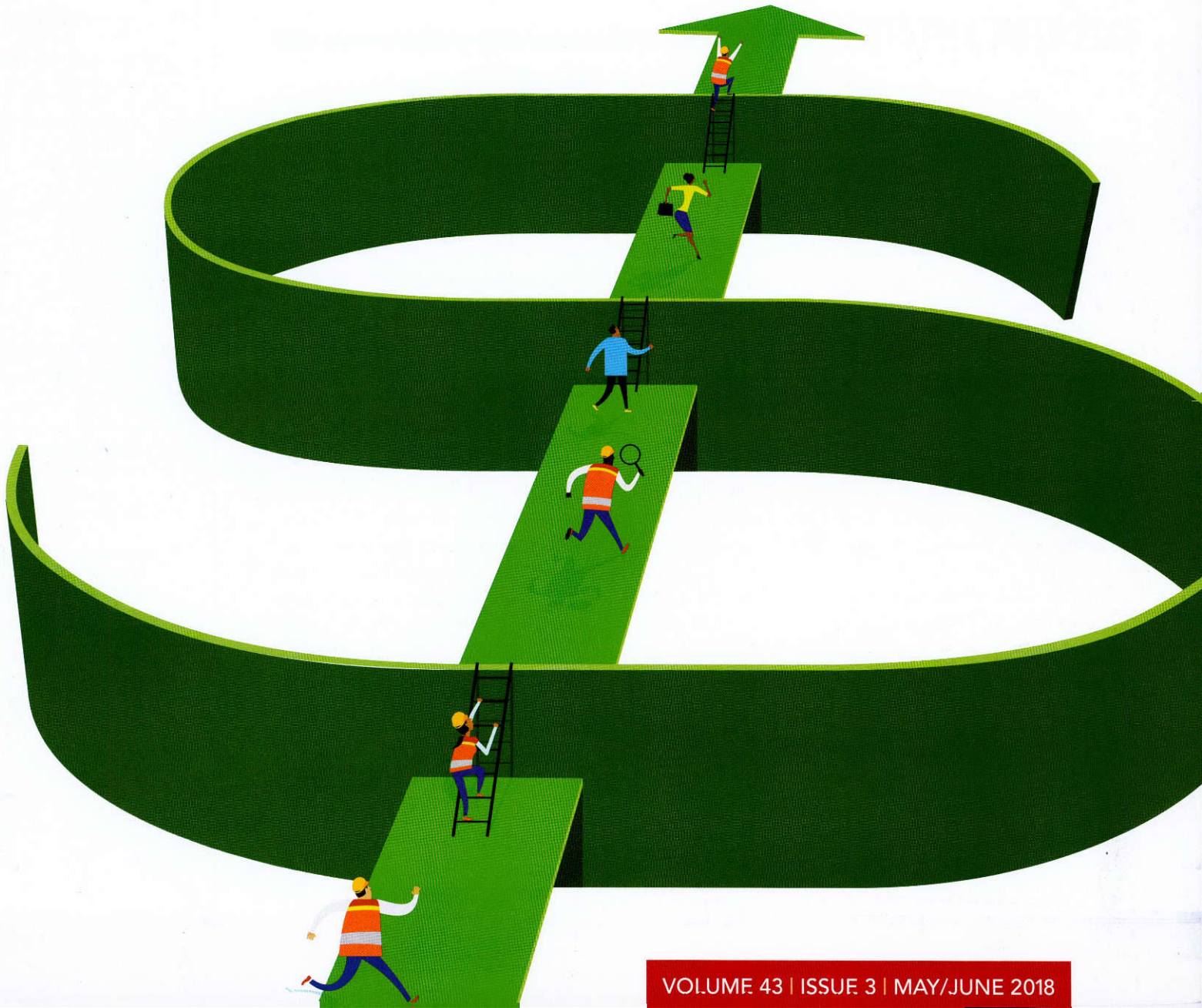




# EFFICIENCY IN MOTION

TxDOT is on the lookout for new ways to be more cost efficient. And who better to know where we can do some belt-tightening than employees?





**JAMES BASS**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

# CHANGES COMING TO AUSTIN CAMPUS

It shouldn't come as a surprise that some of our Austin divisions are getting a new home. We're a year away from breaking ground, but I want to fill you in on the progress we've made, and to let those of you who don't work in Austin know why the move concerns you, too.

A little background. Many of our Austin divisions are housed at locations around the city. Beside the fact that this decentralization makes conducting business a little cumbersome, several of the buildings are on leased land at considerable cost. As some of the leases will end over the next few years, this is the perfect time to consolidate locations and accommodate our employees.

After an exhaustive search — one that focused on securing a location that is centrally located for our affected employees — we decided on 49 acres of land in southeast Austin. The Texas Legislature has appropriated initial funding for planning, design and site preparation for the new campus.


Our next steps will be to secure construction funding for the new

campus. During the next legislative session, which begins in January, we'll be making that funding request to state leaders. But in the interim, we've hired an architecture and engineering firm to handle the design. The architectural firm is working with our Campus Consolidation Workgroup, and Administration, which must give the final approval on the design.

The ideas that are being discussed are quite impressive. They include designing the campus with some indoor and outdoor co-working and meeting spaces. And with a nod to our wellness program, it could have spaces to encourage employees to spend time outdoors, both to work and to focus on their well-being. Bottom line: the new campus will support the way 21st century employees prefer to work, offering spaces that are flexible and adaptable to employee needs.

Now why is that important to employees who won't be making the move? This new campus is being built to improve workflow and working conditions, whether you'll work in it or visit it to conduct business. Besides that, it also may serve as a guide for future TxDOT building construction and renovations.

We have a lot more work to do and there will be a lot more discussion before the move in around 2022, so I encourage you to be on the look out for updates.

And once again, thanks for everything you do to make Texas a better place to live and work. 



**TN MAGAZINE**  
MAY-JUNE 2018

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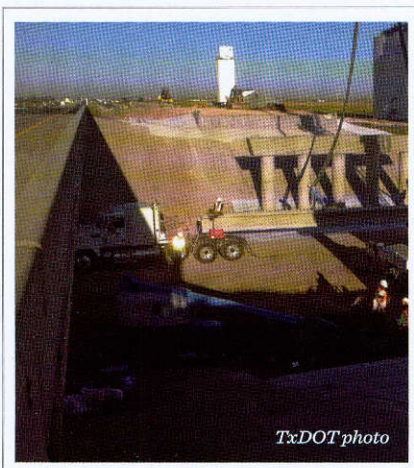
# 10 ON THE COVER

Have any ideas on how to improve efficiency around here? TxDOT employees have a reputation for providing innovative solutions that save time, cut costs and improve teamwork. Leadership is looking to all of us to share in solutions to help the department meet a new goal.

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# 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

## 1 Retirements

Lauren Garduno, P.E., TxDOT's Director of Project Planning and Development, will retire on June 30. He started part-time with TxDOT in 1983 and has been full-time since 1987. Lauren is from West Texas and plans to retire in Abilene with his wife. Jess Blackburn, Director of the Communications Division, leaves TxDOT May 2, to retire from a career that included Dell. Jess joined the department in 2013. He and his wife are proud grandparents and he plans to spend more time with family. Kelly Selman, P.E., Dallas District Engineer retires May 31. He started with TxDOT in 1986. Kelly plans to travel some and pursue other work opportunities.

## 2

## Austin, San Antonio suburban counties among nation's fastest growing

Suburban counties in the Austin and San Antonio metropolitan areas were among the fastest-growing in the nation between 2016 and 2017, according to figures the Census Bureau released in March. Eight of 15 of the fastest-growing counties in the U.S. between 2016 and 2017 are in Texas. In the Austin area, Hays, Williamson and Caldwell counties were among them at 4.96 percent, 3.75 percent and 2.99 percent, respectively. Closer to San Antonio, Comal County grew by almost 7,000 people, giving the county the second-fastest growth nationally among counties with populations of 10,000 people or more.

## 3

## Defensive Driving available for family members

Defensive Driving training is available to TxDOT family members. The National Safety Council provides the Defensive Driving Course training materials. While this course cannot be used for ticket dismissal, it can be submitted for a possible discount on your car insurance. To participate, visit [safetyserve.com/txdot/](http://safetyserve.com/txdot/), and click on New Student to register. The access code is DDC, then the three-letter acronym for your division or district, followed by the number 04. Contact the Occupational Safety Division for assistance at 512-416-3395.

## 4


## Pay by Mail fee changes

Effective March 1, the Texas Transportation Commission adopted a rule setting the late fee for Pay by Mail toll charges at \$4 per statement per month. The department may not charge a customer more than \$48 in late fees in a 12-month period. Late fees will no longer be charged per transaction. Instead, they will be charged per statement. The mailing fee, returned check fee and others are not included in the late fee and will continue to be charged separately.

## 5

## Freight Mobility Plan recognized

In February, the American Transportation Research Institute, or ATRI, released its report on best practices in freight planning at the state level. Texas was the highest-ranked freight plan in ATRI's research based in part on the state's use of detailed commodity and freight flow data in developing its plan, as well as active engagement of its Freight Advisory Committee throughout the planning process.

"We are excited to be able to contribute our knowledge base to this important effort, and even more flattered that we were chosen by our peers as a model freight plan," said Caroline Mays, director of TxDOT's Freight Office. "That said, our freight work has really just begun." 

# A TEXAS-SIZED DISCOVERY NEAR LUBBOCK



TxDOT photo

*During environmental studies of the Loop 88 project near Lubbock, TxDOT's archeologists came across a Texas-sized discovery: mammoth bones!*

**Y**ou will never believe what TxDOT archeology crews found last spring during environmental studies of the Loop 88 project near Lubbock.

Archeologists were investigating the right of way for any archeological evidence such as stone tool artifacts or ancient fire pits — something most federal projects routinely go through before construction. During their investigation, they came across a Texas-sized discovery: mammoth bones!


The thickness of the bones indicated that they came from a species of very large, extinct animals that are collectively known as megafauna, which lived in Texas during the Pleistocene, or ice age. Archeologists tentatively identified the bones as mammoth since they have been documented in the southern high plains of Texas before. (The region is dotted with small pools of water that have been there for tens of thousands of years, making the area an ideal setting for animals and humans.)

## What's next for the mammoth?

TxDOT's archeologists have not yet found any trace of humans at the site. State and federal laws that guide TxDOT's work only apply to human archeology, rather than animal paleontology. In addition, radiocarbon dates from the lab were inconclusive, so it is not clear if the mammoth discovery is from the end of the ice age when humans were present in Texas.

Even though TxDOT archeologists could not date the animal, they are not entirely dismissing the possibility that other parts of the project area will uncover archeological artifacts. Therefore, more investigation needs to be done to find out if the mammoth had some human neighbors or hunters. If so, it would be a significant discovery for TxDOT and for Texas history.

Right now, the bones are still located on private property, so TxDOT will purchase the parcels of land before further excavation. The project is several years from construction, so archeologists have plenty of time to dig deeper into the fossil find.

