as part of its Intelligent Transportation System.

In 1997, the TRF was called upon once again to develop and integrate a traffic management system for the Austin District. Both the El Paso District and Austin traffic management projects are scheduled for completion in December 1998. The El Paso project includes a new traffic management center and traffic management projects for Interstate 10 and U.S. 54. The Austin District project includes a traffic management project along U.S. 183.

Lowe said, "With the need for the Traffic Operations Division to develop and deploy Advanced Traffic Management Systems to two districts in the same time period, the emphasis on standard operations and requirements, reuse of existing software components, and possible assistance from a system integrator vendor came to the forefront."

The SDIWG team held its kickoff meeting on Jan. 26-27 in Austin and began initial prioritization of the Statewide Integration list of projects. Susan Crumrine, director of the Software Engineering Department at Southwest Research Institute said, "Southwest Research Institute is looking forward to our role in the expansion of ITS technologies across Texas...this approach paves the way for future evolution toward regional ITS implementation in Texas."

The SDIWG committee is working with the divisions, districts, research organizations and Statewide Integrator under the guidance of the ITS Standing Committee, the ITS Standardization Policy (enacted by TxDOT on Oct. 13, 1997), and national standards initiatives to contribute to better deployment of ITS in Texas. These combined efforts, Lowe said, will ensure that planned and operational ITS systems in Texas will provide mature transportation management capabilities at an affordable life-cycle cost to TxDOT. While Texas travelers may not witness first hand the behind-the-highway actions of the SDIWG committee, they are sure to witness the benefits of the committee's efforts. ★

ITS in Texas

(Index: DMS - Dynamic message signs; LCS - Lane control signals)

■ Austin District

Estimated operational date: August 1998 (first 8.5 miles)

Expansion plans: Traffic Management Center tentatively scheduled to be awarded to contract in FY 2000

Total coverage upon completion: 34 miles

Milestones: The Austin Traffic Management Center will include full 911 operations

Devices in operation: Cameras 0; DMS 2; LCS 15

■ Dallas District

Operations began: June 5, 1997

Coverage: 27 miles

Current expansion: 54 miles

Total coverage upon completion: 287

Milestones: The Transportation Management Satellite became operational in June 1997; the Dallas District is in the process of interfacing with the cities of Dallas, Richardson, Plano, Dallas County, and the Fort Worth District; portable video surveillance trailers are being used for traffic studies at spot locations

Devices in operation: Cameras 9; DMS 16; LCS 0; Loop detectors 11 stations

■ El Paso District

Estimated Operational Date: Nov. 19

Coverage: 32 miles

Total Coverage Upon Completion: 32 miles

Devices in Operation: Cameras 0; DMS 13; LCS 0

■ Fort Worth District (TransVISION)

Operations began: Satellite Operations Center No. 1 (Interim Traffic Operations Center) Nov. 6, 1992

Coverage: 48 miles

Current expansion: 12 miles to be added in 1998; letting for a new Traffic Operations Center is scheduled for April 1998

Total coverage upon completion: 260 miles

Milestones: TransVISION was the first system to incorporate color CCTV cameras (1992), the first to install lane control signals over freeway mainlanes (1989), the first to utilize fiber optic transmission of video (1992) and the first to implement

asynchronous transfer mode (ATM network for distribution of digital video (1998)

Devices in operation: Cameras 49; DMS 50; LCS 200; Loop detectors 1,390

■ Houston District (TranStar)

Operations began in interim facility: July 17, 1989, operations center opened April 17, 1996

Coverage: 217 miles

Current expansion: 226 miles

Total coverage upon completion: 317 miles

Milestones: TranStar was constructed and operates as a Multi-Agency facility including TxDOT, METRO, City of Houston, Harris County, City of Houston Office of Emergency Management, and Harris County Office of Emergency Management; currently uses priority corridor projects to add systems such as environmental sensors

Devices in Operation: Cameras 108; DMS 84; LCS 10 stations

■ Laredo District (TransGateway)

Coverage: 3 miles

Current expansion: 3 miles

Total coverage upon completion: 8 miles

Milestones: TransGateway was the first rural ITS system in Texas

Devices in operation: Cameras 3; DMS 2; LCS 0; Loop Detectors 2 (stations)

■ San Antonio District (TransGuide)

Operations began: July 25, 1995

Coverage: 26 miles

Current expansion: 27 miles will be added in 1998

Total coverage upon completion: 191 miles

Milestones: TransGuide was one of four sites in the United States to receive additional funding from the US DOT to proceed with new technologies (in 1998) that include traveler information kiosks, in-vehicle navigation units, LifeLink (emergency medical services management system), Real-Time Travel Tag database and Railroad Crossing Advance Warning System

Devices in Operation: Cameras 59; DMS 51; LCS 389; Loop Detectors 800+

ITS systems are also in the planning and developmental stages in the Pharr and Corpus Christi districts. ★

What does 'ITS' mean?

ITS refers to systems ("smart" cars and highways) that use electronics, communications and computer technology for safer and more efficient driving.

ITS originated in the late 1970s and early '80s when engineers began looking at alternative ways to better manage traffic along existing highways. Since its conception, ITS has grown to include public transit systems, commercial vehicle operations, ports, waterways, airports, and freight and passenger railroads.

Here in Texas, ITS systems incorporate the use of fiber optics, computers, overhead variable message signs, lane control signals, geographic positioning system (GPS), in-vehicle navigation devices and handheld navigation devices, cameras, electronic toll tags, kiosks and other technologies to provide motorists with advance notice of highway conditions. The technologies are based on programs developed for aviation, as well as space and defense programs. ★

Recycling program exceeds its goal for purchasing

Once again, TxDOT's Recycling and Recycled Products Program has exceeded its purchasing goal, spending \$41.7 million in fiscal 1997.

In a report to the governor, General Services Division (GSD) Director Larry Zatopek said the department spent almost \$34 million on recycled roadway products; bought \$7.9 million of recycled, remanufactured and environmentally sensitive products; spent 18.1 percent of its procurement budget on green and recycled roadway products (far exceeding the legislatively mandated goal of 8 percent); and completed four experimental road construction projects that used approximately 389 tons of recyclable materials.

Rebecca Davio, head of GSD's recycling program, said these figures are significant for two reasons.

"The first is that TxDOT spent nearly \$42 million on recycled, remanufactured and environmentally sensitive products — that is the single largest expenditure of any state agency in Texas," she said.

"The other thing that is significant about this accomplishment is that it represents only the tip of the iceberg for us," Davio said. "There is an ever-widening array of recycled content products available for use throughout the department's operations."

Davio said the breadth of products available is broad and getting broader. "Just to give some idea of what's available, these are just a few of the recycled-content products available: splash guards for vehicles, commercial carpet, re-refined oil, portable sign stands, three-ring binders, plastic chair mats, file folders, sticky pads, picnic benches, and remanufactured toner cartridges."

The list is growing. "Almost every day, we hear information on new products that are being developed," she said. "And in many instances, these new products are improvements over the existing product."

She cited guardrail blockouts as an example. Blockouts are the piece that fits between a corrugated guardrail and the post that holds it.

They are typically made of pressure-treated wood. Wooden blockouts crack and splinter, and the chemicals that make them water- and insect-proof are not environmentally friendly. But, Davio said, "There are companies that make them from recycled plastic or rubber or a number of other materials that eliminate these operational difficulties, plus they have no problems with chemicals leaching into the soil."

She said this is just one example of ways products can be improved and solve environmental problems.

Davio added that TxDOT's influence on the use of "green" products is significant.

"TxDOT can drive the market due to the sheer dollar amount we purchase," she said. "Companies are willing to create products that solve operational difficulties if they understand the potential of the market."

Additionally, TxDOT's actions influence other agencies. "TxDOT has such a reputation for quality that other agencies see what we're doing and will often follow suit," she said. ★

Special office to oversee development of Texas 130

TxDOT has created a special office to oversee the construction of Texas 130, a proposed highway that would relieve congestion on Interstate 35 in Central Texas.

"We are committed not only to building this much-needed alternate highway, but to expediting the project as fast as we can," said Texas Transportation Commissioner David Laney. "Our commitment is underscored by the creation of the special project office which will focus 100 percent on Texas 130."

David C. Kopp, formerly of the New Braunfels area office of the San Antonio District, is the manager of the new office, which will be located in TxDOT's Turnpike Office.

While at the New Braunfels area office, Kopp, a licensed engineer, oversaw the development of the \$66 million construction of a loop around San Marcos. He also managed TxDOT's \$20 million reconstruction of Interstate 35 in Selma.

Kopp became the Special Projects Director for Transportation Planning and Development in April 1997.

His assignments in that position have included the Laredo IV International Toll Bridge, a review of the use of recycled materials, a comparison study of Federal

Aviation Administration and TxDOT specifications, and a review of moveable span bridges in Texas.

Texas 130 would parallel I-35, running east of the interstate from north of Georgetown to Seguin. It will connect to I-10 at Seguin. The final alignment for Texas 130 has not been decided.

Construction of the 89-mile highway will cost an estimated \$1 billion.

"Texas 130 will be built — it's not 'if' anymore. And it will be built as a toll road," Laney said.

While Texas 130 will be developed as a toll road, officials do not anticipate tolls will be used to fund the entire cost of the possible \$1 billion project.

"We know there are not enough funds through traditional financing methods to complete the project in a timely manner," said Pete Winstead, chairman of the Texas Turnpike Authority. "It will take innovative financing methods to move the project forward. How much tolls will ease the financial crunch is not yet known."

