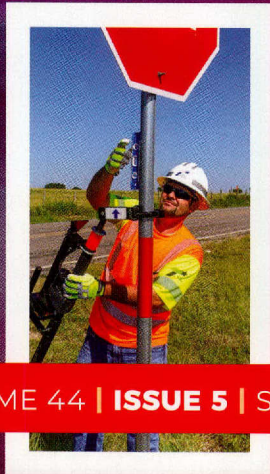
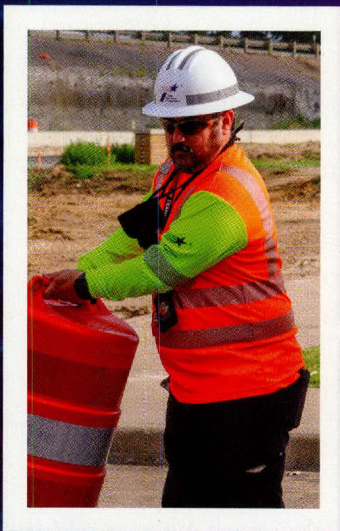
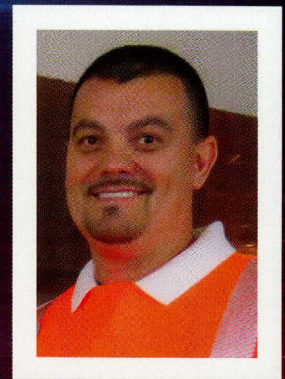
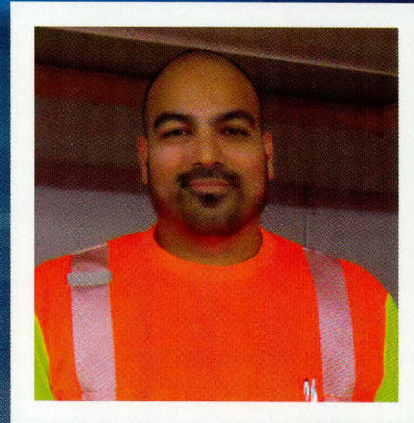




# SAFETY OFFICERS STEP UP

TxDOT safety officers across the state are responding to their district's unique safety challenges.



# New conditions, same job

JAMES BASS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**I**n January, the 87th Legislature will begin, just as it has since 1846. Only next year, besides the normal duties of making a two-year budget and laws that affect Texans and transportation, members will do so under the shadow of COVID-19.

Right now, the Capitol — the people's building — is still closed to the public. Under normal circumstances, that granite building can accommodate more than 5,000 people. Thousands of individuals walk its halls during session to see government at work. But these aren't normal times. That's a challenge that state leadership will manage.



As a state agency that answers to the Legislature, we'll also be managing these new conditions. Much of our work during session involves testifying before committee meetings and hearings, talking one-on-one with members, and answering questions from them and their staffers. How we'll do that under the shadow of COVID remains the question, but one thing is for sure: we'll do everything we can to keep our employees safe as they do their jobs.

Unknowns aside, staff is already in preparation mode. Our State Legislative Affairs staff is ramping up for hearing and meeting requests, and our Financial Management Division is working on our legislative appropriations request, or LAR. The LAR is our official ask for funding.

Right now, we're planning to request some \$30.6 billion over the FY 2022-23 biennium. The bulk of that — about \$26 billion — would be for project development, project delivery, and highway maintenance.

Texas is facing financial challenges because of the coronavirus. We won't know how much it's affected the state's bottom line until those numbers are made public, but state revenues are down, including a major contributor to TxDOT's budget: motor fuels tax receipts.

Those unknowns may require us to make some adjustments to our request during the legislative process, which we can do. But what we won't do is sacrifice safety or production. We will still build projects and support other modes of transportation. We'll continue to do it efficiently, but that's not new for us.

While we're readying ourselves for the session, rest assured that state leaders know that TxDOT is committed to giving Texas our best service. Not even a pandemic — or its unanswered questions — can change that.

Thanks for everything you do. ■



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#### TN MAGAZINE

September-October 2020

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GDC Marketing & Ideation

Unless otherwise noted

#### DESIGN & PRODUCTION

GDC Marketing & Ideation

#### PRINTED BY

TxDOT Print Services

Austin, TX

#### TN IS PUBLISHED BY THE

TEXAS DEPARTMENT

OF TRANSPORTATION

125 E. 11th St.

Austin, TX 78701-2483

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# SHINING STARS



Across the state, TxDOT employees go above and beyond.

## Pharr District raises more than \$2,000 for food bank

### PHARR DISTRICT

**A**s Texans deal with the challenges brought by COVID-19, many look for ways to supplement their family's needs because of changes in the workforce. It's something that didn't go unnoticed by Robert De La Fuente, maintenance supervisor with the Pharr District.

While heading to work last May, his mission was to inspect roadways, but he was inspired to do much more. De La Fuente passed the Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley and noticed a long line of cars waiting for food supplies.

"There were people from all walks of life," De La Fuente said. "I found out later people had been turned away because the food bank's supplies were depleted. I thought to myself how lucky we are to have a job during COVID-19 while others are losing their jobs and having a hard time putting food on the table. Just thinking of this made me sad."

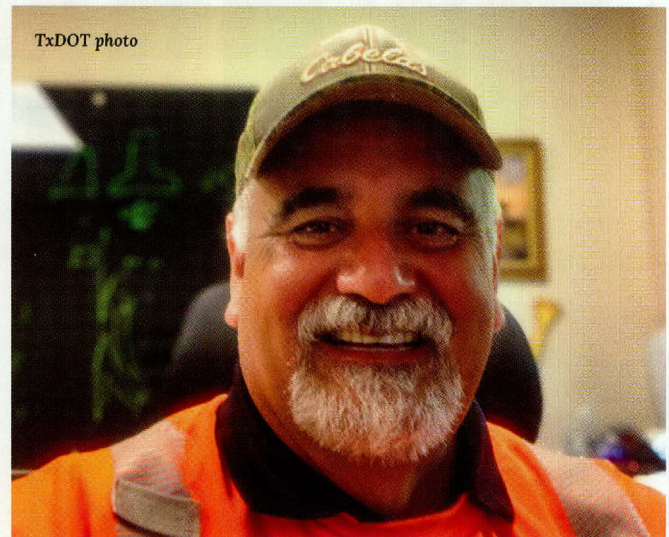
De La Fuente didn't stay sad for long. Instead, he sprang into action. He knew this was an opportunity to do a good deed. He went to Pharr District Engineer Pedro Alvarez with a plan to raise money for those in need. They galvanized an effort to seek donations from fellow employees. The response was overwhelming!

"Employees in the district contributed \$2,425! For every dollar we collected, we would be donating five meals. This meant we were able to help provide approximately 12,125 meals for people in the community," said De La Fuente.

The food bank was extremely pleased with the effort and immediately made the resources available to area residents.

"Robert's genuine concern for others spurred this amazing feat. Hats off to our Pharr District employees for their generosity, too," said Alvarez.

Texans helping Texans is what it's all about.



TxDOT photo

Robert De La Fuente organized a fundraiser for an area food bank that raised \$2,425 in donations.



TxDOT photo

Pharr District Engineer Pedro Alvarez (left) presents the funds raised by Pharr District employees to the Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley.

Send information or any thank-you emails, letters or calls you or your co-workers receive to [AskTxDOT@TxDOT.gov](mailto:AskTxDOT@TxDOT.gov) so we can recognize TxDOT employee achievements. ■

# KEEPING BRIDGES SAFE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

**E**ven though the statewide response to COVID-19 is affecting the ways we do things, TxDOT is still inspecting bridges to ensure a safe and reliable transportation system. Bridge Division staff are taking extra precautions – including wearing masks, social distancing and travelling in separate vehicles – to continue to perform crucial inspections across Texas.

TxDOT's response to emergencies has not slowed down either. In April, TxDOT responded to a critical finding on the U.S. 190 Neches River Bridge when it was damaged after being hit by an overheight vehicle. Bridge Division and Beaumont District staff worked together to respond to the situation. The bridge was closed to traffic and TxDOT performed an inspection to assess the fracture of a truss.

TxDOT pursued an emergency repair contract to repair the damage and return the bridge to service.

Plans were completed in early May. The emergency contract was executed and the bridge was opened again by May 29. ■



*Josh Gutzwiller (left) and John Henry are wearing face masks while inspecting a damaged bridge in the Beaumont District.*



*The truss on the Neches River Bridge after critical repairs were completed.*

# I AM A... DISTRICT PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING ENGINEER

## WACO DISTRICT

**A**fter obtaining an associate degree in civil design, Brenton Lane, district planning and programming engineer with the Waco District, joined TxDOT in 2004. He enrolled in the department's Tuition Assistance Program and completed his bachelor's degree in engineering in 2013. Lane believes the complexity and scale of the projects he gets to work on are unmatched by other industries and he loves that the work he does makes the lives of Texans better.

### **DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS AS A DISTRICT PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING ENGINEER.**

As the district planning and programming engineer, I get to be involved in our portfolio management, planning and scheduling of projects, plan review and even our local government projects. I'm part of the early discussions and planning efforts for new projects. I track them through their funding and development stages and ultimately to construction through our Plan Review Office. My day to day consists of reviewing project information and schedules, monitoring funding sources, forecasting budgets, helping develop our four-year plan and making sure that our group has the tools and information they need to do their jobs.

### **WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT YOUR ROLE?**

Every project that crosses the finish line is the result of the efforts of hundreds of people including our external partners like the metropolitan planning organizations, cities and elected officials. These efforts also include our division and district staff like planners, funding specialists, public information officers, environmental coordinators, utility coordinators, surveyors, designers, engineers, traffic specialists, review staff, construction staff and letting support. The list goes on and on. As a team, we are capable of remarkable things when we focus on the goals at hand and do our part.

### **WHAT SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES ARE CRUCIAL FOR SUCCESS IN THIS ROLE?**

You must be able to work well with others. Everything we do, every project, is a joint effort of many, many people. Being able to foster relationships, listen to others and brainstorm ideas is vitally important to the success of a project.

### **WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE WACO DISTRICT?**

The people in the Waco District are second to none. The Waco District is a place where you are accepted and encouraged to participate and grow in your career. People here help each other. It also doesn't hurt that Waco is home to the greatest university in the world, Baylor University. Being one of the few Baylor Bears working at TxDOT, I had to get my Baylor plug in somewhere. Sic' em.



“

Being able to foster relationships, listen to others and brainstorm ideas is vitally important to the success of a project.

