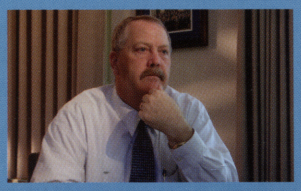


Steve Simmons Talks Reorg

PAGE 8

TXD T 1300.6 T687N 33:03

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

TN
TRANSPORTATION NEWS

VOLUME 33 • ISSUE 3 • MAY-JUNE 2008

The Future of Transportation

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN
0 1161 0864 5791

Bahia Grande Beauty *Page 3*

Transportation Forum Coverage *Page 7*

Maintaining America's Roads *Page 13*

Issue Interests

Saenz Says
Letter from Executive Director Amadeo Saenz.
PAGE 2

Bahia Grande
Restoring the beauty of the Bahia Grande.
PAGE 3

Mike Blaser
Gettin' the goods in Tyler.
PAGE 5

Over the Fence
Short answers to those tough questions your family, friends and neighbors ask about TxDOT. **PAGE 6**

Transportation Forum
News from the 2008 Transportation Forum
PAGE 7

Q and A
Steve Simmons talks reorg for TxDOT.
PAGE 8

COVER STORY
The Future is Now
PAGE 9

Regular T-News Features

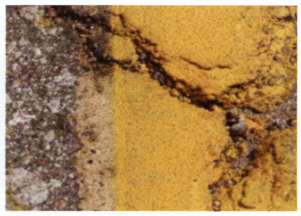
Barrie's Backyard
PAGE 12

Milestones
PAGE 14

Where Am I?
PAGE 18

Community Connection
BACK COVER

Buying a PC?
What to look for in buying a computer.
PAGE 11



Horizon
Read about transportation innovations in the U.S. and abroad.
PAGE 13

T-News is published by the Texas Department of Transportation
125 E. 11th St., Austin, TX 78701-2483.
Phone: (512) 463-8588
Circulation: 18,793
© Copyright 2008

Government and Public Affairs Division

Design and Feature Writing
Thompson Marketing

Photography
Griff Smith, Kevin Stillman
Michael Amador

5 THINGS

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

1. **TxDOT is improving efficiency**
The Regionalization Analysis Committee is reviewing department functions, and will make recommendations on where those functions can be performed most efficiently.

2. **RMAs are accelerating projects**
The eight Regional Mobility Authorities are working to plan and deliver more than $4 billion in transportation projects. Proceeds generated from an RMA project go back into the region to pay for other transportation projects.

3. **Texas just keeps growing**
Texas grew more than any other state in the nation last year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Lone Star State gained almost half a million people from July 2006 to July 2007. The state's population is now estimated at nearly 24 million.

4. **Texans speak out**
More than 20,000 comments were received during the public input period for I-69/TTC. The official comment period ended April 18, after TxDOT extended it 30 days beyond the original closing date of March 19. Texans sent their comments by direct mail, through the Internet or went on record at the 47 public hearings held along the corridor.

5. **The 2008 Texas Transportation Forum was a huge success**
More than 1,200 people interested in transportation attended this year's event. Participants were from Texas, Florida, Colorado and beyond. Session recordings and presentation materials are available at www.TexasTransportationForum.com.

SAENZ SAYS

For the past month, you've probably heard discussions among your co-workers about our regionalization efforts. And that may have just led you to have to more questions – and possibly a little anxiety. That's understandable. Our Development Core Team – a group of district engineers and division directors – is working to identify functions we can improve. Because no decisions have been made, I know this time of uncertainty may be unsettling. I ask for your patience, understanding and the professionalism that is the hallmark of our employees. Our goal in this process is to make TxDOT more efficient, and to improve our operations. With that in mind, I asked our TN staff to include in this issue an interview with Deputy Executive Director Steve Simmons, who heads our task force. It begins on Page 8; please take the time to read it. As more information becomes available, we'll keep you informed.

While TxDOT looks at ways to improve, we're still in the business of planning the future of transportation in Texas. And we recently visited with 1,200 of our closest friends and colleagues to share their thoughts on the subject at the Third Annual Transportation Forum in Austin. For two days, we talked about transportation, present and future. It was another successful forum. If you missed it, and want some quick "sound bites" from conference speakers, check on Page 7.

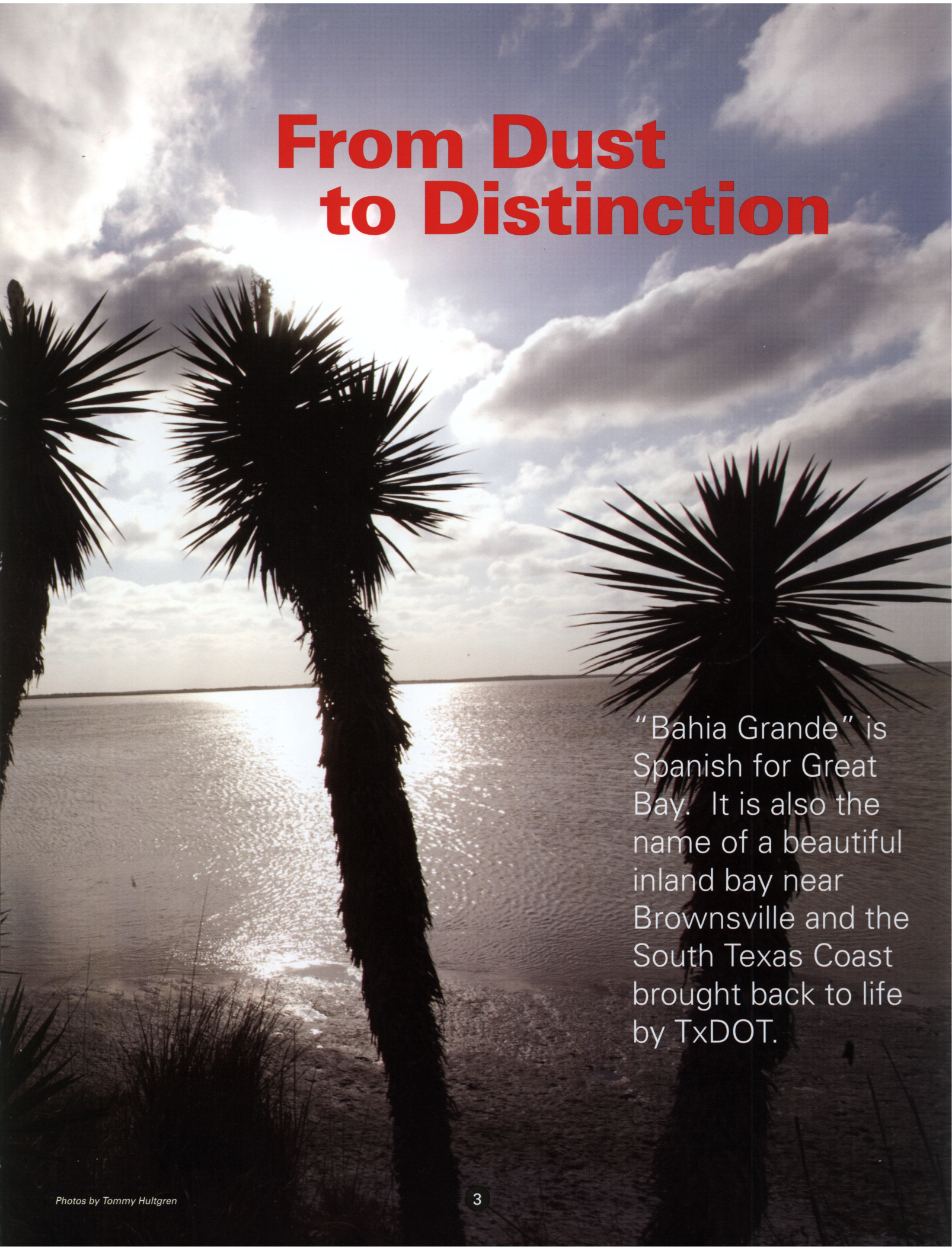
Meanwhile, I'm sure you've heard by now that Gov. Rick Perry has named two new members to the Texas Transportation Commission. With the announcement, Deirdre Delisi will take over as chair of the commission, and William Meadows will join the five-member board. We will have more information about our new commissioners in an upcoming issue of TN.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to Commissioner Hope Andrade, who will be exiting the commission. Hope led the commission and our department with grace and civility during some very difficult months of transition for this agency. She served Texas and TxDOT well.