TxDOT's Austin and San Antonio districts have overseen project development to date, along with numerous other regional transportation projects. ★ *Public Information*

Austin PIO honored for tornado coverage

The tragedy of the Jarrell tornado last year spawned amazing stories of survival, near misses, and great losses. It also provided the backdrop for an award-winning story about TxDOT's role in the crisis.

The Austin Chapter of International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) presented John Hurt, Austin District Public Information Officer, an Award of Excellence on Jan. 14 for his story "An Ill Wind." The article also appeared in *Transportation News* last July.

Hurt wove a series of gripping vignettes about the townspeople in a chronological description of the killer storm's progress. In between, Hurt told how TxDOT personnel rose to the challenge of helping restore order and normalcy.

The IABC judges scored the composition in 12 areas, including creativity, professional standards, effectiveness, and if it was com-

PELLING TO READ. One judge commented: "Liked the time-frames approach. You really realize how quickly this all happened. Nice job of weaving personal stories in with the 'corporate' message of TxDOT's response. Nice, quick read, even though story is lengthy." Another judge called it a "compelling story. Nice job!"

The tragic subject touched many readers, but none so much as another state employee. She waited until friends finished congratulating Hurt after the award presentation. She told him the story was special to her, since two of her family died in the tornado, and thanked him for writing it.

This was the second honor presented to Hurt for "An Ill Wind." In September 1997, TxDOT presented him with a Writing Award for the article. ★ *Chris Bishop, Austin District*

FROM HIGHWAYS TO AIR WAVES

Paris District supervisor lends voice to nationally televised commercial

Jeff Carmack
Public Information Office

Thanks to the pervasive power of television, especially TV advertising, certain people's voices are inextricably linked to certain products. Name a celebrity and certain products come to mind. Like Bill Cosby and Jell-O pudding, or Candice Bergen and Sprint long-distance service or, if you have a good memory, John Cameron Swayze and Timex watches. Or Paul Hutchins and...?

Hutchins works in Traffic Operations in the Paris District, where he is district sign supervisor and railroad liaison, among other things ("I wear a lot of hats," he said.)

But when he's not wearing his TxDOT hats, he's a singer in a band and has been for nearly 30 years. And he recently did the voice-over in a commercial for a coffee creamer. The commercial is airing nationally in more than 120 cities, so there's a good chance you've heard Hutchins' voice and had no idea who it was.

Hutchins said the experience was "a lot of fun, but a lot of work."

He said, "It was a hard three hours. Every enunciation and pronunciation has to be exact. And you really have to act the fool and sing it with lots of vigor and zest for it to sound exciting."

One aspect of the gig Hutchins really likes is getting a residual check every month or so. He said he also just learned that the commercial's run has been extended through April, so the check will keep coming, at least until then.

Hutchins said he got the gig after the band's pianist, Randy Fouts, called him and said "Can you be here tomorrow, and we'll cut a commercial." He said they beat out talent from Los Angeles, Nashville, Atlanta and New York to get the job.

"I expected just to get paid for the studio time," Hutchins said, "but they called shortly after [cutting the demo] and said we'd gotten the job."

And although Hutchins characterizes his commercial work as small potatoes, he said the money to be made doing this kind of work is impressive.

"This is kind of a minor deal," he said. "When you get into soft drinks, beer and trucks, where they run for quite a long time, that's where the money is."

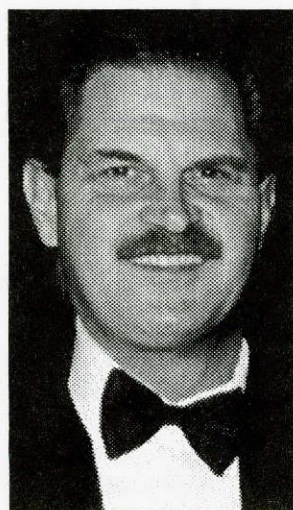
Hutchins said he doesn't actually appear in the creamer commercial; he is just the voice of the creamer. But for those talents who do appear, the money goes way up.

"All I do is the voice," he said. "But if you

can appear, you're talking about major bucks there." He said, "It's super, but I'm too ugly."

Major or minor, Hutchins said "I'd like to do one every week."

Hutchins leads what almost amounts to a double life. By day, he's a mild-mannered state employee. But off the clock, he's a musician of long standing. Which is not surprising, since they don't give nationally televised commercial work to just anyone who wanders in off the street.



"I have no desire to live on the road. I'd like to make commercials for the rest of my life, stay home, and watch the Rangers play ball."

Paul Hutchins
Paris District

little Jimmy Reed." But that's pretty much the extent of his instrumental contribution to the group. "I tried to play guitar a few years ago," he said, "but they took it away from me and said 'just sing.'"

"I began my singing career accidentally," Hutchins said. "When I was a freshman in high school, I didn't like my third-period study hall teacher. So, when a representative of our high school choir came before the study hall group and said anyone interested in trying out for the choir should come with him, I did."

He sings in a band, and has for 30 years. In that time, they've cut five albums and played countless gigs. Hutchins said "We play a wide variety of music - Glen Miller, Johnny Mathis, Doobie Brothers - we can do it all."

All the vocals are handled by Hutchins, who even does some sound-alike vocals. "I imitate a lot of voices," he said. "Johnny Mathis, Elvis, Frank Sinatra, Tom Jones. And in country, I can sound pretty good as George Jones and Roy Orbison."

Hutchins said he also plays blues harmonica

"when we play a

Hutchins said he auditioned by singing "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes" and was immediately told he was first tenor. He not only made the choir but, but was all-state his junior and senior years. This got him a full scholarship to Wayland Baptist College, where he was a member of the Wayland International Choir.

Under the direction of Dr. James D. Cram, Hutchins had a voice lesson daily. While other students sang Italian opera and the like, Hutchins and his mentor would jam for an hour, singing songs by Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett.

Hutchins was also managed for one year by Norman Petty, who had at one time managed and recorded Buddy Holly. In 1966, Petty took a demo tape of Hutchins' to studios in New York, LA. and Nashville. Hutchins said the studio bosses liked his voice but the trend at the time was toward a "heavier" sound, and away from Hutchins' more folk-influenced sound that had been popular earlier in the '60s. As he said, he was "about two years too late or five or six years too early."

While he was attending Wayland Baptist College in Plainview, he auditioned for both the Norman Luboff Choir and the Johnny Mann Singers. And surprisingly, he was offered jobs in both groups. But at about the same time, he said, he decided to come home, find a job and get married.

So, Hutchins said he quit school and returned to Paris. Shortly after he got married "to the love of my life, Karen," he got a call from Bobby Floyd, a friend and bassist in a local band. Floyd asked Hutchins if he'd like to come to a local club that weekend to sing a couple of songs. The crowd's response to his singing was good, and Hutchins was invited to join the band permanently.

"With our first child due in a few months, I decided we could use the extra money," Hutchins said. "I told the guys that I would only stay with the band for one year."

That was 28 years ago, and Hutchins still sings with them.

Hutchins could have had a career in music, but his life took another path. In retrospect, though, he said he has no serious regrets. "I'm 50 years old, so my aspirations for being a superstar are long gone," he said. "I have no desire to live the life of a rock 'n' roll star and live on the road. I'd like to make commercials for the rest of my life, and stay home and watch the Rangers play ball." ★

Employees our strength

Building for tomorrow
on proud traditions

Was Heald
Executive Director

In my 37 years with the Texas Department of Transportation, I have learned that change—while inevitable—is actually a time of new opportunities and challenges. On March 1, I became the 18th person to head this organization since its inception in 1917, and I don't mind telling you that this is one of the most exciting opportunities I've had in my career.

Frankly, becoming TxDOT's executive director was never one of my career goals. I'm more comfortable being in the trenches, from the time I first came on board in the Houston District to my tenure in the Brownwood District to my last assignment as the Fort Worth District Engineer. I have had the privilege of working alongside some of the finest, most dedicated employees in Texas who have contributed overwhelmingly to my professional and personal growth.

Now, I'm looking forward to more of this same dedication as I ask you to join with me to build on the TxDOT family's proud traditions. I may be biased, but I firmly believe we have the finest transportation system in the nation. We got to this point because of the tireless efforts of the thousands of loyal, hard-working men and women who came before us. Without them, this department would not be what it is today. And without you, today's employees, we could not continue their legacy.