”

**BRENTON LANE**

TxDOT photo

*EDITOR'S NOTE: We would like to thank Brenton for following good social distancing measures and capturing his own photograph for this article. ■*

# District Safety Officers step up for unique challenges

**A**cross Texas, TxDOT safety officers are stepping up in ways big and small to respond to unique safety challenges facing their districts. Whether keeping their districts updated on new protocols or finding new ways to reinforce safe hygiene, the TxDOT family is safer thanks to the efforts of safety officers around the state.

“It is well known that safety is TxDOT’s top priority, and rightfully so. But the coronavirus crisis has uniquely focused our attention on the safety of our family, friends and co-workers,” said Valente Olivarez Jr., Corpus Christi District engineer. “It takes a special person to keep others safe, but that is exactly what our district safety officers are doing every day.”

Safety officers work to promote employee safety and serve as a resource to both employees and district leadership. They perform safety-related duties within the district safety program including performing trainings, investigating crashes, coordinating safety meetings and other duties to make sure safety remains a top priority.

Like many safety officers across the state, Safety Officers Benny Trevino, James Collins and Chris Santos in the Corpus Christi District worked as liaisons to their maintenance sections and area offices. During the past few months, they communicated twice per week with these offices and delivered personal protective equipment, water, masks and other essential items as needed. District leadership has also relied on them to regularly check with district maintenance sections to provide information, set up safety protocols, answer questions and ensure that district employees are aware of the department’s COVID-19 safety guidelines and are following them.

“Our safety officers have stepped up and stepped beyond,” said Olivarez. “On behalf of the entire Corpus Christi District, I thank them for their admirable dedication to our safety.”



*(l to r) Corpus Christi Safety Officers Chris Santos, James Collins and Benny Trevino. Photo taken November 2019.*

In the Waco District, Safety Officers Larry Kylman and Brandon Sanders tried to harness positive peer pressure to reinforce good safety habits. Kylman believes that employees who observe their peers following protocols will be more motivated to follow along than if they received a lecture from a supervisor. By placing hygiene products like hand sanitizer and Spray-N-Go every 5 feet in most areas, they ensured employees had little excuse not to practice good hygiene.

According to Kylman, district safety officers serve as the eyes and ears for the district engineer and assist as a trusted confidant and advisor when facing safety-related challenges. Safety officers also play a role as coach and mentor to other employees and model safe behavior.

“All Waco employees view Larry and Brandon as safety mentors and confidants, which allows them to quickly and efficiently share best practices across the



district's maintenance offices, area offices and district headquarters," said Michael Bolin, deputy district engineer for the Waco District.

With so many changes occurring on a regular basis, being proactive rather than reactive helped the Waco District get the supplies they needed in advance.

"Brandon and Larry were always looking ahead, even as far back as February, to speculate on upcoming possible pinch points, trouble spots and supply chain interruptions," said Bolin. "In addition, understanding that mental fatigue resulting from frequent and extreme changes can equate to distraction in the field, these two focused on quick and effective strategies to help offices settle into a 'new normal.'"

In the Yoakum District, Safety Officers Tim O'Neill and Logan Barton also worked tirelessly to relay important information to employees while addressing their

*Continued on page 10*

“  
Our safety officers have  
stepped up and stepped  
beyond. I thank them  
for their admirable  
dedication to our safety.”

”  
**VALENTE OLIVAREZ JR.**



*Waco Safety Officer Brandon Sanders wears a face mask and PPE while performing a temperature check in the morning.*

Continued from page 15

concerns. In addition to standard safety officer functions such as work zone visits and attending individual group morning meetings, O'Neill and Barton worked with their maintenance supervisors and area engineers to ensure that all Yoakum District work groups still reporting to their work locations understood and followed TxDOT's COVID-19 safety protocols.

"Through these difficult times, Tim and Logan have served as essential employees to keep safety at the forefront and have gone the extra mile to keep our employees safe as well as healthy," said Yoakum District Director of Transportation Planning and Development Jeffery Vinklerek. "They are going above and beyond by performing office and procedure inspections throughout the district as well as sharing best practices."

O'Neill said they will continue to observe, advise and assist all district employees as they work through this current challenge.

"Our goal during normal times has always been that every employee makes it home safely at the end of the day," he said. "That goal is even more challenging and important today."

Thanks to the many safety officers across the state for their continued efforts to keep the TxDOT family safe. ■



(Left to right) Safety Officer Logan Barton, Yoakum District Engineer Paul Reitz and Safety Officer Tim O'Neill accepting the Texas Bluebonnet Safety Award for the Yoakum District in August 2018.



Waco Safety Officer Larry Kylman inspects a TxDOT vehicle.

# MOVE ALONG LITTLE DOGGIES

**S**ometimes to build a road, you must go “Beyond the Road.” Such was the case for a colony of sod poodles in Amarillo. For those unfamiliar with the name, sod poodles are more commonly known as prairie dogs.

Once upon a time, prairie dogs served as the caretakers of the fields of the Texas Panhandle — fields that have become increasingly sparse as cities like Amarillo have grown. A huge part of that growth is the relocation and expansion of State Loop 335, which will ultimately move the Loop one mile westward and over I-40 and Amarillo Boulevard, also known as Route 66.

The overpass will cross through the abandoned Amarillo Helium Plant, which was the world’s only helium production facility when completed in 1929 and served important national defense needs during World War II. It became the nation’s chief helium research and development facility after 1943. It closed in 1996. Until recently, it also served as home to a colony of the cute little critters.

In the spirit of TxDOT’s mission of Connecting You with Texas, in early June of this year, it was the mission of TxDOT’s Amarillo District to capture this colony of prairie dogs for quarantine prior to connecting them elsewhere in Texas.

“This is the worst day in their lives,” says Lynda Watson, a professional prairie dog relocater retained by TxDOT to help protect and preserve these gardeners of the prairie. Even so, it’s the first day of the rest of their lives, which will be lived out on a ranch, more than 100 miles away from Amarillo.

“Ranchers have become increasingly aware of the benefits offered by the presence of the prairie dog,” Watson says. “They get to the mesquite as it comes up and they clip it off before it becomes overgrown brush.”

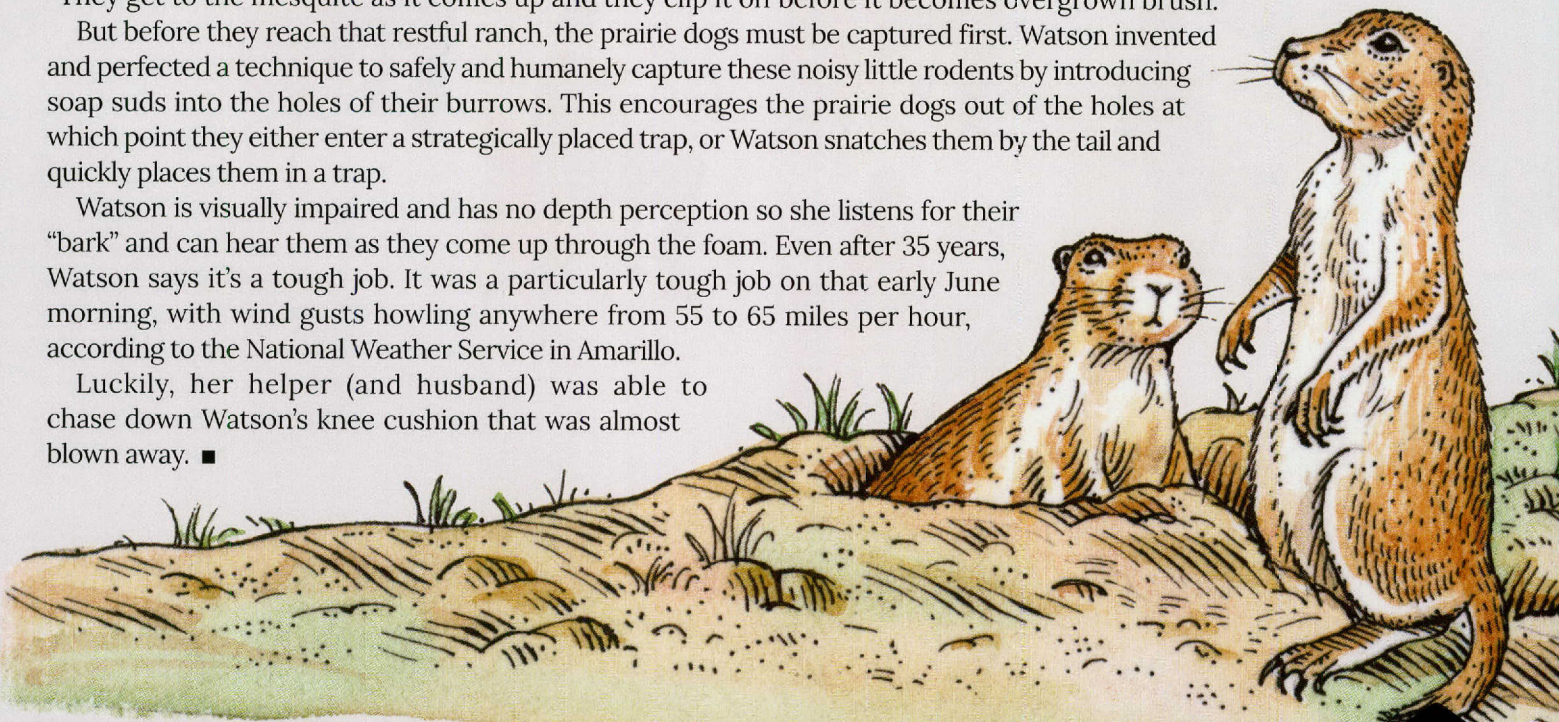
But before they reach that restful ranch, the prairie dogs must be captured first. Watson invented and perfected a technique to safely and humanely capture these noisy little rodents by introducing soap suds into the holes of their burrows. This encourages the prairie dogs out of the holes at which point they either enter a strategically placed trap, or Watson snatches them by the tail and quickly places them in a trap.

Watson is visually impaired and has no depth perception so she listens for their “bark” and can hear them as they come up through the foam. Even after 35 years, Watson says it’s a tough job. It was a particularly tough job on that early June morning, with wind gusts howling anywhere from 55 to 65 miles per hour, according to the National Weather Service in Amarillo.