Our agency and our employees are in the midst of many transitions, and each poses opportunities for growth. I can't think of a better group of people I'd rather serve with, and usher in the future. Thank you for all you do.

Amadeo Saenz Jr.

Amadeo Saenz Jr., P.E.
Executive Director
Texas Department of Transportation



From Dust to Distinction

"Bahia Grande" is Spanish for Great Bay. It is also the name of a beautiful inland bay near Brownsville and the South Texas Coast brought back to life by TxDOT.

Photos by Tommy Hultgren

FACTS AND FIGURES

In addition to the SH 48 improvements, TxDOT:

- replaced the bridge over a channel between San Martin Lake and the Brownsville Ship Channel
- installed a 284-foot long bridge spanning a new Bahia Grande channel in place of an older 103-foot drainage culvert
- put in a wildlife crossing underpass and covered the nearby easement with native plants
- provided "critter crossings" in the safety median barrier
- constructed a bird-and-wildlife viewing area with parking

Pharr District Area Engineer Arnold Cortez

After the dredging of the Port of Brownsville Ship Channel in 1930, the Bahia Grande was severed from the coastal waters that sustained its marine and wildlife inhabitants. It soon became a wasteland of harmful blowing dust and a faint memory of its previous prominence for neighboring communities.

But thanks to an unprecedented environmental effort by TxDOT and nearly 70 partners, the grand bay is back with its original beauty only found in nature.

"It's just amazing," TxDOT Area Engineer Arnold Cortez simply stated. "This project literally transformed an ugly and harsh environment into a destination for wildlife lovers. With water back in the basin, the marine and animal life is starting to return. There have even been sightings of an endangered ocelot. It's unreal."

The project that Cortez speaks of was designed to improve safety on SH 48 in the Pharr District near Brownsville. The $16 million undertaking included the widening of a 9.7 mile stretch of highway that connects Brownsville to Port Isabel from two lanes to four lanes with shoulders and a median barrier.

The new bridges were built to allow expansion and addition of channels to bring back the seawater from the bay. The wildlife underpass and crossings support the migration of animals from south of the Rio Grande River to the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. The newly constructed channels are designed to take advantage of normal salt water tide flow and give marine animals a way in and out of the basin.

The overall 11,000-acre bay wetland restoration project was the largest in Texas, and one of the largest ever in the United States.

Flooding the once-dry basin will enable it to become nursery grounds for important aquatic species such as shrimp, crabs, and finfish. Under favorable conditions, water may inundate approximately 6,500 acres of the Bahia Grande. Additional acreage would be inundated by high tides, storm surges or periods of high rainfall.

"While the environmental aspects of this project are quite remarkable, we also have made some very important safety enhancements along SH 48," Cortez said. "The median barrier will help prevent head-on collisions and the new wildlife viewing area will give tourists and local people alike a safe place to watch birds and enjoy Bahia Grande's natural beauty."

SH 48 also is a designated hurricane evacuation route. Widening and straightening the roadway will improve traffic flow for people fleeing Port Isabel in the event of a hurricane emergency.

"There was a true partnership between surrounding communities and state and federal agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make this project a winner," Cortez noted. "It has already won an Environmental Excellence Award from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. We've also been told that this project will be used as a model for other bay restoration projects in the future.

"The Bahia Grande was a dust-ridden nuisance at one point. Now it is a source of pride and a place all Texans should see."

Editor's Note: You can view some great pictures of the Bahia Grande inundation at http://www.gulfmex.org/crp2008.html.

TN *by John Boggess*

Photos by Francie Hodges, Batten Photography.

Tyler District's multi-talented Mike Blaser

Gettin' the Goods in Tyler

His coworkers call him "the bloodhound." Tyler District purchaser Mike Blaser has developed a knack for tracking down vendors for out-of-the-ordinary requests.

The 28-year TxDOT veteran, who started his career in the Jacksonville maintenance section ("best road crew ever," he says), accepted his current position as a purchaser in 1993. Prior to that, he worked in the equipment section of the district warehouse, affectionately nicknamed the "Best Warehouse in Texas."

Over the years, Blaser has handled some pretty unusual requests. The environmental staff in Tyler once asked him to locate a vendor for some wild celery plants and other native trees and grasses for a special project. Shortly after the specialized goods were delivered, he received a follow-up request to purchase some vegetation cages. It seems a happy crowd of turtles was feasting on the newly planted trees.

Another time, Blaser needed to purchase a pair of water skis for a bridge inspection crew. They planned to mount sensors to the skis and float them under the bridge to inspect the structure. Blaser has also hunted down everything from chest waders to rubber mallets.

"I work with a great bunch of people," he said. "If you have a problem, there's always someone to assist you. The supervisory support is great."

He says he has seen many changes in purchasing procedures in the past 15 years, mostly for the better.

"Used to, it didn't matter what you bought — whether it was a 5-cent or 15-cent item, you had to have three bids," Blaser recalled.

Now such items can be purchased under a bid ceiling, currently $5,000, which eliminates the need to seek multiple bids for qualifying items. Blaser says

The sign says it all.

> "Don't publish anything until after you're 50. By then you'll have enough life experience, and what you write will resonate a lot truer."

routine purchases have become much easier as a result.

Not only is Blaser a skilled purchaser, he is a skilled musician as well. He got his start at age 12, playing mostly for church revivals throughout the East Texas area. When Tyler District Public Information Officer Larry Krantz was creating a new podcast program, he turned to Blaser for help in composing an intro tune for the weekly podcasts. Blaser was more than happy to oblige.

Though the podcasts were initially a district tool, they have expanded to include statewide transportation issues and are currently available for downloading on the Keep Texas Moving Web site, www.keeptexasmoving.com.