*To receive updates, subscribe to TxDOT's archeology program at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov), keyword "archeology." *

**AROUND THE STATE**

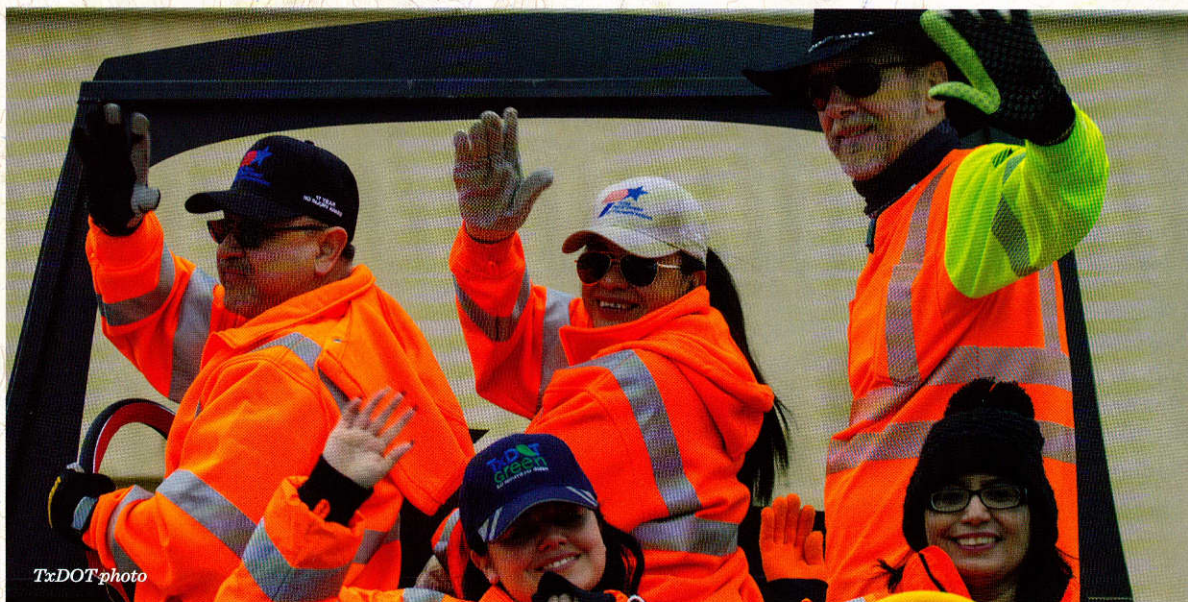
From the Panhandle to the Valley and all points in between, TN brings you transportation highlights happening throughout our great state.

**SAN ANGELO**

**Parade promotes safety, anti-littering messages**

The 2018 San Angelo Stock Show and Rodeo Parade was held in February on the streets of downtown San Angelo. For the first time ever, the San Angelo District participated with a float consisting of a decorated haul truck and trailer.

Employees dressed in official protective clothing gear, locally referred to as their orange shirts, and promoted traffic safety messages and Don't mess with Texas®. The district also debuted its newest member of the family, a sheep named Don't EWE mess with Texas. **TN**



TxDOT photo

Employees dressed in their orange shirts and promoted traffic safety messages and Don't mess with Texas® in the San Angelo District.

**CHILDRESS**

**Childress rallies to help after house fire**

On a Saturday morning last December, Bruce Jones, a maintenance technician in Wheeler County in the Childress District, and his wife discovered flames in the ceiling of the bathroom of their house.

"It was amazing how quickly the house burned," Bruce said. "I had already laid out the clothes I was going to wear that day, so I grabbed them and a few pictures. Everything else in the house was lost. All of our keepsakes, memories and even a hope chest that my wife's father made for her."

As Bruce's family watched the firefighters try to save their house, he was thinking how fortunate he was to get out with his wife and son, their pets and a few pictures.

When Childress District Engineer Marty Smith heard about the fire, he immediately organized a fundraiser to help the family. District employees were offered a hamburger lunch, with the only cost being a donation. Through their enormous generosity, \$2,689 was raised for Bruce and his family.

"As I watched my house burn, every emotion hit me at once," said Bruce. "I wanted to cry, but couldn't. I wanted to scream, but couldn't. Just the smallest gestures of kindness have meant so much, but not as much as what the TxDOT family did for us. I have worked for many other companies that said we were all family, but it was nothing like TxDOT. I see what a real work family is now."

Bruce and his family are now living in a newly purchased house. The money raised by TxDOT bought much-needed clothing and household items. **TN**



TxDOT photo


Bruce Jones (left), Wheeler County maintenance technician, receives \$2,689 from Childress District Engineer Marty Smith after a district fundraiser to help Bruce and his family when a fire destroyed their home.

## Ninth Mobility35 project breaks ground in Austin

Construction is officially underway on a project to reconstruct portions of I-35 in Central Austin. The project, which runs from Rundberg Lane to U.S. 290, also involves improvements at the U.S. 183 interchange. This past January, TxDOT hosted a groundbreaking ceremony to kick off work on that interchange. State and local officials joined TxDOT to commemorate the start of construction, including Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr., State Rep. Celia Israel and Travis County Commissioner Jeff Travillion.

The project includes the addition of three new flyovers at the I-35 and U.S. 183 interchange. Improvements also include the reconstruction of the northbound I-35 to northbound U.S. 183 flyover and St. Johns Avenue bridge. The project will also add extended entrance and exit lanes, reconfigure and improve ramps and shoulders, add intersection bypass lanes at St. Johns Avenue and provide bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

“This project, along with others we’re doing across the state, are part of Gov. Abbott’s directive to the Transportation Commission to ease traffic jams in our major cities,” said Chairman Bugg. “It is the reason the Texas Clear Lanes initiative was created: to tackle congestion and cut commute times, using these Texas voter-approved funds for non-tolled transportation solutions.”

Completion of the \$124.2 million project is expected in summer 2021. 




State and local officials break ground on the I-35 project from Rundberg Lane to U.S. 290 East.

## Southern Gateway Corridor construction underway

A \$666 million expansion project in southern Dallas is underway! TxDOT officials and state and local leaders kicked off construction on the Southern Gateway corridor earlier this year. It marked the beginning of a four-year effort to rebuild and widen I-35 East and U.S. 67 in southern Dallas County.

The project is part of the Texas Clear Lanes initiative to ease traffic jams in major metropolitan areas. It should be completed by late 2021. It will widen I-35 East to five lanes, with two reversible, toll-free express lanes. U.S. 67 will get a third lane in each direction from I-35 East to I-20. Its existing HOV lane will be rebuilt to become one reversible express lane.

The ceremonial groundbreaking included Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr., serving as host. Among the luminaries were State Sen. Royce West, Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins and Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings.

The expansion should bring much-needed relief to drivers in the area. 



TxDOT officials and state and local leaders kicked off construction on the Southern Gateway corridor earlier this year: (from left) TxDOT Chief Engineer Bill Hale; TxDOT Deputy Executive Director Marc Williams; Clay Jenkins, Dallas County Judge; State Rep. Rafael Anchia; Amanda Moreno, DART Board Member; Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr.; Royce West, state senator; Dallas District Engineer Kelly Selman; Rob Franke, mayor of Cedar Hill; Dan Stoppenhagen, vice president of Fluor; and Michael Morris, director of transportation for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

### AUSTIN



### DALLAS



# BACK TO SCHOOL

## CHANGES TO TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**E**ducation shouldn't stop after entering the workforce. But as the cost of education continues to increase, pursuing a degree might be impossible for some. TxDOT has always encouraged lifelong learning and we want to make an investment in employees. To that end, the department recently implemented some changes to its Tuition Assistance Program to change upfront costs and allow more employees to participate.

The Tuition Assistance Program, or TAP, assists employees interested in pursuing a job-related associate, bachelor's, or graduate degree by paying tuition and mandatory fees up to \$3,500 per semester for up to three semesters in a calendar year. Since 2015, the program has helped 25 employees successfully obtain a degree and is currently supporting 38 students who are well on their way.

TAP provides flexible options that will fit the needs of almost all employees. Interested employees can apply to work full-time while taking classes outside of work hours, or become a full-time student while receiving a paycheck and state benefits. Participants can even take classes from the comfort of home by getting a degree online.


### **More participants and no upfront costs**

TAP recently updated the program to make it easier to apply and TxDOT has doubled the number of program participants from 10 to 20 each year. Another major improvement has been removing the requirement that students pay 30 percent of their tuition and mandatory fees upfront. Coming up with these initial funds was often a challenge that prevented employees from moving forward with their education. Therefore, TxDOT will now pay 100 percent of the maximum allowable tuition and fees at the beginning of each semester.



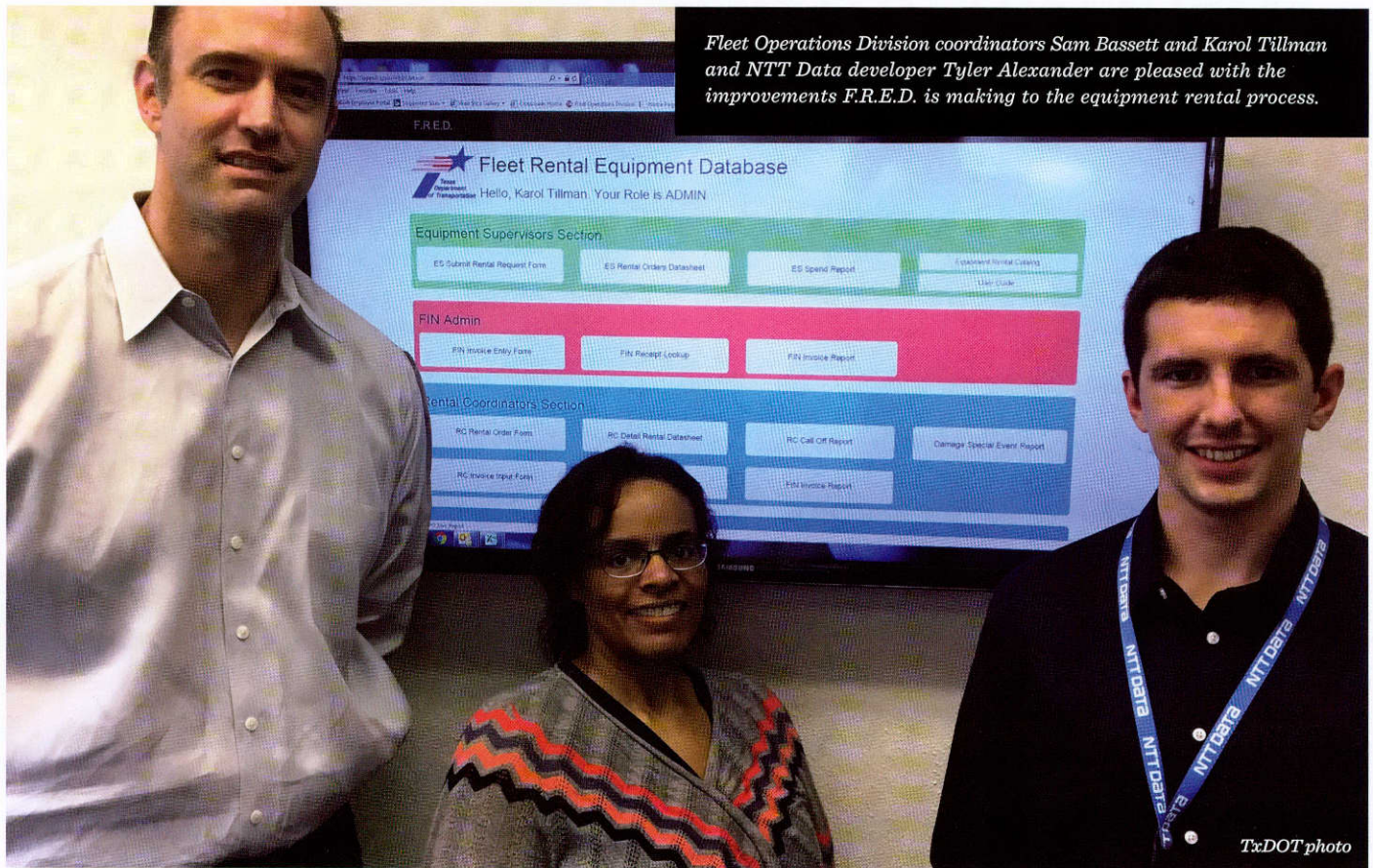
TAP is continuing to make improvements by creating a more connected learning community for support, guidance and help. Current – and new – TAP participants should be on the lookout for e-mails and communications specifically for their educational group.