Luckily, her helper (and husband) was able to chase down Watson’s knee cushion that was almost blown away. ■

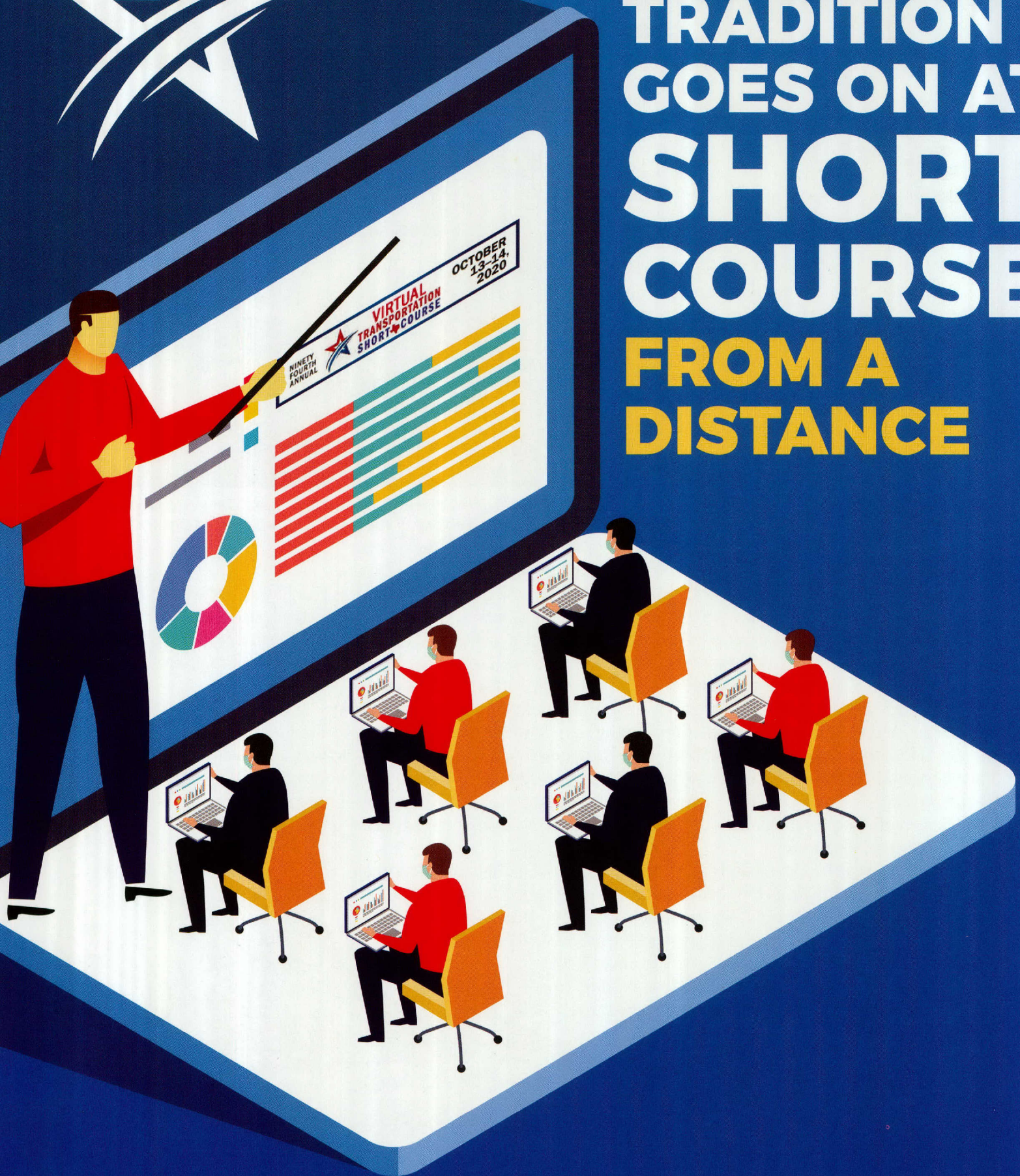


*Professional prairie dog relocater Lynda Watson helped TxDOT relocate a colony of the critters in the Amarillo District.*





# TRADITION GOES ON AT SHORT COURSE FROM A DISTANCE



**A** global pandemic won't stop the 94th Transportation Short Course from taking place on Oct. 13-14. However, this long-standing tradition is learning some new tricks as it moves to an entirely virtual event to ensure the safety of attendees.

Presented by TxDOT and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, Short Course provides a unique opportunity to exchange important technical information that improves transportation in Texas.

"Short Course has a very long history," said Ray Joiner, who leads and directs conferences and events. "It gives TxDOT engineers and industry professionals the opportunity to take continuing education. It also gives them a chance to network and share information on innovations and developments in their fields."

Short Course is typically held on the Texas A&M campus at TTI. However, the university has plans to use that space in the fall for classes to allow for social distancing. With the space unavailable, Short Course became a virtual event out of necessity.

"The shift to a virtual event would not have been anyone's choice in normal times, but it does give the opportunity to invite more people than could usually attend," said Joiner.

Virtual conferences have been around for years, but today they look much different.

"I did virtual meetings in 2009 and 2010 that were just live streams of the sessions," said Joiner. "It was like watching a television show. Now events are much more immersive and interactive."

As TxDOT and TTI staff plan for the event, they have had to rethink everything with an eye to respecting tradition but an awareness of the new format.

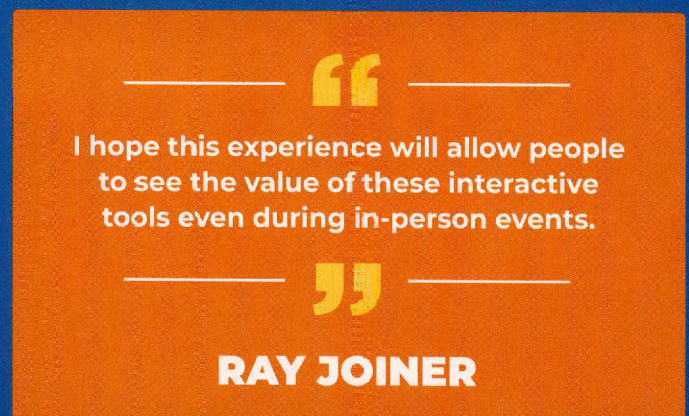
"Virtual events are actually a lot more work to put together," said Joiner. "Virtual attendees are watching on a screen and you need to be aware that your event is competing with a lot of potential distractions. We are asking attendees to take a journey with us, but we also need to work hard to engage them."

One tool for engaging attendees is the Socio app, which is available for desktop and mobile devices and can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play. Through the Socio app, attendees can review presentations, see the conference schedule, participate in polls and games, ask questions, connect one-on-one with other attendees and receive push notifications about upcoming sessions. A link to the app will be sent to attendees following registration a few days prior to the event.

"We've used the Socio app in the past at Short Course but only about 33% of attendees downloaded it," said Joiner. "We haven't taken full advantage of it because of that limited adoption rate. For this year, everyone will be using it."

In addition, the conference will use the video conferencing platform Zoom — which has received a lot of attention this year — to broadcast all the sessions.

Attendees to the upcoming Short Course will also have to adjust their expectations. The virtual event provides unique opportunities, but participants must be open to new experiences. Patience and preparation are a must, Joiner said.



Here are some tips for getting the most out of the virtual Short Course:

- Download the app ahead of time.
- Sign into the app a half hour before the event starts.
- Be early to live events.
- Review the session presentations to decide which ones to attend.
- Review the information provided for getting help for technical problems.

"The effort that you put into a virtual event will affect how much you get out of it," said Joiner. "I encourage attendees to participate in the polls and games, to use the one-on-one networking options, to review the presentations and to ask questions."

Short Course is not the only event to move to an online format this year and this trend will probably continue through the end of the year. The tools used in virtual events will likely endure even longer.

"I hope this experience will allow people to see the value of these interactive tools even during in-person events," said Joiner. "They can really enhance the experience." ■

# MASK AND FACE COVERING PROTOCOL FOR TxDOT WORKERS



**A**s the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention adjust their guidance related to respiratory protection associated with COVID-19, TxDOT continues to follow guidelines designed to keep us healthy and safe. The CDC recommends the use of cloth face coverings in “public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.”

The guidance emphasizes that cloth face coverings are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators, which continue to be in critical demand for health care workers and medical first responders.

According to the TxDOT Playbook for Safely Returning to In-Office Operations which can be found on Crossroads, personnel working inside TxDOT facilities will be required to wear a face covering when outside of their normal work area (i.e., cubicle or office) or when interacting with others when social distancing cannot be maintained. If an employee is in a common space such as a copier room or breakroom, a face covering must be worn. In addition, they may be worn at all times as a courtesy to others. In some cases, local building/working conditions may warrant specific guidelines for cloth face masks.

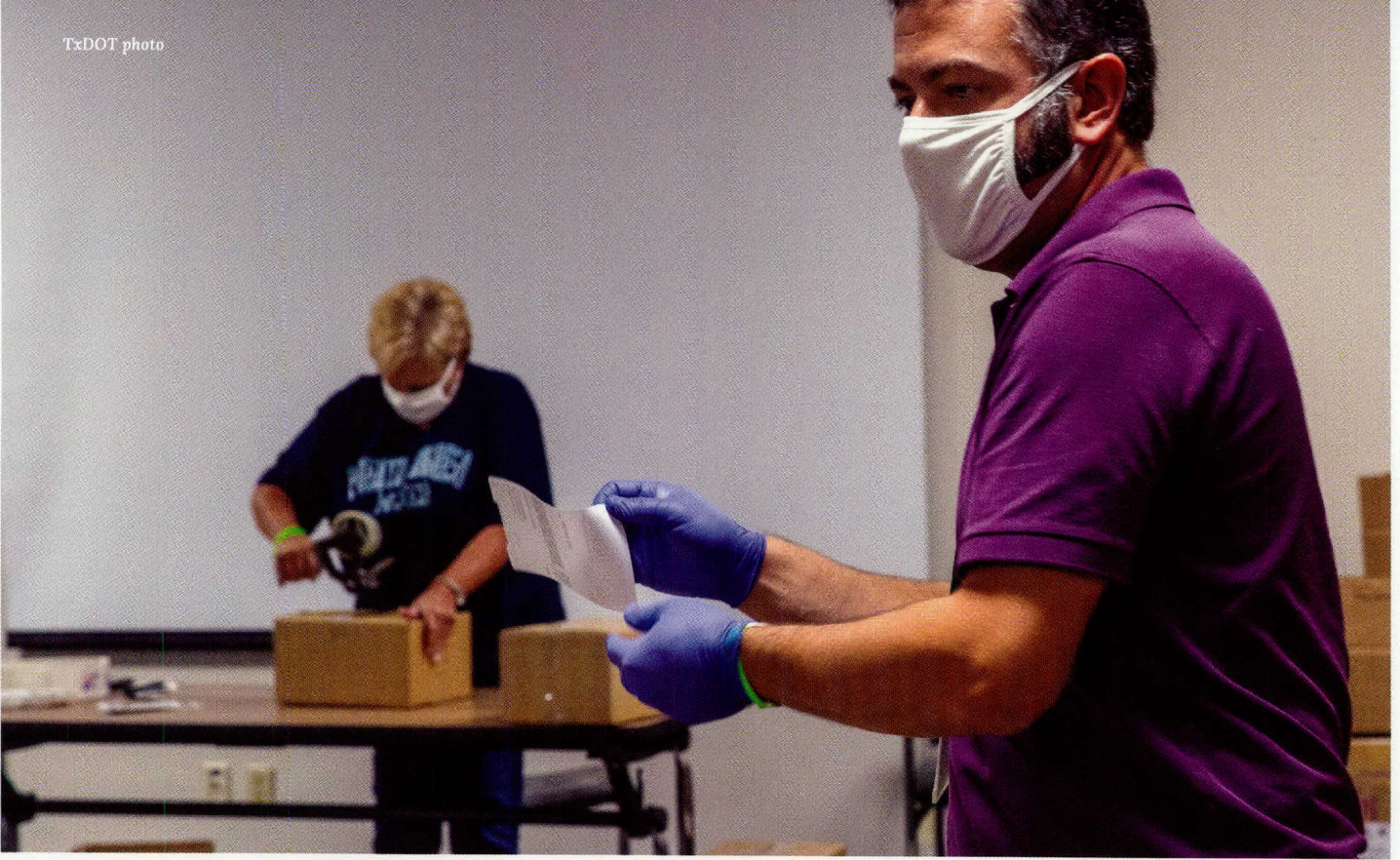
When available, TxDOT will provide each employee coming into a facility with a reusable face covering. If these are not immediately available, employees must provide their own face covering and may use improvised face coverings constructed in accordance with CDC guidance.