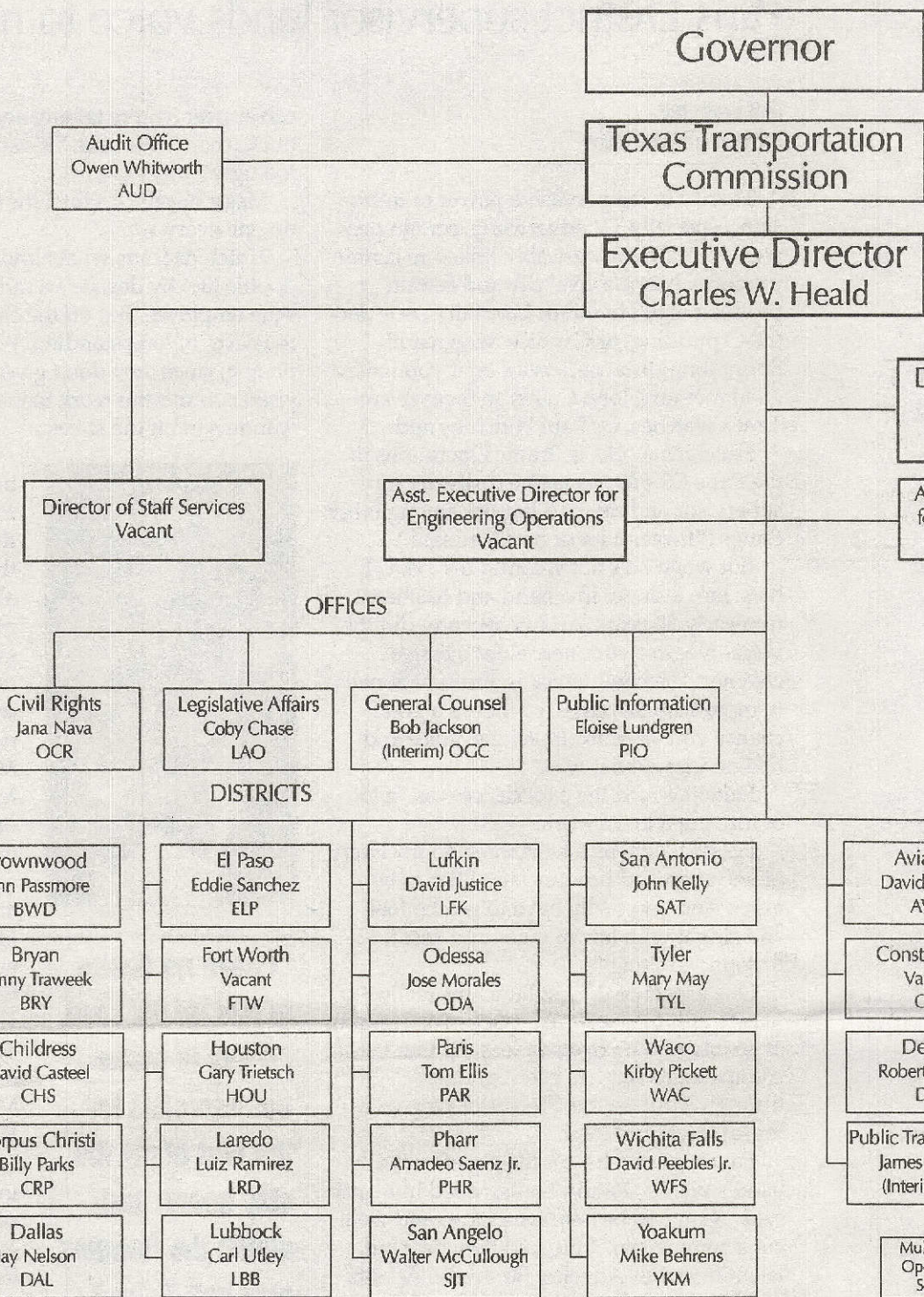
Yes, many things have changed over the years—people, careers, leadership, even our department's name. But one thing didn't—our mission. We still all agree we're here to work cooperatively to provide safe, effective, efficient movement of people and goods. We've earned the public's trust by providing them first-rate service and they expect nothing less in the future.

There are exciting times ahead for us in Texas transportation. We now have the ability to move projects from concept to concrete faster with the State Infrastructure Bank loan program and the Texas Turnpike Division's ability to sell revenue bonds. We are developing intelligent transportation systems in our larger cities that make the driver, vehicle and roadway more efficient. It stands to reason that in order to take on these new tasks, we must have an organization that is flexible, innovative and responsive to our ever-changing society.

For the past several weeks, a transitional advisory group of your fellow employees have been meeting at my direction to help develop an organizational structure that reflects the needs of our customers, the talents of our employees and the core functions of our department. Just as I did not accept the executive directorship lightly, neither did these determined employees undertake this assignment without fully understanding the profound effect their efforts would have.

My instructions to them were simple—we spend 99 percent of our time planning, designing, constructing and maintaining transportation systems. To do that, the department's employees must have firm leadership, confidence in management and a clear sense of direction. The new organizational structure should improve efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and communication. If we focus on the results and not on the process, I guarantee we will save money and build transportation projects faster.

The advisory group didn't use magic formulas; they used plain old,



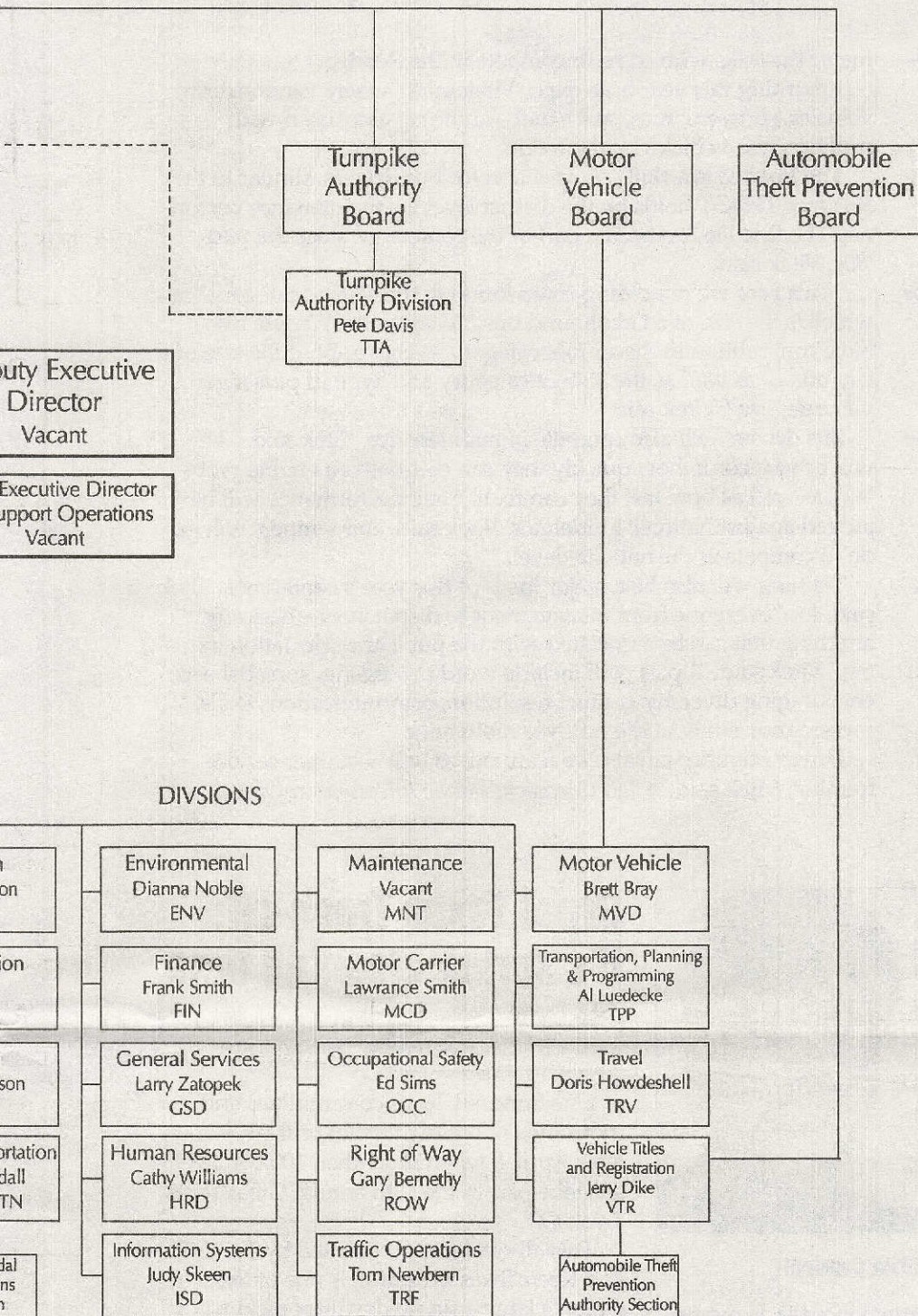
down-home common sense. And common sense told them that there are three basic ingredients that make an organization effective and efficient: good work ethics, good production and good employees. That's how this department was built and that's the philosophy I intend to continue as executive director.

Since we knew we already had this basic foundation, we worked toward maintaining our momentum while accommodating change. We live in a new world of transportation challenges; we do not need a TxDOT structured for the old world. Without tearing anything apart, we believe we've reshaped our department for the future.

I am hopeful that we will be a TxDOT that speaks with one voice. Our leaders will be accountable, armed with policies that give them the ability to make informed decisions without unnecessary interference. Employees will have the tools they need to meet any challenge that comes their way. We will be a family that focuses every day on improving what we did yesterday and giving Texans the best transportation system in the world.