A talented lyricist, Blaser's musical influences include Loggins and Messina, Jerry Reed, Chet Akins, Steve Earl, John Hyatt and a few others. His favorite guitars are his 1971 Guild and a 1975 Honer that belonged to his brother.

Most of the time, the music comes first, then the lyrics. Some of the best advice Blaser received was from a fellow artist who told him: "Don't publish anything until after you're 50. By then you'll have enough life experience, and what you write will resonate a lot truer."

While Blaser says his years at TxDOT have been the best job he's ever had, he does have plans for life after TxDOT. His dream is to own a studio and publishing house so he can help other musicians and artists avoid the typical pitfalls of breaking into the music business.

Until then, "the bloodhound" will continue to track down both unusual and routine purchases for any TxDOT employee who needs them. The sign over his office says it best: "Serving over 400 daily."

Blaser serves them with a smile...and sometimes, a song. TN

by Ann Zeeck

OVER THE FENCE

Q **Why is T-News mailed to my home? Wouldn't interagency mail be cheaper?**

A Delivering T-News directly to employees' homes allows it to be read at their leisure. It also allows the information to be easily shared with family members and friends, increasing communication effectiveness. Since T-News is now published only six times a year, overall costs are cheaper than when it was published monthly. In addition, plans are to transition T-News to an Internet-based publication next year, a move that will provide considerable savings by eliminating printing and distribution costs.

Q **What is the status of the review by the Sunset Advisory Commission?**

A The review is ongoing and most Sunset meetings with districts, divisions and offices have been completed. Sunset staff continues to ask follow-up questions in preparation of its report expected this summer. A public hearing is scheduled for July 15, and a meeting on final recommendations is set for Sept. 23-24.

Stay informed on transportation issues — check out TxDOT's new Podcast program.

Updates are posted weekly on www.keeptexasmoving.com

3 THIRD ANNUAL | TEXAS TRANSPORTATION FORUM

APRIL 20-22, 2008 HILTON AUSTIN, TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

KEEP TEXAS MOVING

More than 1,200 people attended the 2008 Texas Transportation Forum in Austin April 20-22 to hear from front-line officials about how they're tackling local, state and national transportation problems. Conference goers learned about the realities of funding both present and future transportation needs; talked about transportation security in a post-9/11 world; and discussed how a good transportation system can bring economic opportunity to future generations of Texans.

Below are some of the comments from presenters at the Forum sessions:

"The work we do together makes a difference and we cannot relent in our quest to solve these challenges. Because we're not just talking about dollars and concrete and orange cones. Instead, we are talking about freedom: the freedom to move about, to transport goods or to simply travel freely with one's family."
Gov. Rick Perry, talking about the need to stay engaged in solving Texas' transportation challenges

"We, as a state, have come to the real point where we have to decide whether we are going to become a third-world transportation state or whether we are going to rise to the occasion and make sure that we can keep as much maintenance as possible and keep people moving."
U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson of Dallas on the transportation challenges facing Texas

"America's global economic strength is due in large part to a surface transportation system that historically ranked amongst the best in the world. It's our highway system that enables a large, prosperous population to efficiently import and distribute goods from around the world and to transport its own goods efficiently from anywhere on the continent to the rest of the world."
State Rep. Mike Krusee on the impact and importance of the state's highway system

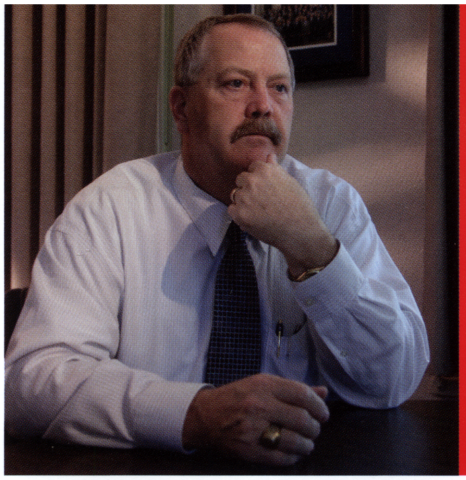
"We in Texas should guard against the temptation to injudiciously transfer funds from maintenance to new capacity. Although our current citizens desperately need the new roads, if we transform mere maintenance costs into future rehabilitation costs, we will have passed on a many-fold burden to the next generation."
State Rep. Mike Krusee on the competing needs of maintaining the highways we have and reducing congestion

"We recognize there's a short-term funding problem with the highway trust fund, which is somewhat just this side of catastrophic. And then there is a long-term problem that actually, may be structurally even more serious."
Geoffrey Yarema, member of the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission, summarizing the commission's finding on transportation funding in the U.S.

"North Texas positioned itself to do quite well."
James Bass, TxDOT's chief financial officer, on the success of the Dallas-Forth Worth region to get a $3.2 billion upfront payment from the North Texas Tollway Authority for the State Highway 121 project. The money is obligated to road projects in the DFW region

"Nobody can tell you what the plan is, what the vision is."
Congressman John Mica, Republican leader of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, on the need to define a national goal for transportation

"We Texans are at the wheel of a powerhouse economy that is racing forward at record speeds. As our growth accelerates, our needs do as well. We do not fulfill the public trust if we waste our time arguing over millions when our needs are in the billions."
Gov. Rick Perry on the need to work together to deliver transportation solutions



Q&A With Steve Simmons

Steve Simmons, Deputy Executive Director

Led by Deputy Executive Director Steve Simmons, a team of district engineers, division directors, office directors and employees across the state is looking for ways to enhance TxDOT efficiencies. Simmons recently sat down with TN and answered questions from employees regarding the efficiency effort. Below is an excerpt of the interview. For the complete interview, go to TxDOT's Crossroads Intranet site.

TN: Why do we need to consider reorganization/regionalization?

Simmons: A lot of things are happening right now that impact our department. We are going through Sunset Review. We are looking to implement recommendations from five independent audits that examined our department and how we do business. We also have a new executive director, Amadeo Saenz.

The question we are asking right now is: Are we operating in the most efficient manner possible? The follow-up question is: What changes can we make to improve?

TN: We are already looking at reducing operating costs by 10 percent, why do we need to consider something more?

Simmons: First off, employees — all the way from front-line workers to managers to directors — are to be complimented on their efforts to cut operating costs. We are asking the private sector to cut costs and we are delaying projects, so we must be able to step up to the plate and cut back as well. Cutting costs, however, does not mean we should stop looking for ways to improve efficiency. Cutting costs and improving efficiency are both good, but they are not the same thing.

We answer to taxpayers and the legislature, not just on our spending, but on the services we provide. We will be held accountable for the quality of our transportation system. If there are operational or organizational barriers to providing a better transportation system, we need to identify them and address these barriers right now.

We are open to any suggestions or changes that improve efficiencies. Everything is on the table. We are looking at the entire department, not just isolated areas or functions.

TN: Will district lines be changed?

Simmons: We are not looking at district boundaries in this process. We are very comfortable with the district lines we currently have. We are looking at district functions not lines.