Employees will regularly clean and maintain their face coverings in accordance with CDC guidance.

The CDC recommendations also reiterate the importance of social distancing, hand washing and other previously established guidance associated with preventing the spread of COVID-19.

TxDOT may alter its guidance as the recommendations of federal and state health agencies change.

For additional information, including a video from U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams on how to make your own face covering, please visit the CDC website, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). ■



*Bonita Jennings (left) and Theo Kosub from the Public Transportation Division package cloth masks for shipment to transit providers across Texas.*

# CLOTH MASKS FOR TEXAS TRANSIT WORKERS

**H**eeding the call to help the public is always a priority for the Public Transportation Division and this summer was no different. The division was tapped by the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist in the distribution of thousands of cloth face masks to transit organizations. TxDOT was given the responsibility of distributing masks statewide to 53 Texas transit providers.

Twenty-thousand cloth face masks were provided to urban and rural transit agencies statewide for employees. These workers are on the frontlines as they transport passengers every day. Having the necessary equipment to protect them against the spread of COVID-19 is important. The masks are washable, reusable and crucial as transit workers try to stay healthy during the pandemic. The largest provider on TxDOT's list received

more than 500 masks, while the smallest received approximately 40. At the discretion of each transit agency, the masks could also be distributed to riders to enhance safety for everyone in the vehicles.

Division staffers Theo Kosub, Karen Burkhard, Adam Bailey, Antonia Casares and Bonita Jennings volunteered to meet at the Riverside Campus in Austin to get the distribution underway. They unpacked 56 boxes of masks, counted and sorted them and re-packed them for delivery to 53 transit organizations statewide. The delivery was made possible by Support Services Division mailroom employees Abel Davilla and Randall Tod.

Those involved said it felt great to do a good thing for employees. They also noted that the first in-person contact with their TxDOT family in months felt great, even if it had to be at a safe distance, with masks and gloves. ■

TxDOT photo

# Clemens wins prestigious WASHTO Award

**D**eputy Dallas District Engineer Ceason Clemens recently received the prestigious Dr. L.I. Hewes Award from the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. The award, which is traditionally presented during the association's annual conference which was cancelled this year due to COVID-19, was presented to Clemens during a conference call with TxDOT administration, Dallas District Engineer Mo Bur and numerous members of WASHTO leadership.

The conference call was actually a ruse, staged to surprise Clemens and present her with the award.

Once on the call, WASHTO and TxDOT leadership, along with Clemens' family joined for the announcement. The surprise worked. Clemens wasn't even aware she had been nominated.

In presenting the award, former WASHTO President Kyle Schneweis of Nebraska called Clemens a "most deserving recipient." Clemens was recognized in part for her engineering prowess, innovation and collaboration with several TxDOT project partners that ultimately found solutions that supported the needs of the traveling public and the Dallas community.



Clemens was recognized in part for her engineering prowess, innovation and collaboration with several TxDOT project partners that ultimately found solutions that supported the needs of the traveling public and the Dallas community.



*Ceason Clemens (right) receives her award from Dallas District Engineer Mo Bur.*

Clemens' track record proves she is a leader, but it also shows how much of a visionary she has become in her 16 years at TxDOT. The Plano native began her career at TxDOT in 2004 as a summer engineering technician. She quickly worked her way through the ranks to become the deputy district engineer for one of the largest districts in the state. Clemens has guided the district on several complex high-profile projects that garnered public support and recognition for the department.

During the WASHTO ceremony, Clemens was also recognized as a role model and champion for women and young engineers at TxDOT. Clemens has worked

to empower her staff by providing skills to succeed and opportunities to lead. Many members of her team have advanced their careers at TxDOT under her leadership.

During her acceptance speech, Clemens said the award honors the work of the Dallas District.

"I can't do anything by myself," she said, with her parents proudly watching and listening online. "We have a great team."

The Dr. L.I. Hewes Award recognizes a recipient's outstanding contribution to the highway development program in the Western region of the United States. Clemens is one of only 12 TxDOT employees who have won the award in its more than 70-year history. ■

# TxDOT

# ARCHEOLOGISTS

# HARNESS CANINE POWER

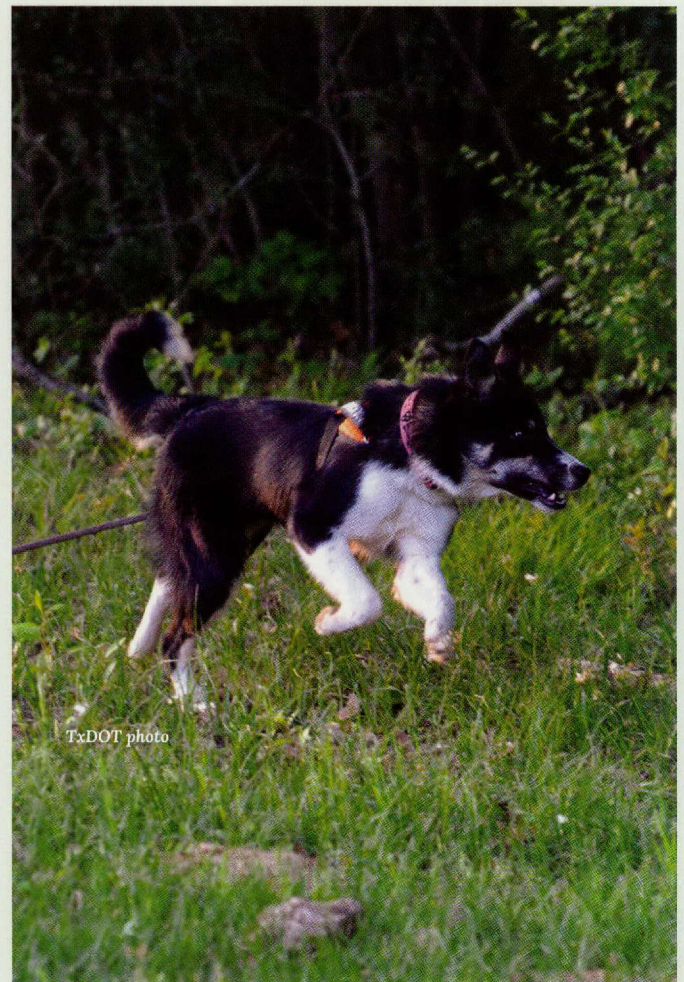
**T**xDOT archeologists trust several time-tested techniques to discover sites and artifacts in the field: historic maps, aerial photography, ground-penetrating radar, shovel testing and controlled excavation using heavy equipment. Their latest approach, however, relies on the natural capabilities of man's best friend.

To supplement traditional methods, archeologists are turning to dogs for additional help. But not just any pup will do. Cadaver dogs — the highly-trained canines used by police and search-and-rescue teams to locate human remains — are now sniffing out burials dating back hundreds, even thousands, of years.

Archeological investigations for TxDOT's U.S. 77 project in Driscoll combined traditional techniques with dog-sniffing investigations to learn more about a site occupied by Middle Archaic to Late Prehistoric peoples, a timeframe dating from 1,000 to 5,200 years ago. Initial efforts uncovered artifacts related to early cooking methods and revealed a prehistoric burial. Archeologists consulted with federally-recognized Tribes to properly care for the remains.

Dog-sniffing investigations led by Dr. Ben Alexander and staff from the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University detected a second burial in an unexcavated area. When a trained dog picks up the right scent, it signals the find to its handler by lying down. Excavation at the spot verified the find. Tribal members requested that the burial remain in place, and TxDOT protected the burial site throughout construction.

Investigations using archeology dogs are promising. The method is less invasive than traditional approaches and is especially helpful in locating sensitive cultural resources. But there is still much to learn about its benefits and limitations. Environmental factors like sun, temperature, vegetation and water affect how much scent remains at a burial site. Additional testing is needed to help scientists better understand how far



*Investigations using archeology dogs are promising.*

back in time a canine's nose can detect. And the dogs, often raised and taught by volunteers, require more than a year of specialized training.

TxDOT will continue to complement its traditional archeological survey methods with dog-sniffing investigations and share results of the technique. These canine colleagues could prove to be another trusty tool for the archeology team. ■

# BACK TO BASICS:

## Paper letting keeps TxDOT moving forward

**A**s a result of the ransomware incident that hit TxDOT last spring, the Construction Division organized a grueling all-paper letting for the first time in more than a decade.

When Construction Division Director Gina Gallegos heard TxDOT's computer systems were down in late May and would continue to be down for an indeterminate time, she realized they'd have to do their monthly letting by hand.

"We knew that we still had to have letting. That was not an option whether or not we would have letting," Gallegos said.

Letting is the process of receiving and opening bids for construction and maintenance projects across the state. Gallegos said skipping just one month could have meant months of project delays and job losses.

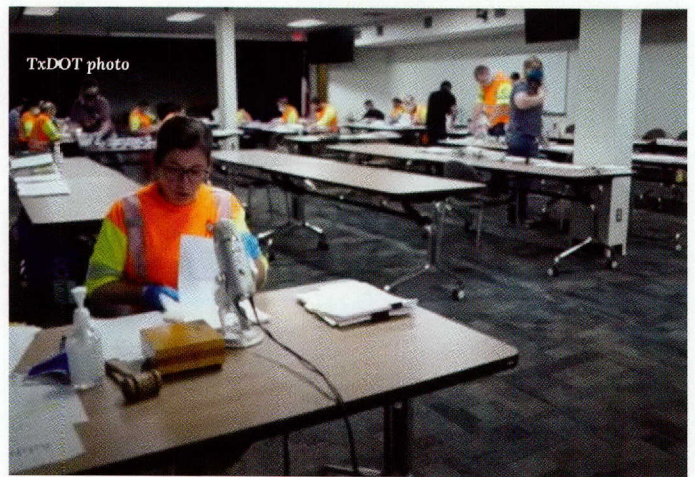
"So, it's for not only our infrastructure, but jobs in general and really keeping our economy going," Gallegos said.