TxDOT values its employees and is looking down the road to make sure we stay competitive. The deadline to register for the fall semester is June 15.

*For more information on TAP and eligibility requirements, visit HRD's TNtoday webpage, call 512-426-2700 or email [education@txdot.gov](mailto:education@txdot.gov).* 



# NEED TO RENT EQUIPMENT? NEW DATABASE MAKES IT EASIER



**T**he Fleet Operations Division’s rental team has a new assistant named F.R.E.D. — Fleet Rental Equipment Database — that went live in late January.

“F.R.E.D. is 10 times better than our old portal,” said Karol Tillman, rental coordinator for Fleet Operations.

Fleet Operations’ rental program began several years ago to supplement TxDOT’s fleet during peak work times and emergency operations, but quickly outgrew its access database.

The previous portal was slow and didn’t support large numbers of users or all business processes. The division’s rental team worked with the Information Management Division and NTT Data to develop a web-based application.


Before F.R.E.D., many district customers and equipment shops tracked rental equipment and invoices through

inconsistent and time-consuming spreadsheets and paper records. Now users have up-to-date, accurate rental information at their fingertips.

F.R.E.D. supports all employees involved in the rental process. Finance staff will have the ability to enter invoices and assign them to districts.

Rental coordinators can use the system to look up orders, invoices, district spending reports and other details. The database allows all coordinators access to the same accurate information to provide seamless service.

F.R.E.D. is accessible to users via a simple request process and is also compatible with mobile devices.

“Now we can quickly gather data without spending hours sorting through information,” Tillman said. “It’s very efficient and is helping us find areas for improvement.” 

# EFFECTIVE EFFICIENCY:

## YOUR IDEAS CAN LEAD TO SAVINGS



**A**s a state agency, TxDOT must be responsible with the funding we receive. Recently, we set a department goal to identify \$613 million in costs savings through the Unified Transportation Program, or UTP, by August 2019. To achieve this goal, the agency needs your ideas.

To that end, we've launched a dedicated webpage where you can submit ideas. It's on Crossroads. Just look for Key Initiatives at the bottom, and click on Innovation and Cost Efficiency Suggestions Program.

Fiscal responsibility is a key objective of our stewardship goal. Texans have been really generous the past few years, devoting more money to transportation through Propositions 1 and 7. And TxDOT has, in turn, put more projects in the pipeline and on the ground.

Department-wide, we regularly use innovative initiatives, business process improvements and cost efficiency efforts. These efforts

contribute to our goals that include delivering the right projects, focusing on the customer, fostering stewardship and promoting safety.

Typically all these activities lead to savings, but there is no central repository for these activities to be stored so that these ideas are known and the value of the savings is recognized.

"As a part of this initiative, we intend to have a more central view and management of cost savings," said Darran Anderson, director of strategy and innovation. "We want to encourage a culture of translating our improvements and efficiencies into savings that can directly help the department with delivering more projects."


TxDOT is putting together a work group focused on this effort. This work group will be the lead for creating the mechanisms and identifying, clarifying and preparing ideas for the department. They will also help with coordination and tracking progress over time.

***Department-wide, we regularly use innovative initiatives, business process improvements and cost efficiency efforts.***

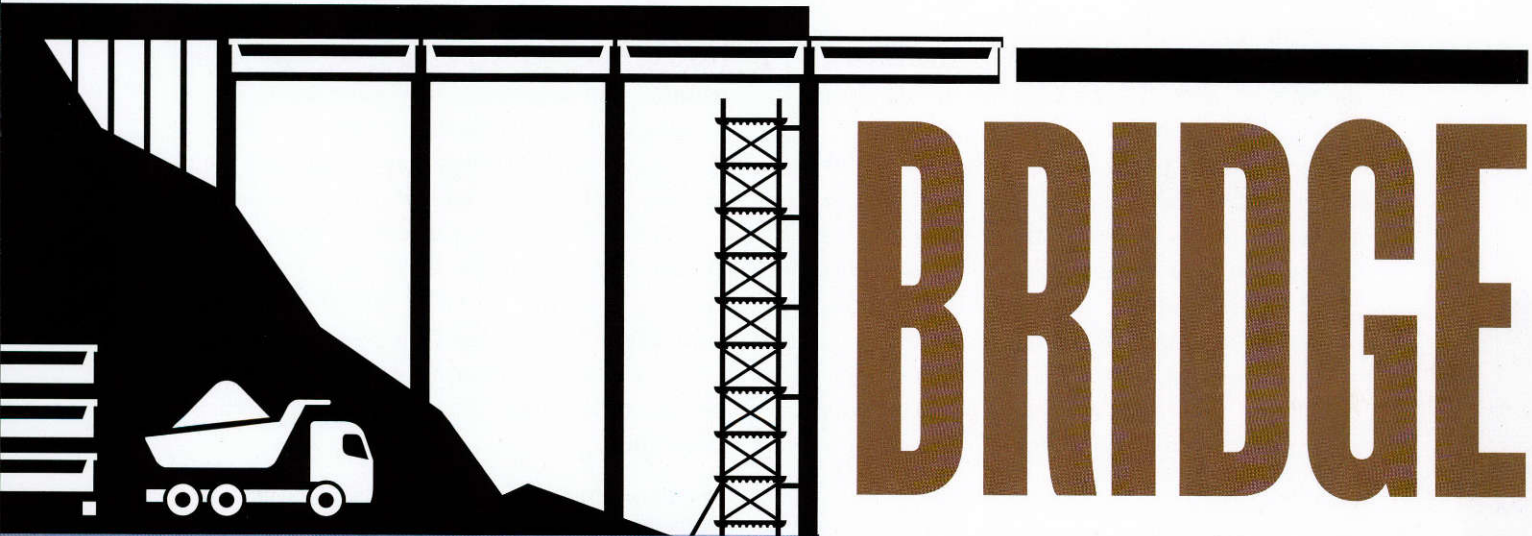
Savings opportunities are identified not only at the top, but also by employees in the field. The department plans to regularly recognize innovative employees who are achieving cost savings for the department. That recognition will be encouraged in performance evaluations.

"We want to encourage input from all employees through the web portal," said Anderson. "We also want to hear from our leaders in divisions and districts."

The program itself will also be under continuous improvement and development.

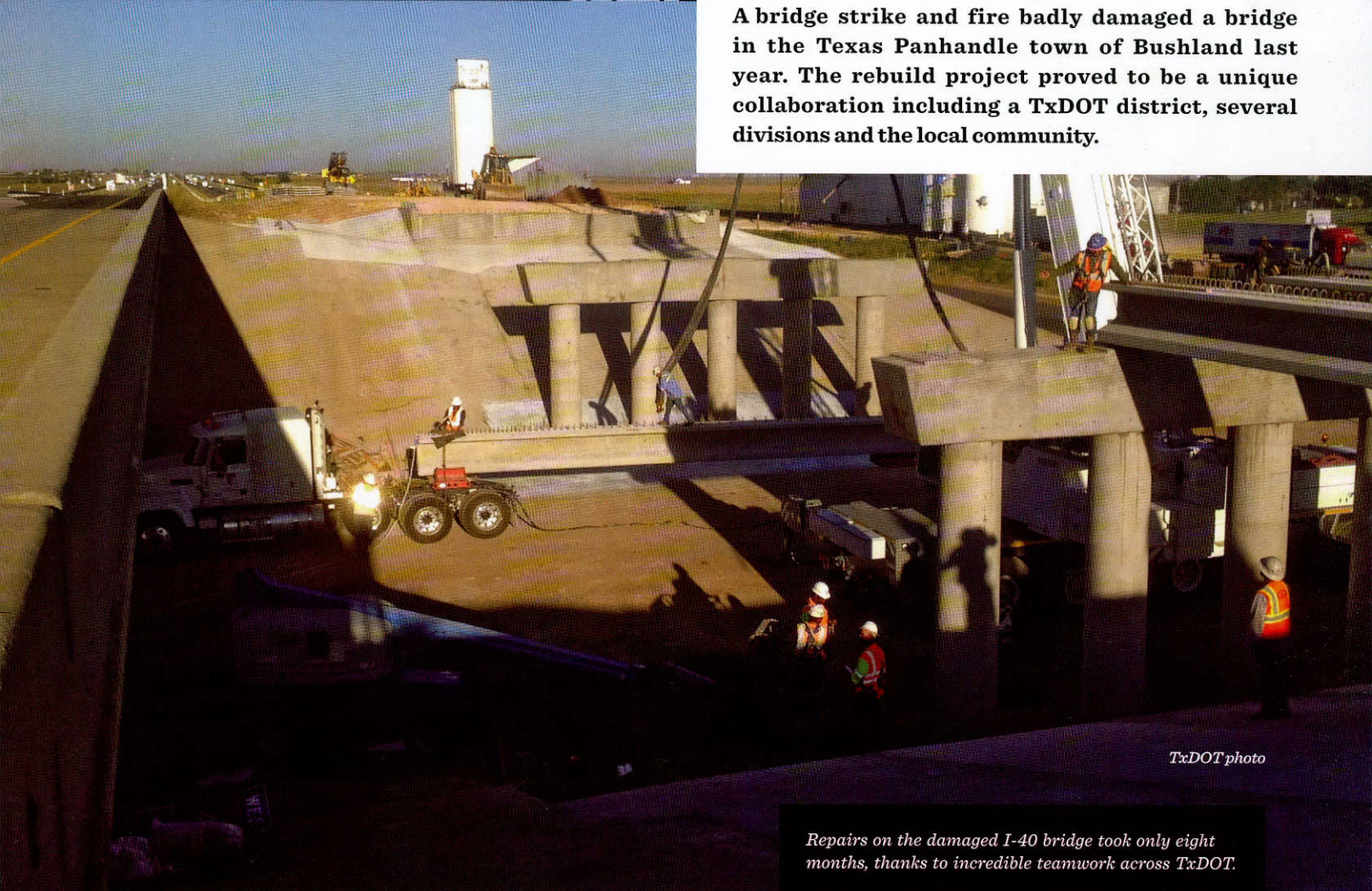
"We really want to hear from you. We need to hear from you. We set a lofty goal of \$613 million in savings that we can only meet with your participation. Who better to know where we can do some belt-tightening than the people who do the work? So put on your thinking caps and let us hear from you," said Executive Director James Bass. 