TN: Will divisions be merged?

Simmons: It is too early in the process to say how it will impact divisions. We have a good organization, but we can always improve.

TN: Will jobs be cut?

Simmons: Jobs are not the focus of the analysis. We are looking at what is needed to plan and deliver a quality transportation system for Texas. If we identify a redundant or inefficient function that needs to be changed, we will figure out how to absorb the impact of that change before it is made.

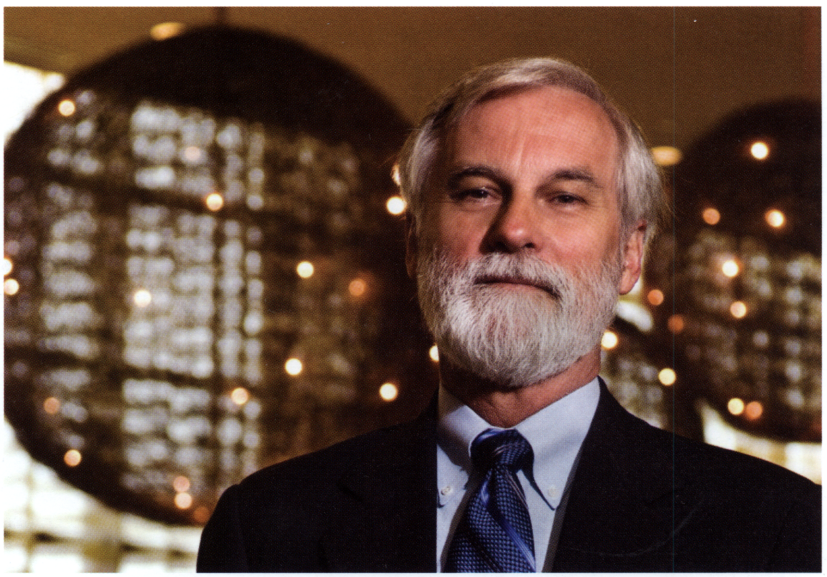
TN: Just the mention of reorganization can cause some concern among employees. What do you say to employees who are concerned? What do you want them to know?

Simmons: Amadeo Saenz and the rest of the administration know the heart and soul of this department is our employees. They are the reason we have been a great agency for so long. Our future success is dependent on our quality employees. What we want to do is make sure our employees are in the best position to be successful. From an organizational standpoint, we want to reduce or eliminate redundancies, make sure department functions are handled at the right level or location and ensure coordination between work units. TN

The Future Begins... Right Now

People have always been fascinated with the future. Maybe it's the adventuresome side of humans that pokes at our imaginations and calls us to speculate about the frontier of tomorrow. One thing for sure, it's always tough to wrap your mind around something that doesn't exist...yet.

But that's exactly what a team of TxDOT and University of Houston Futures Studies researchers are trying to do. They've come together on the TxDOT Scenarios Project to develop some transportation situations that could materialize in the future in order to determine how Texas should be planning today.



Dr. Peter Bishop, Chair of the University of Houston's Studies of the Future graduate program

"Trying to forecast the future always seems to conjure up spooky music and pictures of crystal balls in people's minds," said Ron Hagquist, senior planner with TxDOT's research office. "However, the type of scenario planning that we're embarking on has actually been used for decades. Major corporations and the military have successfully applied these methods to prepare themselves for what could come."

Hagquist explained that the University of Houston's Futures Studies program had already done much of the data gathering by futurists worldwide on major trends and possible developments in six categories: technology, demographics, economics, culture, politics and the environment.

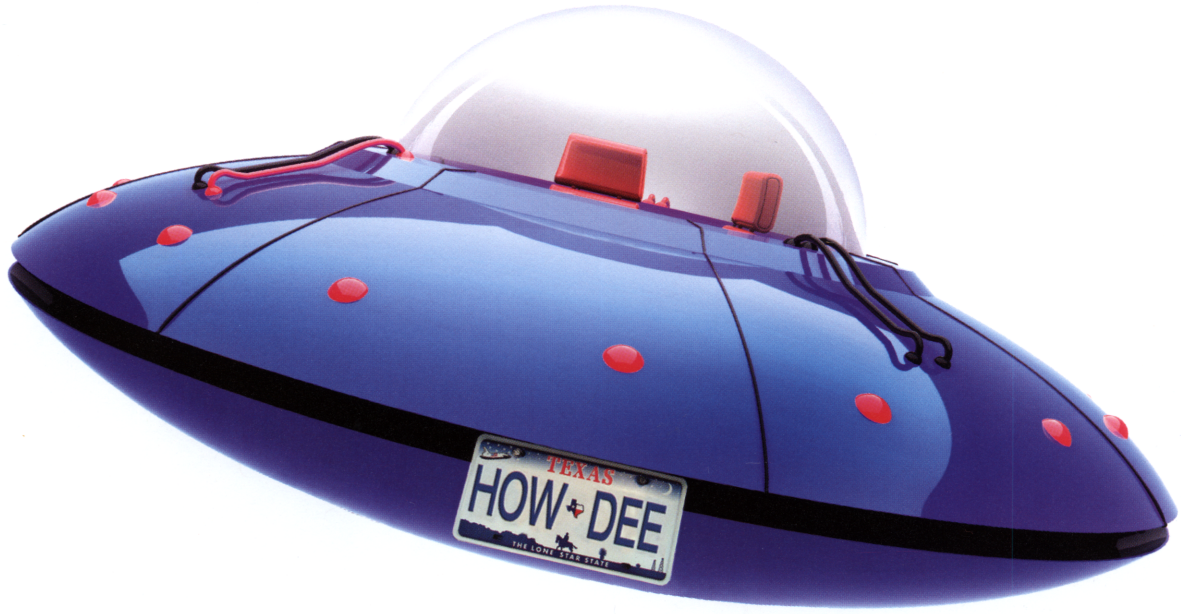
For example, over the next several decades, vehicle fuel efficiency will impact transportation organizations throughout the country. A technology forecasting company surveyed transportation industry stakeholders about the timeframe for hybrid vehicles to make an impact on the car market. Many experts have circled the year 2013 for when hybrids should achieve a major market share of 30 percent. While such projections are not an exact science, they are based on trends and sound projections from credible professionals.

This type of projection is helpful to TxDOT in planning for the future because most of its operating dollars come from the gas tax. Better gas mileage can mean overall lower fuel revenues even when factoring in more drivers. And while vehicle improvements are great for the economy and the environment, lower gas tax revenues mean Texas will need to be ready to finance its transportation needs from other sources.

For the Scenarios Project, the team added transportation as the seventh major issue. To gather data on transportation trends, the team talked to stakeholders around the state from various interest groups such as rail, aviation, environmental, legislative and finance.

The next step was to formulate potential scenarios of what the future might look like in Texas. Those seven scenarios are grouped in three categories of traffic congestion, economic development, and shifting transportation experiences which anticipates major changes in the transportation industry.

For example, a brief overview of a scenario in the economic development category follows.