Since TxDOT usually uses computers to manage the letting process, Gallegos knew this was going to be difficult. They had to award 122 construction and maintenance projects worth \$652 million.

On June 4 and 5, around 35 volunteers from multiple divisions came to Austin for the letting. Usually contractors submit their bids for contracts online. This time, they either had to mail it in or bring it to the department.

This piled on another hurdle. Not only did employees have to do the letting by hand, but they had to do it during a global pandemic. They took multiple COVID-19 safety precautions including wearing masks, social distancing and handwashing. They also set up a drive-through for contractors to drop off their paper bids.

"We had cones lined up to identify which driveway to use. It was a one-way drive-through and they would drive out the other way. That way the contractors would not have to exit their vehicles," Gallegos said.



*Construction Division Director Gina Gallegos reads the low bidders on a YouTube livestream in TxDOT's first all-paper letting in more than a decade.*

Employees then packed up the envelopes and took them inside where there was a team of people to review, tab, double-check and triple-check the bids.

"We had people stationed to open, stamp and sort the bids," Gallegos said. "Then they had to enter those bids into a spreadsheet. So, you are talking about bids that could have hundreds of line items and they are entering those by hand," she said.

It was exhausting. They worked well into the night on the first day and stayed late on the second day. Eventually, they got it done with Gallegos reading off which contractors were the low bidders on a YouTube livestream.

"Our biggest thing was, don't drop the ball," Gallegos said.

Looking back, Gallegos is proud of the TxDOT team from multiple divisions who worked together to get it done. She even said they'd do it again.

"I think we're ready. If it happens again we'll be ready to go," Gallegos said. ■

## Gardening brings healthy bounty

**A**ctress Audrey Hepburn once said, “To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.” Her words couldn’t be more appropriate for these COVID-19 times. While gardening has always been popular, more people are turning to their yards to plant flowers, grow vegetables and hope for a brighter future.

Gardening yields many benefits. Working in the soil to bring things to bloom gives you a sense of accomplishment while boosting your mental health, especially during periods of high stress. A recent study by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service found that being around plants can improve your overall well-being.

“Interacting with nature can increase self-esteem and mood, reduce anger and improve general psychological well-being,” said Charlie Hall, AgriLife Extension horticulture and economics specialist.

Gardening also provides:

- Exercise.
- Positive at-home leisure to cope with boredom.
- Access to fresh food.
- Exposure to vitamin D to help with calcium levels.

Through gardening, families can learn where food comes from by working on a family project together.

Alice Area office employees in the Corpus Christi District believe in the benefits of gardens so much, they decided to create one at their TxDOT property. Construction Inspection Manager Jonathan Boehm and other employees used personal time to create a bountiful vegetable garden.

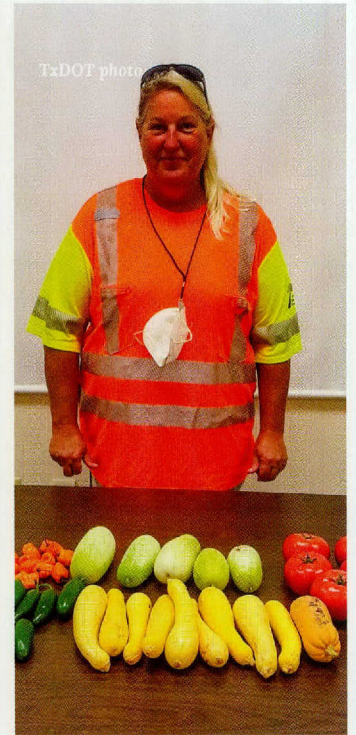
“Gardening was listed as an activity for ‘Get Fit Texas.’ Many of us already had home gardens, so we decided to create one at work. Planting, weeding and maintaining the bed helped us earn Get Fit minutes during the challenge,” said Boehm.

Depending on the season, Alice office employees can find squash, jalapenos, habanero peppers, banana peppers, watermelons, tomatoes, cucumbers and cherry tomatoes in their garden. Employees can even grab a vegetable straight from the vine for their lunch. Talk about fresh!

Boehm witnessed the benefits of building community by gardening with co-workers.



*Jonathan Boehm shows off watermelon from the garden at the Alice Area Maintenance office.*



*Julie Brueberg displays a bountiful harvest from the employee garden.*

“The garden gets you outside to stretch your legs and make conversation with other employees,” he said. “It helps boost your day. And when COVID-19 hit and many of us worked from home, our maintenance crew stepped in to keep the garden in good shape.”

If you want to start a garden or get expert advice on the garden you already have, visit the Texas AgriLife Extension for gardening tips. ■

**LIVE WELL  
WORK WELL**  
Texas Department of Transportation

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

## 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 Sept. 11.

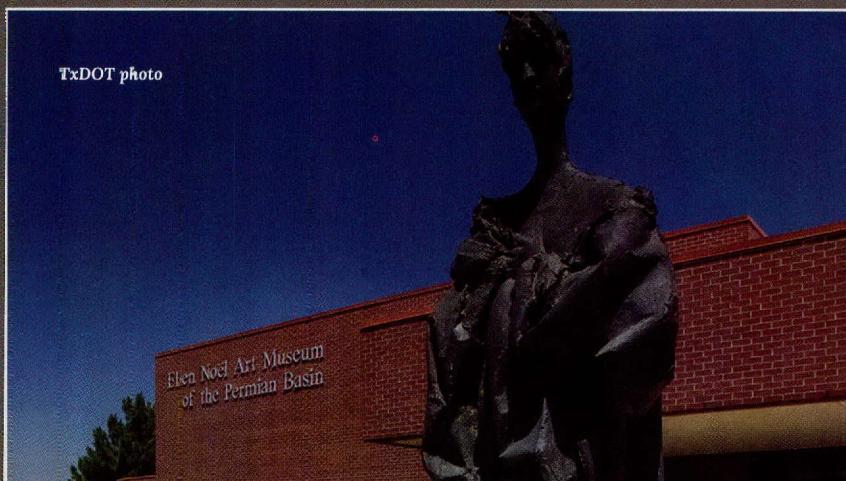


## Identified:

Congratulations to our first identifier David Scheel (SAT).

Last edition's photo featured the Ellen Noel Art Museum of the Permian Basin at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin in Odessa.

Others correctly identifying the photo were Lanny Wadle (FIN), Kim Deal (LFK), Chris Cowen (BRY), Joseph Hagler (LFK), Darren McDaniel and Barbara Frische (retired). ■



## UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

**Sept. 7**

**LABOR DAY**

(Agency Closed)

**Sept. 24**

**TEXAS TRANSPORTATION**

**COMMISSION MEETING**

(Austin)

**Sept. 28**

**YOM KIPPUR**

(Optional Holiday)

**Oct. 29**

**TEXAS TRANSPORTATION**

**COMMISSION MEETING**

(Austin)

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

EDITOR'S NOTE: TN has a new News feature combining TxDOT Talk Around the State and 5 Things You Need to Know Right Now. All the great content about events, people and news is still here. Check it out!

### AUSTIN DISTRICT

#### TxDOT celebrates the Americans with Disabilities Act 30th Anniversary

On July 26, 1990, former President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law. It was the first comprehensive civil rights law for people with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination in employment and providing accessibility requirements in public accommodations, transportation, telecommunications and more.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the signing of the ADA, 21 interested groups, including TxDOT, planned a series of virtual workshops called ADA30 Moving Forward.

The ADA30 workshops featured 12 virtual workshops throughout the month, culminating in a Texas-sized virtual celebration. The celebratory event was held on July 24 and featured notable disability advocates from Texas who shared their personal experiences with a focus on the past, present and future of the ADA.

TxDOT will continue to expand its partnerships with disability advocacy groups and other stakeholders, including cities, counties and transit authorities who share the common interest to improve and increase accessibility for all. ■

### FLEET OPERATIONS DIVISION

#### Fleet Operations tests on-board road cameras

The Fleet Operations Division is working with the Pharr, Beaumont, Yoakum and Bryan districts to pilot an on-board video camera that is being beta tested by the Fleet Navigator, or FNAV, service provider, Verizon Connect.

The project involves mounting a small, outward-facing camera to a vehicle's rearview mirror. The camera records video of the road ahead when triggered by specific events, such as hard braking or sudden acceleration. The camera will not record activity inside the cab and is activated by events that could set off an existing FNAV alert. The video could provide more information about the circumstances surrounding the alert.

Through the pilot, Fleet Operations will explore the potential for the technology to enhance safety and situational awareness, particularly in emergency operations. The project team will evaluate the capabilities for the camera to monitor on-demand snowplow and debris cleanup operations.

The cameras are being tested on five vehicles each in the pilot districts. The types of vehicles piloting the technology include pickup trucks, dump trucks, SUVs and aerial devices. After the test phase, Fleet Operations will review the findings with Verizon and determine possible customizations and applications that would meet TxDOT's needs, based on user feedback. The division will then compare the findings with the similar projects in-flight to determine the best way forward.

The pilot districts were selected because they are in areas that are likely to experience tropical storm activity and might have an opportunity to test the camera's usefulness in emergency operations. Other TxDOT divisions and districts are also testing similar products in the use of video and telematics for snowplow tracking and other applications, including roadway engineering analysis and emergency operations. ■



*An on-board video camera is being beta tested in select districts by the Fleet Navigator service provider, Verizon Connect.*

## DALLAS DISTRICT

### Traffic relief ahead for I-635 East in Dallas County



TxDOT photo

*The \$1.7 billion I-635 East Project will improve mobility in Dallas County.*

Relief for I-635 East, one of North Texas' most congested roadways, has arrived in the form of major reconstruction. The \$1.7 billion I-635 East Project will improve mobility along I-635 in Dallas County. The design-build project spans 11 miles, from just east of U.S. 75 in North Dallas to I-30 in Mesquite.

Construction began this spring and will last through late 2024. The project was first environmentally cleared in early 2003, and has been revised occasionally until it became the region's top funding priority several years ago.

The project features reconstruction and widening of I-635 from U.S. 75 to I-30, including the I-635/I-30 interchange. The mainlanes will be expanded to include an additional lane in each direction and the existing HOV/Express Lanes will be rebuilt with wider shoulders and a concrete barrier separating them from the mainlanes. When complete, there will be a total of 10 mainlanes and two TEXpress Lanes. The project will also include the construction of continuous frontage roads and provide numerous intersection improvements, including a new Skillman Street bridge over I-635.

The project will provide much needed congestion relief for I-635 East, which was originally opened in 1969 with a capacity of 180,000 cars per day. Recently, the average daily traffic on I-635 reached more than 230,000. The Texas Transportation Commission has designated the project as part of the statewide Texas Clear Lanes initiative, organized to address the most congested roadways in the state's metropolitan areas. ■

### Williams named district engineer in Atlanta

Jere A. "Buddy" Williams is the new district engineer for the Atlanta District. He replaces Mike Anderson who retired in May. In his new role, Williams will oversee the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the state transportation system for the nine-county Atlanta District. He comes to Atlanta from the Materials and Tests Division in Austin, where he has served as its director since 2019.

Williams started his career with TxDOT in 1987 as a summer intern for the Clarksville Maintenance Section. After earning his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Texas A&M University in 1990, he accepted a full-time position in the Atlanta District's Texarkana Area Office, obtained his professional engineering license and was named assistant area engineer.

### Bass named WASHTO president

TxDOT's Executive Director James Bass became president of the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials earlier this year. WASHTO provides a forum for exchanging ideas, exploring and adapting techniques, promoting quality and best practices for implementation.

### Garrison named director of Materials and Tests Division

Miles R. Garrison is the new director of the Materials and Tests Division. In his new role, Garrison will oversee and direct the department's statewide quality monitoring and quality assurance programs by developing material specifications and test procedures.

Garrison earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Texas A&M University in 1983 and accepted a full-time position in the Atlanta District's Mount Pleasant Area Office. He obtained his professional engineer license while at the Gilmer Area Office and served as area engineer there for five years. Garrison served 25 years as the Atlanta District's materials engineer and concurrently 20 years as the pavement engineer. He has been the deputy director for the Materials and Tests Division since 2019. ■

# SECTION HONORS

## MIGHTINESS WITH PEDRO AWARD



TxDOT photo

Recent honoree Benjamin King with the Pedro Award (wearing a mask, of course!).

**W**ithin the Transportation Programs Division, the Project and Portfolio Section (formerly the Project Management Office) established a fun and lighthearted way to motivate its employees. The Pedro Award is a life-sized resin doll of a chihuahua and he has traveled around the state to different honorees the past six years.

As the section grew from its beginning in 2012, its team members came to comprise a diverse group of employees, including some working remotely. At the time, having employees working outside of Austin was unusual for a division, so there was a need to build a sense of pride, motivation and comradery amongst the team. The Pedro Award was born.

The little chihuahua is a physical representation of the team's grit and mightiness, despite its small size. The section's goal is to be the agency's

resource for project managers and affect the way projects are managed. Pedro signifies that the small can be mighty and make an impact! The award reminds team members that what they do matters within the organization.

Nominations are requested from the team and the names of the winners are inscribed on a plaque. The award is given each quarter and recipients get to keep Pedro until they pass him along to the next winner.

This past quarter, the Pedro Award was presented to Benjamin King, transportation engineer.

"Being awarded the Pedro Award has provided me with an astounding feeling of accomplishment," King said. "Receiving the award caught me off guard due to my short tenure with the team. It feels good to be recognized by my fellow peers and co-workers for the work done in unison with the team." ■



# VIRTUAL CELEBRATION MARKS COMPLETION OF I-35 AND OLTORF PROJECT IN AUSTIN

**C** OVID-19 may have stopped in-person gatherings, but TxDOT has found a way to celebrate the completion of the I-35 at Oltorf Street Improvement project, virtually. This Texas Clear Lanes-funded project is the eighth Mobility35 project to be constructed.

During the Texas Transportation Commission meeting in June 25, a ribbon-cutting video was presented, featuring Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr., State Rep. Eddie Rodriguez and TxDOT Austin District Engineer Tucker Ferguson. It also included video footage of the completed project.

“When Governor Greg Abbott asked the Texas Transportation Commission to come up with a Texas Clear Lanes Initiative, the goal was to relieve congestion in our metro areas,” said Chairman Bugg. “Today, we’re celebrating another major step in that effort.”

The \$42.6 million I-35 at Oltorf Street Improvement project included reconstruction of the Oltorf Street bridge, construction of extended entrance/exit ramps and a braided ramp along northbound I-35. Pedestrian and bicycle enhancements were also made within the project limits.

“Even though we can’t be together, it is important we celebrate the improved mobility, safety and connectivity this project brings to I-35 users and the community,” said Ferguson. “This is one of several Mobility35 projects aimed at reducing commute times and improving the quality of life for the community. Something definitely worth celebrating.” ■



*A virtual ribbon cutting marked the opening of the I-35 at Oltorf Street Improvement project in Austin.*

## RECRUITING IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

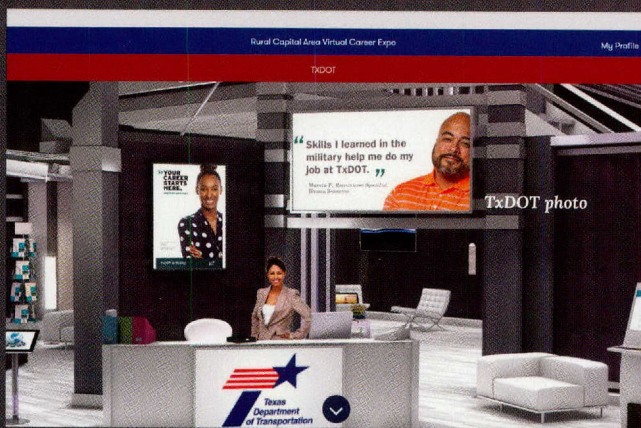
**T**he Talent Acquisition Team in the Human Resources Division takes adapting to change very seriously. What was once unusual is now being considered the new normal. Since recruiting and talent acquisition efforts for the agency never stop, the team has had to make some quick changes.

Due to the global pandemic, many colleges and agencies — including TxDOT — have begun using virtual recruiting. The team swiftly acclimated to the new environment. Virtual fair platforms aren’t just for reaching multiple people quickly and efficiently; the booths themselves are customizable to create a special user experience.

While the platforms differ, they all use a chatting service of some kind. When an individual enters a room, notification is provided. One-on-one chatting is then initiated and the team members work through their specific needs. The attendee’s profile includes contact information and a resume. These applicants are grateful for the one-on-one attention and are genuinely excited to apply to open positions.

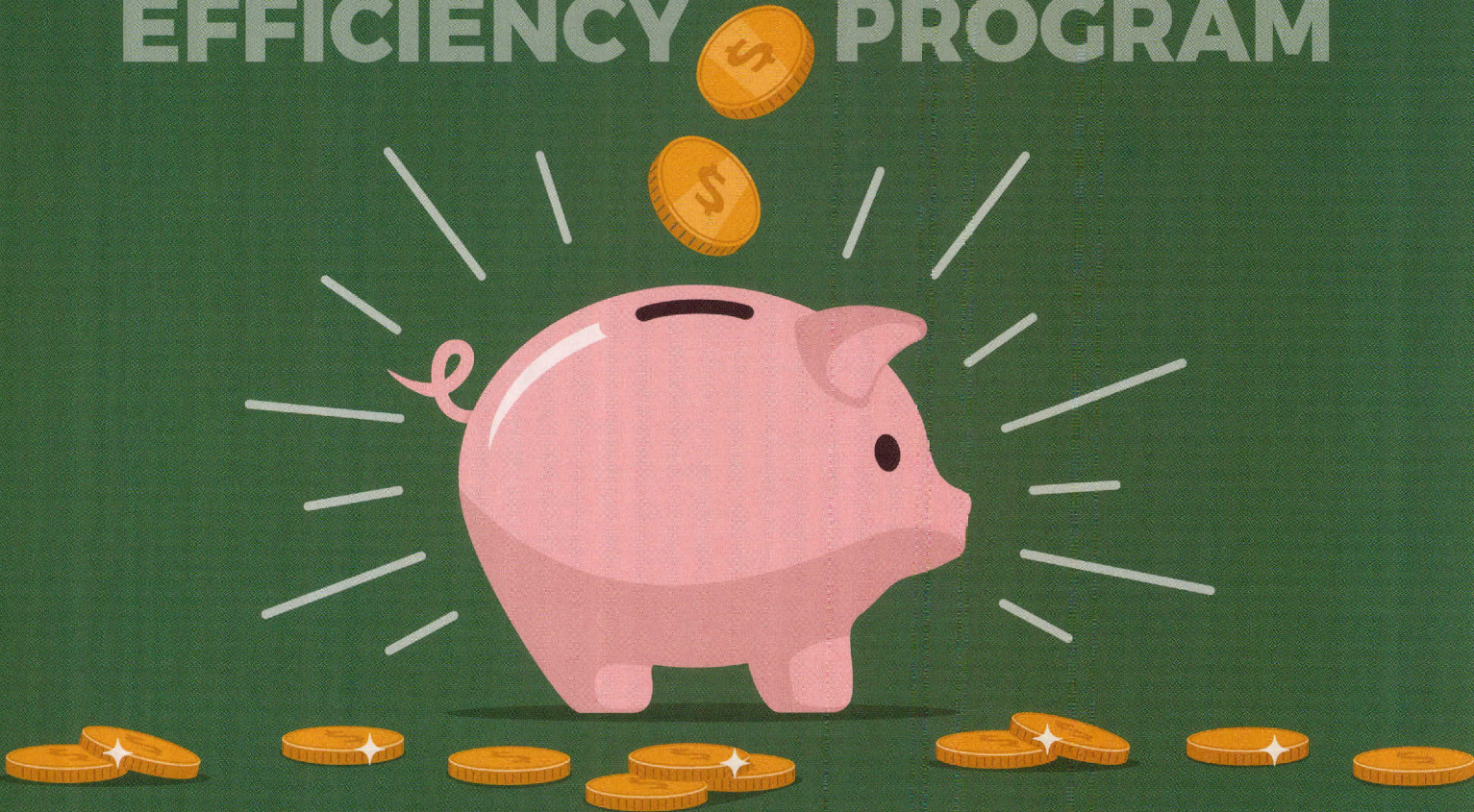
To date, the team has met with more than 400 qualified applicants through virtual recruiting fairs, such as the National Society of Black Engineers, Texas Tech University, Engineering and Science Virtual Fair, Workforce Solutions and Hire Heroes.

Although in-person events will be missed, TxDOT will continue to stay on the cutting edge of recruiting efforts. If you would like to know more about these virtual fairs, please reach out to a member of the Talent Acquisition Team: Sheila.Brooks@txdot.gov, Charlene.Shirley@txdot.gov, Angela.Carrizales@txdot.gov, Jlevine@txdot.gov or Marvin.Faulcon@txdot.gov. ■



*An example of a virtual booth at a recruiting event.*

# RECOGNIZING EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS FOR INNOVATION AND COST EFFICIENCY PROGRAM



**T**xDOT recognizes the value in evaluating and continually improving how it does business. The Innovation and Cost Efficiency Program provides the opportunity for all employees to provide input on how TxDOT can be a better steward of Texas resources. Employees can submit suggestions to the program to identify potential innovations, cost savings/recovery ideas and process improvements. Here are some suggestions that have been recently implemented and the outstanding employees who suggested them.

## **Decommissioning of BPRS**

The Construction, Maintenance and Information Technology divisions collaborated to decommission the legacy Bid Proposal Request System, or BPRS, which vendors used to request paper bid proposals but was redundant with the existing function in another system. The agency continues to have paper bidding capability – which proved indispensable in recent months – but this change supports increased electronic bidding during routine periods. It also eliminates system support time for staff and reduces risk due to occasional glitches in BPRS.

Thank you to all TxDOT employees who worked to make this transition a reality!

## **Eliminate petty cash**

The petty cash program was established many years ago to facilitate purchasing of miscellaneous items that could not be purchased through established methods. As purchasing methods have advanced, petty cash has become an outdated system with higher risk to the department than other purchasing methods. The Financial Management Division is collaborating with 15 districts that are closing their petty cash accounts, leading to greater efficiencies and more security for TxDOT's financial management.

TxDOT would like to recognize Heather Weeks with the Beaumont District for submitting this idea. ■

# Robert Stahl

## BRYAN DISTRICT



## Robert Stahl

### GENERAL TRANSPORTATION TECHNICIAN BRYAN DISTRICT

You could say Robert Stahl, general transportation technician with the Bryan District, has a lot of miles under his belt. He's worked for TxDOT for a decade and patrols more than 300 miles of highway to make sure signs are maintained. That means repairing damaged signs, installing new signs, trimming trees in front of signs and checking the reflectivity of signs. It should come as no surprise Stahl likes working with his hands when he's off the clock, too.

#### What is the best part of working in your district for TxDOT?

Teamwork. It goes a long way toward making good things happen on the job.

#### What part of your job do you like the most?

It feels good to set goals, work on a task and see it through to completion.

#### If you didn't work at TxDOT, what profession would you most likely do?

Construction! I like remodeling work. It's great helping my co-workers complete their pet projects, too.

#### Tell us a hobby you enjoy outside of work.

Carpentry! Again, I enjoy working with my hands.

#### Considering your district, this should be a no-brainer: Aggies or Longhorns?

Aggies! Home of the 12th Man!

#### Star Wars or Star Trek?

Star Wars. There have been so many good movies in the franchise.

#### Chevy or Ford truck?

Chevy, of course.

#### Do you like to exercise at a gym or outside?

I'm an outside type of person. I work outdoors; do projects. It's always great to be out in the open doing things you like to do.

#### Are you a cat or dog person and why?

Cat. Definitely. They're so independent and low maintenance. I like that.

#### If you could choose free groceries or a maid for a year, which would it be?

Gotta go with the food! That's a huge savings right there.

#### You're tearing up the dance floor. Are you two-stepping or line dancing?

Neither. My motto is just let it be.

#### If the year 2020 had a name, what would it be?

Challenging Adversity. ■

# MILESTONES

## JULY SERVICE AWARDS

### ABILENE

- 30 Amy J. Hart
- 20 Kyla K. McGuffin
- 10 Ricardo Camacho
- 5 Johnny Dempsey  
Gerald Lipke  
Trajan Wilson

### AMARILLO

- 35 Durward M. Dorris
- 15 Martin F. Walsh
- 5 Tracy D. Bridges  
Diane Byram  
Maria M. Collins  
Chris Conner  
Julian Garza  
April Meyer  
Gail D. Ramsay  
Anthony Reed

### ATLANTA

- 15 Dayna J. Mason
- 5 James T. Baxter  
Jeff B. Davis  
Henry W. Snider  
Tonya B. Wiley

### AUSTIN

- 35 Maurice Fifer
- 20 Christopher W. Ake  
Cole G. Farmer  
David J. Walenta  
Robert B. Wilson
- 15 Stephen G. Easley
- 10 Jorge Carrasco
- 5 Matthew R. Sanner  
Gerald M. Simpson  
Daryle Williams

### AVIATION

- 5 Julie Fielder

### BEAUMONT

- 15 Julia Ragsdale
- 5 Herbert R. Kirkpatrick  
Melissa C. McKague

### BRIDGE

- 5 Anthony Felderhoff

### BROWNWOOD

- 10 Michael P. Pugh
- 5 Canaan D. Cavitt

### BRYAN

- 10 Billy D. Avritt  
Dennis A. Krc  
Charles E. McDermott  
David W. McKibben  
Robert T. Stahl
- 5 Benjamin K. McNair  
Tammy M. Rabun  
Darnell M. Sandles  
Joshua M. Vrazel

### CHILDRESS

- 5 Jason W. Orr

### COMMUNICATIONS

- 15 Dianah D. Ascencio

### CONTRACT SERVICES

- 5 Betty Adams

### CORPUS CHRISTI

- 45 John M. Jacobs
- 15 Vicente Romero Jr.
- 10 Peter J. Albert  
Emilio Hernandez
- 5 Rachel Ebbitt  
Estevan Galvan  
Leonor Hernandez  
Eric Martinez  
Edward Meza  
John Palermo  
Gloria Salinas

### DALLAS

- 25 Nicki C. Kerksieck  
Juan A. Perez Jr.
- 20 Anhnguyet T. Nguyen
- 15 Ryan J. Badgley  
Terry L. Clark  
Monica P. Perez  
Richard F. Williford  
Shawn Yousefi
- 5 Kade C. Erwin  
Maria C. Facio  
John Lewis

### DESIGN

- 20 David L. Bedrich

### EL PASO

- 15 Anthony C. Marquez  
Moises Montes  
Jaime Soto
- 10 Rafael Gandara III

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 20 Carlos H. Swonke

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 35 Adrian Valencia  
Patricia Carrillo  
Nnabugwu W. Ezi
- 20 Victoria D. Gross  
Alva G. Hernandez  
David G. Maurer
- 10 Dustin L. Moore  
Darian Smith

### FLEET OPERATIONS

- 35 Ricky L. Nieman
- 30 Toby T. Towery
- 15 Mary A. Harris  
Stephen C. White
- 10 Heath L. Rothwell
- 5 Leland D. Christensen  
Jason R. Heaslet  
Michael M. Macias

### FORT WORTH

- 25 Gina Johannessen
- 20 Gary G. Cline  
David R. Oster

- 10 Tracy G. Hefner

- 5 Jaime Gomez  
Jamie E. Pierce

### HOUSTON

- 35 Mark D. Patterson
- 20 Stella P. Beserra  
Bruce E. Cash  
William M. Hausman
- 15 Algenon G. Byars  
Maria D. Pacheco
- 5 Eugene Ampomah  
Abdel Fellat  
Evan W. Kutnicki  
Kyle A. Mathis  
Joshua Merchant  
Micah J. Schluter

### HUMAN RESOURCES

- 5 Alexander Plotkin

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 5 Brent M. Eastman  
Angela Schwausch

### INTERNAL AUDIT

- 5 Alberto Calderon  
Rita E. Ruiz

### LAREDO

- 25 Jose M. Benites
- 5 Pedro A. Bustamante  
Raul Garza Jr.

### LUBBOCK

- 20 Domingo Q. Saldana
- 15 Juan M. Gonzalez  
Paulino F. Gonzalez  
Tommy H. Walden Jr.
- 10 Jeremy W. Stanley
- 5 Arturo Mata  
David Polando

### LUFKIN

- 10 Milton P. Kelley
- 5 Matthew M. Haney

### MAINTENANCE

- 20 Timothy L. West

### MATERIALS AND TESTS

- 20 Raymond D. Merritt

### ODESSA

- 30 Ruben L. Reyes
- 10 Jesse M. Hernandez
- 5 Robert M. Leyva

### PARIS

- 25 Carlos O. Gilstrap
- 20 Bruce W. Thompson Jr.
- 15 Christopher C. Cannon

### PHARR

- 20 Juan Gomez
- 5 Amanda V. Flores

### PROCUREMENT

- 5 John Jones

### PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- 15 Marialyce Luckey
- 5 Sanjuanita Martinez  
April G. Richey

### PROJECT FINANCE DEBT AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS

- 10 Carmen M. Graso Garcia

### RAIL

- 5 Nick Bueche

### RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

- 35 Willis W. Odell

### SAN ANGELO

- 15 Francisco J. Martinez
- 5 Jose L. Gonzales  
Clay L. Graves  
Dickie R. Huey
- 5 Rebecca Perkins

### SAN ANTONIO

- 25 John P. Gianotti  
Robert J. Gutierrez
- 20 Tony S. Martinez  
Roy T. McCue
- 15 Tony R. Botello  
Leon B. Flournoy
- 5 Felix X. Diaz  
Clinton Gill  
Joseph L. Hooter  
Rosendo Torres

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

- 10 Moses A. Garcia

### SUPPORT SERVICES

- 10 Raani T. Francis
- 5 Diana Miller  
Warren Rose

### TRAFFIC SAFETY

- 20 Blanca N. Trevino-Castro

### TRAVEL

- 5 Michelle Maronde

### TYLER

- 15 Charles R. Adams
- 10 William P. Braly  
Robert G. Covington  
Terry G. Platt

### WACO

- 30 Billy M. Tweedle
- 20 Bodie L. Pate
- 15 Christi L. Bonham  
Ryan C. Bonner  
James D. Dagle  
Grady B. Norman
- 5 Michael Schrank

### WICHITA FALLS

- 20 Gregory A. Gibbs  
Larry W. Gooch
- 5 Robert A. Stovall

### YOAKUM

- 10 Larry L. Shilling
- 5 Jose Martinez Camarillo  
George J. Holstein

# AUGUST SERVICE AWARDS

## ABILENE

- 20 Russell D. Chapman
- 5 Memo Ortiz

## AMARILLO

- 5 Panfilo R. Trejo

## ATLANTA

- 20 James T. Green
- 15 Aaron L. Hackett

## AUSTIN

- 35 Sherman M. Coots III
- 20 Scott R. Cunningham
- Carol V. Garcia
- Jason W. Whitworth
- 15 Kristina L. Morriss
- 10 Brian J. Taylor
- 5 Kevin Koch

## BEAUMONT

- 10 Jonathan D. Lawrence
- 5 Ernest Cherry
- Laura Lightfoot

## BROWNWOOD

- 15 Chris J. Graf

## BRYAN

- 20 Timothy R. Ramirez
- 15 Glen W. Fenton

## CHILDRESS

- 20 Marty D. Navarrette
- Arty R. Tucker
- 5 Larry D. Lusk

## COMMUNICATIONS

- 15 Joshua M. Hunter
- 10 Shawn P. Lloyd

## CONSTRUCTION

- 35 Jorge R. Besa

## CORPUS CHRISTI

- 10 Monica Gonzalez
- 5 Arthur Herrera

## DALLAS

- 25 Billy M. Meador
- 20 Gustavo J. Garcia
- Jamshid Shirali
- 15 Ray Hejke
- 10 Nathan J. Petter
- Lane D. Selman
- 5 Justin Braudrick
- Brandi Bush
- Richard L. Farmer
- Alie Guerra
- Eric Herman
- Indira Kaini
- Christopher Napps
- Mac Wassef

## EL PASO

- 20 Annette G. Cuevas
- 10 Joel E. Muniz
- 5 Jorge E. Acuna
- Elizabeth Estrada
- Hugo A. Hernandez
- Mario A. Irigoyen Lujano
- Jaime Ramirez

## ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 20 Jonathan H. Budd

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 15 Rosa L. Martinez
- Canh H. Nguyen
- Kathryn D. Steese
- 5 Stephanie Villarreal

## FLEET OPERATIONS

- 5 John L. Bell
- Thomas A. Cozart

## FORT WORTH

- 20 Mohammad A. Al Hweil
- 15 Douglas W. Barnard
- Isaac A. Johnson
- Jacky D. Kirkland
- Manuel Padron Jr.
- Ben Trevino
- 5 Jeremy T. Dooley
- Charles W. Sirengo

## GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

- 5 Megan Kenney

## HOUSTON

- 30 Frank M. Wadlington
- 20 Dennis A. Johnson
- Carlos M. Zepeda Jr.
- 15 Gerard A. Clisham
- 5 Raul O. Canas-Blanco
- Suraj Chapagain
- Tricia Collette
- Steven P. Garza
- Michael Hardwick
- Lane C. Harris
- Clarence P. Jaimes
- Jessica L. Kephart
- William G. Temme

## HUMAN RESOURCES

- 25 Ruben Alonso

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 5 Jeramy D. Haskell

## LAREDO

- 20 Roel Pena
- Sergio Reyna

## LUBBOCK

- 20 Andy Peralez
- Daniel T. Richter
- 15 Juan G. Cantu
- Leonel L. Reyes
- 10 Ramiro Martinez
- 5 Jorge Barretero
- Dennis Jennings
- Tony D. Kelly

## LUFKIN

- 30 Howard S. Looney
- 15 Cory M. Howard
- 5 Joshua Duffey
- Randall T. Kendrick
- Michael D. Manchack

## OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

- 10 Fernando Hernandez

## PARIS

- 15 Karen L. Jackson
- Ricky G. Roberts
- 5 Roy Jaynes
- Dustin C. Lyday
- Katie J. Vick

## PHARR

- 15 Martin Delafuente
- Jose T. Garza
- Romeo Pena

## PROCUREMENT

- 25 Samuel Reyes

## PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- 25 Allison C. Kurwitz
- Harry C. Pan

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 20 Alfredo Gonzales

## RIGHT OF WAY

- 25 Paul A. Fierro
- 15 Nancy J. Romero

## SAN ANGELO

- 20 John O. Baker

## SAN ANTONIO

- 40 Craig S. Williams
- 20 Charles A. Bendele II
- 15 Victor Abrego
- Mark S. Andrews
- George J. Garza
- Scott A. Magers
- Jerry L. Stevens
- 10 Irma B. Benavides
- 5 Pablo B. Guerra Sr.
- Mario M. Ruiz
- Richard A. Segura

## SUPPORT SERVICES

- 25 Rhonda L. Branecky
- 20 David W. Coleman
- Charles A. Wallace
- 15 Laura L. Johannsen
- Helen C. Rodriguez
- Georgena A. Sasser

## TRAFFIC SAFETY

- 20 James H. Hollis
- Barbara D. Russell
- 15 Joshua S. Verastique
- Dustin L. Wiggins

## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMING

- 5 James C. Dooley

## TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

- 10 Sonya E. Ayers

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

- 15 Valerie D. Followell
- Oswaldo Lopez

## TYLER

- 10 David A. Tober
- 5 Shannan T. Besherse
- Sharon Holley
- Kathryn R. Stringer

## WACO

- 30 Gregory N. Holecek
- 20 Donald E. Wilganowski
- 10 Mallory E. Donovan
- 5 James Dixon

## WICHITA FALLS

- 25 Michael L. Carriger
- 15 James L. Gill
- 5 Joshua A. Harrell

## YOAKUM

- 20 Timothy J. Kocian
- 15 Alan J. Migl
- 5 Andrew G. Bordovsky

# MILESTONES

## MAY RETIREE REPORT

### AMARILLO

21 Melvin J. Hammer

### ATLANTA

36 Michael C. Anderson

### AUSTIN

27 Daniel S. Bridges

### BEAUMONT

35 Ted E. Clay  
12 Robert L. Chance Jr.

### BRYAN

21 Johnny R. Moffett

### DESIGN

37 Gary R. Love  
20 Vincent J. Parker

### EL PASO

27 Thomas A. Murphy  
22 Fernando Serrano

### FLEET OPERATIONS

16 Donald J. Whitesell

### FORT WORTH

28 Leo Ehlinger III

### HOUSTON

31 Alan D. Moreau Jr.  
18 Thomas A. Johnston

### HUMAN RESOURCES

23 Jennifer L. Williams  
22 Leigh Annis Kennedy

### LUBBOCK

22 Laura L. Alwan  
21 Edvin D. Hartfield

### MATERIALS AND TESTS

16 Isidro M. Cerda Jr.

### PEPS

26 Larry H. Wenger Jr.

### SAN ANTONIO

22 David M. Fredricksen  
19 Darrell W. Jones

### TRAVEL INFORMATION

13 Shana W. Powell

### TYLER

22 Lupe S. Cruz Jr.

### WACO

15 Clifford J. Neumann

### WICHITA FALLS

26 Hector A. Flores

## JUNE RETIREE REPORT

### ABILENE

22 Virginia C. Guelker  
20 Ted F. Wende  
10 Michael W. Shankles

### AMARILLO

31 Joe M. Armstrong

### AUSTIN

21 Walter G. Barfield

### BEAUMONT

19 Ronald D. Smith

### BROWNWOOD

25 Pless E. Stuessy

### CONTRACT SERVICES

9 Charlotte J. Walther

### DALLAS

31 Bryan E. Ogden  
21 Larry S. Hoppe  
Boon K. Thian  
Kevin J. Wiles  
18 Michael D. Ives

### EL PASO

20 Albert Bautista

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

6 Christine Martin Bergren

### HOUSTON

27 Henry E. Kellumen  
24 Sandra G. Flores Burch

### LAREDO

27 Alfredo Alaniz Jr.  
21 Carolyn B. Ramsey

### LUBBOCK

16 Ricky D. Alexander

### MAINTENANCE

32 Dennis K. Markwardt

### MATERIALS AND TESTS

14 Patricia K. Douglass

### ODESSA

25 Orlando Padilla

### PHARR

30 Jorge L. Mendoza  
20 David R. Nieto

### SAN ANTONIO

33 Tomas A. Romero  
18 Ernest C. Casias

### SUPPORT SERVICES

6 Agnes Gonzalez-Hamilton

### TRAVEL INFORMATION

13 Susan F. Goble

### WACO

20 Kay R. Pigg  
14 Carl D. Kasner

### WICHITA FALLS

16 David C. Threadgill  
14 Thomas H. Felderhoff Jr.  
13 Richard C. Haralson

## IN MEMORIAM

### AMARILLO

#### Guadalupe Lovato

Date of Death: 7/16/2020  
Retired: 1996  
Years of Service: 24

### BRYAN

#### Albert Brewster Jr.

General Transportation Technician  
Date of Death: 6/11/2020  
Years of Service: 34

### CIVIL RIGHTS

#### Pamela Coleman

Resource Support Specialist  
Date of Death: 7/10/2020  
Years of Service: 1

### DALLAS

#### Robert Boykin

Transportation Engineer  
Date of Death: 6/7/2020  
Years of Service: 26

### LAREDO

#### Israel Arriaga

General Engineering Technician  
Date of Death: 6/15/2020  
Years of Service: 16

# LOW TRAFFIC VOLUMES FAST-TRACKING PROJECT TIMELINES IN HOUSTON DISTRICT

**W**ith lighter traffic conditions during stay-at-home orders this spring, two projects in the Houston District have been able to complete more work faster than anticipated.

Crews on the I-610 West Loop/I-69 Southwest interchange project have accelerated many aspects of the project, cutting work time significantly. Crews were able to open the new I-610 southbound exit ramp to Fournace, an important connection to the Bellaire community. Currently, work continues on the new I-610 West Loop southbound connector to I-69 Southwest Freeway northbound.

The I-69/I-610 interchange is a major connection point of two extremely busy highways serving the Greater Houston area. The \$259 million project will significantly enhance safety and improve mobility by widening the connector ramps to two lanes, increasing sight distances and providing remedies to eliminate weaving.

Work also began in the first week of April to resurface a portion of Westheimer Road from I-610 to Dairy Ashford. Due to low traffic volumes in this area — one of the busiest



*Low traffic volumes cut down work time on the I-610 West Loop/I-69 Southwest interchange project.*

in Houston — the contractor was able to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week for a limited time. The original plans called for only nightly work. The increased work time has put the project significantly ahead of schedule. This project was originally slated to take 13 months to complete but is likely to finish in five months. ■

## EMPLOYEES CHIME IN

**What was your favorite band/artist to listen to in high school?**

### AMARILLO DISTRICT



**JOE TINDALL**  
GENERAL ENGINEERING TECH

“One of my favorite music artists when I was in high school was M.C. Hammer.”

### BROWNWOOD DISTRICT



**AMY ROSE**  
MAINTENANCE TECH

“My favorite band in high school was Bon Jovi.”

### FORT WORTH DISTRICT



**JANET CRAWFORD**  
AREA ENGINEER

“I listened to Wham in high school. All the girls loved Wham because George Michael was so good looking!”

# **Your Employee Assistance Program is here for you when you need it.**

**Confidential counseling for you and your family is available 24/7. For assistance, call and ask to speak to a counselor.**

**Toll Free  
800-343-3822**

**In Austin  
512-328-1144**

**EAP Teen Line  
800-334-Teen (8336)**

**Or visit  
[www.awpnow.com](http://www.awpnow.com)**