# REBUILDING THE BUSHLAND



# BRIDGE

A bridge strike and fire badly damaged a bridge in the Texas Panhandle town of Bushland last year. The rebuild project proved to be a unique collaboration including a TxDOT district, several divisions and the local community.



TxDOT photo

*Repairs on the damaged I-40 bridge took only eight months, thanks to incredible teamwork across TxDOT.*

In February 2017, a tractor-trailer was headed eastbound on I-40 when it veered off into the grass median then down between two bridge structures and onto RM 2381 below. The tractor came to rest under the bridge where it caught fire and severely damaged the bridge.

This event set into motion a unique project that required incredible collaboration between the Amarillo District, multiple TxDOT divisions, contractors and many in the community of Bushland, Texas, including local government entities, the Bushland ISD, and surrounding businesses. Due to the location of the incident, an especially quick response and completion would be expected to minimize the impact to the traveling public, local businesses and a nearby school.

The Bridge Division immediately conducted an initial site survey and determined a plan for bridge repair. However, resulting bids from the emergency letting came in much higher than anticipated so it was decided that a bridge replacement would be the better alternative.

The Amarillo District and the Bridge and Design divisions worked together to quickly develop accelerated design, letting and construction schedules. Their tight coordination and weekly meetings allowed them to simultaneously work on preliminary bridge and roadway designs.


Locally, the district worked on traffic control plans, developed environmental documentation and coordinated letting and contract signing with the Construction Division. District maintenance crews completed upgrades to the frontage roads to handle diverted interstate traffic.

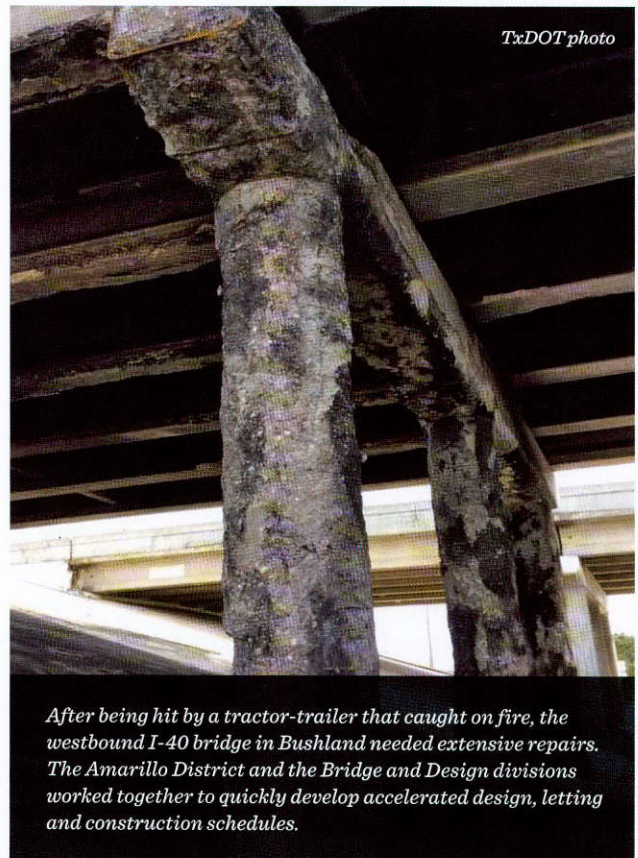
The incredible teamwork across TxDOT allowed the project to be let and approved by the Texas Transportation Commission within just four months of the incident. A short two months later, westbound I-40 and RM 2381 were closed completely and the bridge demolition and re-build began.

Community outreach was a key component to the success of the project. While businesses and residents understood the need for the bridge replacement, most did not believe the project would be finished in the proposed eight-month timeline. While the planning and designing were underway, the district was out in the Bushland community keeping residents and businesses up to date on the project.

The Bushland ISD was most concerned due to the direct impact to their school which is directly accessed using RM 2381. District personnel met with school officials, as well as representatives from the local bank, post office and the nearby feed and convenience stores, to hear their concerns and to work with them to minimize inconveniences.

In early October, the Amarillo District opened the new bridge to traffic. This incredible milestone was just two months after actual construction began and two weeks ahead of the projected completion date. Bushland ISD Superintendent Don Wood sent a letter to the Amarillo District and the contractor expressing his gratitude and thanks.

To some, eight months might seem like a long time, but considering that a traditional bridge re-build can take 18-24 months, this project is an exceptional example of great leadership and collaborative teamwork. The Amarillo District, the Bridge, Design and Construction divisions, along with the contractor did an outstanding job in executing this project. 



# ROB BLANCHARD

## 2017 AIRPORT MANAGER OF THE YEAR



**I**t was 2002 when Rob Blanchard was looking for civilian employment following his decorated 23-year military career as a Navy aviation maintenance officer. But when he applied for the advertised aircraft log and records clerk job at McGregor Executive Airport, the airport manager — who was about to retire — urged Rob to apply for his job. And he got it.

Fast forward 15 years and Rob Blanchard was on stage at the Annual Texas Aviation Conference receiving one of TxDOT's most prestigious honors, the Airport Manager of the Year Award. To many of his colleagues, the honor was overdue.

"He is the best airport manager I've worked with in the 40 years I've been in the municipal management business," McGregor City Manager Kevin Evans says. "He is focused, thorough, consistent and he follows through. Rob is always focused on what is best for the airport."

Over the last 15 years, under Blanchard's leadership, McGregor Executive Airport has seen more than its share of major improvements: refurbished runways, new runway lighting, precision approach path indicators, new airport signage, additional hangars to keep up with demand, a new fuel site, two new ramps, a refurbished north apron, new game fencing surrounding the airport's 800 acres and the list goes on.


"I've become an expert in looking for money," Blanchard admits. "I apply for TxDOT grants every chance I get. I could not do anything without TxDOT. They are there for support and they do a great job doing it."

Blanchard is equally appreciative of the McGregor City Council because of its support of airport improvements and its belief in the value of aviation for a community. Unlike many general aviation airports, McGregor Executive actually makes money for the city.

Situated just seven miles west of Waco, McGregor's airport is a nearby, uncrowded alternative for business travelers and recreation seekers. And thanks to the improvements over the years, over 40,000 operations are conducted by pilots using this top-notch facility.

So, after two successful careers, is the McGregor airport manager ready for retirement?

Blanchard says he still has plenty of work to do. He's in the process of rehabilitating the terminal ramp, wants to have the southeast apron improved and would like to double the size of the west apron.

"I want to keep on contributing. Every year I seem to find a new challenge, so it looks like I will be here for a while," he says. 

Ragan's 2017  
**EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS Awards**



# RAGAN'S EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS HONORS TN

**TN** Magazine has earned Honorable Mention recognition in Ragan's 2017 Employee Communications Awards in its best employee magazine category. The Ragan Awards celebrate the greatest campaigns, initiatives and one-time publications in the communication, PR, marketing and media industries. TN was competing against some major private-sector companies, including AT&T, Ford Motor Company, NBC Universal, FedEx, General Motors, T-Mobile, Cisco and many more.

"I'm so proud of the consistent, outstanding work my team does producing every issue of TN, and we're honored to be recognized by our peers in the employee communications industry across the nation as well," said Brent Dollar, director of the Executive and Employee Communications Section in the Communications Division. **TN**

# PORT ARANSAS GETS NEW FERRY

**G**oing to Port Aransas? Get on board the newest TxDOT ferry!

March saw the launch of a new ferry in Port Aransas in the Corpus Christi District. Ferries berthed at Port Aransas are named after former executive directors of TxDOT and this one has been christened the Amadeo Saenz Jr. Saenz served as executive director from 2007 to 2011.

The Saenz cost more than \$6 million to build. It holds 28 vehicles, which is larger than some of the others serving the crossing. The eight-ferry fleet has six 20-vehicle ferries. The larger ferry will help keep up with increased demand.

The new ferry also has a pollution-reducing system and is ADA compliant. Between two and six ferries run the Port Aransas route and connect Aransas Pass on the mainland with Port Aransas on Mustang Island. The quarter-mile route typically takes less than ten minutes, although peak summer hours may require drivers to wait longer. **TN**

*Former TxDOT Executive Director Amadeo Saenz Jr. was on hand for the dedication of his namesake ferry in Port Aransas in the Corpus Christi District. The new ferry holds 28 vehicles, which is larger than some of the others serving the crossing.*



*TxDOT photo*

*Developing seeds for grasses is an intense, years-long process. The plants have to be researched and samples need to be collected throughout the year. Photos courtesy of the Texas Native Seeds Project.*



**T**exas has more than a million acres of state-managed rights of way that require grass and plants to prevent erosion. For decades, however, TxDOT had few options when it came to the kinds of seeds available to plant on this land. When a cooperative effort of university partners, land owners and others in South Texas hatched the idea to advance the availability of native seeds 20 years ago, TxDOT quickly became one of their biggest supporters. Today, the Texas Native Seeds Program is ramping up the use of native seeds for land restoration in almost every corner of Texas.

From the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, cattle production drove the market for grass seeds, and ranchers looked to non-native, forage grasses to improve nutrition for their animals.

“Unfortunately, when you focus on a single species the way the cattle industry did, you lose biodiversity,” said Dennis Markwardt, director of the Vegetation Management Section in the Maintenance Division. “It affects the habits of local wildlife, like quail and deer.”

In addition, some of the non-native grasses introduced

were aggressive and choked out other grasses, even on land where they hadn’t been planted. Once established, they didn’t allow anything else to grow.

Around the mid-20th century, land owners began to realize the value of biodiversity and wanted to re-establish native grasses. It wasn’t that easy, though. The commercial seed market was focused on non-native grasses and other options just weren’t available.

“From TxDOT’s perspective, we didn’t have much choice when we needed to seed land in the right of way or other places,” said Markwardt. “Ranchers wanting to preserve the biodiversity on their land didn’t like us using non-native, forage grasses because they don’t respect land boundaries. But we didn’t have any selection.”

In the late 1990s, landowners in South Texas, along with other groups concerned about native habitats, started the South Texas Natives Project to develop seeds from native grasses for commercial use.