Scenario: An Energy Constrained World

Attitudes and lifestyles have been transformed by the high costs of energy resulting from the peaking of global oil production driven by high global demand. The transportation industry changes slowly until a disaster in the Middle East results in a month without oil. The United States responds with a massive investment program that accelerates the auto industry's movement beyond oil and the combustion engine. The transportation industry and mobility patterns are changed forever.

Potential Implications for TxDOT

- Faster than anticipated decline in fuel taxes leads to new funding strategies
- Sharp drop in vehicle miles traveled and congestion until a new fleet is deployed
- Shorter and less frequent commutes; higher demand for mass transit solutions or ride-sharing services

"We don't expect any of the seven scenarios to come true, but probably parts of each will happen in some combination," Hagquist projected. "If we are proficient at planning for each scenario we should be ready for what the future actually does have in store for Texas transportation."

The next step in the process is to begin analyzing the data and discussing how Texas should begin to prepare for the future. Those types of discussions could be done in workgroups with various transportation stakeholders, including legislators, regional mobility authorities and interested citizens around the state.

"Departments of transportation have always been long-term thinkers because of the extended periods of time massive transportation infrastructure improvements take to build and finance," said Dr. Peter Bishop, chair of the University of Houston's Studies of the Future graduate program. "This project will help TxDOT think critically about many scenarios that could be true in the future and become more flexible in addressing those possibilities. TxDOT will also need to take a leadership role in working with the public on why long-term decisions are so important."

Communication is a key objective of this effort. The idea is to get policy makers and citizens around the state thinking about the long term. Trying to anticipate how the future might look could help decision makers as they develop both short- and long-term solutions.

"It's no secret that we're facing some tough decisions on our transportation system for the future," Hagquist concluded. "But we need to maintain our focus on the long term. Solutions for key infrastructure of this magnitude do not happen overnight. It's important that the decisions we make in the near term are clearly going to address our long-term needs. We think the Scenarios Project will help bring that type of forward thinking to Texas' transportation issues."

TN

by John Boggess

Check out the April 25 podcast interview with Dr. Bishop at www.KeepTexasMoving.com.

From Gigabytes to Gigahertz

Need to buy a PC? If you don't have a teenager handy, take along some of TxDOT's ideas next time you visit the electronics store.

Like most people, you probably get that wide-eyed look when you walk into a computer or electronics store. With so many products on store shelves, it's difficult to know what to choose.

If you're in the market for some home computer equipment, consider using TxDOT's computer guidelines. TxDOT has simplified the choices, setting minimum standards for the agency's network computers, laptops and printers. The process is detailed in the Technology Services Division's Core Architecture Document listed on the division's Crossroads webpage. It gives specifications on computer-associated equipment TxDOT uses.

Below are some things you might consider when you make that trip to the electronics store.

Desktop workstations at TxDOT have a 2.4 to 3.2 GHz processor (the power behind the computer's operation), a CD and DVD writer and recorder, a minimum 40 GB hard drive, and at least a GB of memory. Many workstations also use a LCD flat-screen monitor. The price you'll pay for a home computer will vary with the options you select, but can start around $600.

If you like your technology "on the go," invest in a laptop. TxDOT uses devices that contain Intel Dual Core or Duo Core 2 processors. At a minimum, TxDOT selects laptops with a 40 GB hard drive, with at least 512 megabytes of memory. Screens come in a variety of sizes, but a 15-inch screen serves most users' needs. A DVD reader and writer is standard and the agency usually opts for a floppy disk drive, either internal or USB attached. With the popularity of laptops, shop around for the best value.

Some final guidelines:

- Consider what you plan to do with your computer: word processing, data managing, computer gaming or movie viewing. The more you want to accomplish, the more memory you'll need.
- Get a warranty in case something breaks down unexpectedly.
- Don't be afraid to take advantage of the store's technical assistance team. They can answer questions and ensure your new purchase operates properly.

by Bill Powell

Watering Wisely

Two things you can be sure of in a Texas summer: it's going to be hot and it's going to be bone dry. Landscaping, whether along the highway or in your backyard, will need water to survive.

According to the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, 25 percent of the water supply in Texas urban areas is used for landscape and garden irrigation. Much of this water is used to maintain traditionally high-water-demanding landscapes.

Even drought-tolerant Texas native trees and shrubs need frequent watering until they become well rooted, which may take two growing seasons. To save money, TxDOT utilizes temporary drip irrigation systems on most highway landscape projects. Once plants are well established, they can tolerate less frequent watering and the temporary systems are shut down.

What about your own yard in the summer months? A well designed system will certainly save time, money and water. I recently spoke with B.J. Janek, a landscape professional and licensed irrigator from the Design Division's Landscape Design and Enhancement Section. He offered some watering basics.

Sprinkler Irrigation

Sprinklers are the most commonly used method of landscape watering. The two basic types are a sprinkler attached to an above-ground hose, and the permanent, automatic underground system. Both systems require little maintenance and apply large volumes of water in a short time. An automatic sprinkler system, however, can be more water efficient if designed and installed correctly.

Whichever system you choose, adjust sprinklers to avoid watering sidewalks and driveways. Also, make sure they deliver large droplets of water instead of a fine mist, which blows away and evaporates.

To encourage a deep and healthy root system, don't water too frequently, when you do, make sure you water to a depth of four to six inches.

Janek says it's best to water in the early morning, when the wind is calm and the temperature is lower to minimize evaporation. Avoid watering in the evening because the lawn stays wet all night, making it more susceptible to disease.

Drip Irrigation

Drip irrigation is ideal for flower and shrub beds. The water flows very slowly under low pressure with little waste through evaporation or runoff. In fact, drip irrigation reduces water loss by up to 60 percent.

Irrigating Other Plants in the Landscape

As with your lawn, water-established trees, shrubs and groundcovers infrequently, yet thoroughly. Most trees and shrubs benefit from a once-a-month thorough watering (to a depth of eight to 10 inches) during the growing season. Water along the drip-line of trees — the ground below the outside edges of the tree's branches — not at the trunk. This gets water to the roots of the tree. And remember, normal lawn watering is not a substitute for thorough tree and shrub watering.

When temperatures go up this summer, remember to keep your cool and water wisely. TN

by Barrie Cogburn

HORIZON
THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION

Texas is leading the way in finding viable solutions to our nation's transportation challenges. Analyzing transportation policy from all angles is part of the process, and the purpose of our research publication, *Horizon*. In each issue of TN, we will present condensed excerpts from *Horizon*. To find out more, we invite you to read the complete articles at www.txdot.gov (keyword: Horizon).

From *Horizon* Winter 2008:

The numbers are staggering. More than one in four of America's nearly 600,000 bridges need significant repairs or are burdened with more traffic than they were designed to carry, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

A third of the country's major roadways are in substandard condition—a significant factor in a third of the more than 43,000 traffic fatalities each year, according to 2005 data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Traffic jams waste 4 billion hours of commuters' time and nearly 3 billion gallons of gasoline a year, the Texas Transportation Institute calculates.