I'm confident that by now you have already heard from district engineers and division and office directors how the department is going to operate under my watch. I intend to be the kind of executive director who provides direction and leadership with less reliance on committees and task force groups—and with fewer meetings so people can spend more time at their jobs. As the old saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the tasting, and we won't know how it will work until we've tried it for awhile. It will be challenging, but I am looking forward to it because I will be trying it alongside 14,000 of the most dedicated employees in the state. ★

Organizational Chart



Summary of changes

What was	Is now	Change
Audit Office (AUD)	Audit Office	None
Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA)	A section of VTR	
Aviation Division (AVN)	Aviation Division	None
Budget and Finance Division (BUD)	Finance Division (FIN)	FIN will assume Management Service Office Strategic Planning functions
Business Opportunities Programs Office (BOP)	A section of Construction Division (CST)	
Civil Rights Division (CIV)	Office of Civil Rights (OCR)	Duties remain the same
Construction and Maintenance Division (CMD)	Construction Division (CST) and Maintenance Division (MNT)	Maintenance functions will go to new Maintenance Division (MNT). CST will assume functions of Materials and Tests Division, Research and Technology Transfer Office, and oversee operations of Business Opportunities Office
Design Division (DES)	Design Division	None
Environmental Affairs Division (ENV)	Environmental Affairs Division	None
General Services Division (GSD)	General Services Division	GSD Architectural Services functions moved to new Maintenance Division (MNT). GSD will assume Management Services Office's On-Line Manuals support
Human Resources Division (HRD)	Human Resources Division	HRD will assume functions of Training, Quality and Development Division (TQD). EEO and affirmative action functions moved to Office of Civil Rights (OCR)
Information Systems Division (ISD)	Information Systems Division	ISD will absorb personnel of Retooling Office
International Relations Office (IRO)	A section of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division	
Legislative Affairs Office (LAO)	Legislative Affairs Office	None
Management Services (MAN)	MAN's On-Line Manuals support assumed by GSD. Strategic Planning functions assumed by FIN	
Materials and Tests Division (MAT)	A section of new Construction Division (CST)	
Motor Carrier Division (MCD)	Motor Carrier Division	None
Multimodal Operations Office (MMO)	A section of the Public Transportation Division	
Motor Vehicle Division (MVD)	Motor Vehicle Division	None
Occupational Safety Division (OCC)	Occupational Safety Division	None
General Counsel Office (OGC)	Office of General Counsel	None
Public Information Office (PIO)	Public Information Office	PIO will now include department's ombudsman
Public Transportation Division (PTN)	Public Transportation Division	PTN will oversee operations of the Multimodal Operations Office (MMO)
Research and Technology Transfer Office (RTT)	A section of CST	
Right-of-Way Division (ROW)	Right-of-Way Division	None
Traffic Operations Division (TRF)	Traffic Operations Division	None
Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP)	Transportation Planning and Programming Division	TPP will oversee operations of International Relations Office
Training, Quality and Development Division (TQD)	A section of the Human Resources Division	
Travel and Information Division (TRV)	Travel Division	
Turnpike Authority Division (TTA)	Turnpike Authority Division	None
Vehicle Titles and Registration Division (VTR)	Vehicle Titles and Registration Division	VTR will oversee operations of Automobile Theft Prevention Authority Office

March 4

Organizational changes become effective. Post Fort Worth District Engineer position.

March 6

Post positions for:

- Deputy Executive Director
- Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations
- Assistant Executive Director for Support Operations
- Director of Staff Services

Post staff services officer and secretary positions for:

- Executive Director
- Deputy Executive Director
- Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations
- Assistant Executive Director for Support Operations
- Director of Staff Services

Post directors of:

- Construction Division
- Maintenance Division
- Public Transportation Division

May 1

Target date to have all positions filled.

New ED staff positions

Several new positions have been created with the reorganization, forming Executive Director Wes Heald's primary staff.

The Deputy Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations, Assistant Executive Director for Support Operations and Director of Staff Services will assist Heald by providing advice, consultation, direction and support to the districts and divisions.

The deputy will assist in all phases of directing, managing and implementing department policies, programs and operating strategies, as well as oversee all department activities in the absence of the executive director.

Supporting the engineering and support operations of the department will be the focus of the assistant executive directors, while commission activities and special projects will be some of the duties of the Director of Staff Services. ★

Transit conference to be biggest

Features range from microcomputer training to bus-driving competition

This year's Public Transportation Conference, slated for April 20-22 in Houston, promises to be the biggest and best ever.

"This event is going to be a premier even like no other," said Vickie Vitek, the Rural Transit Assistance Program manager in the Public Transportation Division.

The conference is being hosted by the Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority (or METRO, as it is commonly called.)

One of the highlights, Vitek said, will be a bus maintenance forum sponsored by Friendship Publications, publishers of *Bus Ride* magazine. "They sponsor these forums," Vitek said, "where the maintenance folks can get together and talk about anything — air conditioning, brake systems — literally anything that goes into keeping a safe fleet on the road."

Vitek said this is the first time Friendship has held a forum on the state level. Normally she said, they do it on a regional level. "But they're doing it in Houston because METRO has a whole facility devoted to keeping buses on the road."

This conference gets no money from TxDOT, Vitek said, but is funded strictly by registration fees, and supported by the host — in this case, Houston METRO.

"The department has continued to participate in this conference, in cooperation with the transit industry, to advertise its involvement with public transit," Vitek said.

The conference has grown dramatically since it began in the '70s, Vitek said. "We started with about 25 people in one room, and now we're up to about 400 paid registrants," she said. "And that doesn't count the people who come to the expo or the people who do train-

ing or the folks who come to compete in the Roadeo."

Returning this year is an expo, Vitek said, "where vendors bring vehicles, software, tires, seats, fuel — anything associated with putting these vehicles on the road."

The Roadeo is a skills competition for bus drivers, similar to the Roadeos TxDOT holds on the district level for maintenance personnel. The Roadeo has been a part of the conference since the mid-'80s, Vitek said.

"This year we're holding competition in the 45-foot category, which is the size of a Greyhound bus," Vitek said. "We will also have competition in the 40-foot category — that's about the size of a city bus — as well as the 35-foot category and Type III passenger van category," Vitek said.

Bus drivers will also compete in maintenance, Vitek said. They will be judged on how quickly they can diagnose an engine problem, as well as how fast they can fix it. Their performance will be judged against national guidelines, Vitek said, and winners will go on to compete at the national level.

Training will also be a major focus of this year's conference, Vitek said, for "everyone from management to dispatchers — basically, anything that can be associated with the public transportation industry," Vitek said. Topics will include word processing, spreadsheets, encouraging diversity, conflict resolution, communications skills, presentation skills, and employee motivation.

Driver training will also be featured, as will customer-service training, Vitek said. ★ *Jeff Carmack, Public Information Office*

Hispanic engineers laud HOU's Cardinal

Norm Wigington
Houston District

Elvia Cardinal, P.E., director of Consultant Contracts Administration for the Houston District, was recognized as one of four winners of the 1997 National Hispanic Engineer Professional Achievement Award, presented on the stage of the Cullen Theater in the Wortham Center.

The ninth annual award ceremony followed a formal dinner in the Grand Foyer of the Wortham hosted by the Hispanic National Engineer Achievement Awards (HENAA) on Oct. 11.

"It looked like the Emmys," Cardinal said. "There were celebrity presentations, videos and slide shows. It was all very exciting and very choreographed." Here she pauses and then by waving her hands just so, you could imagine the brightly lit stage and the stairs.

"We were told to prepare a speech and it was on the teleprompter. It was all first-class and very exciting to be a part of it, much less to represent TxDOT," Cardinal said. "I was very excited and pleased that I was in such notable company."

Each year, the association solicits persons who represent to the community the highest ideals and ethical standards for professional engineers. As models for young Hispanic engineering students, these leaders are recognized annually at the HENAA Conference. Cardinal currently serves on the State Board of Directors for the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering (TAME) and serves as treasurer of the local Gulf Coast Chapter of TAME. Before her current

appointment, Cardinal was the District Plan Review supervisor, responsible for reviewing and processing \$400 million to \$500 million in construction projects per fiscal year. The award recognizes her achievements as a member of a government agency. Last year Maribel Chavez, the district engineer for the Abilene District, won this prestigious award.

The national winner of the Engineer of the Year was Ernie Rodriguez, the highest-ranking Hispanic at the Lucent Technologies. Rodriguez leads an organization of nearly 11,000 employees with an annual budget of \$1.5 million.

"Although the group is based in California, and there are sponsors from around the world, the awards are presented in Houston each year. Exhibitors at the conference included NASA headquarters, the Johnson Space Center, Schlumberger, every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, the Peace Corps, Westinghouse, 3M, GE, Hughes Missile Systems Company, Motorola, IBM, DuPont, the FBI and CIA," Cardinal said. "It was a fascinating and complex representation of individuals."

A native of South Texas, Cardinal holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Texas A&I University and has been registered by the State of Texas as a professional engineer since 1988. ★

This story originally appeared in Forum, the Houston District newsletter.



Elvia Cardinal

Great Texas Trash-off: It's spring cleaning time

Linda Levitt
Travel and Information Division

One hundred Texas communities and thousands of highway miles will be cleaner after April 4, when more than 100,000 Texans take part in the 13th annual Great Texas Trash-Off.

This all-out effort, organized by TxDOT and Keep Texas Beautiful, is one of the nation's largest single-day litter pickup events.

TxDOT's Adopt-a-Highway volunteers will pick up trash on highways, and volunteers from Keep Texas Beautiful Proud Communities will clean city streets and parks. The Trash-Off encourages Texans not to litter.

"People are more likely to throw litter in an area that's already dirty, and they'll think twice about tossing their trash on a clean stretch of road," said Doris Howdeshell, Travel and Information Division director.

The Trash-Off coincides with the wildflower season, when motorists travel Texas roads to view stands of bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush and other flowers. It also kicks off Keep Texas Beautiful Month.

The Trash-Off is part of TxDOT's litter prevention program, which includes Don't Mess with Texas, Adopt-a-Highway, and a grassroots partnership with Keep Texas Beautiful, Inc. Working together, these programs are designed to change the attitudes and the behavior of would-be litterers. ★



Amarillo Police Department officer Erick Bohannon and TxDOT Traffic Safety Specialist Tracy Tellman helps fit Olsen Elementary School students Aryn and Dustin with bicycle helmets. TxDOT participated in the give-away of 4,000 bicycle helmets in Potter and Randall counties.

KEEPING KIDS SAFE

Coalition hopes to reduce injury with community-based programs

Tonya Detten
Amarillo District

"How hard can it be to install a car seat?" asks a new mom, unaware that she is talking to the Texas Panhandle's only Certified Passenger Safety Seat Specialist. "What do you mean my car seat was recalled... They wouldn't sell it if it weren't safe!" says another frustrated parent. "What's a locking clip?" says a mother of a 3-year-old.