“Most everyone in the natural resources community said it couldn’t be done. It was too complicated,” said Forrest S. Smith of Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Smith is



**“ We not only have a choice to use native grasses for revegetation, but the program has worked with us to develop grasses that fit our specific needs. ”**

**Dennis Markwardt, director of the Vegetation Management Section in the Maintenance Division**

the Dan L. Duncan endowed director of South Texas Natives and Texas Native Seeds Projects at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at the university.

Developing seeds for grasses is an intense, years-long process. The plants have to be researched and samples need to be collected throughout the year. Then, growth traits are tested in multiple locations. That testing takes two to three years.

“Once we get a suitable population of plants, we have to increase the amount of seed available, which can take a year or two,” said Smith. “We start from just a very small yield of seeds to producing hundreds of pounds for commercial sale.”

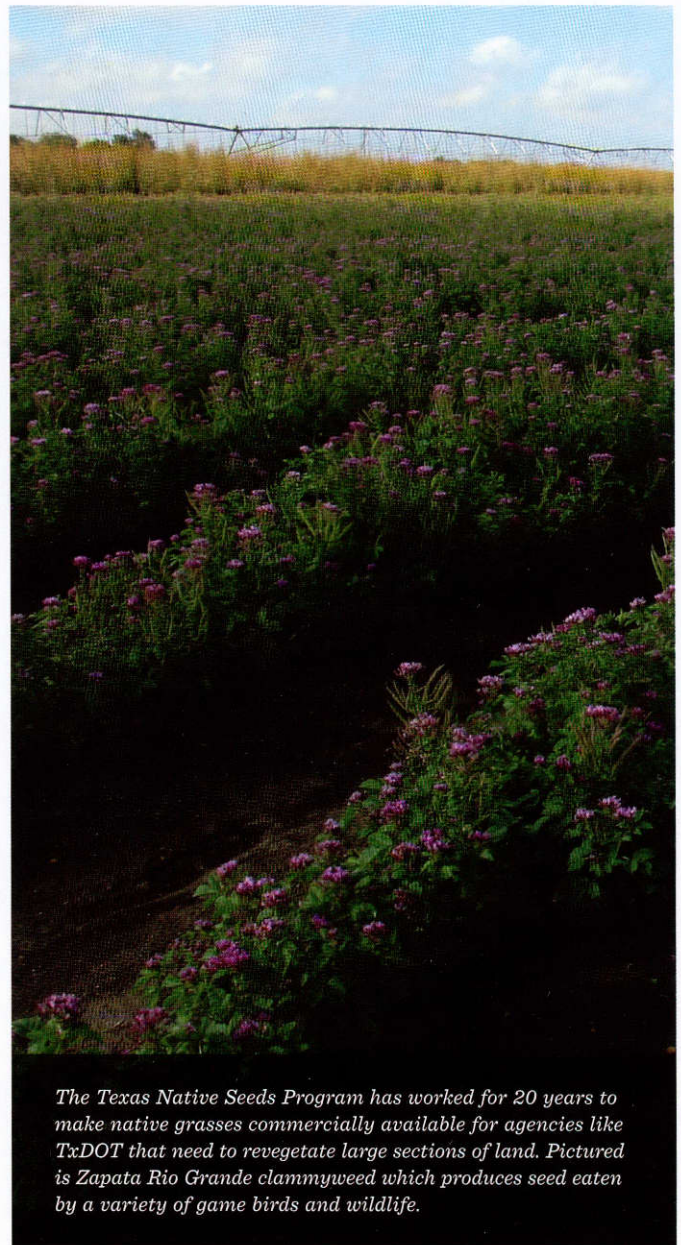
In time, though, the project began to have great success and moved beyond South Texas. Today, it is the Texas Native Seeds Program at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute and its work has spread to Central and West Texas.

TxDOT has been a supporter of the project from the beginning and has reaped many benefits from it.

“We not only have a choice to use native grasses for revegetation, but the program has worked with us to develop grasses that fit our specific needs,” said Markwardt.

For example, TxDOT needs grasses that will establish quickly to prevent erosion and comply with environmental requirements. The difference in germination time between species can be between three days and 20 days, so having choices is a big advantage.


“We also want grasses that are good neighbors, so to speak, and don’t intrude on other land,” said Markwardt. “We also prefer grasses of shorter stature that don’t block visibility. Some species of grass grow up to nine feet tall.”



*The Texas Native Seeds Program has worked for 20 years to make native grasses commercially available for agencies like TxDOT that need to revegetate large sections of land. Pictured is Zapata Rio Grande clammyweed which produces seed eaten by a variety of game birds and wildlife.*

Another challenge is the poor soil that TxDOT is often faced with.

“Our rights of way are highly disturbed and we’re trying to grow vegetation in the worst soil around,” said Markwardt. “This program has been great for us because we now have a choice of species to fit our needs.”

The seed program continues to move forward with initiatives for the Permian Basin/Panhandle regions, East Texas and the Coastal Prairies. TxDOT will continue to benefit from this effort to restore native habitats. 

# SECURITY MATTERS

## PHYSICAL SECURITY



Cyber attacks are committed by people from around the world sitting behind their computer. However, we can't forget that it may sometimes be easier for someone to simply walk into one of our facilities and physically steal our information.

Physical security is challenging because many people often walk in and out of our facilities, including contractors, vendors and visitors. We need your help to protect TxDOT against physical threats. Here is what you can do:

**1. Dispose of confidential documents properly (Use designated bins marked for shredding).**

An easy way for someone to steal confidential documents is to go “dumpster diving.” These criminals will search through our garbage — sometimes while pretending to be a janitor — looking for sensitive information.

**2. Always wear your identification badge.**

Always stop and ask individuals without an ID badge to identify themselves and kindly escort them to the front desk to register with security. If you open a door that requires badge access, always close the door behind you to guard against unauthorized access. Beware of people following you into the building, as well. Criminals can pretend to be another employee to gain access to our facilities.

*Physical security is challenging because many people often walk in and out of our facilities, including contractors, vendors and visitors.*

**3. Beware of “the repairman.”**

A criminal could enter our building pretending to be a pizza deliveryman or the copier repairman. Since we regularly expect to see these people, you may not feel a need to make sure they have been checked by security. Please remember that everyone in our building should have an ID badge, whether it's an employee, contractor or visitor.

**4. Protect your workspace.**

A security team can only do so much. Remember to lock up any sensitive documents or valuable items and always lock your computer whenever you leave your desk.

*If you have any questions about TxDOT's security procedures, you can reach the IT Service Desk at 512-302-HELP (4357) or <http://ITHELP.TN>*

# Paper chase:

## Recycling numbers add up

**Y**ou probably know that TxDOT recycles paper, but you may be surprised to find out that TxDOT recycles hundreds of tons of paper every year. In fiscal year 2017 alone, TxDOT collected 404.37 tons of paper and sold it to recyclers for \$19,278 in salvage sales made by the TxDOT Green program.

Paper recycling makes good money for the department and it saves more than landfill costs. The effort also saves natural resources. **During FY 2017, TxDOT saved:**


6,874 trees  
1,617,480 kilowatts of electricity  
153,661 gallons of oil  
2,830,590 gallons of water  
1,213 cubic yards of landfill space

Since TxDOT Green began tracking paper sales in 1994, the department has recycled a total of more than 11.5 million tons of paper and earned \$292,534.

**This effort has saved:**

199,086 trees  
47,338,336 kilowatts of electricity  
4,497,142 gallons of oil  
82,842,088 gallons of water  
35,504 cubic yards of landfill space

By recycling paper, TxDOT earns, taxpayers save, and Texas' natural resources are spared. All TxDOT employees need to do is keep up the good work and put every scrap of clean paper in the recycling bin.

Given all the resources saved and the money earned, it's worth a little extra effort to recycle paper at every opportunity. 



# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

## ABOUT THE NEW PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD



*The new Performance Dashboard provides a quick look at TxDOT's progress on key initiatives.*

On March 1, TxDOT launched its first online Performance Dashboard. The dashboard contains Commission-level performance measures that the Strategic Planning Division developed with the assistance of multiple divisions. This collaborative team effort to launch this initiative involved the Bridge, Civil Rights, Communications, Construction, Financial Management, Information Management, Maintenance, Traffic Operations, and Transportation Planning and

Programming divisions. Commission level signifies that the performance measures are designed to be considered when the Texas Transportation Commission is making policy and funding decisions.

Strategic Planning developed the Performance Dashboard with the objective to set targets for our agency goals and track our progress. Today, while working closely with the divisions, five of our seven TxDOT goals have been assigned specific performance measures.

*Launching TxDOT's first online performance dashboard was a collaborative effort involving many divisions. Team members pictured are (l to r) Larbi Hanni, Chad Sliva, Jim Padilla, Julien Devereux and James Huang.*

*TxDOT photo*



**Strategic Planning developed the Performance Dashboard with the objective to set targets for our agency goals and track our progress.**

The Performance Dashboard is a central place where we can show Texans how we're focusing on them as customers, how we're serving them, and how they can evaluate our performance. It is also responsive to Senate Bill 312 of the 85th Legislature, better known as our Sunset bill. This bill laid out a requirement to establish a way to let Texans know how we're measuring up. The dashboard achieves that objective. For example, optimize system performance on the dashboard shows the state's travel time reliability and congestion indexes. These measures are important because when we give Texans reliable travel times, our road network runs smoother, drivers get to their destinations faster and goods are not stuck in traffic.

Most importantly, the Performance Dashboard lets Texans know how we're doing, and upholds our

commitment to them through our core values: People, Accountability, Trust and Honesty. It will also help TxDOT know where to make adjustments and assist in strategic decisions.

We will be continuously improving the dashboard based on public feedback (a feedback mechanism has been established online), Commissioner and Administration feedback and staff feedback. We welcome your thoughts on how to enhance the Performance Dashboard. As we refine the site, not only will content and design changes be reviewed and implemented, but the list of performance measures will expand as our agency improves our methods to collect and analyze information. Keep a watch out for changes to come and our progress in performance management here at TxDOT. **TN**

# CHAMBERS COUNTY COMMISSIONER RECEIVES ROAD HAND AWARD




*Beaumont District Engineer Tucker Ferguson (left) presented Chambers County Commissioner A.R. "Rusty" Senac with TxDOT's Road Hand Award in March at the Chambers County Commissioners Court.*

**B**eaumont District Engineer Tucker Ferguson presented Chambers County Commissioner A.R. "Rusty" Senac with TxDOT's Road Hand Award in March at the Chambers County Commissioners Court. Commissioner Senac was also honored the following week at a meeting of the Houston-Galveston Area Council Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The Road Hand Award was created in 1973 by Luther DeBerry, who led the Texas Highway Department from 1973 to 1980. In the early days of the 20th century, anyone who helped build roads was called a road hand. Today's Road Hands are citizens who have given their time, energy and vision to help improve transportation

in their communities throughout the state.

In bestowing this award, the Texas Department of Transportation recognized and expressed its sincere appreciation to Commissioner Senac who has contributed significantly to building one of the best transportation systems in the world.