Dams, too, are at risk. The number of dams that could fail has grown 134 percent since 1999. Underground, aging and inadequate sewer systems spill an estimated 1.26 trillion gallons of untreated sewage every year. "Much of America is held together by Scotch tape, baling wire and prayers," said Donald F. Kettl, director of the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania.

Fixing these problems and others threatening the nation's critical infrastructure would cost $1.6 trillion — more than half of the annual federal budget, estimates the American Society of Civil Engineers. And that doesn't include what it will cost for new capacity to serve a growing population.

To begin to address their transportation problems, state governments are borrowing more money, adding user fees such as tolls, and striking deals with private companies, including leasing state assets.

One of the chief challenges facing infrastructure is simply age. Much of the nation's transportation infrastructure was erected in the boom days after World War II and is reaching the end of its life cycle. Another worry is that the nation's growing population is creating a need for more capacity.

To handle growing transportation needs, the federal highway system will have to double during the next 50 years and public transportation ridership should double within 20 years, according to recommendations from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Railways should be prepared to handle a 63 percent increase in freight by 2035, the association estimated. TN

by Eric Kelderman with Stateline.org

Districts:

Abilene:
20 Daniel P. Richardson
15 Roy M. Dill
10 James W. Terry

Amarillo:
10 Michael D. Brown

Atlanta:
25 Jon S. Williamson
15 Jerry L. West
10 Christopher A. Bingham; Carl E. Coats; Fred D. Crowder; Christopher S. Moore; Samuel E. Nuckels; David C. Old

Austin:
25 Wilie C. Brundige
20 William H. Braswell; Calvin R. Thomas

Beaumont:
35 Thomas D. Black
10 Curtis D. Holmes

Brownwood:
30 Richard L. Belvin
15 Peggy C. Bledsoe; Jana L. Osbourn; Weldon L. Swanger

Bryan:
30 Blane A. Laywell
25 Paul A. Gurka; Walter H. Norwood
15 Lionel Colvin
10 Teresa J. Van Hoozer; Gurald T. Vanveckhoven; Victor M. Vasquez

Childress:
25 Martin R. Smith
15 James T. Patterson

Dallas:
35 James H. Pickel
30 Richard S. Dorsett III; Cathy W. Masters; Sherman L. Putman
20 James K. Chambers; Monnie H. Matthews; Anne M. Polk
15 Richard P. Barker; Gerry V. Hennig; John K. Kiser; Miguel A. Valdespino
10 Alireza Askari- Imajdabadi; David L. Heady; Diane K. Powers; Timothy L. Powers

El Paso:
15 Javier Bustos; Aldo R. Cardona; Ismael Flores; Jose Y. Gonzales; Ernesto Gonzales; Martin Holguin; Manuel Molina Jr.
10 Pedro Ojeda; Cesario Salinas Jr; George D. Valenzuela

Ft. Worth:
40 Douglas A. Clay
30 Grover A. Schretter
25 Sherry T. Hoak; Lewis D. Hooks
20 Jacob R. Dunbar Jr; Keith W. Harris
15 Steve W. Bishop; James K. Griffin; Brian H. Harvey; Armando Rodriguez
10 Jack A. Johnson; Kristine K. Means; Danny L. Parker; Jack L. Shearman (Dec. omission)

Houston:
25 Karen G. Baker; Irma C. Blue; Yimkei G. Cheung; Russell D. Shelton Jr; Larry R. Stephenson
20 Jimmy C. Barger; Nelson T. Christensen; Paul B. Eley; Ernest C. Krolczyk Jr; Lisa A. Perez
15 Lynise D. Charles; Terry L. Dayton; Raymond G. Rodriguez
10 Pamela G. Anderson; Ross H. Ayala; Roberta K. Calvert; Robert D. Greenmyer; Teresa L. Hanson; Ricardo Montes; Jason A. Mushinsky; Sherman L. Poe; Jason W. Smith; Melvin Tidwell; Casey E. Weatherly; Deborah A. Williams
05 Thomas B. Beck; Latasha C. Brown; Brandon R. Brown; Michael W. Cheatham

Laredo:
15 Baltazar Avila
10 Antonio Perea

Lubbock:
30 Jerrell C. Otwell
25 Victor J. Borrego
15 Ellen S. Yates

Lufkin:
25 Curtis W. Shoemaker
15 Cathy P. Mills; Mark E. Payne
10 David L. Bryan; Don E. Pledger; Henry L. Wilmore Jr.

Odessa:
25 John P. Cooper; Douglas E. Paup; Cleon L. Payton Jr.
15 Judy K. Burton; Jorge Estrada; Dimas Lopez; Heriberto H. Martinez

Paris:
25 Joe N. Strickland
20 John R. Ward
15 Geary D. Allen; Darius L. Samuels
10 Tracy D. Cowan; Kimberly K. Gilcrest; Robert A. Horne
05 Darren L. Hester

Pharr:
30 John L. Solis III.
10 Dolores Canales
05 Sergio L. Cantu

San Angelo:
40 Jose H. Rendon
30 William C. Kleypas
20 Ernie D. Covington
10 Joe S. Gomez; Kenneth R. Schniers

San Antonio:
35 Billy W. Harvey; Rodney R. Roberts
30 William A. Miller; Richard Salas
20 Daniel L. Stacks
15 Jeanne L. Bird; Melissa M. Jordan
10 Michael S. Friesenhahn; Greg R. Mendoza Jr.

Tyler:
25 Jerry L. Frick
20 Bruce E. Johnson
10 Gregory L. Skiles

Waco:
25 Charles R. Padgett; David J. Pittman
05 Andrew R. English

Wichita Falls:
20 Marty W. Little
10 Richard K. Miller

Yoakum:
35 Carl L. O'Neill
20 Donald W. Petru
15 Melvin L. Guenther; Rhonda R. Migl
10 Steven J. Bujnoch; William J. Gooch; Thomas F. Kocian; James W. Konvicka; Martin C. Steffek; Jeffrey L. Stock

Divisions:

Administration:
35 Shirley K. Macik

Bridge:
25 Sammy W. Mitchell
05 Aaron M. Sanders

Construction:
40 Lawrence W. Worden
10 Lawrence C. Smith; Albert N. Umeadi

Divisions: *continued*

Finance:
10 Bryon W. Watson

General Services:
35 Donald W. Morrison
30 Ellen A. Glass
15 Ursula E. Williford

Motor Carrier:
20 Diana G. Gil
10 Michelle D. Manigault
05 Kevin D. Malone

Motor Vehicle:
10 Marla J. Rose

Occupational Safety:
10 Michele A. Regis

Right Of Way:
20 Michael W. Champagne

Technology Services:
30 William E. Kokas
25 Louis D. Sierra
20 Patrick H. Lea Jr.
15 Diana S. Hamill; Todd L. Pederson
10 Yesenia S. Moreno

Texas Turnpike Authority:
15 Dieter Billek

Traffic Operations:
10 Sher Y. Neely

Vehicle Titles and Registration:
35 Frances D. Stastney
15 Jeffrey L. Kirk
10 Richard Arevalo; Ann C. Arwood
05 Luz A. Ortiz; Annette M. Smelser; Johnna L. Weigand

Districts:

Abilene:
20 Gary D. Stevens
10 Carrie C. Hart; Michael J. Martin; Daniel L. Martin

Amarillo:
30 Joe D. Prather
25 Thomas E. Nagel; Gary W. Whatley
20 Mark E. Peil
15 James R. Hammett; Ray E. Lermon; Kenneth W. Prestidge
10 Roxanne Jennings; Kevin K. Kerlee; Gregory D. Mayfield; Joellen K. Miller; Marlon W. Mitchell; John C. Tobias Jr.

