

# A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

Marc Williams brings his extensive experience to bear as TxDOT's new executive director.

# Supporting transportation means supporting you

MARC WILLIAMS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**W**hen the Transportation Commission selected me as the department's new executive director, I was honored. And I still am. Not because of the title, but because I get to work alongside you to meet our collective task of connecting Texans with the things that are important to them, whether that's getting across town or across state. We don't just build the roads and bridges and run the ferries that make those physical connections possible, we help keep Texans safe while they make those connections. We support the state's many other transportation modes — general aviation, public transportation, pedestrian, rail and more — that keep Texans moving and our economy strong.

Since becoming executive director, I've visited a number of districts and work sites and have seen

first-hand how we continue to move the needle forward on our shared responsibilities. TxDOT does — you do — an exceptional job of meeting the needs of Texans. You always have, outside challenges like hurricanes, statewide winter freezes and worldwide pandemics, aside.

And we will continue to meet the mission. We will continue our relentless focus on improving safety. Six months into this year, 1,858 people have lost their lives in traffic crashes. As executive director, I'm asking that we continue to sound the clarion call to Texans to do the things we know will keep them safe behind the wheel, like wearing their seat belts, avoiding speeding and paying attention to the road.

We owe the same to our colleagues. We will continue to make on-the-job safety our priority because our other families — those individuals who share our homes — are depending on each of us to return at the end of each day.

We will continue the job of improving the delivery of transportation projects. By its very nature, project planning and delivery are complicated tasks, made even more challenging by forces sometimes out of our control, namely funding, public consensus and material availability. But the job that Texans rely on us to do — the job we must do — is to get projects from concept to completion.

And lastly, we must continue the diversity strides we've made. It is our job as a state agency to better reflect Texas' diversity in our employee ranks, our leadership and our programs. We will continue taking steps to ensure TxDOT is a welcoming agency that supports our differences and our talents. To put it simply, TxDOT should reflect all of the people and the values that make Texas great.

I'm excited about our TxDOT family and the great work that we are accomplishing together.

You are what is best about Texas. ■





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## ON THE COVER

Marc Williams has been TxDOT's deputy executive director since 2016. Now, he's taking on the role of executive director.

## FEATURED STORIES

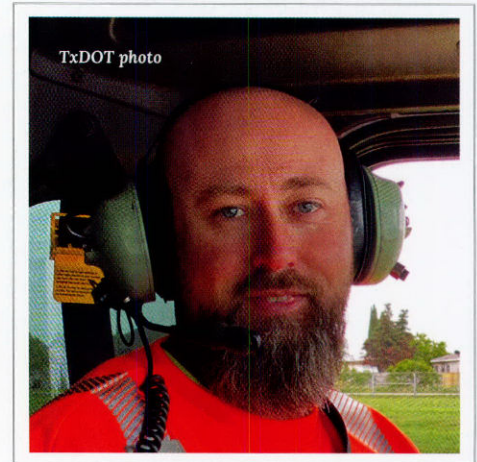
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# 6

**I Am A...  
General  
Engineering  
Technician**



Across the state, TxDOT employees go above and beyond.

## Good deed hits close to home in Paris District

### PARIS DISTRICT



ur employees are constant fixtures on Texas roadways. Whether it's clearing debris, fixing signs or ensuring roads and infrastructure are safe, chances are you'll see them somewhere in some capacity. That turned out to be a good thing for one Texas resident. She needed help and our employees were in the right place at the right time to come to her rescue.

It unfolded in the Paris District off FM 79. As General Transportation Specialist Keith Jenkins and a co-worker traveled through Lamar County on a work detail, he noticed something strange. Upon closer inspection, he realized a citizen was in dire need of help. A disabled woman, with one-leg, was lying in a ditch. The woman uses a wheelchair for mobility and while navigating through her yard, it rolled in the wrong direction. The wheelchair went into the ditch outside her home. She attempted to pull herself up to safety but could only manage to get out of the chair. She was stuck! There was nothing more she could do. Outside and facing the elements, she needed help and fast.

Her help came in the form of TxDOT employees. Jenkins, part of the Lamar County Maintenance Section, has worked for TxDOT for 18 years. He immediately pulled his truck over and stopped to provide assistance. Without hesitation, he pulled the distressed woman out of the ditch and back into her wheelchair. His quick-thinking and decision to help prevented a bad situation from becoming worse. It's the type of service he says he'd do all over again.



**Keith Jenkins of the Paris District assisted a disabled woman who turned out to be the relative of a co-worker.**

"We're able to see people in the community all day. Safety is always a priority. So, it's great to help someone in need because we certainly don't want a situation to get worse."

Jenkins' great attitude was instantly noticed. As it turns out, the woman he assisted was a relative of another Paris District employee, Julie White. White says the willingness to help her aunt was immediate. She's thankful for the effort of co-workers like Jenkins and others.

"This makes me so proud to be a part of TxDOT and to know there are still good people out there and they are TxDOT people," said White.

A good deed by good people.

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. ■

# FLOODING STRIKES TWICE FOR BEAUMONT TRANSPORTATION TECH

## BEAUMONT DISTRICT

**A**s a veteran rodeo rider, Willie Pickens, general transportation technician with the Beaumont District, knows how to take the bull by the horns. He also knows sometimes you just have to hold on for dear life. That lesson was never truer than when his home flooded twice in two years during Hurricane Harvey and Tropical Storm Imelda.

Pickens works in the Beaumont District under the Maintenance Division. He helps pre-treat roads in the winter and spray weeds in the summer.

"I also drive dump trucks. It just depends on whatever service is needed," Pickens said.

He grew up in the area, and from an early age, the rodeo has been a major part of his life. One of his favorite events is steer wrestling.

"You're on a horse going 30 mph and you lean over and grab a set of steer horns," he said. "It's an awesome feeling."

It's a lifelong passion, and he's pretty good at it but because two homes flooded, he doesn't have any photos of himself competing.

"All of those pictures got lost in the two floods," Pickens said.

Pickens lived in the same house for decades and never had any flood damage. Then Hurricane Harvey came through in 2017 and destroyed his home. So, he rebuilt a new house in the same spot. In 2019, Tropical Storm Imelda flooded that house, too.

"My family is alright. I'm alright," Pickens said. "The house is material things. The furniture is material things. None of us lost our lives in either flood, so I'm very grateful for that."

Fortunately, his second home is still standing, but they lost nearly everything inside, including a photo album that had pictures of him steer wrestling.

Looking back, maybe he could have saved some things from the homes before they flooded. However, he was working during both storms to block off flooded roads.

It was tough, but he knows he was helping to keep everyone safe.



*Willie Pickens (right) with the Beaumont District and his wife had two homes flood in two years during Hurricane Harvey and Tropical Storm Imelda.*

"My wife and my kids drive on these same roads that we work on," Pickens said. "And I know if I patch a pothole right now it keeps my wife, my kids or someone else from hitting a pothole and turning over. That always goes through my mind and it always helps."

It's no wonder Pickens, who helped others even as his own home flooded, has no fear of taking the bull by the horns. ■

# I AM A ... GENERAL ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN

## ABILENE DISTRICT

**J**ason Collett, general engineering technician - Center Stripe Lead with the Abilene District, has been with TxDOT for more than 20 years. He started his career with TxDOT in February 2001. Before applying for a position in the Abilene District Center Stripe Section, he was a heavy equipment operator with another state agency. He worked his way up the career ladder in Center Stripe before becoming the lead for the team. Collett feels blessed to work for such a family-oriented organization. He and his wife, Mindy, have four children, two grandkids and two grandbabies on the way.

### **DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS AS A GENERAL ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN.**

As the lead for the Center Stripe team, it is my responsibility to ensure that the roads are striped safely and according to plans. I review the district striping requests and prioritize needs to plan our work. I am in constant contact with the 13 maintenance section supervisors and area engineers to meet the striping needs of the district. Safety is the number one priority as we stripe the roadways and maintain our complex striping equipment.

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

We spend the majority of our time on the centerline of the roadway, so we cannot let our guards down or let our minds wander for one second. People may not realize the importance of the pavement markings on the roadways, but the job we do helps keep the traveling public safe in their lane of travel. It takes all members of the team to work together to complete our daily striping tasks.

### **WHICH PROJECT FROM THE PAST FEW YEARS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?**

I am most proud of the I-20 Emergency Bridge Repair Project in Callahan County that was done this past February. This complex lane reduction project included two bridges. This project took extensive coordination between me, the area engineer, the maintenance supervisor and the section employees. I was extremely proud of the success of this project because of the detail in the traffic control and complexity of the striping to complete this task.

I am also proud that I had the opportunity to be part of the Hurricane Harvey clean-up operations in 2017. This is an experience I will never forget. I worked with TxDOT employees from across the state on this mission to serve the great state of Texas.



“

We spend the majority of our time on the centerline of the roadway, so we cannot let our guards down or let our minds wander for one second.

”

**JASON COLLETT**

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

# A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** In May, the Texas Transportation Commission selected Marc Williams as TxDOT's new executive director, effective June 1. Williams has worked at TxDOT since 2012 when he joined the department as director of planning, serving in that role until 2016 when he was appointed TxDOT's deputy executive director.

TN sat down with Williams at TxDOT headquarters in Austin to get his thoughts on the future of the agency, the value of the TxDOT Family and what he enjoys most about working at TxDOT.