These are just some of the questions that Amarillo District Traffic Safety Specialist Tracy Tellman answers in any given week. Tellman answers each call with a genuine concern for helping parents. Not just because it's part of her job, but because it could mean the difference between life and death for a child.

As part of her goals to reduce the number of traffic safety related accidents and injuries in the Amarillo District, Tellman wanted to put the Texas Department of Transportation in the position of being a community resource for traffic safety information and educational materials. So, in 1996 under the support and guidance of then District Engineer Billy D. Parks, P.E., the Panhandle Safe Communities Coalition – a partnership among more than 30 organizations, business and government agencies – was formed to create a safe environment for residents of the Amarillo and Canyon areas.

Safe Communities is a program sponsored by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). According to

information from NHTSA, traffic crash injuries are one of the most overlooked public health problems facing our nation today. Through a Safe Communities umbrella, NHTSA says, a community can prevent traffic deaths and injuries and raise awareness of the steps that can be taken to reduce these traumatic injuries. Amarillo TxDOT was able to partner with West Texas A&M University in Canyon to become the lead agencies in forming the Safe Communities coalition.

"As we compiled a list of community leaders, businesses, trauma centers, law enforcement agencies, planning committees, education systems, recreation centers, the list kept growing and growing," said Tellman. "But we couldn't really narrow the list. If we wanted this to be a true community project, we had to involve the entire community and see what programs are out there, what programs are being duplicated, and what programs are lacking."

The group met for the first time in August of 1996. They met with a representative of the Greater Dallas Injury Prevention Center and then created a statement of purpose: The Amarillo Area Safe Communities is a gathering of public and private agencies that share a common interest in injury and trauma prevention.

Through two NHTSA grants totalling more than \$50,000, the coalition's first major project will construct a database of injury and fatality data to be used for determining

future target areas for programs and to evaluate implemented programs.

"The Coalition is a dynamic group. They're very energetic," said Mark E. Tomlinson, P.E., Amarillo District Engineer and member of the Safe Communities Coalition. "It has really helped TxDOT strengthen relationships within the community."

The Safe Communities coalition spawned several other community coalitions of which TxDOT is a part. The Safe Kids Coalition committed to increase bicycle helmet usage in the Amarillo area. Through Safe Kids, TxDOT has helped distribute almost 4,000 bicycle helmets in Potter and Randall counties and other smaller communities.

"Every child who receives a helmet must first participate in a bicycle safety class and sign a pledge promising to wear the helmet while riding," said Tellman. "This year, we also worked with a local charity Christmas project that was giving away hundreds of bicycles. Safe Kids helped organize a bicycle safety class and helmet giveaway for recipients of the bicycles."

TxDOT also participates as a member of the Panhandle 3D Coalition, another group formed from the Safe Communities umbrella to spread the anti-drinking & drugs message. "Safe Communities has helped TxDOT get in touch with other agencies who work to prevent the same things we do," said Tellman. "Now local people know who to call for traffic safety information and prevention programs."★

First-of-its-kind conference brings field operations workers together

January's Field Operations Conference, the first of its kind, was by most accounts a success.

Bobbie Templeton, assistant executive director for Field Operations, said this conference was the first in TxDOT history to bring together field ops personnel under one roof.

"The objective," Templeton said, "was to bring together people from railroad, construction, materials and tests, traffic safety, traffic engineering, traffic management, labs and construction, and get them to talk about the issues that are before them and bring some homogenous thinking to these issues."

Templeton said these disciplines had, in the past, met separately. "Traditionally, we've had conferences, but construction met by itself, the lab folks met by themselves, traffic had its meetings," Templeton said. "But by doing it that way, we had a fairly constant stream of people coming out of the districts to Austin."

Maintenance personnel will continue to have their own, separate conferences, Templeton said.

At the direction of former Executive Director Bill Burnett, Senior Management Team members were directed to hold combined meetings of the areas under their respective purviews.

Templeton said the reviews of the larger, integrated conferences have been mixed. Some had been critical like the older way of staging conferences because it drew too many people away from their jobs at one time, Templeton said. However, the larger conferences are not without their drawbacks, Templeton said. A chief complaint is that staff members who may have a mix of responsibilities are forced to choose between attending, for instance, the maintenance conference or a conference on construction.

The newest member of the Texas Transportation Commission, Robert Nichols, addressed the conference Jan. 28.

Good people, well paid and given a direction can do a great job was Nichols' message.

Nichols addressed the "group that does the actual work" of building and maintaining what he called "the best transportation system in the world."

"I have traveled around the state a lot since joining the commission, and met with a lot of elected officials," Nichols said, "and I can tell you TxDOT is held in very high regard throughout the state."

Nichols said that when he was named to the commission, he undertook to visit every district, every division and every special office. "I'm a nuts-and-bolts kind of guy - I'm not big into sensitivity training - and I wanted to try to get a feel for the business of TxDOT," he said, "and the best way to do that, that I know of, is by talking to our people doing the actual work." He said he has so far managed to visit 106 field offices, and is not finished yet.

During his visits, he said he usually asks two questions: "What are we doing right, so I don't screw that up, and what are we doing wrong, so I can see what I might do to fix it."

Nichols also emphasized his belief that TxDOT must maintain its excellence in core technical areas - engineering, construction and maintenance.

Working together was stressed by Tom Newbern, director of the Traffic Operations Division.

"To improve the quality of TxDOT's operations and programs, we must work together," said Newbern. "We can deliver that quality product by continually seeking to coordinate better, cooperate

more and communicate more effectively."

Newbern said the conference provided an excellent opportunity for networking.

"It was a good conference, and a good chance to get together and talk," said Newbern.

Construction and Maintenance Division Director Thomas Bohuslav agreed. "We were thoroughly encouraged by the active participation of the field personnel," he said. "A result of the conference was a better understanding of the needs of the field."

Bohuslav presented an overview of CMD's sections and their duties, the legislative impacts to the construction business and the goals of the division.

Hot mix and training topped Material and Tests Division Director Kathryn Holtz's remarks.

"Five years ago, we were getting density on only about half of our pavements," said Holtz. "Now under QCQA, we get density around 90 percent of the time. Getting the right density is a significant factor affecting the life of an asphaltic concrete pavement."

Holtz also mentioned that the average length of time an employee stays in one job is dropping to three years.

"We must be able to train them (employees) quickly to handle testing and inspection, and we must do it in a convenient way, so they are off the project minimal amounts of time," she said. Tom Yarbrough, director of Engineering and Implementation for Research and

Technology Transfer Office, gave an overview and history of RTT.

TxDOT's research program is the largest and is considered the best transportation research program of any department of transportation in the nation, according to Yarbrough.

"Our program depends on the active participation of many individuals throughout TxDOT," he said, "and without their ability to expend time and effort on technical oversight of the individual projects, our program will suffer."

Yarbrough explained that research is important to the department and just about every mile of road we have in the state shows evidence of the effect of the research program.

Addressing the closing luncheon were David Casteel, Kirby Pickett, Gary Treitsch and Carl Utley, district engineers from Childress, Waco Houston and Lubbock, respectively.

The four addressed the subject "Challenging the Status Quo." The common thread that ran through all their remarks was change: Change as a constant in all the department does, knowing what to change and what to leave alone, and changing the way the department does business.

Five awards were presented during the final day of the conference. The Materials and Tests Division named the Houston District laboratory both Innovative Lab of the Year and the District Lab of the Year. Ed Hampson of the San Antonio District Lab was honored with the Lab Employee of the Year award. The Traffic Operations Division gave the Gene W. Sparks Award, for outstanding service for non-engineering personnel in support of traffic operations and safety, to John Stringer of the Corpus Christi District. Jerry Keisler of the Paris District was the winner of the Richard H. Oliver Award, given for outstanding service in the engineering or technical field for outstanding service in support of traffic operations and safety.

★ Jeff Carmack, Helen Havelka, Public Information Office



Translators work to assist Spanish-speaking participants in TxDOT's first Field Operations Conference.

Brohman earns national recognition

Victor Tsai
Houston District

Last month one of TxDOT's newest employees, transportation management specialist Rita Brohman, was recognized as one of 1997's Outstanding Young Women of America in recognition of her outstanding professional and civic contributions.

"I've won several awards in transportation," said Brohman, who has spent 10 years in the field, "but I was especially proud to be recognized by something that crosses over to civic involvement as well."

Brohman cut her teeth in transportation, working in California, where she served as a consultant for the firm she started with her husband, Larry. He now works as a senior transportation planner at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC).

After eight years, the couple decided their two young children took priority over the long hours and traveling that came with owning a business. Brohman says she considered several agencies to work for before deciding to take a position with TxDOT.

"I chose TxDOT over other agencies because I feel that the people at TxDOT are less concerned with personal agendas and more with overall mobility," she said. "Also, I like the fact that TxDOT handles

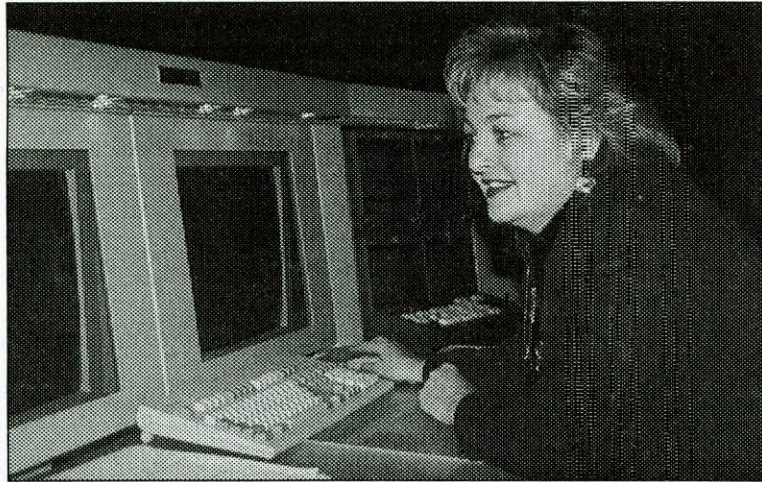
transportation on a statewide basis, not just in one local area."