"I am humbled to be recognized by TxDOT when there are so many who contribute to Texas' transportation needs," said Commissioner Senac. "Our Chambers County Commissioners Court really appreciates our partnership with TxDOT as we continue to work together to build safe, reliable and efficient transportation systems." 

# TxDOT 101



## WHY ORANGE CONSTRUCTION BARRELS AND WARMER WEATHER ARE SYNONYMOUS IN TEXAS

*EDITOR'S NOTE: TxDOT101 is a feature that focuses on explaining a common topic for the agency.*


**I**t's the beginning of May, and summer is approaching. That means two things in Texas: triple-digit temperatures and orange construction barrels aplenty. It's no accident that these two are linked. In fact, it's the warmer weather that aids in the ramp-up of construction because heat is a necessity for a roadway construction mainstay, asphalt.

Asphalt is the roadway cover of choice for many TxDOT projects. Concrete being the other, but concrete is more of an all-weather material. It creates its own heat when it cures. Asphalt, on the other hand, must rely on an outside source, and the sun — and the heat that it brings — is a perfect partner.

According to Jerry Peterson, materials engineer in the Construction Division, asphalt — or what many confuse as “tar” — is very sticky and thick at ordinary temperatures. Both great and needed properties for roadway building, but to be able to install it on the road surface, asphalt has to be heated in a tank to a temperature of 250 to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. After heating, it is either sprayed directly on the road, or mixed with aggregates, and then applied to the road surface.

But here's why warmer temperatures during spring and summer months are important to the process. According to Peterson, for the asphalt and aggregate mixture to adhere correctly, the surface that the mixture is being applied to needs to be of the right temperature — a warm roadbed, courtesy of the sun.

“Once that mixture is put on the pavement, it's going to start cooling immediately, and that gives us a limited time to work with it. But if the surface that the mixture is being applied to is warm, it makes compacting the mixture into a smooth driving surface easier,” Peterson said.

“Think of it like a hot glue gun. Asphalt, like the glue in a glue gun, has to be hot for it to be worked with. The longer the glue stays hotter, the easier it is to position it and the better it sticks. And the better the project you're working on.” 

# I am a...

## Consultant Manager

**N**icholas Spencer, who works as a supervisor in the Fort Worth District, began his TxDOT career with the Houston District in 1996. He moved to the Dallas District in 1999 as an engineering assistant and worked on projects like the SH 31 Bypass. He became the consultant management office supervisor for the Fort Worth District in 2015. Spencer received his bachelor of science degree in civil engineering technology from Texas Southern University in 1996, where he also played college football. He later obtained his master's degree in Transportation Planning from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2008.

Outside of TxDOT, he is a part-time adjunct professor for Tarrant County College District where he teaches various courses for the Construction Management and Engineering programs. He and his wife, Sylvia, have two sons: Simon, 13, and Jacob, 6. Spencer enjoys spending time with his family and traveling.

### **Describe what you do as consultant manager.**

Overall, I ensure the success of my team and their consultants. I manage the portfolio of projects, both old and new, and determine who will be the next project manager to get an assignment. Our office is different in that we manage all types of assignments ranging from schematics to feasibility assignments. I constantly evaluate the state of the assignment with my project managers to allow our district to strategically plan priority projects. I essentially develop the process to carry the project managers across the finish line. We want them to be successful.

### **What are the challenges and rewards of your job?**

Because I was the first in this position, I needed to develop a process to fit the Fort Worth District's needs. The main challenge is ensuring that all projects get done in a timely manner. I have to ensure that plans are realistic and the correct process is followed. We are evolving as an office because Fort Worth has not had this component in place before. I'm always looking for ways to improve our process and increase our efficiency.

The rewards of this job begin with the success of each of my project managers. I want to put them in a position to be successful so that they get the credit they deserve in managing consultants.

### **What advice do you have for someone who would like to do your job?**

Always look for challenges and don't be afraid to make mistakes. You should be very organized and driven to succeed, no matter what. Once you succeed, continue to challenge yourself and find ways to improve. Also, find ways to motivate others. Your employees will gravitate to your leadership if you have firm principles. Give employees the confidence to make mistakes and be open to learning from your team.



NT  
TATION

**Nicholas V. Spencer**

**Consultant Manager  
Fort Worth District**

**Tell us the best part of working in the Fort Worth District. How does working in a metro area district affect your work?**

The Fort Worth District has a lot of great people who are very knowledgeable in what they do. Most of them have been here for decades and have a tremendous amount of experience. Consultants throughout the state are looking to make their mark in the Fort Worth District. Also, the location is perfect for me. I dedicate so much time to TxDOT but I don't feel stressed in any way. **TN**





**Holly Brady**

**Environmental Specialist  
Odessa District**

Holly Brady started her career at TxDOT in 2006 in the Environmental Affairs Division. In 2009, she became the West Region environmental coordinator. After the Regional Centers were dissolved in 2012, she decided to expand her knowledge of the TxDOT environmental process and went to work for the Odessa District. Holly has bachelor's and master's degrees in biology from Texas State University and an MBA from Texas Tech University. She is originally from Austin and enjoys traveling back to the area to see her family whenever she gets a chance.

Holly Brady

**What is the perfect weekend for you?**

Camping, hiking and just being out in nature is a perfect weekend for me. I enjoy taking little road trips to explore new places, too.

**What is a typical day like for you at TxDOT?**

Environmental rules, regulations and processes are constantly changing, and when the rules aren't changing, the project plans are changing. So I guess you could say a typical day for me is coordinating projects for environmental clearance and hoping that nothing changes. One thing that remains constant is the never-ending flow of projects.

**What are the five words that best describe you?**

Sarcastic, honest, skeptical, guacamole (don't ask) and ambitious.

**What's the most important lesson you've learned from your work at TxDOT?**

Document everything! The environmental process is tightly bound by laws and regulations and is subject to audits, so it is very important that I document everything I do. That mindset often carries over into other parts of my job, so my inbox is a little outrageous at the moment.

**Pringles or Lay's? Which flavor?**

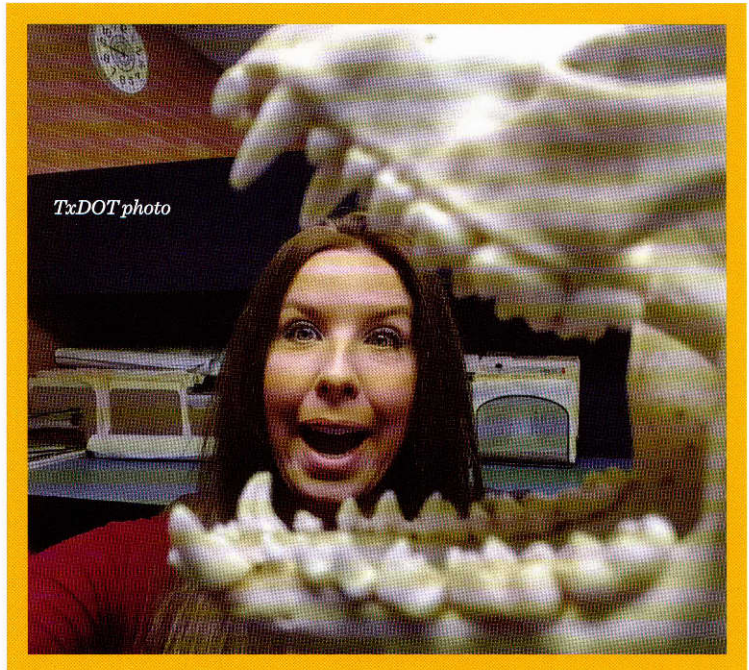
Pringles, sour cream and onion flavor. Once you pop, you can't stop!

**What characteristic do you most admire in others?**

I think integrity is a very admirable characteristic because it encompasses so many other qualities.

**How do you recharge?**

I teach fitness kickboxing classes after work, so I get to work out some stress on the bag while helping others improve their health. No matter how my day goes, I always feel better after class.




**What game or movie universe would you most like to live in and why?**

I think living in Pandora from the movie "Avatar" would be neat because the Na'vi have a unique respect for and connection to nature that many cultures on earth don't have. Plus, you get to ride banshees!

**What TV channel doesn't exist but really should?**

Cat TV! It would be a mix of National Geographic, the TV show "Hoarders" and funny cat videos.

**What are you interested in that most people haven't heard of?**

Herpetology, the study of amphibians and reptiles. I've come across many people who don't know what it is, and are immediately creeped out when I explain it. I'm not an expert by any means, but I've always had an interest, even more so after studying them in college. Herping — the act of searching for amphibians or reptiles — is especially fun! 

# Where Am I?

Here is a photo depicting an identifiable landmark you may have seen in your travels around Texas. If you think you know what this is a photo of or know where it was taken, send an email to [TNideas@txdot.gov](mailto:TNideas@txdot.gov). Deadline for submissions is June 4.




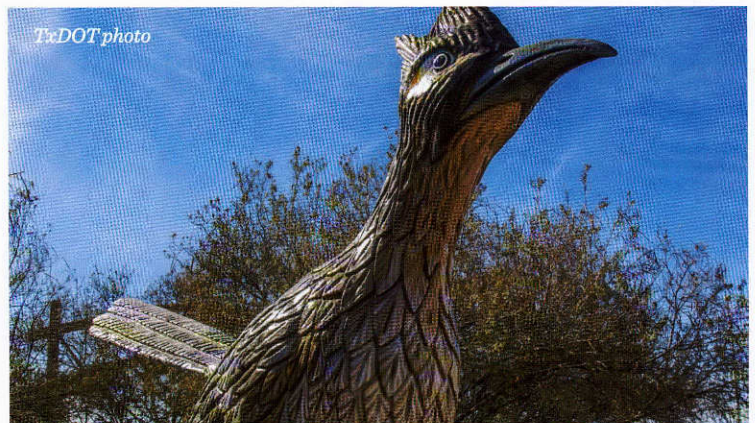
TxDOT photo

## Identified:

Congratulations to our first identifier Melissa Hinckley (ABL).

Last edition's photo featured Paisano Pete, the roadrunner mascot of Fort Stockton. Erected in 1980, the statue is 11 feet tall and 22 feet long. Pete is one of the most recognizable roadside attractions in the southwest.

Others correctly identifying the photo were: Hector Siller (PHR), Ed Whiteside (FIN), Bradley Peikert (BRY), Michael Vargas (HOU), Jesus Cervantes (HOU), Kimberly Campos (HRD), Eric Garcia (PTN), Lauren Garduno (ADM), Tom Schwerdt (CST), Allen Lassetter (WAC), Albert Garza (TRV), Jose Celedon (CRP), Adeliza Ramirez (AUS), Carmen Ramos (AUS), Dora Robles (PHR), Felice Herrera-Kish (HRD), Justin Kalisek (BRY), Chris Cowen (BRY), Mark Fisher (ENV), Clover Clamons (ENV), Megan Lowary (FIN), Maurice Maness (BRY), Kitty Powledge (SSD), Jana Osbourn (BWD), Robert Haensly (BRY), Linda Englert (HOU), Sharon Benson (WAC), Donna Plummer (TRF), Brandon Mair (BWD), Kathy Baca (PTN), Walter Barfield (AUS), David Herbrich (AUS), Brian Jasik (SAT), Stephanie Beasley (TRV), Sendy Bolin (AMA), Shayla Brewer (LBB), Kristie Shackelford (FTW), Karen Threlkeld (CMD), Erin Dunnam (ABL), Jan Robbins (BRY), Michelle Maxon (DAL), Jennifer Bierman (TPP), Austin Valentine (GOV), Janean Whitten (retired), Virginia Wier (retired), Joe Lopez (retired), Richard Sliva (retired), Sabrina Stachowski (retired), Amanda Marlar (LBB) and Karra Patterson (ABL). 