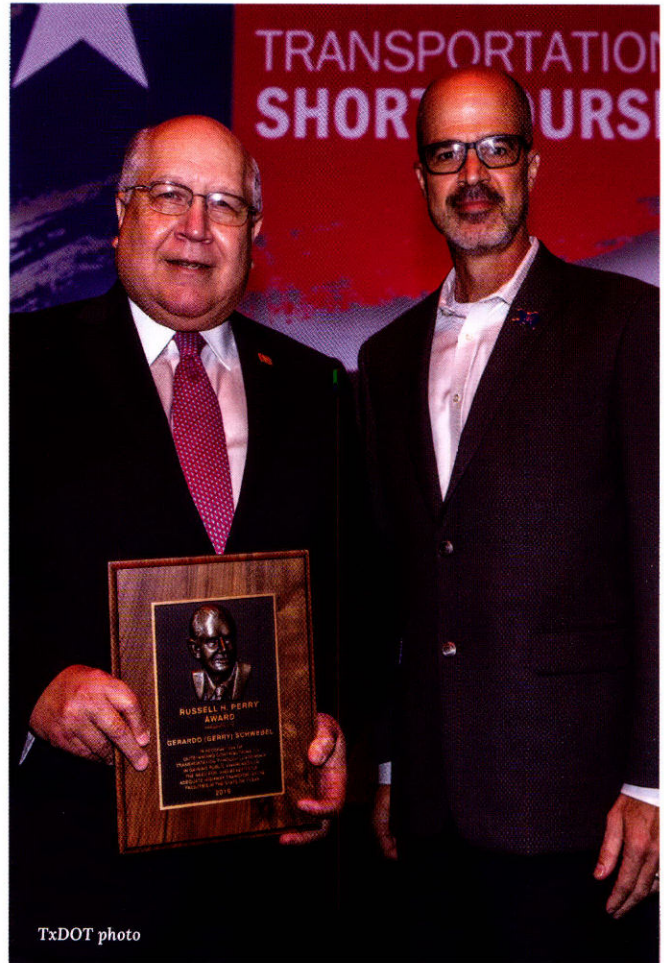
The following has been edited for length and clarity. Visit TN+ to see a video of the full interview.

**TN: What do you enjoy most about working for TxDOT?**

**Marc Williams:** What I enjoy most is the people we work with and seeing how we do the great work that we do. It's not just TxDOT people. It's also people outside the organization: local elected officials, motorists and landowners. People whose transportation needs are challenging us to rethink how we do things. It's that interpersonal dynamic that I've always enjoyed. You're able to be involved in so many people's lives. That's what I've enjoyed about the work we do here in TxDOT and being a part of the TxDOT Family.

**TN: What are some of the biggest opportunities for TxDOT in the coming years?**

**MW:** One of [Texas Transportation Commission] Chairman Bugg's favorite callings to us is to execute, execute, execute. We owe it to our customers to do all we can with the resources provided to us to deliver projects to improve safety and to enhance mobility. That's the challenge for the department. It has been for the past 100 years and will continue to be far past my tenure.



**Marc Williams, right, with Gerardo Schwebel at the 2019 Transportation Short Course.**

**TN: You have an extensive engineering background. How do you think that will help you in your new role as executive director?**

**MW:** I see myself as an engineer — and that's important — but one who has spent a lot of time on the administration side as well. I understand and appreciate the expertise that goes into so much of what we do on the engineering side. What I can bring to this position is some of the training and experience that I've had as a professional engineer. I understand the thought processes, the mechanics and the standards that are involved. We have to work within those standards even when we desire to do things differently.





*Williams (center) talks with the Austin Meals on Wheels team in 2016.*

Sometimes we may find ourselves getting hung up on the old ways of doing things. As engineers, we have the ability to use our training, our expertise and our understanding to use those standards differently. We can rethink and challenge the status quo when it comes to how we get our work done.

**TN: You've had many opportunities to speak with lawmakers and elected officials. What is your sense of how they perceive the value of our front-line employees to the success of the agency?**

**MW:** The perception of our front-line employees is one that is tremendously high, and that's well earned. It's well earned by those women and men who are keeping our roads safe. They are responding to severe weather events and other types of emergencies. Thanks to our front-line employees, we have consistently risen to the challenge. I know that our legislators and so many others appreciate our front-line employees for the work they do.

**TN: Over the past few years — especially during the COVID-19 pandemic — the department has been through many changes. Can you talk about what employees can expect as we move forward?**

**MW:** I would expect continued change in how we go about our work. If anything is certain in our world right now, it's change. Employees being flexible and adaptable in their work environment and in their responsibilities is important. Our leadership and our commission value and respect each of the employees within TxDOT. We want to do our very best to accommodate people's individual needs and ensure the work environment is safe and productive and enjoyable.

**TN: What is one thing you want employees to know as you take on the executive director role?**

**MW:** I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of employees already. One of the things I emphasize is what a privilege and honor it is for me to serve alongside each employee and to support you all in the work that you do. I want to do everything I can as executive director to help our employees achieve excellence. That's what I've expressed and will continue to express as executive director. ■



*Williams addresses a Border Trade Advisory Committee Meeting in January 2020.*

# TRAGEDY BRINGS CHANGE THAT SAVES LIVES IN DALLAS DISTRICT

**A**fter tragedy, Tara Thompson has focused on finding hope.

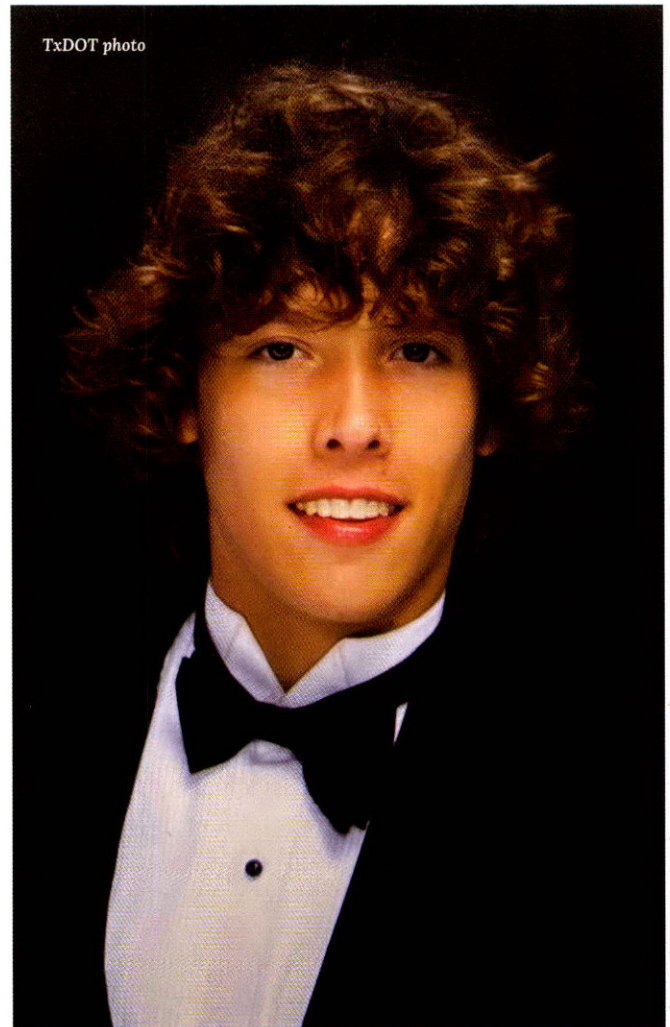
On Sept. 21, 2020, Thompson's son, Austin Elbert, lost control of his vehicle on U.S. 287 in Waxahachie, hydroplaned and crossed into oncoming traffic. An 18-wheeler hit his pickup head-on. Austin died later at an area hospital. The crash occurred just two days before his 18th birthday.

Since then, Thompson has shared her painful story, hoping that it will remind others of the importance of driving safely.

Her effort has already saved lives.

In the weeks after Austin's crash, Thompson noticed that TxDOT's Dallas District was installing cable barrier in the median of U.S. 287. The barrier installation, part of a statewide safety enhancement program, got close to, but did not include, the location where Austin's crash occurred. A future phase to install a barrier between Ovilla Road and Business 287, which includes Austin's crash site, was originally scheduled to let in June 2022.

Thompson, hoping others would not have to endure the loss of a loved one, contacted the district. She told her story to Dallas District Engineer Mo Bur and Ellis County Area Engineer Juan Paredes. Quickly, the decision was made to extend the cable barrier to include the area of Austin's crash. The barrier project was advanced and completed this past March, more than a year earlier than originally planned.



*Austin Elbert died in a crash just before his 18th birthday. Safety measures put in place by the Dallas District at the crash site are helping to prevent more deaths.*

It didn't take long for Thompson's efforts to save a life.

Just days after the project was complete, Thompson's niece was involved in a crash at the site where the barrier was extended. The barrier prevented her niece, Channing Buchanan, from crossing into oncoming traffic. Buchanan's car was totaled, but she survived.

"I just say Austin was watching after her," Thompson said. "These barriers are a huge benefit."

Bur said he is deeply thankful to Thompson for sharing her story and prompting a discussion about how to do more. To Bur, the barrier extension was a logical decision after talking to Thompson. In fact, Bur said the discussion made him think of the safety of his own daughter and son, and that helped provide a more personal connection regarding the importance of TxDOT safety projects.

"Every crash and every fatality on our roadways affects so many people," Bur said. "My staff worked very hard to find a way to extend the cable barrier sooner, and I'm so grateful that they did. Safety is a priority for me, and I realize more work needs to be done. But I'm happy this project made a difference."

Safety projects take on additional importance in areas like Ellis County, where traffic and population are growing rapidly. Seeing the benefits of these projects is a reminder of the work TxDOT employees do daily to enhance safety on state highways, said Paredes.

"I'll always remember Austin's story when I drive by this location, and I'll remember just how important safety projects like this are," Paredes said.