Brohman works at TranStar as the Houston Priority Corridor Program Manager, overseeing 26 projects that fall under the Intelligent Vehicle Highway System/Intelligent Transportation System (IVHS/ITS) umbrella. Prior to joining TxDOT she worked on the Smart Commuter Program, which put portable Sony Magic Link computers in the hands of 700 commuters on IH 45-North Freeway.

The Sony Magic Links showed current traffic conditions on the freeway, which provided incentive for motorists to choose alternative methods of transportation.

Outside of her job at TranStar, Brohman participates in civic activities through her church, which include helping feed the hungry, serving as a marriage and family counselor and playing contemporary Christian music on her guitar. She and her husband are both musicians and have even released two recordings of their music. She also volunteers her time as a professional, serving

as an associate editor of *Transportation Demand Management Review*, a professional journal. She also serves as an officer for the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT), a national professional organization. ★



Rita Brohman, a transportation specialist in the Houston District, was recognized as one of 1997's Outstanding Young Women of America.

GSD employees awarded for their efforts at safety

More than 100 General Service Division employees were recognized for their safety efforts at a division luncheon in September.

On Nov. 13, 1997 126 TxDOT employees attended the second GSD Safety Awards Luncheon. Senior Management, Occupational Safety, GSD supervisors, guests and 91 of the 131 award recipients attended the event.

Assistant Executive Director Daffney Henry, Occupational Safety Division Director Ed Sims and General Services Division Director Larry Zatopek took part in recognizing the 1997 fiscal year award recipients and presenting the three categories of safety awards.

Post and Seguin Regional Supply Centers and the TxDOT Records Management Section were presented plaques and/or year labels for having no lost time due to injuries during fiscal 1997. This represents quite an achievement when the working environment and scope of the work is considered in these three areas. The award recognizes the team work of the individuals in these sections and their dedication to promoting a safe work atmosphere.

Sixty-five employees were honored for accident-free vehicle operations during fiscal year 1997. Five operators had more than 25 years of accident-free vehicle operations. Charles Martin from Security com-

pleted 25 years, Gary Love from the Seguin RSC completed 28 years, McKinley Clark Jr. from the Auto Shop along with Harvey Ricks from the Athens RSC completed 29 years and the leading safe operator was David Brown from Facilities Management with 31 years.

Ninety-two workers were recognized with no-injury safety awards for completing fiscal 1997 without a reportable injury. Nine of these workers had completed 25 years or more without injury.

Bobby LaFont from the Welding Shop and Robert Driggers from the Seguin RSC completed 27 years; Danny Morrow from the Welding Shop, L. D. Washington from the Machine Shop and Larry Williams from the Austin RSC completed 28 years; McKinley Clark Jr. from the Auto Shop and Ernest Spradling from the Riverside Copy and Supply Center completed 29 years; and James Justice from Camp Hubbard Shops and Helen McCarther from Main Office Copy Center completed 31 years.

Five employees completed their first year with Safe Operator and No-Injury Awards. The five employees are Ron Haberer from Austin RSC; John Hummel from Athens RSC; Joe Pennel from Seguin RSC; Robert Winters from Post RSC; and Roland Garza Jr. from MES. ★ *Bill Boytim, GSD*

Oops!

Color us chagrined.

In the February issue of *Transportation News*, there appeared a first-person article by Burton Clifton of the Fort Worth District about his long-time friend Bubba Williamson and an unforgettable Aggie joke that Williamson was fond of telling.

In the first paragraph, Clifton states that Williamson "can be described as a dyed-in-the-wool Tea-sipper, notorious for his storehouse of Aggie jokes."

While Williamson may be a font of College Station-centric humor, he is definitely NOT a Tea-sipper.

In a letter to the editor of *Transportation News*, Williamson set the record straight in no uncertain terms.

"Burt is pulling my leg or he has been out in the sun too long," Williamson wrote. "I was in the Corps (of Cadets) during my early years; then, after service, I returned as a regular student. One year I was a member of the A&M basketball team. My blood runs maroon and I'm proud of it."

Clifton, who works in the Fort Worth District, concedes the mistake was all his.

"I pulled a stupid thing," he said. "What I should have said was he seems like a Tea-Sipper."

Clifton said he has known Williamson since "1957 or '58. He was working for the Design Division and I was working for the Fort Worth District. I was on the team doing interstate needs estimates in the district, and he was one of the design people riding herd on the project."

Clifton said his mistaken assumption that Williamson was a graduate of the University of Texas was prompted by Williamson's penchant for telling Aggie jokes.

"Maybe it was because he was a good Aggie joke teller," Clifton said. "He and I never talked about school." ★

Service Awards

March

Abilene District
20 years
Reynoldo S. Ramos
15 years
Clyde L. Prince
Jimmy G. Redwine
10 years
Daniel P. Richardson
Glenn P. Wiggins

Amarillo District
15 years
Dale A. Dallas
5 years
Timothy F. Barrera
Devin W. Cowart

Atlanta District
25 years
Connie L. Hudson
15 years
Jon S. Williamson
10 years
John M. Burns
5 years
Jerry L. West

Austin District
35 years
Billy D. Smith
30 years
Dennis W. Friedrich
25 years
Edward Villalpando Jr.
20 years
Mario E. Hernandez
15 years
Wilie C. Brundige
10 years
William H. Braswell
Calvin R. Thomas
Terry L. Walker
5 years
Dieter Billek
Roberta A. Jones
Cindy L. Smith

Beaumont District
35 years
Alfred E. Smith
30 years
Albert L. Morgan
25 years
Thomas D. Black
Doc J. Jeanise
15 years
Charles Brown
5 years
Russell P. Bonnin Jr.

Brownwood District
20 years
Richard L. Belvin
5 years
Peggy C. Bledsoe
Jana L. Osbourn
Weldon L. Swanger

Bryan District
30 years
Reynolds McClure
25 years
Larry J. Kopecky
20 years
Blane A. Laywell
Robert Ramirez
15 years
Paul A. Gurka
5 years
Cynthia A. Arizola
Lionel Colvin

Childress District
5 years
Bobby D. Calcote
James T. Patterson

Corpus Christi District
30 years
Rene Valerio
10 years
Curtis W. Shandy
Daniel L. Stacks
5 years
Lorenzo Garcia
Calistro Gonzales

Dallas District
25 years
Charles M. Musketnuss
James H. Pickel
Philip E. Simons
20 years
Richard S. Dorsett III
Cathy W. Masters
Shirley B. Smith
15 years
Stacy E. Kimberlin
10 years
Matthew D. Holboke
Monnie H. Matthews
5 years
Richard P. Barker
James K. Griffin
Gerry V. Hennig
John K. Kiser
Porfirio Lopez Jr.
Tommy R. Seals
Darrell G. Tidwell
Miguel A. Valdespino

El Paso District
40 years
Alfred A. Klement
30 years
Sabino Talavera Jr.
5 years
Aldo R. Cardona
Manuel Carreon Jr.
Maria V. Chanez
Ismael Flores
Jose Y. Gonzales
Ernesto Gonzalez
Martin Holguin
Richard C. Mason
Manuel Molina Jr.
Scott E. White

Fort Worth District
30 years
Douglas A. Clay
20 years
Grover A. Schretter
15 years
Sherry T. Hoak
Gilbert I. Latigo
10 years
Gordon C. Abbott
Alvin D. Meyer
5 years
Steve W. Bishop
John F. Cordary Jr.
Brian H. Harvey
Robert J. Pitts
Herman Rodriguez
Eric C. Sawey
Paul D. Shover
David T. Speicher
Christopher M. Staud
Anthony Watson

Houston District
35 years
Harold L. Heidemann
30 years
Gary K. Trietsch
25 years
Judith W. Davis
Shirley D. Woods
20 years
Donald J. Lorenz
Michael Tagliareni
15 years
Yimkei G. Cheung
Russell D. Shelton Jr.
Larry R. Stephenson
10 years
Jimmy C. Barger
Nelson T. Christensen
Paul B. Eley
Ernest C. Krolczyk Jr.
Walter F. Noske Jr.
Lisa A. Perez Vela
5 years
Lynise D. Charles
Tyrone E. Gitrey
Patricia A. Martinez
Raymond G. Rodriguez

Laredo District
25 years
Santos A. Garcia
15 years
Gilberto Pena

Lubbock District
25 years
R. L. Burnett
20 years
Phillip L. Barnett
Jerrell C. Otwell
15 years
Michael W. Killough
10 years
Anne M. Polk
Jerry O. Ritchie
5 years
Ellen S. Yates

Lufkin District
30 years
Truman H. Johnson
15 years
Clyde J. Mathews Jr.
Curtis W. Shoemaker
10 years
Sally J. Quick
5 years
Cathy P. Mills

Odessa District
20 years
Pamela P. Brown
15 years
John P. Cooper
Cleon L. Payton Jr.
5 years
Judy K. Burton
Roy M. Dill
Jorge Estrada
Dimas Lopez
Heriberto H. Martinez
David L. Portillo
Charles E. Vick
Michael J. Weis

Paris District
15 years
Joe N. Strickland
10 years
Thomas M. Jones Jr.
5 years
Geary D. Allen
Danny N. Grissom
Ricky E. Thomas

Pharr District
35 years
Harry W. Kiehn
30 years
Ruben P. Lopez
25 years
Gilberto Garza
5 years
Fernando A. Guzman
Johnny Hix
Antonio Reyna

San Angelo District
20 years
Leonard L. Sanchez
10 years
Ernie D. Covington

San Antonio District
25 years
Flora W. Burke
Billy W. Harvey
20 years
James V. Bates Jr.
William A. Miller
Richard Salas
5 years
Jeanne L. Bird
Edna L. Garcia

Tyler District
15 years
Jerry L. Frick
10 years
Daniel M. McClanahan

Waco District
25 years
Irvin G. Hines
15 years
Charles R. Padgett
David J. Pittman
Charles E. Smith
James R. Stimmel Jr.