TxDOT photo

## UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

**May 24**

Texas Transportation  
Commission Meeting  
*(Austin)*

**May 28**

Memorial Day  
*(All agencies closed)*

**June 19**

Emancipation Day  
*(Minimal staff required)*

**June 28**

Texas Transportation  
Commission Meeting  
*(Austin)*

# MILESTONES

## MARCH SERVICE AWARDS

### DISTRICTS

#### ABILENE

- 30 Daniel P. Richardson
- 20 Christopher A. Bingham
- 5 John C. Brown
- Jeffrey W. Peterson
- Adrian Valdez
- Stephanie A. Watson

#### AMARILLO

- 20 Michael D. Brown

#### ATLANTA

- 20 Carl E. Coats
- Fred D. Crowder
- Christopher S. Moore
- 5 Kenny J. Woods

#### AUSTIN

- 15 Aaron M. Sanders
- 5 Kenneth E. Barrett
- James S. Ethridge Jr.
- Christopher C. Hluz
- Larry K. Jefferson
- Vicki G. Joy
- Nickholas Pardo
- Tyler D. Saunders
- Clayton J. Turner

#### BEAUMONT

- 10 Robert L. Chance Jr.
- 5 Robert W. Jackson

#### BROWNWOOD

- 25 Jana L. Osbourn
- 5 Quinton J. Cook

#### BRYAN

- 20 Teresa J. Bullock
- Victor M. Vazquez
- 10 Ralph Narro
- 5 Alban A. Gutierrez
- Thomas M. Hendrix
- Rene E. Pequeno
- Delmy M. Reyes

#### CHILDRESS

- 35 Martin R. Smith
- 5 James C. Allen
- Rogelio Vela Jr.

#### CORPUS CHRISTI

- 15 Jimmy M. Owens
- 10 Jason J. Lambert

#### DALLAS

- 25 Richard P. Barker
- Gerry V. Hennig
- John K. Kiser
- 20 Alireza Askari-Majdabadi
- John R. Freeman
- Diane K. Powers
- Timothy L. Powers

- 10 Juan A. Paredes
- Godfrey B. Sendawula

- 5 Hayden W. Cavnar
- Travis W. Chatman
- Emmanuel E. Navarro
- Michael J. Paris
- Brandon L. Stell
- Nelson L. Underwood

#### EL PASO

- 35 Hector R. Granado
- 25 Jose Y. Gonzales
- Manuel Molina Jr.
- 20 Pedro Ojeda

#### FORT WORTH

- 25 Steve W. Bishop
- Armando Rodriguez
- 5 Jose Benavidez
- Rehan A. Bhatti
- Michael B. Gage
- Royce D. Hanna
- Sarah G. Johnson
- Ngozi C. Lopez

#### HOUSTON

- 30 Paul B. Eley
- 20 Pamela G. Anderson
- Ross H. Ayala
- Roberta K. Beatty
- Robert D. Greenmyer
- Teresa L. Hanson
- Ricardo Montes
- Jason A. Mushinsky
- Jason W. Smith
- Casey E. Weatherly
- Brandon R. Brown
- 15 Abraham M. Guzman
- 10 Peggy S. Ludwick
- Leslie E. Meyer III
- Richard E. Spencer
- William M. Streeter
- 5 Jannie F. Blackmon
- Sharmila S. Davis
- Enrique Lopez
- Jorge S. Montes
- Matthew H. Smith
- Seung B. Yoo

#### LAREDO

- 15 Jose A. Saldana
- 5 Daniel Perez

#### ODESSA

- 5 Mario Finney
- Kella L. Page
- Shannon K. Ritchie

#### PARIS

- 30 John R. Ward
- 25 Darius L. Samuels
- 20 Robert A. Horne
- 15 Darren L. Hester

- 5 Justin T. Bailey
- Bruce A. Joslin

#### PHARR

- 15 Sergio L. Cantu
- John P. Ramirez
- 5 Rene M. Galvan
- Javier Martinez Jr.
- Martha Y. Miranda
- Angel M. Renteria Jr.

#### SAN ANGELO

- 20 Joe S. Gomez
- 15 Matthew L. Evans
- 5 Paul A. Morales

#### SAN ANTONIO

- 25 Jeanne L. Tarrant
- 20 Greg R. Mendoza Jr.
- 15 Charles F. Miksch
- Roberto Moya III
- 5 Albrina Coleman
- Rebecca E. Fox
- Guadalupe H. Garza
- Robert J. Steigleder

#### TYLER

- 20 Gregory L. Skiles
- 5 Rodney L. Millsap
- Gorgonio Ordonez Jr.
- Robert E. Tabraham

#### WACO

- 15 Andrew R. English
- 10 Randall W. Squyres
- 5 Kyle E. Naizer
- David A. Stefka
- Phillip Stone

#### WICHITA FALLS

- 20 Richard K. Miller
- 5 Michael R. Alexander
- George D. Chaffin
- Patricio Perezsilerio

#### YOAKUM

- 20 Steven J. Bujnoch
- William J. Gooch
- Thomas F. Kocian
- Martin C. Steffek
- Jeffrey L. Stock
- 5 Michael A. Jasek
- Macy McCorkle

### DIVISIONS

#### AVIATION

- 10 Josh A. Daniel

#### COMMUNICATIONS

- 5 David C. Glessner
- Linette H. Harris

#### CONSTRUCTION

- 20 Albert N. Umeadi

#### DESIGN

- 15 Robert E. Garza

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 10 Laura L. Poldrack

#### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 5 Towanda M. Palmer
- Chris S. Sobremonte

#### FLEET OPERATIONS

- 30 Keith W. Harris
- 20 James W. Terry
- 5 Jose A. Clayton
- Paul R. Cytulik

#### GENERAL COUNSEL

- 5 Allan D. Meesey

#### HUMAN RESOURCES

- 10 David R. Lucas

#### MAINTENANCE

- 30 Daniel L. Stacks

#### PEPS

- 10 Paul Aparicio

#### PROCUREMENT

- 25 Rhonda R. Migl
- 20 Cesario Salinas Jr.
- 10 Dustin M. Fraticelli

#### PROJECT FINANCE, DEBT & STRATEGIC CONTRACTS

- 5 Jeanette S. Arellano

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 5 Sharon D. Lewis

#### RIGHT OF WAY

- 25 Aldo R. Cardona
- Weldon L. Swanger

- 5 Lora R. Gunter
- Melinda B. Skillern

#### SUPPORT SERVICES

- 5 Judy S. Baker

#### TOLL OPERATIONS

- 15 Latasha B. Brookins

#### TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

- 5 Lacey N. Cox

#### TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING

- 5 Julie A. Beaubien
- Andrea C. Gonzales

# APRIL SERVICE AWARDS



## DISTRICTS

### ABILENE

- 30 William T. Parrott
- 20 Carrie C. Hart

### AMARILLO

- 20 Roxanne Jennings  
Gregory D. Mayfield  
Marlon W. Mitchell  
John C. Tobias Jr.
- 5 Larry Barber

### ATLANTA

- 10 Stacy D. Reaves

### AUSTIN

- 20 Lorri A. Pavliska  
Ronald L. Schulze
- 5 Roger J. Ashabranner  
Heather D. Ashley-Nguyen  
Tonia L. Dryja  
Billy W. Herbert  
Jerry M. Lions  
Timothy R. Miller  
Pedro G. Munoz III  
Jarrod T. Pohlmeier  
Warren D. Scott

### BROWNWOOD

- 30 Jay Green
- 25 Lindy J. Harrington  
Jerry G. Johnson

### BRYAN

- 35 Jan R. Robbins
- 5 Ruben Pola Jr.  
Arthur Porto

### CHILDRESS

- 5 Nicholas S. Fulton  
Casey J. Upton

### CORPUS CHRISTI

- 30 Victor E. Yourcos
- 25 Karla D. Moczygemba
- 5 Jose F. Celedon  
Ricardo Martinez  
Johnathan L. Murphy  
Tommy Perez

### DALLAS

- 10 Charles A. Tapp
- 5 Christopher C. Crane  
Kathleen A. Harlan  
Dean M. Hollingsworth  
Keton C. Parrish  
Shelley D. Pridgen  
Anthony J. Salinas

### EL PASO

- 25 Blanca G. Serrano-Rivera
- 5 Hector Gonzalez Alfaro  
Rosendo Bautista  
Chad E. Chairez  
George Medina  
Tomas Mendoza Jr.  
Johnny Trujillo  
Clarice N. Westman

### FORT WORTH

- 40 Grover A. Schretter
- 35 Monty W. Hale  
Michael A. Sepeda
- 20 Donald J. Wright
- 5 Vallorie L. Jackson  
Candra L. Meeks  
Beverly A. O'Dell  
Chad W. Ripley  
Colt A. Wright

### HOUSTON

- 30 Elizabeth M. Keasling
- 20 Kiara D. Marquise
- 15 Tri D. Nguyen
- 5 Edward C. Bedford  
Norman H. Bennett  
Chen-Hua Chung  
Leonel E. Enriquez  
John D. Fatuch  
Hector A. Gomez  
Aaron L. Hand  
Matthew L. Hensarling  
Peter G. Massey  
Norman B. Norris  
Elmer A. Perdomo  
Gregory A. Snider  
Michele C. Wilkins

### LAREDO

- 25 Reynaldo Garza
- 5 Saul Rubio

### LUBBOCK

- 5 Celia Quintana

### LUFKIN

- 25 Jason B. Allen  
John H. Parker
- 20 Chester O. Dixon

### ODESSA

- 25 Juan M. Flores Jr.
- 10 Joel T. Rodriguez

### PARIS

- 5 Daniel E. Campbell  
Casey J. Smith

### SAN ANGELO

- 5 Juan Castillo Jr.  
Gary A. Castleberry  
Ernest Franco  
Bradley M. Gandy  
Jamie L. Green  
Jesse P. Hidalgo  
Damian Lopez  
Joel S. Reyes

### SAN ANTONIO

- 30 Joel K. Davenport Jr.
- 25 Lonny R. Williams
- 20 David B. Taylor  
Velinda Viesca-Garza
- 10 William J. Reed
- 5 Roland T. Ballin Jr.  
Michael T. Wootan

### TYLER

- 20 Sheena K. Turner  
James D. Walton  
Vernon M. Webb
- 5 Lindsey S. Robertson

### WACO

- 5 Cory W. Laffoon  
Amanda L. Mooney  
Matthew B. Sleeth

### WICHITA FALLS

- 20 Joellen K. Miller

### YOAKUM

- 25 Darrell W. Gajewski  
Rhonda L. Moorman
- 20 Jeffrey W. Gerdes  
Darrell G. Phelps  
Lana K. Warnken
- 5 Zackary C. Chumchal  
Marcus A. Dodson  
Clinton C. Hadley  
Brian C. Williams

## DIVISIONS

### AVIATION

- 5 Robert P. Hidrogo

### BRIDGE

- 5 Ethan S. Epstein

### CIVIL RIGHTS

- 5 Sierra R. Fallin

### COMMUNICATIONS

- 5 Ignacio M. Lujan

### COMPLIANCE

- 5 Alex Gomez Jr.