As a 15-year-old, Austin signed his driver's license to be an organ donor. His organs were donated on what would have been his 18th birthday, Thompson said. Since then, Austin's family has worked hard to continue his example by holding fundraisers and talking about traffic safety.

Austin was a varsity baseball player and the school community has rallied around his family, helping them come to terms with Austin's death. The family has developed a website, [liveonaustin.com](http://liveonaustin.com), that tells Austin's story and his passion for baseball. It also provides details of various fundraisers to help other youths interested in competitive sports.

"We want to give back to others like he wanted to give back," Thompson said. ■

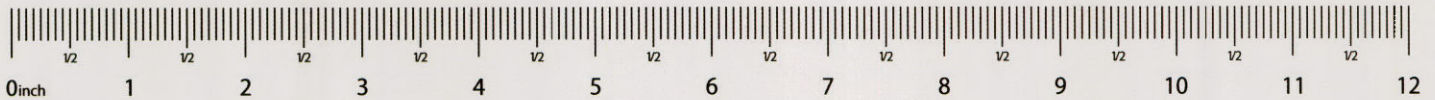


*Austin Elbert and his cousin Channing Buchanan: before his death in a crash. Safety measures put in place at the site of his crash saved his cousin's life less than a year later.*



*Safety barriers put in place after Austin's crash saved his cousin's life in almost the same spot.*

# YOAKUM DISTRICT PLANTS A SEED FOR THE FUTURE



**W**

hen a small patch of a rare plant and a bridge replacement project crossed paths, the Yoakum District took steps that helped create a brand-new seed bank for the species.

The Texas Pinkroot plant is a species of greatest conservation need in Texas. Found in only 13 counties across the state, it grows in forested and wooded areas. Its seeds had never been collected in Texas.

During the environmental review of the Yoakum District project design to replace a bridge on FM 109 in Colorado County, the consultant TxDOT hired to conduct a habitat assessment and prepare documents for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department found that suitable habitat existed for the Texas Pinkroot.

TxDOT is not required to survey for plants that are not in the state's endangered species list, yet the Yoakum District often conducts these surveys if they can be done while the plant is flowering and easily recognized.

When a small clump of the species was identified growing where the new bridge would be located, TxDOT alerted Texas Parks and Wildlife that the small population of the rare plant would be destroyed entirely.

Texas Parks and Wildlife staff monitored the plant weekly for seed production. The Texas Pinkroot produces seeds from April to November. Over twelve weeks, the department collected several hundreds of its seeds from the patch as they matured.

The Texas Pinkroot plant is a considered a species of greatest conservation need in Texas.

The seeds were stored at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Seed Bank in Austin. Although length of seed viability for Texas Pinkroot is unknown, seeds can remain viable for decades and be used for research and to create new populations of the plant. The new bridge construction is not anticipated to begin until the summer of 2022, so seeds can be collected again in this fall.

Thanks to the diligence and hard work of these organizations, this project has created the first seed-banked collection of the species ■

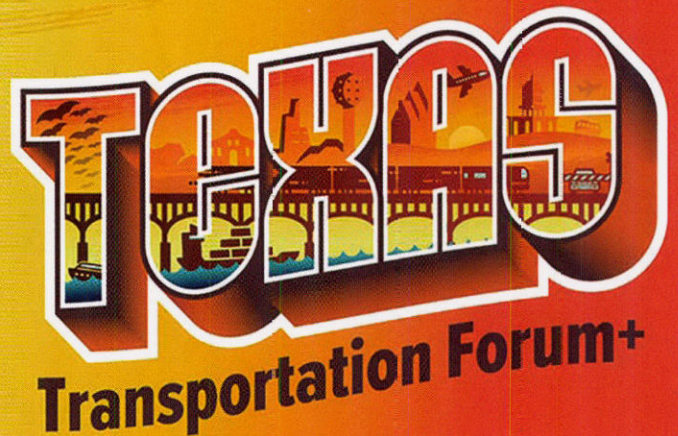


*The rare Texas Pinkroot finally has a seed bank collection after a small patch was found in the Yoakum District.*

# FORUM+ SERIES CONTINUES VITAL TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSION



TEXAS  
TRANSPORTATION  
FORUM



**F**ollowing TxDOT's first e-Forum in February, TxDOT continued the vital transportation dialogue with the Forum+ Series. The events in March, April and May tackled a variety of intriguing topics including modal transportation, the border trade master transportation plan, emerging technology and freight.

The e-Forum kicked off in February with sessions focused on the outlook for the future, from concerns about COVID-19 and its impact on transportation to the recent legislative session. It also included conversations with several Texans, including Gov. Greg Abbott, Transportation Commission Chairman Bruce Bugg and former TxDOT Executive Director James Bass.

Texas and TxDOT are leaders in the effort to plan, innovate and partner with the freight industry as it embarks on autonomous freight initiatives.

In late March, TxDOT hosted the next event in its e-Forum series, Beyond Roads: Modal Transportation Update. Invited experts and department personnel discussed planes, trains, ports and public transit, TxDOT's role in supporting these critical systems and

their impact on the state's economy. Marc Williams, Executive Director for TxDOT, moderated this chat with leaders from TxDOT's Rail, Public Transit, Aviation and Maritime divisions. The panelists highlighted the unique contributions of different modes of transportation to the state's ecosystem.

In April, TxDOT continued the Forum+ Series with a discussion on the Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan with then Texas Secretary of State Ruth R. Hughs. During the event, TxDOT's Freight and International Trade Connect Director Caroline A. Mays interviewed Hughs about how the plan will support TxDOT's mission of Connecting You With Texas. A live Q&A with event attendees followed the discussion.

Texas and TxDOT are leaders in the effort to plan, innovate and partner with the freight industry as it embarks on autonomous freight initiatives. In May, attendees were able to learn more about this effort during a Forum+ Series event titled Emerging Technology and Freight: How TxDOT is Innovating to Make Freight Movement Safer and More Efficient. Hosted by Beverly West with TxDOT's Strategic Planning Division, the event focused on key initiatives throughout TxDOT (Learn more about freight and trade on page 18). ■

# HAVING A BLAST!

6-year-old Archer helps bring down 183 flyover

**I**n May, TxDOT enlisted the help of a 6-year-old boy to bring down part of the I-35/U.S. 183 flyover in the Austin District. TxDOT partnered with Make-A-Wish Central and South Texas to give Archer Foltermann the chance to implode sections of the flyover by pushing the ceremonial detonator at sunrise.

"I blew up a bridge," said Foltermann. "It was fun, and it was loud!"

Archer, who was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia just before his first birthday, is described as a firecracker who refuses to let cancer slow him down. He's currently in remission.

TxDOT's former Executive Director James Bass suggested the department reach out to Make-a-Wish Central and South Texas as it came time to demolish a section of the flyover. The organization grants wishes to children who have critical illnesses. The wish is limited only by the child's imagination.



TxDOT photo

Six-year-old Archer imploded sections of the U.S. 183 flyover by pushing the ceremonial detonator at sunrise.



*The I-35/U.S. 183 flyover in the Austin District was demolished in May – with some special help!*

The demolition took place over two weekends in May, when TxDOT temporarily closed both directions of the I-35 and U.S. 183 mainlanes, as well as the frontage roads at the I-35/U.S. 183 interchange to safely demolish three flyover spans.

Archer, who was named “master of demolition” by the Austin District team responsible for the safe execution of the implosion, now says he wants to dress up as a TxDOT engineer for Halloween. Everyone involved had a blast, and who knows? Granting this wish may inspire Archer to turn his demolition skills into a full-fledged career with TxDOT someday.

This \$124.2 million Texas Clear Lanes project began construction in 2018 and is anticipated to be completed in mid-2021.

The I-35 from Rundberg Lane to U.S. 290 East project addresses mobility on one of the most congested highways in Texas. The project will improve mobility, safety and connectivity for all modes of transportation along and across I-35.

The project includes the construction of three flyovers at the I-35/U.S. 183 interchange as well as the reconstruction of the existing northbound I-35 to northbound US 183 flyover. Two of the new flyovers have opened, connecting southbound I-35 to both north and southbound U.S. 183. The third flyover will link northbound U.S. 183 to northbound I-35.

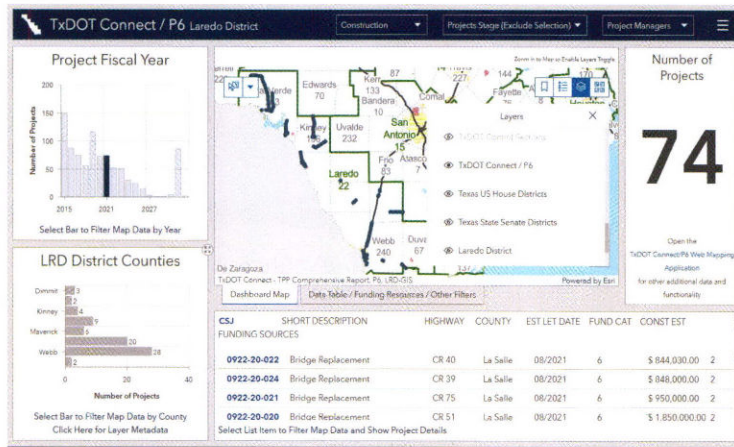
The project also includes the reconstruction of the St. Johns Avenue bridge and new frontage road U-turns in both directions at St. Johns Avenue.

The contractor for the 2.7-mile project is J.D. Abrams Inc. ■



*Southwest Public Information Officer Bradley Wheelis helps Archer practice before the flyover implosion.*

# GIS GIVES LAREDO DISTRICT A MAP TO SUCCESS



TxDOT photo

*The Laredo Projects Dashboard is a high-level overview of GIS data for the district.*

**T**he Laredo District has spent the last few years developing web geographic information system functionality that allows users to leverage data from TxDOTCONNECT and other sources in a powerful map format. GIS provides real-time information for making decisions and prioritizing projects.

Automating project data and mapping to generate these web mapping resources allows for quick project review with the ability to query and extract data on the fly.

Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, is a framework for gathering, managing and analyzing data that describes events and features along the earth's surface. At first, the Laredo District started sharing web maps and GIS products through SharePoint. It then made sense to develop a GIS hub that includes web GIS sources as well.

"The Laredo District has put together several dashboards using GIS which are housed on the Laredo GIS hub on our Crossroads site. They can be accessed by anyone with an ArcGIS account," said Victor Gonzalez, GIS analyst in the Laredo District. "The Laredo Projects Dashboard is a high-level overview of the GIS data and filters for the district."

The Laredo Projects Dashboard shows all the projects for the Laredo District from 2015 to the present. Users can filter by year, county, funding group, project stage and more. The dashboard not only shows the data for the project but connects it to a map.

"In the past, we have depended on lists and spreadsheets that were maintained by hand and by many different people," said Omar Costilla, transportation specialist with

the Laredo District. "Now we let the program do the work for us and have cut down on manual inputs."

The tool also allows users to run reports using different criteria to focus on the information they need. The reports can be printed or exported as a PDF.

Now we let the program do the work for us and have cut down on manual inputs.

**OMAR COSTILLA**  
Transportation Specialist

"The ArcGIS platform includes configurable widgets that we can customize for our specific needs," said Gonzalez. "It is available to all districts and many other districts are using it. Hopefully, we can all take advantage of this powerful tool."

The tool will continue to grow and improve as users make suggestions, TxDOTCONNECT and other data sources implement new functionality and the statewide GIS program expands. (For more information, contact the Transportation Planning and Programming Division.)

"It's a great tool and we've already seen the benefits from it," said Humberto "Tito" Gonzalez Jr., director of Transportation Planning and Development for the Laredo District. "It's a very busy time in Laredo and we have a lot of major projects going on. This tool is helping us make decisions with real-time data to best use our funds and prioritize our projects throughout the region." ■



# INCLUSION AT TxDOT: NEW RESOURCE GROUP FOR LGBTQ+ EMPLOYEES



*The LGBTQ+ Coalition Employee Resource Group held its first meeting in June and welcomes friends and members of the community to participate in future meetings.*

**T**xDOT employees can proudly announce the creation of a group aimed at supporting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer, or LGBTQ+, community: The LGBTQ+ Coalition Employee Resource Group. The LGBTQ+ Coalition ERG strives to provide a virtual meeting tent for friends and members of the LGBTQ+ community, promote conversation about current LGBTQ+ issues and work with other TxDOT employee resource groups to help make TxDOT an even more inclusive and diverse work environment. This comes on the heels of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2020 that extended workplace discrimination protections to members of the LGBTQ+ community. Five years before, in 2015, the court legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states.

The creation of TxDOT's LGBTQ+ Coalition ERG is a significant move to empower the community. In June, the LGBTQ+ Coalition held their inaugural meeting and developed a working mission statement: To inform and create an inclusive environment within TxDOT that promotes the recruitment, retention and advancement of LGBTQ+ people.

The group includes the following: Chief Information Officer Anh Selissen as executive sponsor and Houston District Deputy District Engineer Varuna Singh as adviser. The group's leadership council includes the Communications Division's Creative Services Section Director David Munns, Lubbock District Engineering Assistant Erica Ripley, Travel Information Division Partnership Manager Lois Rodriguez and Bridge Division Engineering Assistant Dominique Wermine. Human Resources Division's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Program Specialist Erin Miller serves as staff liaison to promote the recruitment, retention and advancement of LGBTQ+ people.

The ERG welcomes friends and members of the community to participate in future meetings and events which will include virtual LGBTQ+ film screenings and conversations about diversity, terminology and labels that influence LGBTQ+ identity and culture. To learn more about the LGBTQ+ Coalition and other ERGs, visit the ERG page on Crossroads and reach out to the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion team at HRD\_EmployeeDiversity@txdot.gov. ■

# FREIGHT AND TRADE FOCUS OF STUDIES

**I**n 2018, TxDOT adopted the Texas Freight Mobility Plan to facilitate continued economic growth by addressing freight transportation needs and moving goods efficiently and safely throughout the state.

Since then, staff with the Freight and International Trade/Border Connectivity Section of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division continued the study of freight and trade needs. Below are just a few highlights of recent studies the section has completed or launched.

Published last December, the **Texas Freight Network Technology and Operations Plan** builds upon the goals introduced in the Texas Freight Mobility Plan. The network plan recommends appropriate technology, data-sharing and operations-based strategies to capitalize on freight safety and mobility challenges and opportunities.

“One goal of the plan was to improve freight mobility using Intelligent Transportation Systems technology,” said Sherry Pifer, Freight Systems Branch manager with the Freight and International Trade/Border Connectivity Section.

An intelligent transportation system is an advanced application which enables users to be better informed and make safer, more coordinated and smarter use of transport networks.

Coming out just a few months ago, the **Economic Role of Freight in Texas** report analyzes and documents freight’s impact on the Texas economy and raises awareness about the importance of safe and efficient freight transportation to the state and local governments, economic development groups, municipalities and the public.

Texas’ ability to maintain its position as a leader in the global economy depends on the strength of its freight transportation system.

“Freight is responsible for approximately four million jobs and \$302 billion in income in 2018,” said Pifer.

The recently adopted **Texas/Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan** is an ambitious undertaking to plan for the future of the 1,254-mile Texas-Mexico border region. The border is an increasingly critical gateway for the economies of the U.S. and Mexico. More than \$451 billion in trade crossed the border in 2019, over \$24 million in trade each hour.

“At TxDOT we need to ensure that the movement of goods and people are streamlined and connected to the communities and regional needs as well as industry and commerce,” said Aisa Showery, International Trade and Border Planning Branch manager with the Freight and International Trade/Border Connectivity Section.

Freight is responsible for approximately four million jobs and \$302 billion in income in 2018. Sherry Pifer, Freight Systems Brand manager

**SHERRY PIFER**

Freight Systems Brand manager

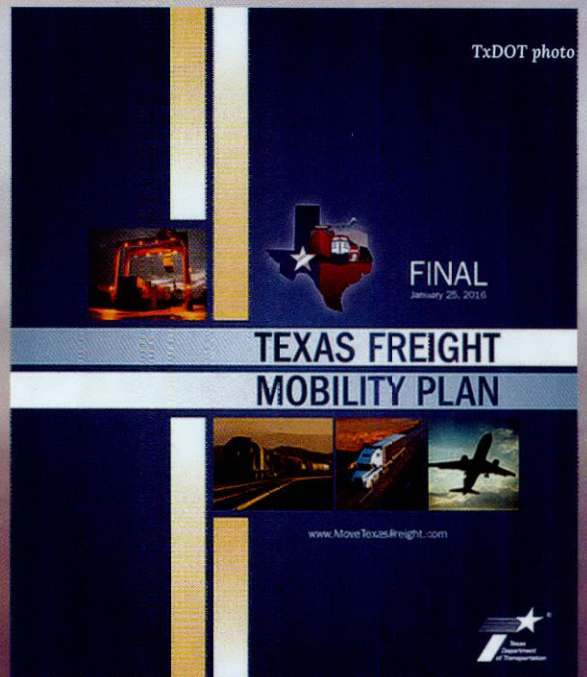
Part of the focus on the infrastructure to support the movement of goods and people across the border is the **Border Trade Advisory Committee**. The committee provides a forum for the exchange of communications between the Texas Transportation Commission, TxDOT, elected officials and committee members representing border trade interests.

In addition, several studies of transportation corridors are just beginning or recently released.



TxDOT photo

*The study of freight and trade needs continues with efforts to raise awareness and encourage public input.*



TxDOT photo

*The Texas Freight Mobility Plan addresses freight transportation needs throughout the state.*

Studies kicked off this year for both the I-20 and I-10 corridors. These are the first studies to consider the entire length of the interstates.

“We’ve done many, many studies on segments of these interstates but never their entirety,” said Lorena Echeverria de Misi, Corridor Planning Branch manager with the Freight and International Trade/Border Connectivity Section.

Both I-20 and I-10 cross the state from east to west. I-20 covers 635 miles while I-10 is 880 miles from the border with Louisiana to the border of New Mexico.

“The I-10 corridor in particular has a lot of issues to consider,” said Caroline Mays, director of the Freight and International Trade/Border Connectivity Section. “It is a continental east-west corridor. It’s the only interstate going through El Paso. It connects to both I-35 and I-27. It is a hurricane route in Southeast Texas. This study will be critical for transportation in the state.”

Finally, the **Ports-to-Plains Corridor Feasibility Study** was completed in 2020. This corridor is a combination of different highways that originate in Laredo and go up to Canada, with the potential to become a major freight route for international trade.

For Texas, the study focuses on a stretch of 963 miles between the New Mexico and Oklahoma borders and Laredo. This includes sections of I-20, I-27, I-35, U.S. 83, U.S. 87, U.S. 277, U.S. 287, SH 158 and SH 349.

“This corridor integrates the most strategic economic engines in the state like agriculture, energy sector and international trade. The corridor also connects the nation’s economic engines,” said Echeverria de Misi.



These are just a few of the many projects that involve freight and border trade at TxDOT.

For more information, check out the Transportation Planning and Programming page on [txdot.gov](http://txdot.gov). ■

# TxDOT hosts vaccination clinics for employees

**T**xDOT employees, family members and contractors participated in COVID-19 vaccine clinics held across the department this past spring. In partnership with the Texas Department of Public Safety’s Medical Unit, the Wellness Team flew on a DPS aircraft to various districts offering the single shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Clinics, organized by Human Resources staff in the districts, were held at district offices or in some cases, at a nearby airport where TxDOT employees met the team.

In addition, some districts partnered with a local vendor to offer the Moderna or Pfizer two-dose vaccine. Austin headquarters employees had opportunities to attend vaccine clinics at the Riverside campus hosted by H-E-B or offsite at a Passport Health Travel Clinic in Austin.

In all, 631 people were vaccinated. Individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and two weeks after the second dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Updates to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance indicate fully vaccinated people are able to safely resume more social activities that they did prior to the pandemic.

“Employees were so excited to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and grateful that TxDOT cared enough about their health to bring the vaccines right to their work,” said Gina Akin, TxDOT Wellness Program Administrator. “We were happy to also offer the vaccines to TxDOT contractors like our security officers, housekeeping staff and IT consultants. Protecting them protects all of us.” ■



TxDOT photo

*In the Pharr District, TxDOT offered drive-through service for the COVID-19 vaccine.*

**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 July 17.



## Identified:

Congratulations to our first identifier Chris Cowen (SJT).

Last edition's photo featured the Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary in McKinney. However, most identifiers cited Dinosaur Valley State Park in Glenrose which has a similar sculpture and they are credited here as well.

Others identifying the photo were Jodie Kelly (BWD), Anette Moss (FTW), Brenda Sanchez (DAL), Joseph Hagler (LFK), Lanny Wadle (FIN), Lyndol Irby (TRV), Jennifer Warnick (MTD), Scott Serafin (AUS), Tracy Lane (FTW), Peggy Miller (TRV), Tracy Hefner (FTW), Dawn Robertson (DAL), Martin Sotelo (ELP), Amy Rose (BWD), Lynn Palmer (TYL), Tammy Falco (BRY) and Cindi Watson (ABL). ■



## UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

**July 5**

**DAY AFTER**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY**  
(Minimal staff required)

**July 29**

**TEXAS TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION MEETING**

**August 27**

**LBJ'S BIRTHDAY**  
(Minimal staff required)

**August 31\***

**TEXAS TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION MEETING**

\*Meeting takes place on a Tuesday rather than Thursday

# INNOVATIVE SUGGESTION

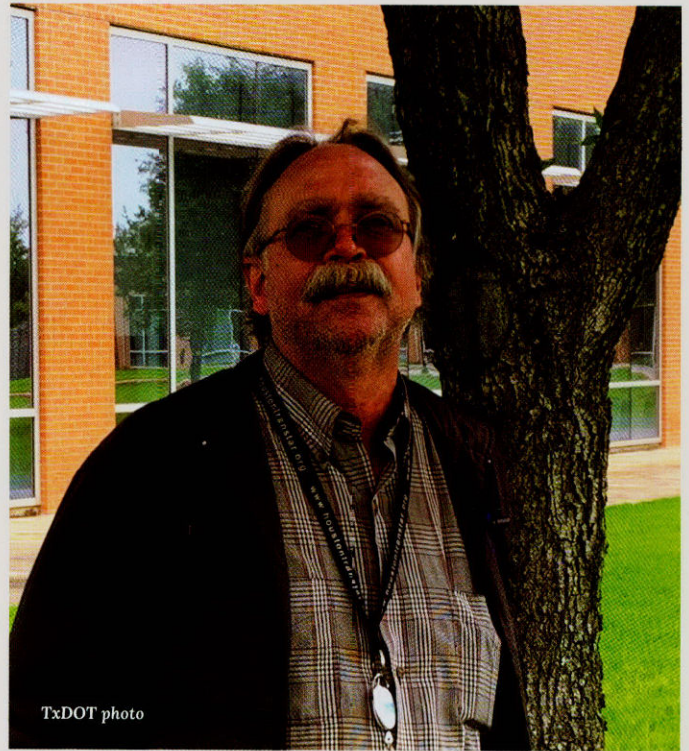
## LEADS TO NEW UTILITY METER MANAGEMENT WORKGROUP IN HOUSTON DISTRICT

**W**hen experience, dedication and ingenuity combine, the result is often a good one. That's certainly the case when you consider employee Wayne Rentschler. He has worked at TxDOT for 40 years, yet he's never stopped looking for ways to contribute to his work environment. His commitment to cost efficiency made way for an innovative measure that will benefit TxDOT for years to come.

TxDOT performs critical energy management functions at different levels across the agency, but there has been a need to establish a centralized effort to manage utility accounts effectively, in keeping with our goal of stewardship of public funding. The Utility Meter Management workgroup has taken up the charge to address this. The workgroup's origins are thanks to an idea from Rentschler.

In 2018, Rentschler, an employee in the Houston District traffic signal shop, submitted an Innovation and Cost Efficiency program suggestion regarding utility billing issues. Rentschler, who plans to retire soon, sought to make one last meaningful contribution. His suggestion was quickly determined to be very large in scope, complexity and significance. It quickly spun off into the Enterprise Governance Statewide Utility Meter Management workgroup approved through the Executive Steering Committee in 2019.

The workgroup is led by the Strategic Planning Division. That workgroup has already started or plans to develop several processes that will help TxDOT manage utility accounts more effectively, including utility connect/disconnect process improvements, cost savings initiatives including LED illumination, a full-scale utility audit, a TxDOT energy management program, a utility database and more.



TxDOT photo

*Wayne Rentschler submitted an Innovation and Cost Efficiency program suggestion that led to the creation of a statewide workgroup.*

Rentschler has been a critical part of this suggestion's success from the beginning. When an Innovation and Cost Efficiency team visited the Houston District in 2019 to gather more information for the project, Rentschler, along with colleague Terrance George, welcomed the team with expertise and enthusiasm.

While this project is far from being fully implemented, Rentschler should be recognized for his dedication and commitment to stewardship at TxDOT. As he prepares to retire, he can be confident that TxDOT will carry forward what he started.

Thank you, Wayne, for all that you have done for this amazingly valuable project at TxDOT! ■

# Dana Williams

## STRATEGIC PLANNING DIVISION

### Dana Williams

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING DIVISION

The name is Dana. Dana Williams. She's strategic, she's efficient and she's a former U.S. diplomat. Once a member of the foreign service with the U.S. Department of State, she's travelled the world working at embassies in Cambodia, France, India and Switzerland. Now, she spends her days in the Strategic Planning Division as the lead for the Innovation and Cost Efficiency Program. On the weekend, she leads a statewide group as president of the Texas Women Fly Fishers. The married mother of three stays busy but took time to chat about some of her favorite things.



#### Name your favorite spot for fly fishing and why.

The Guadalupe River near New Braunfels for rainbow trout in the winter. Trout only live in beautiful places, and trout fishing is very challenging. The Guadalupe is a Top 100 Trout Stream and the southernmost U.S. trout fishery.

#### You're fishing in the wild and hear weird noises in the distance. Are you checking things out, running for cover or ignoring it?

Ignoring it. I heard a bobcat or other wild cat near me once high up on the bank of the Lampasas River near Killeen. A little disconcerting, though.

#### What's your favorite type of fish to eat? Catfish, redfish, trout or salmon?

Crappie but fly fishers primarily practice catch and release.

#### It's vacation time – a beach or the mountains?

Smoky Mountain National Park. Not a fan of the beach.

#### If you had to start another career, what would it be?

In my fantasy life, country music star or barrel racer in a rodeo. In reality, U.S. diplomat.

#### You're offered two extra weeks of paid vacation each year or your own parking spot at work for a year. What's your choice?

Two weeks extra vacation for spending more time with my husband and three college kids, fly fishing and traveling.

#### You're teleworking: Sweatpants, pajamas or your best clothes?

My telework uniform is fishing pants and a ballcap.

#### Which Texas staple is your favorite: Cowboy boots or flipflops?

Definitely my black Lucchese cowboy boots. I don't even own flip flops!

#### You're choosing the official ice cream of Texas. What's your choice: Homemade vanilla, mint chocolate chip or cookies and cream?

Mint chocolate chip.

#### It's 1990, what CD are you playing? Bruce Springsteen, M.C. Hammer or George Strait?

Definitely George Strait – the king always and forever.

#### Name the way you enjoy exercising: Swimming, tennis, going to the gym or none of the above?

I started playing tennis twice a week during the pandemic shutdown and love it!

#### Do you prefer hanging out at Mount Bonnell or Barton Springs?

Really, I just want to be standing in any Hill County river or playing any sport.

#### Name something you've done as a child that you still enjoy today.

I was a serious softball player growing up and still love watching the game but rarely get to play. My diving line drive catch playing second base as an adult is still a treasured memory. A famous family story is that I played a softball tournament as a teen in 100 degrees in Texas with a ruptured appendix and a low fever before anyone diagnosed the problem. ■

# All Across TxDOT

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### AUSTIN DISTRICT

#### New overpasses break ground in Austin District

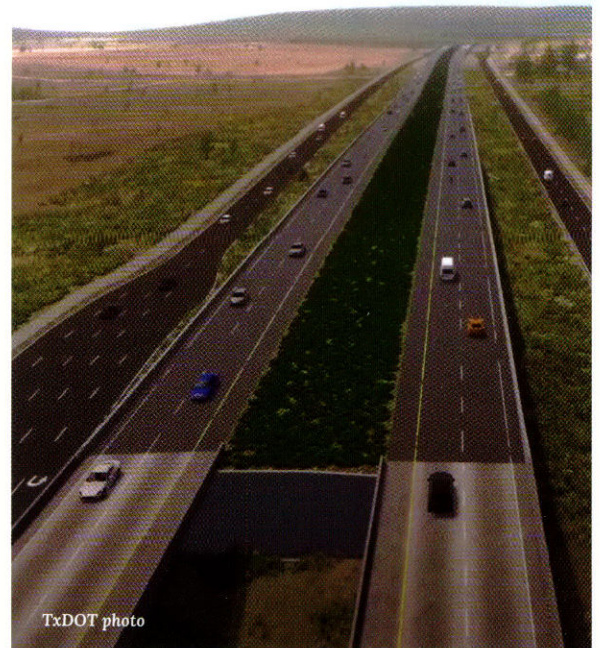
The Austin District celebrated the start of construction on the SH 71 improvement project at Ross Road and Kellam Road with a virtual groundbreaking ceremony on April 8.