Wichita Falls District
20 years
Melton A. Demoss
15 years
Kyle D. Walker
10 years
Marty W. Little

Yoakum District
35 years
Lloyd E. Cody Jr.
30 years
Anthony J. Kutac
25 years
Carl L. Oneill
James L. Skrovan
10 years
Donald W. Petru
5 years
Melvin L. Guenther

Budget and Finance Division
20 years
Donna L. McGee

Construction and Maintenance Division
20 years
Baldemar P. Maldonado Jr.

Environmental Affairs Division
20 years
Ann M. Irwin
10 years
Barbara A. Stocklin

General Services Division
25 years
Beverly A. Houston
20 years
Ellen A. Glass
5 years
Rebecca A. Lucas
Rhonda R. Migl
Ursula E. Williford

Information Systems Division
20 years
William E. Kokas
Larry C. Smith
15 years
Louis D. Sierra
10 years
Bryan C. Davis
Jerry R. Jones
Patrick H. Lea Jr.
5 years
David A. Bishop
Diana S. Byrnes

Materials and Tests Division
30 years
Albert L. Pozzi
Lawrence W. Worden
15 years
Karl J. Janak

Motor Carrier Division
10 years
Diana G. Gil
DuWayne D. Murdock Jr.

Right of Way Division
15 years
Sammy W. Mitchell

Senior Management Team
25 years
Rae S. Barho
Shirley K. Macick

Transportation Planning and Programming Division
15 years
Don R. Noah
10 years
Angie R. Palmer

Traffic Operations Division
15 years
Thomas D. Beeman

Travel and Information Division
5 years
Brenda J. Provost

Vehicle Titles and Registration Division
30 years
Terald D. Houghton
25 years
Rosie B. Patton
Frances D. Stastney
Rebecca E. Swank
20 years
Joey M. Connell
Margaret P. Wood
5 years
Jeffrey L. Kirk

Retirements

December
Abilene District
Patsy M. Norris, Contract Specialist I, 21 years
Fort Worth District
Stephen W. Penrod, Traffic Signal Repair Technician III, 27 years
Houston District
J.C. Howard, Engineering Technician IV, 16 years
San Antonio District
Ronald J. Beath, Engineering Specialist I, 32 years
Richard F. Herms, Transportation Maintenance Supervisor II, 39 years
Joe M. Castillo, Engineering Technician III, 26 years
Waco District
William W. Fague, Motor Vehicle Mechanic II, 11 years
Yoakum District
Freddie L. Duebbe, Maintenance Technician IV, 29 years

January
Austin District
Rubin Lang Jr., Engineering Technician III, 28 years
Bryan District
James C. Ferguson, Engineering Technician III, 11 years
Houston District
Homer E. Rhoden, Engineering Technician IV, 34 years

In Memoriam

Employees
San Angelo District
Tirso Garcia, Transportation Maintenance Technician IV, died Jan. 9, 1998.

Retirees
Amarillo District
Horace M. Knox, Auditor II, retired in 1981, died Oct. 17, 1997.

Atlanta District
Robert H. Barr, Engineering Technician V, retired in 1977, died Nov. 16, 1997.

Beaumont District
Elmo J. Blanchard, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1978, died Nov. 19, 1997.

Bryan District
Adam Wojcik, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1977, died Nov. 27, 1997.

Dallas District
Robert L. Bolden, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1992, died Nov. 4, 1997.
John A. Collman, Skilled Laborer, retired in 1968, died Nov. 7, 1997.

El Paso District
Santos P. Gonzales, Maintenance Technician II, retired in 1977, died Dec. 12, 1997.
Thomas V. Uranga, Maintenance Technician II, retired in 1974, died Dec. 14, 1997.
Jose Villanueva, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1974, died Dec. 17, 1997.
David H. Woodward, Shop Foreman, retired in 1972, died Dec. 5, 1997.

Paris District
Sam T. Jones, Maintenance Construction Superintendent II, retired in 1977, died Nov. 24, 1997.

Corpus Christi District
Frank Jozwiak, Jr., Transportation Maintenance Supervisor II, 29 years
Paris District
James B. Robinson, Purchaser III, 29 years
Pharr District
Reynaldo Garza, Jr., Program Administrator III, 30 years
Tyler District
Lawrence "Wayne" Leake, Geologist IV, 37 years
Yoakum District
Raymond G. Kasper, Purchaser II, 32 years

February
Amarillo District
James P. Kennedy, Jr., Administrative Technician IV, 27 years
Bryan District
Billy M. Currie, Engineering Technician V, 38 years
Lufkin District
Levi Wyatt Jr., Maintenance Technician IV, 24 years
Odessa District
Eddie B. Poitevin, Roadway Maintenance Supervisor II, 33 years
Transportation Planning and Programming Division
Agustin Chavez, Director, III, 31 years

John T. Metts, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1980, died Jan. 4, 1998.

Pharr District
Ruben Pineda, Maintenance Technician II, retired in 1975, died Oct. 2, 1997.

Ines Ramirez, Maintenance Technician II, retired in 1976, died Nov. 20, 1997.

Filiberto Rodriguez, Maintenance Technician II, retired in 1975, died Nov. 26, 1997.

Ramon Solis, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1988, died Oct. 18, 1997.

Tyler District
Delma M. Jenkins, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1977, died Nov. 19, 1997.

Waco District
Lanny L. Beverly, Maintenance Construction Chief III, retired in 1992, died Nov. 4, 1997.

Wichita Falls District
Mary A. Bearden, Engineering Technician IV, retired in 1992, died Nov. 9, 1997.

Yoakum District
Adolph A. Guetebier, Maintenance Technician III, retired in 1980, died Dec. 10, 1997.

Accounting Division
Frances M. Snodgrass, Senior Office Assistant, retired in 1959, died Nov. 12, 1997.

Bridges and Structures Division
Gussie P. Everts, Clerk III, retired in 1975, died Nov. 14, 1997.

Construction Division
John B. Mounce Jr., Director I, retired in 1986, died Dec. 7, 1997.

What's new? PIC now on-line

The Public Information Coordinator (PIC), the daily recap of news affecting the department, is now available exclusively through TxDOT's Intranet site.

The report, which is produced every weekday morning by the Public Information Office, has been available for several months through Groupwise, the department's electronic mail system.

However, recent

upgrades to Groupwise rendered this arrangement unworkable, so PIC was moved to the Intranet.

As of Feb. 23, it became available only through the Intranet.

Now, everyone with an Internet browser can view and print PIC quickly and easily.

The address for PIC is <http://crossroads.dot.state.tx.us/org/pio/index.html>. ★

Letters

There are still good people out there who will give you a helping hand in a time of need. On Jan. 22, I had a blowout on Interstate 10 near Executive Center.

I would like to extend my gratitude to a few people. Monica, the kind-hearted lady who took the time to stop and ask if she could call someone to help me; the **Department of Transportation Courtesy Patrol** that did a fantastic job changing my tire; also to the operator, No. 488, from the El Paso Police Department; and to my boyfriend, William S. Gomez Jr., who arrived at the scene to comfort me. I thank you all and may God bless you and protect you.

Aurora Gutierrez
El Paso

.....

I am writing this letter to let you know what a fine person and employee **Garry Brown** is. My wife and I, along with our little granddaughter, had the misfortune of having a flat tire several days ago during a very miserable and rainy day.

Thinking I was fully equipped to change a tire, I soon found out that I not only did not have a lug wrench by my jack wouldn't work without blocks, which I did not have. Wondering exactly what I would do, almost immediately Garry appeared and, disregarding the rain, he provided the help I need to get back on the road.

My wife and I were so impressed with Garry, as very few people would stop at all, and certainly not in the kind of weather we were experiencing last night.

We just want to express our gratitude to Garry and we thought you might like to know what an outstanding citizen we think Garry is.

David Grader
Lamar County

Garry Brown is an Engineering Technician in the Paris District's Lamar County maintenance section.

.....

I just wanted to take a moment to express my wonderful experience I had at your **Vehicle Title and Registration Division** located on Research Boulevard in Austin. I went in to obtain a duplicate title for a car I was selling. While there, I asked about a title to my current vehicle that I keep getting Bexar County license renewals even though I should be getting Travis renewals. **Liz Quiroz** in this office went out of her way to research the problem and discovered the county was not only wrong but the tag number was incorrect as well as not showing it to be currently registered. She contacted the county to confirm tag renewal and told me she would make the necessary system corrections and mail me a copy showing the corrections.

This was on Friday, Jan 9. Today (Jan. 13) I received the corrected printout and a personal note explaining the corrections. The service was fast, efficient and personal. This employee should be commended. To borrow a line from an insurance company, this isn't

what you expect from a state agency, but maybe you should. Again, pass on my thanks to your outstanding public employee. You may want to clone her.

Norman J. Poole
via email

Liz Quiroz is a Customer Service Representative in the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division's Austin Regional Office.

.....