### CONSTRUCTION

- 30 John E. Lane

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 20 Daniel V. Harris
- 10 Patrick W. Lee
- 5 Michael R. Chavez  
Rebekah M. Dobrasko

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 5 Raymond M. Bischoff  
Ning Chen  
Jane E. Graf  
Sandra L. Long  
Shelli L. Neeper  
Ty S. Prosser

### FLEET OPERATIONS

- 25 Rickey L. Willis
- 20 Samuel E. Nuckels
- 5 Milton L. Burrell Jr.  
Dwan L. Johnson  
Linden K. Vance

### GENERAL COUNSEL

- 5 Alicia L. Ramon-Kane

### HUMAN RESOURCES

- 20 Leslie A. Mabry
- 5 Chandra D. Stubblefield

### MAINTENANCE

- 25 Steven G. Prather

### PEPS

- 25 Jesus Avila
- 5 Amanda I. Griffey  
Mindy N. Sawyer  
Cammie E. Sperry

### RIGHT OF WAY

- 20 Erin N. Matthews
- 5 Matthew Jimenez

### SUPPORT SERVICES

- 15 Brandon K. Henry
- 5 Mark L. Howell

### TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

- 5 Andrew B. Souder

### TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING

- 30 Jefferson M. Grimes
- 20 Francis J. Bailey Jr.
- 15 Veronica Cortez

# MILESTONES 2018

## JANUARY RETIREE REPORT

### DISTRICTS

#### ABILENE

23 Bruce W. Wheeler

#### CORPUS CHRISTI

23 Candelario Salinas III  
22 Michael A. Trevino

#### DALLAS

30 Michael A. Renfrow  
29 Michael D. Hainline

27 Lynn D. Lunski  
Gregory D. Price

#### FORT WORTH

29 John R. Tillinghast

#### HOUSTON

26 Richard Powell

#### LAREDO

14 Jose Mario Morin

#### LUFKIN

28 Gerald B. Colter

#### TYLER

20 John L. Powell

#### WACO

26 Anthony J. Moran

#### WICHITA FALLS

21 Alton L. Stanford

### DIVISIONS

#### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

22 Diana Ruiz

#### MAINTENANCE

23 Daviette A. Gilbert

#### SUPPORT SERVICES

11 Ellen Singer

## FEBRUARY RETIREE REPORT

### DISTRICTS

#### ATLANTA

38 Dennis M. Beckham

#### AUSTIN

26 Clay L. Brown  
21 Richard L. Parker  
14 Terrie Lynne Wilhelm

#### BEAUMONT

28 Joe A. Felan

#### CORPUS CHRISTI

22 Richard Valderrama

#### DALLAS

25 Gregory R. Denton  
Rhonda C. Ledbetter  
15 Francene G. Williams

#### FORT WORTH

22 Dean C. Martin  
19 Juan M. Reyna

#### HOUSTON

29 Teddy R. Revia  
22 Isaac B. Mooshabad  
20 Sabas U. Cagubcub  
12 Joe R. Goode  
11 Hilda Garza Scott

#### LAREDO

21 Alberto R. Ramirez

#### LUBBOCK

15 Juan J. Rivera

#### LUFKIN

10 Vivian A. Harrison

#### ODESSA

13 Juan S. Ortiz Jr.

#### WACO

22 Darren W. Poe

#### YOAKUM

5 Richard Darrel Johnson

### DIVISIONS

#### BRIDGE

27 Dean J. Loitz

#### PROCUREMENT

32 Scott D. Koczman

#### RAIL

29 Guy W. Godfrey

#### SUPPORT SERVICES

29 James E. Kridner

#### TRAVEL INFORMATION

19 Robbie L. Dudley

## IN MEMORIAM

### DISTRICTS

#### AMARILLO

**John McConnell**  
Date of Death: 2/13/2018  
Years of Service: 30  
Retired: 2011

#### BROWNWOOD

**Gene Christian**  
Maintenance Foreman  
Date of Death: 3/19/2018  
Years of Service: 32  
Retired: 1993

#### PHARR

**Humberton Balli**  
Date of Death: 2/22/2018  
Retired: 1986

#### Estanislao "Stanley" Carranza

Date of Death: 2/24/2018  
Retired: 1992

#### Santos D. Zavala

Date of Death: 1/19/2018  
Retired: 1998

#### TYLER

**Randall Alford**  
Purchaser  
Date of Death: 2/5/2018  
Years of Service: 17

#### WACO

**Cody G. Cornell**  
General Transportation Technician  
Date of Death: 3/14/2018  
Years of Service: 1

### DIVISIONS

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Timothy "Tim" Stagg**  
Material/Process Inspector  
Date of Death: 3/16/2018  
Years of Service: 47

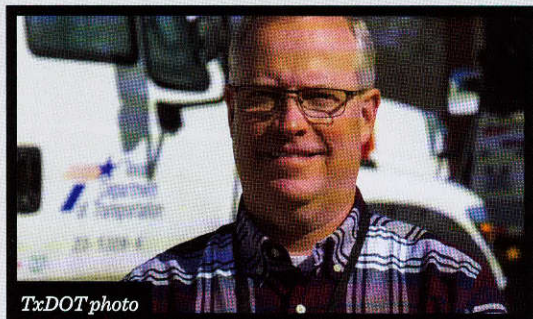
# TxDOT Family Members Chime In

*How are you going to celebrate Dad this Father's Day?*



**GINNA HUGHES**  
SAFETY OFFICE TECHNICIAN, ABILENE DISTRICT

"Our family shows how much we love and appreciate the fathers in our lives by making their favorite meals and spending the day doing what they enjoy."




**RICH TRUITT**  
UTILITY COORDINATOR, BROWNWOOD DISTRICT

"I have observed Dad for the last half of his 92 years. The best way to celebrate him would be to enjoy life with those I am blessed to live and work with."



**ISMAEL E. SOLALINDE**  
TRANSPORTATION ENGINEER,  
SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT

"I am going to celebrate my first Father's Day as a dad by sharing every moment with the little one God has graciously lent me." 

# Bright Lights

## Promoting TxDOT Opportunities for Childress Students



**T**xDOT representatives attended the annual Childress High School Job Fair in January and discussed with students the many opportunities available at the agency. The students were so grateful, they sent a special note to the Childress District.

Representatives from engineering, administration and human resources were present at the job fair and talked to approximately 145 students from Childress, Foard, Hall and Motley counties. Students were interested in the TxDOT summer hire program as well as career information.

"The students didn't realize the vast opportunity within the transportation system for jobs such as geographic analyst, auditor, research analyst, surveyor, archeologist and graphic designer," said Denise Key, Human Resources specialist. "They thought their career would be limited to maintenance or engineering."

"We believe the students walked away with a greater understanding of career opportunities at TxDOT," said Key.

National Honor Society member Austin Farr sent a thank-you note to the Childress District. It said, "You have shown many students interested in engineering and administration what is possible in your field."

**Read more about the good work employees are doing in Bright Lights on Crossroads:** <http://crossroads/brightlights/>. Send information on any thank-you emails, letters or calls you or your co-workers receive to AskTxDOT so we can continue to shine Bright Lights on TxDOT employee achievements. 



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TN Online (TxDOT computers only):  
<http://crossroads/>

# Fresh Start

## CHANGES IN DIET CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

*Ever wonder what a difference cutting out packaged foods and adding more fresh foods to your diet would make? Gonzalo Ponce, project manager for the Public Transportation Division, decided to do just that. Last year's biometric screening results were surprising for him. He needed to improve all his numbers — blood pressure, glucose, total cholesterol and weight. Already an avid cyclist and flag football player, Gonzalo decided to focus on eating a healthier diet. This is his journey to wellness.*

I started buying fresh ingredients instead of the boxed or pre-packaged foods. I used to buy pre-packaged frozen chicken, meat patties, ready-to-eat meals, burgers, pizzas and some boxed meals. Now I grill, bake or buy natural or rotisserie chicken. I also started making smaller meals and added more fresh fruits and vegetables to my diet, like avocados.


I prepared more foods at home and ate out less. The change also affected my wallet. I was spending approximately \$8 for breakfast and \$10 for lunch every day or \$90 a week. I now spend between \$20-\$25 for breakfast and lunch, weekly. Breakfast includes oatmeal, granola, bananas and other fruits. At home I make my own burger patties, organic rotisserie chicken, steamed vegetables, rice and fruits. I drink at least 48 ounces of water a day.

Another new fresh habit included preparing

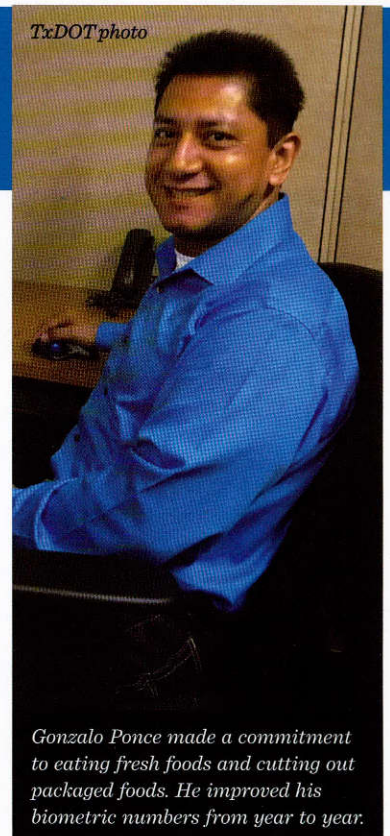
meals on Sunday and packaging them as lunches for the work week.

Another surprise came in April. An emergency room visit revealed two blood clots in my left lung. Other health issues and a death in the family created more obstacles, but I didn't let these events stand in my way.

The transition in my diet had its challenges, but it was a matter of starting out one day and one meal at a time. I made it my goal to eat better and exercise more. The final surprise was seeing all my numbers go down during this year's screening.

We all have the capacity to make positive changes, but it is our willingness to take that first step that propels us forward toward real change. This positive attitude and "fresh" approach to my diet has made a big difference in my life. 

TxDOT photo



*Gonzalo Ponce made a commitment to eating fresh foods and cutting out packaged foods. He improved his biometric numbers from year to year.*

**Contact your local Wellness Program Coordinator to learn about the wellness program and start your journey today!**



Putting people first. Making connections that count.