Atlanta:
20 William T. Parrott
10 Laura T. Harp

Austin:
30 Daniel L. Smith;
20 Charles D. Jackson
15 Jeffrey R. Gill; Jimmy W. Hibler; Roy C. Lueders; Henry Ramirez
10 Yolanda J. Enriquez; Lawrence E. Overfelt; Ronald L. Schulze
05 Veronica Cortez

Beaumont:
30 Betty B. Brown
10 William D. Sims
05 Danelle L. Mullins

Brownwood:
20 Lester D. Brown, Jay Green
15 Lindy J. Harrington, Jerry G. Johnson, Victoria Z. McKee
10 Edward R. Gillette

Bryan:
20 Howard C. Elrod II; Glenna J. Goodrum

Childress:
15 Rhonda L. Collingworth; Danny E. McFalls

Corpus Christi:
30 Jose A. Vela Jr.
25 Victor P. Lara; Victor Pinon Jr.
20 Jose M. Garcia; Ralph G. Gustafson; Victor E. Vourcos
15 Calistro Gonzales; Karla D. Moczygemba
25 Sue F. Reid; Raymond A. Schmidt; Andrew L. Wilhite
20 James E. Hill
15 Susan E. Clark; Clyde D. Hatcher; Candace G. Henley
10 Chad A. Kirby
05 John M. Herrman

El Paso:
30 Cesar Gonzalez
20 Oscar A. Arzaga
15 Jesus Avila; Blanca G. Serrano-Rivera

Ft. Worth:
25 Monty W. Hale; Aaron M. Pruit; Michael A. Sepeda
10 James B. Craft; Leslie A. Mabry; Donald J. Wright

Houston:
25 Rodney W. Saunders
20 Richard L. Adams; David T. Gibbons; Elizabeth M. Keasling
15 Delbert W. Aldredge
10 Richard F. Carrier; Darryl D. Cash; Kiara D. McGregor-Booth; Saeid S. Moradmand
05 Tri D. Nguyen; David Vasquez

Laredo:
30 Jose Gonzales Jr.
15 Reynaldo Garza

Lubbock:
35 Armando A. Perez
30 Phillip L. Barnett; Bertha W. Gambrell
25 Michael T. Quisenberry
20 Arron R. Justus; Linda J. Parker
15 Katandy W. Decker
10 Marvin Garcia; Kenneth D. Wood
05 Brandon K. Henry

Lufkin:
25 Herbert E. Bickley; Clyde J. Mathews Jr.; Michael O. Myers
15 Jason B. Allen; John H. Parker
10 Chester O. Dixon

Odessa:
25 Mark A. McCollum
20 Melissa N. Yates
15 Juan M. Flores Jr.; Noel C. Ramirez

Paris:
15 Charles R. Granstaff; Ralph D. Hall; Tracey L. Hankins; Christopher E. Mpountain

Pharr:
30 Hector R. Carreon
10 Armando S. Rodriguez

San Angelo:
45 James R. Alexander Sr.
10 Ricardo Benavidez

MILESTONES

Districts: *continued*

San Antonio:
30 Conrad J. Hillert
20 Joel K. Davenport Jr.
15 Lonny R. Williams
10 Velinda Viesca-Garza
20 Daniel L. Stacks
15 Jeanne L. Bird; Melissa M. Jordan
10 Michael S. Friesenhahn; Greg R. Mendoza Jr.

Tyler:
20 Daniel M. McClanahan; John W. Wickware
10 Sheena K. Turner; James D. Walton; Vernon M. Webb

Waco:
30 Richard J. Skopik
25 Alfred L. Husak
20 Marvin R. Shilling

Wichita Falls:
25 Kyle D. Walker
20 Kevin C. Nichols
15 Jerry Bradley; Tamera H. Marlow; Perry A. Provence; Harold L. Rutherford Jr.; Rickey L. Willis
10 Erin N. Wilkinson

Yoakum:
30 Rudolph Garcia
25 Alberta T. Garley; Michael W. Valenta
15 Darrell W. Gajewski; Angela M. Malinovsky; Rhonda L. Moorman
10 Jeffrey W. Gerdes; Darrell G. Phelps; Lana K. Warnken

Divisions:

Construction:
30 Baldemar P. Maldonado Jr.
25 Terry L. Personett
20 John E. Lane
15 George E. Okwumo; Vijayan Pillai
10 Justo Landeros III

Environmental Affairs:
10 Daniel V. Harris
05 Maya U. Coleman; Charlotte J. Kucera

Government & Public Affairs:
20 Jefferson Grimes
05 Alexandra S. Russell

Human Resources:
15 Katherine S. Harrison; Nelson Rios Gonzalez
10 Eleonore G. Atwood; Clem T. Bullock

Maintenance:
25 Daniel H. Rosado
15 Steven G. Prather
10 Jack C. Mathis

Motor Carrier:
20 James M. Dewbre
10 Mark A. Lupercio; Joann Vasquez

Technology Services:
25 Judy B. Skeen

Traffic Operations:
15 Gary L. Tarter

Transportation Planning and Programming:
20 Rhonda J. Christensen
10 Francis J. Bailey Jr.

Vehicle Titles and Registration:
35 Linda W. Walden
30 Esmeralda Lopez
15 Patricia A. Tiger
10 Joanne Canida

Retiree Report

JANUARY 2008

Districts:

Austin:
30 James R. Dildine

Beaumont:
6 Ronald E. Lemons

El Paso:
15 Michael B. Kohan

Fort Worth:
40 Robert A. Julian
13 Enrique L. Salazar

Houston:
26 Olan B. Norman

Odessa:
31 Tommy M. Dominguez

Paris:
9 Nancy L. Anderson

San Angelo:
28 Charles W. Cook

San Antonio:
4 Donald L. Cranford

Tyler:
12 Herbert O. Lyle

Wichita Falls:
27 Tommy J. Veal

Divisions:

General Services:
18 Geraldine C. Bartel

Motor Vehicle:
11 Hernan G. Cortez

Right of Way:
20 James P. Hutchinson

Texas Turnpike Authority:
30 Andra B. Evans

Traffic Operations:
11 Judy A. Allen

Transportation Planning and Programming:
15 Richard L. Camp

Vehicle Titles and Registration:
19 Edwisa W. Guess

Retiree Report

FEBRUARY 2008

Districts:

Abilene:
35 Bernice Turentine

Atlanta:
21 James G. Simmons

Beaumont:
33 Mark E. Hanks
31 Patrick E. Pearson
31 Dana S. Stephens

Bryan:
7 Joe E. Baggett
7 Phillip J. Higgins

Corpus Christi:
26 Maria E. Trevino

Fort Worth:
10 Enrique Guzman

Houston:
27 Debra T. Primrose

Lubbock:
23 Jerry S. Morphis

Odessa:
30 Eugenio S. Diaz
27 Jimmie Hernandez

San Angelo:
30 Samuel R. Gebara

San Antonio:
28 Fernando C. Abrego
8 Robert E. Ferguson

Tyler:
22 Barnie M. Trussell Jr.
18 Pete Martinez

Waco:
10 Johnny R. Neal Sr.