We would like to thank the Gilbert Texas Construction Company for their good work and courtesy during the highway construction. We would also like to thank **Larry Davis** with the local Texas Department of Transportation for all his help. They both have notified us when they were going to be working in front of our establishment, they got the job done in a timely manner, and they always leave an opening for our customers to drive in and out. They have done a good job and we really appreciate them.

Amigo's Mexican Café
Childress

Larry Davis is engineering technician in the Childress District's Wellington area office.

.....

I wanted to tell you what a good job the road crew in the Terlingua/Lajitas/Presidio area are doing. I commute from Lajitas to Presidio five days a week. As you know, FM 170 has numerous low water crossing and areas prone to rock slides. I leave my house each day at 6:30 am to make it to work by 8 am.

There have been many times recently after rains that I would have been delayed had it not been for the diligence of the **TxDOT road crews**.

Although I am out early, they are too, clearing water crossings and rock slides. I have seldom had to wait, and even then no longer than 10 minutes.

This type of dedication often goes unnoticed, but I believe these people should be given credit for a job well done. Please relay my appreciation and gratitude for an excellent example of good public service.

David Alloway
Presidio

These TxDOT road crews work in Brewster and Presidio counties of the El Paso District.

.....

Your 80th anniversary celebration was great! We are so grateful you included students and teachers. We were all impressed and in awe of all the regulations and big responsibilities you all have.

I was so proud of our students and their interest. Your organized tours and hospitality were outstanding! I heard several students comment on "how nice those people are." Oh, yes, of course they truly appreciated the bags of goodies and cookies. This was a surprise to them and a great ending to a fun afternoon!

Diane Powers
Lakeview Elementary
5th Grade

Dana Kleman, who works in the Amarillo accounting office, gave this group a tour during the district's 80th Anniversary open house.

It is with a great deal of gratitude that I write to you on behalf of myself and this downtown El Paso organization. Your efforts in first monitoring and finally resolving the proposed change in the Interstate 10 signage relating to Juarez, Mexico, exemplifies to all of us what a valuable asset we have in **Eddie Sanchez**.

Your conscientiousness and devotion to your community stand as a model to all of us who love the El Paso/Juarez Metroplex and are concerned for her future.

Mr. Sanchez, we wish for you only the best and hope to see you very soon at one of our bi-monthly meetings.

Tanny Berg
El Paso

Eddie Sanchez is the El Paso District Engineer.

.....

I just wanted to take a few moments to express my appreciation for the assistance that **Tanette Burns** gave us in moving a large boiler from Camden to Dallas.

I realize that finding a route for a load this large can be difficult and tedious. The route she gave us before the move required only minor alterations. Because of this, our route survey was completed over the weekend and we were able to deliver the boiler before Thanksgiving.

I deal with a number of states on superloads daily and it is reassuring to know that my home state of Texas has a staff that exhibits the professionalism, consideration and dedication necessary to accomplish difficult assignments as the one we just completed.

Gary Gunderson
Landstar Ligon

Tanette Brown is a Permit Officer in the Motor Carrier Division permit branch.

.....

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you and your employees **Jimmy Spicer** and **Brad Hague**.

I called your office early Monday, Jan. 26, to ask for assistance in replacing our mailbox, which had been destroyed Friday night. Within 15 minutes, Mr. Spicer and Mr. Hague were here and completed the job in a short time.

Congratulations to TxDOT for having two very courteous and obliging employees who worked in adverse weather, cold and rain.

The public is prone to criticize and very lax to praise, so thank you for the opportunity to praise these two young men.

Sybil A. Keasler
Texarkana

Brad Hague is Texarkana Maintenance Section supervisor and Jimmy Spicer is a crew chief in that maintenance section.

.....

Rimes in 'Don't Mess with Texas' TV spot

Country and western singer Lee Ann Rimes has made a television spot for the Texas Department of Transportation's 'Don't Mess with Texas' litter campaign.

The spot, featuring the young star, was created by Austin's GSD&M Advertising and will appear through the week of March 9 in selected markets in Texas. A 30-second television spot and a 60-second radio spot also will be distributed statewide for public service air time.

Rimes joins a list of musicians and other well-known Texans who have donated their time to help generate awareness of the litter prevention campaign, including Stevie Ray Vaughan, Willie Nelson, George Foreman, Lyle Lovett and the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

Since the first television public service was aired in 1986, Don't Mess with Texas

has received more than \$114 million in free radio and television air time. More than 40 corporate sponsors have helped spread the litter prevention message through advertising and community involvement.

The campaign has been successful in its efforts to reduce litter. Between 1979 and 1985, the cost of picking up litter along the state's highways increased more than 15 percent a year. After a year of the Don't Mess with Texas campaign, roadside litter was down 29 percent, the largest one-year decrease in the nation's history.

GSD&M Advertising has announced recently it will relinquish the Don't Mess with Texas campaign to another agency. ★ *Linda Levitt, Travel and Information Division*

More letters

Please forgive me for dragging my feet on this note. On Nov. 22, 1997, my father passed away after 107 days in the hospital in Lubbock. On Nov. 23, we loaded up the car and headed for Durant, Okla. About six to eight miles west of Seymour we had a blowout. This wonderful man named **David Waldron** took care of us in a way no one else could have. He was truly sent from God. He wouldn't take money; however, I understand you give bonus points. Please give Mr. Waldron as many points as possible; he is most deserving. As sad as our trip was, if not for this gracious man it would have been worse.

Shirley Lilley
Lubbock

David Waldron is a Maintenance Technician in the Seymour Maintenance Section, Wichita Falls District.

.....

This letter is to commend and express a warm "thank you" to the professional **staff of the Galveston/Bolivar Ferry.**

I was distracted, and thus I cannot identify the vessel involved, but if you pass this along, they will surely know whom I mean.

On Oct. 12, I rushed my year-old daughter to the UTMB Galveston emergency facility from the Crystal Beach area. She had been pinned under a telephone pole that had rolled over her chest and head and was semi-conscious when we loaded her into the car. There was no ambulance available in the necessary time frame.

Alerted by 911 services, your competent and courteous staff met us at the dock, led us quickly on board and provided clear and accurate directions to the emergency room. They were alert and handled the potentially grave situation appropriately. We were comforted by the genuine concern and attentive care.

The happy ending is this: It appears that my daughter will recover fully. Though

thoroughly "squished," she did not suffer much internal bleeding or long term loss of vision.

Please find a way to let them know of my appreciation.

Jeff Avant
Austin

.....

This letter is to commend the superlative service and effort of **Grace Jaber.**

In assisting me the past several days, her attitude has been genuinely courteous and responsive. On three occasions, Grace indicated she would give me follow-up phone calls. I've admitted to her my pleasant shock and surprise to not only receive the calls, but to have received them in a timely manner. She has certainly made what started out as a harrowing and frantic experience a very pleasant one.

Yardley Kennedy, President
West Gulf Transportation, Houston

Gracie Jaber is a registration clerk in the Motor Carrier Division's commercial vehicle operations branch.

.....

Normally I do not have complimentary comments about city, county, state, or federal government agencies. As I travel your highway system at 70 mph on most highways it makes driving in Texas a pleasure instead of a drudgery. I want to compliment whoever is responsible in the Texas Department of Transportation for the decision to post the current speed limits after the federal law was passed. There are some highways in this state in the western area that I believe you could have posted NO SPEED limits. Based on the difference in braking capabilities, suspension, aerodynamics, and overall handling capabilities our modern automobiles are probably safer at 30 percent higher speeds than comparable automobiles of the '50s and '60s era. If you doubt my word try driving a 1960 model Chevrolet through a pylon course and compare it to one of the current Camaro state trooper cars the department is using.

A Texas Resident and Motorist

Calendar

March

- 2** Texas Independence Day (holiday)
- 17-18** 1998 Regional Maintenance Conference, Laredo, CMD
- 18** Certified Professional Public Buyer Review, Austin, GSD
- 18-19** Certified Public Purchasing Officer Review, Austin, GSD
- 20** Certified Professional Public Buyer/Certified Public Purchasing Officer Written Exam, Austin, GSD
- 25-27** Fourth National Aviation System Planning Symposium, Houston, AVN
- 26** Commission Meeting, Austin
- 31-4/1** 1998 Regional Maintenance Conference, Paris, CMD

APRIL

- 1** 1998 Regional Maintenance Conference, Paris, CMD
- 4** Great Texas Trash-Off, Statewide, TRV
- 13-14** Inventory and Warehouse Management, Austin, GSD
- 15-17** Advanced Public Purchasing, Austin, GSD
- 18-22** Texas Public Transportation Conference & Rodeo Competition, Houston, PTN
- 21** San Jacinto Day (holiday)
- 30** Commission Meeting, Odessa

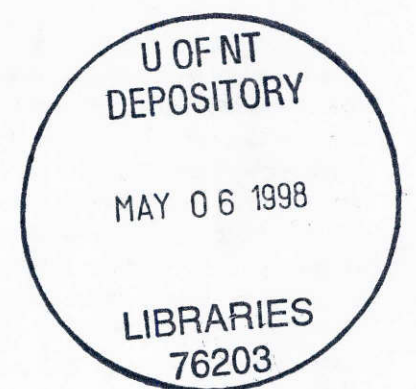
MAY

- 12** Texas Turnpike Authority Board meeting, Weslaco
- 25** Memorial Day (holiday)
- 28** Commission Meeting, Austin

JUNE

- 2** How to Process and Evaluate Bids, Austin, GSD
- 3-5** Competitive Sealed Proposals/Competitive Negotiations, Austin, GSD
- 3-5** Texas Aviation Conference (formerly Texas Airport Operators Conference), Austin, AVN

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