“I am happy to announce we are beginning construction on two new overpasses on SH 71,” said Tucker Ferguson, TxDOT Austin District Engineer. “With continued growth in eastern Travis and Bastrop counties, this project will enhance safety and mobility by allowing motorists on SH 71 to flow through the area without stopping.”

The project will construct two new bridges over the existing signalized intersections at Ross Road and Kellam Road, new frontage roads within the project limits and improved bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

“One of the most significant frustrations for central Texans is traffic congestion, including along SH 71, an essential artery connecting the city of Austin with the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and other central Texas communities,” said Sen. Judith Zaffirini. “This project will not only improve regional connectivity and relieve congestion, but it will also save lives by improving intersections and making other important safety enhancements. Thank you TxDOT for all you do to keep Texas prosperous and safe.”

Construction on the \$60.5 million project should take approximately three years, ending in late 2023. Work on the 2.5-mile improvement project will take place in five phases, with Zachry Construction Corporation as the contractor. ■



*Improvements to the intersection at Ross Road and Kellam Road include new overpasses.*

### DALLAS DISTRICT

#### Irving Interchange Project has virtual groundbreaking in Dallas District

In April, the Dallas District held a virtual groundbreaking for the Irving Interchange Project in Dallas County. The \$301 million Texas Clear Lanes project will include the reconstruction of the interchanges at SH 183, SH 114, Loop 12 and Spur 482. Loop 12 will be reconstructed and widened from six to eight lanes. SH 114 and Spur 482 will also be reconstructed and widened. Ten overhead direct connect ramps will be built to replace existing ground-level cloverleaf ramps.

The overall length of the project is about 9.6 miles including bridges and direct connectors. ■



*A virtual groundbreaking was held in April for the Irving Interchange Project.*



## New CDC guidance for in-person office operations

In May, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 do not need to wear masks in certain circumstances.

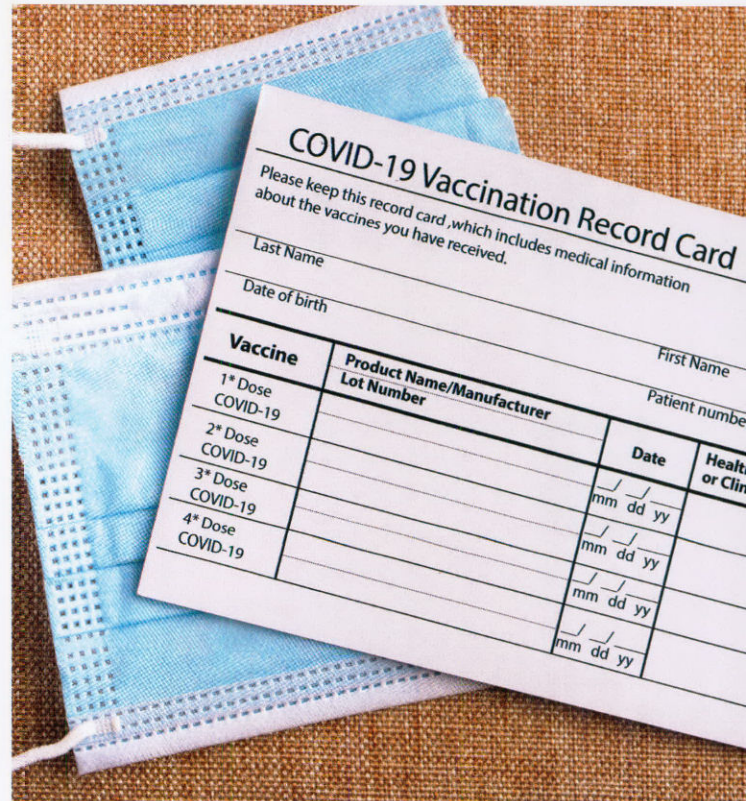
Based on this new CDC guidance, fully vaccinated TxDOT employees and visitors do not have to wear masks in TxDOT facilities. Fully vaccinated people may continue to wear masks if they choose, and individuals who have not been vaccinated are strongly encouraged to wear masks.

If you are fully vaccinated, there is an extremely low risk when in the vicinity of unvaccinated people whether they wear a mask or not.

Other operations changes include:

- If you have been vaccinated, you are not expected to wear masks, including in vehicles.
- COVID-related leave (timesheet code SCKCV) can still be used to get the vaccine, to recover from vaccination reaction, or if you have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID.
- If you have been fully vaccinated, you will not be required to present a COVID-19 vaccination card.

The battle against the virus is not over, so it's still important that we all follow the COVID-19 Best Practices and Expectations when at work. ■



## Deaths of Texans not wearing seat belts spiked in 2020

Despite a drop in the number of traffic crashes throughout the year, 2020 saw a spike in the number of fatalities overall and deaths of people in Texas from not wearing a seat belt. That's why TxDOT is reminding everyone that buckling up is the best defense in a crash.

Last year, the simple act of buckling up saved many Texans from death or serious injury in crashes. Unfortunately, in 2020 there was a 16% increase in deaths of unbuckled motorists. There were 1,073 fatalities in 2020 and 926 fatalities in 2019 due to people not wearing seat belts.

Putting on a seat belt only takes a few seconds and doing so reduces the risk of dying by up to 45% for people in the front seat of passenger cars and up to 60% for people in pickup trucks.

"This past year we have all been reminded of the simple acts we can take to protect our lives and those of our loved ones," said former TxDOT Executive Director James Bass. "Wearing a seat belt is the most important step we can take to protect ourselves from serious injury or even death in a traffic crash. Instead of putting yourself and others in danger, remember: buckle up day and night, every rider, every ride."

Research shows pickup truck drivers and passengers continue to lag in seat belt use. Close to half of all pickup drivers killed in crashes last year in Texas were not wearing a seat belt. Additionally, people driving at night wear their seat belt less often, even though it's a more dangerous time to drive. Last year, 59% of all crashes in which unbuckled drivers or passengers died occurred at night. ■

## Stewart named chief financial officer

Stephen Stewart is TxDOT's new chief financial officer. He has more than 20 years of state governmental experience and has been involved with many key initiatives since he began with TxDOT in 2012. While with TxDOT, Stewart has held previous roles as Manager of Financial Reporting, Director of Accounting, and most recently Director of the Financial Management Division. Prior to coming to work at TxDOT, he was with the Comptroller of Public Accounts. Aside from governmental accounting, he has also gained business and management experience from owning his own CPA firm which focused on bookkeeping and tax services. ■

# CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP SKILLS WITH NEW PROGRAM

**T**raining, discussions, networking and more are available to leaders and aspiring leaders at TxDOT through a new program from the Workforce Development Section of the Human Resources Division.

The Leadership Development Pathway Program provides supervisors, managers and team leads at TxDOT the opportunity to network. Participants can also use resources and reference materials that include webinars, workshops, instructor-led courses and a virtual knowledge center.



*The Leadership Development Pathway Program provides resources for leaders like instructor-led courses on supervisor-related topics.*

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

The program's impetus was the need to assist TxDOT management with an outlet for addressing issues, including feedback, conducting effective career conversations, public speaking, meeting management and other relevant topics.

"The program is developed not just for current leaders but for those who want to be leaders at TxDOT," said Dean Carpenter Turner, Human Resources training specialist. "It provides diverse programming to give them the opportunity to network and connect to other employees related to their roles in management and leadership."

The program is open to anyone at TxDOT but some classes have prerequisites and may require supervisor approval. However, many courses and webinars are available for all. For example, Leadership Hacks is a series of webinars that feature guest presenters and subject

matter experts and is designed to develop leaders within the agency. The webinars cover topics affecting leaders like recognizing stress in employees and teamwork. Employees can sign up for them in the Training and Development section of PeopleSoft.

In addition, the program will include video interviews with senior leadership about their journey at TxDOT. The available resources will cover a wide variety of topics and provide many great tools for managing an ever-changing work environment.

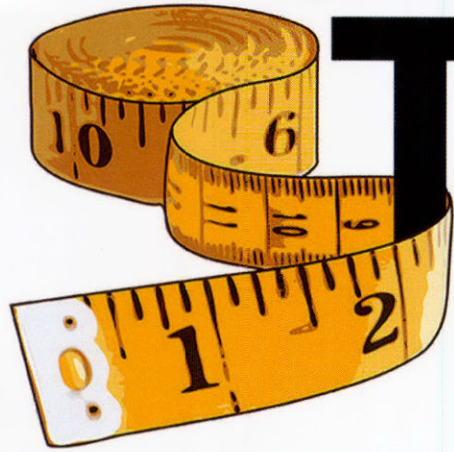
"The program is not heavily structured so employees can pick and choose topics they are interested in," said Sabrina Bate-man, Human Resources training specialist. "We wanted to show that leadership is a continuing journey."

The program represents an investment in TxDOT employees. It allows them an avenue to become leaders regardless of their job title.

"You don't have to be a supervisor to be a leader," said Bate-man. "Organizations that develop leadership in all their employees work better and accomplish more than organizations stuck in old structures and hierarchies. It is about empowering employees and encouraging them to step up and set goals."

Anyone interested in the program can email [LeadershipDevelopment@txdot.gov](mailto:LeadershipDevelopment@txdot.gov) for more information. ■

# Get Fit Texas!



**WRAPS UP ANOTHER YEAR**

**T**xDOT wrapped up another year of the Get Fit Texas! Challenge, the state agency-to-agency competition that encourages state employees to add physical activity to their routine. The 10-week challenge asked participants to log a minimum of 150 minutes of physical activity per week. To complete the challenge and receive eight hours of leave time, employees had to log the required minutes for at least six weeks of the challenge.

This year, 5,931, or 47% of TxDOT employees logged more than 17 million exercise minutes. Of those, 5,084 employees reached the challenge goal of exercising at least 150 minutes a week for six weeks or more. However, TxDOT had a 9% decrease in active participation and a 10% decline in individuals achieving the challenge goal over the previous year.

The Get Fit Texas! Challenge has benefits beyond pumping up the competitive spirit. Participants reported feeling less stressed and being committed to the lifestyle changes beyond the 10 weeks.

That effort helped the department get second place in the large agency category. First place went to the Department of Public Safety that had a 52% completion rate. Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center got third, with a 13% completion rate.

The winners of the third annual internal competition are listed below:

First Place, Divisions:

- Research and Technology Implementation Division – extra small division category with 93% completion rate
- Public Transportation Division – small division category with a 64% completion rate.
- Maintenance Division – medium division category with an 81% completion rate.
- Traffic Safety Division – large division category with a 68% completion rate.

**This year, 5,931, or 47% of TxDOT employees logged more than 17 million exercise minutes.**

First Place, Districts:

- Childress District – small district category with a 63% completion rate.
- Yoakum District – medium district category with a 51% completion rate.
- Corpus Christi Division – large district category with a 51% completion rate.

To see where your district or division finished, check out the detailed results on Crossroads.

All 2021 Get Fit leave time must be taken by Dec. 31, 2021.

# MILESTONES

## MAY SERVICE AWARDS

### ABILENE

- 40 David C. Caffey
- 15 Dennis J. Holland

### ADMINISTRATION

- 25 Amanda M. Martinez

### AMARILLO

- 5 Bryan Newport

### ATLANTA

- 15 Thomas C. Bruce

### AUSTIN

- 35 Thien T. Nguyen
- 15 Susana Ceballos
- 5 Heather A. Carman

### BEAUMONT

- 25 Scott J. Ayres
- 20 Steve T. Melton
- 5 Walter Boerner

### BRIDGE

- 15 Taya Retterer

### BROWNWOOD

- 20 Gonzalo Flores
- 15 Gerald Ragland

### BRYAN

- 20 Lorena A. Patranella

### CHILDRESS

- 20 Amanda N. Cabler
- 5 Randy D. Barnett
- Ryan J. Reid

### CIVIL RIGHTS

- 20 Martha R. Arnold

### COMPLIANCE

- 5 Jason R. Williams

### CONSTRUCTION

- 15 Jason C. Duncan

### CORPUS CHRISTI

- 15 Michael P. Gross
- 10 Christopher Castellano
- Jeffrey K. Heimann
- Jesus P. Morataya

### DALLAS

- 30 James M. Palmgren
- 20 Timothy P. Wright
- 15 Perry L. Day
- 10 Jamie R. Pruett
- 5 John K. Anderson
- Michael DuVall
- Jobie Hill
- Napat Intharasombat
- David Rounsley

### EL PASO

- 25 Jose Mendez

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 15 Paul N. Campbell
- 10 Casey M. Rowe
- 5 Kurt Ahlhorn

### FLEET OPERATIONS

- 40 Mat R. Foster
- 25 David L. Merritt
- 20 Juan A. Martinez
- 15 Dalton B. Pratt
- 10 Anna L. Leal
- Michael W. Rogers

### FORT WORTH

- 15 James A. Lang
- 10 Steven W. Gayle
- 5 Sandra Thompson

### GENERAL COUNSEL

- 25 John J. Ingram Jr.

### HOUSTON

- 35 Charles W. Dawson Jr.
- Jeffery D. Thomson
- 25 Cinnamon D. Bialas
- Shianne M. Blease-Staine
- Donald A. Marquise
- 20 William D. Burch
- Matthew J. Gardner
- Robert E. Henry
- Elizabeth A. Martin
- Henry I. Nazareno
- David J. Weisz
- 15 Joey V. Duncan
- Catherine K. McCreight
- Dorothy K. Murphy
- Lisa A. Thomas
- 10 Mariano B. Manon-Og
- 5 Sharlett A. Moore

### HUMAN RESOURCES

- 10 Eugene A. Chapa

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 15 Aileen A. Wade

### LAREDO

- 5 Juan P. Garza Jr.

### LUBBOCK

- 25 Ronnie V. Long
- 20 Jimmy M. Grado
- Shelley C. Harris
- Russell W. Ray

- 10 Orlando Lira
- Manuel Marmolejo
- Kelley D. Tooley

### LUFKIN

- 20 Tracy L. Walker
- 10 James R. Dunn
- 5 Victor Shelton

### MAINTENANCE

- 25 Antonio I. Barron
- 20 Alfred E. Chandler
- 5 Anna Maijala

### MARITIME

- 15 Travis C. Milner

### OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

- 15 Jessica D. Mueller

### ODESSA

- 40 Tommy D. Rejino
- 25 Eric J. Lopez
- 5 Sonia Rivera

### PARIS

- 35 Kevin W. Wilson
- 25 Michael P. Murphy
- 20 Crystal J. Cook
- Colby D. Shelton
- 15 Jesse D. Herrera
- 5 Diego V. Mingura

### PHARR

- 25 Atidio Garza
- 15 Daniel Garcia

### PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- 20 Julia K. Custer
- Lisa A. Merwin
- 5 Jessica Andrews

### PROJECT FINANCE, DEBT & STRATEGIC CONTRACTS

- 30 Alma C. Piper

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 15 Linda C. Hernandez

### RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

- 5 Jadesola B. Adediwura

### SAN ANGELO

- 20 Michael A. Cervantez
- 15 Jonathan W. Phillips

### SAN ANTONIO

- 35 Mark R. Mosley
- 30 Darcie A. Schipull
- 25 Sergio R. Garcia
- 15 Carlos L. Herrera
- Michael G. Jarzombek
- Samuel Santos
- 10 Juan L. Rodriguez
- 5 Pilar Cantu IV
- Gerhard Ganter
- Daniel Gaona
- David Pulido

### SUPPORT SERVICES

- 20 Kevin C. Rucker
- 15 Roland S. Ramon
- 5 Maulik Mistri

### TOLL OPERATIONS

- 15 Roland G. Silva
- 5 Larry D. Stanley

### TRAFFIC SAFETY

- 20 Keith D. Kyle
- 15 Rebecca P. Black
- Lydia Bryan Valdez
- Ishmael D. White

### TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

- 20 John C. Jameson
- 15 Jennifer R. Carpenter

### TRAVEL

- 10 Jeremy Primozich

### TYLER

- 15 Geoffrey S. Cunningham
- Dan L. Hernandez III

### WACO

- 25 Brent T. Zarosky
- 15 Brian L. Ayers
- Wesley D. Hilburn
- Christopher J. Johnson
- Rachelle Sandel
- 5 Mark Davis

### WICHITA FALLS

- 25 Kade A. Kimbrow
- 10 Jason L. Alvey
- 5 Jessi J. Goodwin

### YOAKUM

- 20 John P. Clark
- 15 Lariet W. Girndt
- 5 Dustin L. Harper
- Karen E. Voelkel



# JUNE SERVICE AWARDS

## AMARILLO

- 10 Donald W. Hibbs  
Kevin D. Hill  
Steven H. Wynia

## ATLANTA

- 15 Jose A. Romero

## AUSTIN

- 25 David L. Martinez
- 15 David A. Herbrich  
Brandon A. Marshall

## BRIDGE

- 35 Timothy E. Bradberry
- 5 Larry J. Chaloupka Jr.  
Pegdwende Igor  
Kafando

## BROWNWOOD

- 10 Glenn R. Herring

## BRYAN

- 10 Donald R. House II  
Matt W. Moore

## CHILDRESS

- 25 Paul E. Henslee
- 10 Lewis F. Allen  
Oscar Garcia  
De Santiago
- 5 Jared R. Groves

## COMMUNICATIONS

- 20 Brent Dollar

## CONSTRUCTION

- 15 Jessica K. Ganucheau

## CORPUS CHRISTI

- 35 David C. Chapa  
Martin C. Horst
- 10 David A. Franco  
Ruben Garcia  
Van L. Henrichson  
Barron G. Morris  
Ruben M. Ortiz  
Johnnie W. Smith Jr.

## DALLAS

- 35 Walter R. Fisher III
- 30 Matthew R. Morrow
- 20 Kareem Doucette
- 15 Michael B. Smithey
- 10 Leslie C. Davenport
- 5 Farzia Haque  
Hadeel Radaideh

## EL PASO

- 20 Timothy R. Caswell
- 5 Michael M. Ivey

## ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 10 Mark A. Fisher

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 10 Amber N. Kirkland

## FORT WORTH

- 30 David E. Wagner
- 20 Christian J. Houghton
- 15 Joseph M. Mims  
Eddy G. Watson
- 10 Johnny D. Blakeney  
Justin Derden

## HOUSTON

- 35 William L. Stone Jr.
- 25 Michael Awa  
Funso A. Ekibolaji
- 20 Bart B. Brenk  
Rafael Cortes  
Trent W. Kubena  
Jahangir Yaghmaeian
- 15 Nestor E. Dizon  
Ramanie R. Rajapakse  
Christopher A. Sell
- 10 Joseph R. Fealy
- 5 Erica Mohs

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 30 Cheryl C. Grant
- 20 Ann M. Zeeck

## LUBBOCK

- 35 Ben Kautz
- 15 Hector M. Osuna

## LUFKIN

- 15 Krista B. Cloonan
- 10 Randal S. Cooper

## MATERIALS & TESTS

- 20 Melissa R. Adamcik
- 15 Christina Gutierrez

## ODESSA

- 15 John R. Carrasco  
Francisco P. Perez  
Ramon Sotelo
- 10 Francisco L. Barron

## PARIS

- 10 Benjamin B. Garrett  
Daniel W. Hart

## PHARR

- 30 Eloy Guajardo Jr.
- 20 David R. Vera
- 15 Leonel C. Saenz Jr.

## PROCUREMENT

- 20 John A. Landa

## PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- 25 Brian K. Williams
- 20 Gunalini Rajkumar
- 15 Caleb M. Bryant
- 10 Natashia M. Tabatabaai

## PROJECT FINANCE, DEBT & STRATEGIC CONTRACTS

- 10 Scott J. Spradlin

## RAIL

- 10 Jody S. Wall

## RIGHT OF WAY

- 25 Deana M. McHorse
- 20 Crystal D. Damron

## SAN ANGELO

- 20 William L. Knight
- 15 Curtis D. Storey

## SAN ANTONIO

- 20 Donald W. Deaton  
Edmundo Gonzalez  
Lorenzo Morales  
David O. Valdez
- 15 Jose Antu III  
Jerry W. Bailey
- 10 Ethan L. Garza
- 5 Fernando Flores  
Vicky D. Ribordy

## SUPPORT SERVICES

- 20 Martin G. Boehringer  
Sean M. Goltz
- 15 Frances C. Fletcher
- 10 Joseph A. Wilson

## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING

- 20 Gabriel Contreras

## TRAVEL

- 35 Donna J. Watson

## TYLER

- 10 Bob P. Hardy Jr.  
Clarence R. Ohnheiser Jr.

## WACO

- 25 Jaime A. Olvera
- 15 Chris J. Mashek  
Mark A. Sedillo

## WICHITA FALLS

- 35 Samuel D. Groves
- 25 Mitchell E. Nava

## YOAKUM

- 10 Gerard E. Jalufka

# MILESTONES

## MARCH RETIREE REPORT

### ABILENE

**23** James H. Smith  
**21** M Scott Free  
**7** Daisy Rodriguez

### AMARILLO

**7** Pete Lomeli Jr.

### ATLANTA

**26** Heron Garcia

### AUSTIN

**23** James E. Bailey

### AVIATION

**22** Harry A. Lorton

### BEAUMONT

**25** Edward M. Anderson  
**14** William L. Bainbridge III

### BROWNWOOD

**36** Paul H. Musick

### BRYAN

**22** Walter J. Breaux

### CORPUS CHRISTI

**14** Curtis R. Carroll

### DALLAS

**25** Stephanie M. Bruner

### EL PASO

**27** Javier Cordova  
Nestor Gomez

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

**31** Barbara J. Hickman

### HOUSTON

**36** John A. Elam

### LAREDO

**17** Herminia Cantu

### LUBBOCK

**15** Stanley W. McNeely

### MAINTENANCE

**24** John D. Bilyeu

### PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

**26** William A. Reichert Jr.  
**16** Christina A. Corley

### PHARR

**21** Juan Gomez

### PROCUREMENT

**23** Susan I. Lassiter  
**22** Araceli Sanchez

### SAN ANGELO

**20** Frances L. Strube  
**16** Barry S. Matthews

### SAN ANTONIO

**36** David A. Vrana

### SUPPORT SERVICES

**5** Carl Martin

### TRAFFIC SAFETY

**18** Anna L. Hovenden

### WICHITA FALLS

**21** Gregory A. Gibbs  
**20** Martha Renee Chilcott

### YOAKUM

**15** Jerry J. Faltisek

## APRIL RETIREE REPORT

### ABILENE

**31** Amy J. Hart  
**26** Jeffrey S. Holland  
**24** Edward L. Hart

### ATLANTA

**28** Barbara F. Wyatt

### AUSTIN

**17** Juan Salazar

### BEAUMONT

**23** Gary L. Korns  
**15** Susan M. Will  
**14** Mark S. Odom  
**6** Joel David Stein  
**5** Doug Nichols

### BRYAN

**16** Robert William Haensly

### CORPUS CHRISTI

**32** John A. Evers

### DALLAS

**31** Alan J. Easterling  
Harry J. Rogers III

### EL PASO

**25** Alberto F. Dominguez

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

**10** Layde E. Philips

### FLEET OPERATIONS

**32** Joe P. Cornett  
**24** Johnie Q. Muller

### FORT WORTH

**39** Santos R. Chazarreta  
**38** Monty W. Hale  
**29** Kenneth W. Johnson  
**8** Cynthia J. Don

### HOUSTON

**25** Kevin E. Braun  
**14** John Smith McAllister III

### LUBBOCK

**29** Jose J. Lopez  
**25** Ronnie V. Long

### ODESSA

**16** Benjamin G. Casas

### PROCUREMENT

**2** Marque Lynn Fitts

### SAN ANTONIO

**20** Emilio J. Blancas

### TOLL OPERATIONS

**16** Stephen Easley

### WACO

**23** Richard E. Martin III

### WICHITA FALLS

**14** David Wayne Renicks

### YOAKUM

**26** Paul Edward Reitz

## IN MEMORIAM

### ABILENE DISTRICT

**Rex Thackerson**  
General Transportation  
Technician  
Date of Death: 04/12/2021  
Years of Service: 4

### ATLANTA DISTRICT

**Jerry West**  
General Transportation  
Technician  
Date of Death: 3/8/2021  
Years of Service: 24  
Retired: 2017

### CHILDRESS DISTRICT

**Robert Miles**  
General Transportation  
Technician  
Date of Death: 04/19/2021  
Years of Service: 10

### HOUSTON DISTRICT

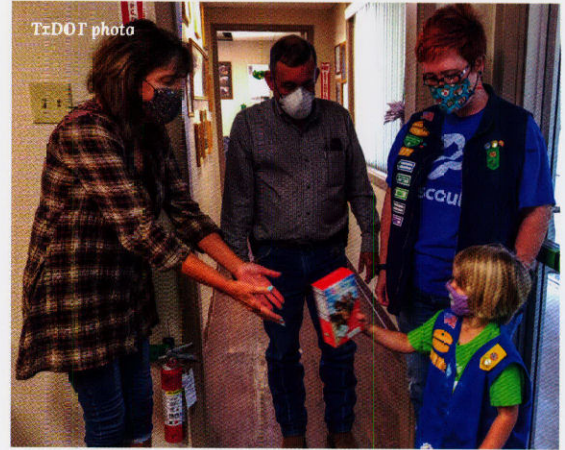
**Isidro Rodriguez**  
General Engineering  
Technician  
Date of Death: 05/11/2021  
Years of Service: 21  
**Sylvia Wright**  
Office Technician  
Date of Death: 05/09/2021  
Years of Service: 16

# GIRL SCOUT TROOP THANKS LUBBOCK DISTRICT EMPLOYEES WITH COOKIES FOR HEROES

**M**aintenance crews across the Lubbock District were treated to a delicious surprise in May. Girl Scout Troop 6371 delivered boxes of their world-famous cookies to all 18 district maintenance sections and the Special Jobs crew as part of the Girls Scouts' Cookies for Heroes program.

According to troop leader Amy Goebel, wife of Lubbock District Director of Construction Ed Goebel, money donated to the troop during the cookie drive is used to purchase additional boxes of cookies to give to the military and local heroes. COVID restrictions prevented the troop from sending cookies to servicemen and women, so the group decided to treat TxDOT's maintenance sections instead.

The troop thanked the TxDOT heroes for their hard work to keep roads clear of ice and snow and safe for all travelers this past winter season. Ed and Amy's daughter, Elaina, also part of Troop 6371, helped deliver the cookies. ■



Lubbock District maintenance crews got a sweet surprise as they were honored as part of the Girl Scouts' Cookies for Heroes program.

## EMPLOYEES CHIME IN

**If you were stranded on a desert island and had only one book to read, what book would it be?**

### PHARR DISTRICT

TxDOT photo



**HECTOR SILLER**  
SAN BENITO ASSISTANT AREA ENGINEER

"The Alchemist. It's a story about overcoming obstacles. If I were on a deserted island, I would want to read something hopeful and something that explains that each obstacle you encounter is an opportunity to grow."

### YOAKUM DISTRICT

TxDOT photo



**KELSEY STEFFEK FOWLKES**  
ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST

"I'd have to say the 2021 Old Farmer's Almanac. The book would help me predict bad weather and good fishing days!"

### LUFKIN DISTRICT

TxDOT photo



**CHRISTIE MADDUX**  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

"The one book I would choose to read is the Bible. In each section of the Bible we are reminded of God's unchanging, faithful, gracious and loving character."



# You can't fix a pedestrian at a body shop.

Slow down and watch for pedestrians.

BE SAFE. DRIVE SMART. 

#EndTheStreakTX