Wichita Falls:
28 Anita C. Sanders
25 Grace M. Davis
21 Terry L. Holder

Divisions:

General Services:
35 Donald W. Morrison

Public Transportation:
4 Juanita O. Wright

Technology Services:
19 Larry E. Smallridge

Texas Turnpike Authority:
25 Sandra S. Carmona

Traffic Operations:
9 Katherine V. Wynn

Travel:
28 Samuel A. Martinez

Vehicle Titles and Registration:
23 Beverly M. Wayts

In Memoriam JANUARY - APRIL 2008

Districts:

Yoakum:
James Garner
Maintenance Tech
TxDOT Service Time: 22 years, 3 months
DOD: 01/31/08

Corpus Christi:
Pedro Garcia
Alice Maintenance Office Sign Tech
TxDOT Service Time: 39 years
DOD: 02/19/08

Houston:
Larry Lemons
Engineer Specialist IV
TxDOT Service Time: 21 years, 2 months
DOD: 02/27/08

San Angelo:
Bobby E. Cummings
Engineering Tech IV
TxDOT Service Time: 31 years
DOD: 2/25/08

Guadalupe R. "Lupe" Gonzales
Maintenance Tech III
TxDOT Service Time: 27 years
DOD: 02/25/08

William "Blackie" Radle Jr.
Maintenance Tech III
TxDOT Service Time: 26 years
DOD: 02/22/08

Districts:

Corpus Christi:
August E. Caron Jr.
Design Technician
TxDOT Service Time: 44 years
DOD: 03/30/08

Dallas:
Barbara N. Shamburger
Right of Way Supervisor
TxDOT Service Time: 21 years, 8 months
DOD: 03/05/08

Houston:
Carol Letz
Right of Way Agent IV
TxDOT Service Time: 50 years, 8 months
DOD: 03/30/08

San Angelo:
Robert T. "Bob" Coy
Engineering Tech
TxDOT Service Time: 33 years
DOD: 03/05/08

Yoakum:
Richard Vinklarek
Maintenance Tech
TxDOT Service Time: 24 years
DOD: 03/12/08

Divisions:

Motor Vehicle:
James R. Sigler
Investigator III
TxDOT Service Time: 2 years, 9 months
DOD: 03/30/08

Districts:

Paris:
Clyde Champion
Purchaser II
TxDOT Service Time: 30 years
DOD: 04/12/08

Michael L. Saunders
Sign Tech IV
TxDOT Service Time: 28 years
DOD: 04/17/08

Pharr:
Martin M. Hernandez
Engineering Tech I
TxDOT Service Time: 19 years, 1 month
DOD: 04/12/08

Cecilia H. Ramos
Construction Recordkeeper I
TxDOT Service Time: 13 years, 3 months
DOD: 04/16/08

Wichita Falls:
Larry L. Carter
Material Processing Inspector
TxDOT Service Time: 31 years
DOD: 04/26/08

Divisions:

Construction:
Cynthia F. Larkin
Administrative Assistant IV
TxDOT Service Time: 9 years, 2 months
DOD: 04/11/08

Maintenance:
Charles E. Benton
Maintenance Technician V
TxDOT Service Time: 3 years, 5 months
DOD: 04/14/08

WHERE AM I?

Travel Division Photo Librarian Anne Cook supplied TN with this photo thought to be taken in the 1950s. Other than the businesses, there is no other identification as to the location of the highway. The structure in the center of the photo is a bar called the "Hide-A-Way," and the one to the right is a drive-in theater called the "Gay 90." If you think you know where this picture was taken, contact Anne Cook at acook@dot.state.tx.us or call her at (512) 486-5838.

Identified:

The photo in the March/April TN was identified by Chuck Bennett, a transportation investigator for the Motor Carrier Division in Austin, as being taken in Oak Cliff, Texas. The business was Fred Oakley Motors, a Studebaker dealership located at the corner of Zangs & Davis. After Studebakers stopped being made, the business started selling Chryslers.

HR NEWS

Beneficiary information on ERS OnLine
Employees Retirement System OnLine now provides employees an easy way to review their beneficiary information. Employees may also designate beneficiaries over the Internet by visiting the ERS site at www.ers.state.tx.us or linking to ERS Online from the HRD Crossroads site.

Information is also available by calling ERS Customer Service in Austin at (512) 867-7711 or toll-free at (877) 275-4377.

Summer enrollment around the corner
Employees and eligible family members will be able to make benefit coverage changes during summer enrollment July 28 – Aug. 28. Former department employees can make changes during a special retirees' enrollment period July 24 – 26.

Family and Medical Leave Act expanded
Amendments addressing two types of military leave have been made to the Family and Medical Leave Act for relatives of active-duty service members. Active Duty Leave provides up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave, and Military Caregiver Leave provides up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period. These are the first major changes to the FMLA since it was enacted 15 years ago.

TxDOT
COMMUNITY CONNECTION

TxDOT's 15,000 employees not only serve the public during work hours, they are involved in serving their communities as well. Here are just a few of the community service stories.

Hundreds of TxDOT employees across the state volunteer to serve their local communities, many as volunteer firefighters. The Beaumont District is a good example with several employees who wear two hats — TxDOT hard hats by day and fire helmets in their spare time. **Joe Kibodeaux** started the China Volunteer Fire Department with the help of his father (a TxDOT retiree) and his brother. The entire family now volunteers. **Mark Odem** is the captain of the Woodville Fire Department and was named Outstanding Firefighter of the Year by the Tyler County Firefighters Association. **Donald Wilkerson** volunteers at Highway 321 Volunteer Fire Department and was the Liberty Fire Department's "Firefighter of the Year" a few years ago. **Steve Rutledge** is a charter member of the Tri-Community Volunteer Fire Department. He once responded to a fire that was so hot it melted his face shield. Still, Rutledge speaks for all TxDOT volunteers when he says, "It's an honor to be able to serve others." TN

Copies of this publication have been deposited with the Texas State Library in compliance with the State Depository Law.

Printed on recycled paper by TxDOT General Services Division.

TNews Online (TxDOT computers only):
http://crossroads/org/pio/TNews/tnol.htm

We hope you enjoy the new edition of TN.
In the future TxDOT will be looking at new ways to get information to employees.

Texas Department of Transportation
125 E. 11th St.
Austin, Texas 78701

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED