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New Commission Chair

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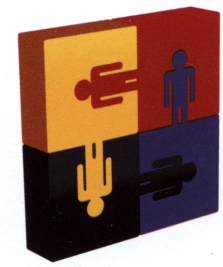

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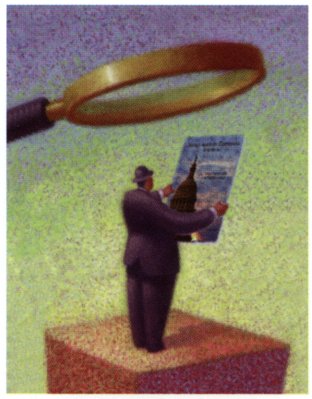

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5 THINGS

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

1. **Discussion on TxDOT continues**
The Sunset Advisory Commission will hold a hearing July 15 in Austin to get public testimony on recommendations to improve TxDOT. Members of the transportation commission and TxDOT administration are expected to attend and represent the department. See story on page 9.

2. **No decision yet on restructuring**
Work continues to develop recommendations on how to improve department efficiency, but no decisions on restructuring have been made. (See page 2 for column from Amadeo Saenz.) Concepts being considered would allow districts to focus on project delivery and system operation, while aligning statewide operations by function.

3. **Commission affirms toll road principles**
Guiding principles that will govern the development, construction and operation of toll road projects and the Trans-Texas Corridor have been adopted by the transportation commission. The principles include working to protect private property when planning projects and tolling only new lanes added to an existing highway.

4. **It is time to make benefit decisions**
Summer Enrollment for benefit changes this year will be held July 14-26, 2008 for TxDOT retirees and July 28 – Aug. 22 for current department employees. For more information see page 5.

5. **How much is your commute costing you?**
With the rising price of gasoline, it is a question many TxDOT employees are asking. Determine the cost of your commute, and get tips on how to set up a carpool or vanpool, by going to the Environmental Division's Crossroads site at http://crossroads/org/env.

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SAENZ SAYS

It's been a busy few months at TxDOT. We've welcomed two new commissioners, made a major announcement about I-69/TTC and completed the first phase of Sunset review. You can read more about them in this edition of TN. Parallel to all those actions has been our study of internal restructuring to improve efficiency. Here's an update.

A team of district engineers and division directors has reviewed areas we can improve to meet our growing transportation needs. The administration is analyzing those recommendations. In July, we'll get input from district engineers, division directors and office directors. We will discuss the plan with our employees before we begin implementation.

While final decisions haven't been made, we are moving forward with ideas that were initiated long before we began discussing restructuring. These efforts would be going forward with or without a broader restructuring plan because they make good business sense and allow us to do our jobs better. Let me give you some examples.

For years, TxDOT has worked to make our environmental process more efficient. New procedures allow districts to submit documentation to one of four regional environmental centers for review and approval. This benefits the districts because it expedites the approval for projects, and allows the Environmental Affairs Division to concentrate on more complex environmental studies.

We're more efficient when we share resources, and make the best use of our assets. Districts with lighter design loads are helping districts with heavier design needs. Some districts have chosen to consolidate offices, reorganize production units, and work with their TxDOT neighbors to capitalize on each other's strengths. For example, the Yoakum and Corpus Christi districts are working on fleet maintenance. Atlanta has reorganized area offices, and increased design production.

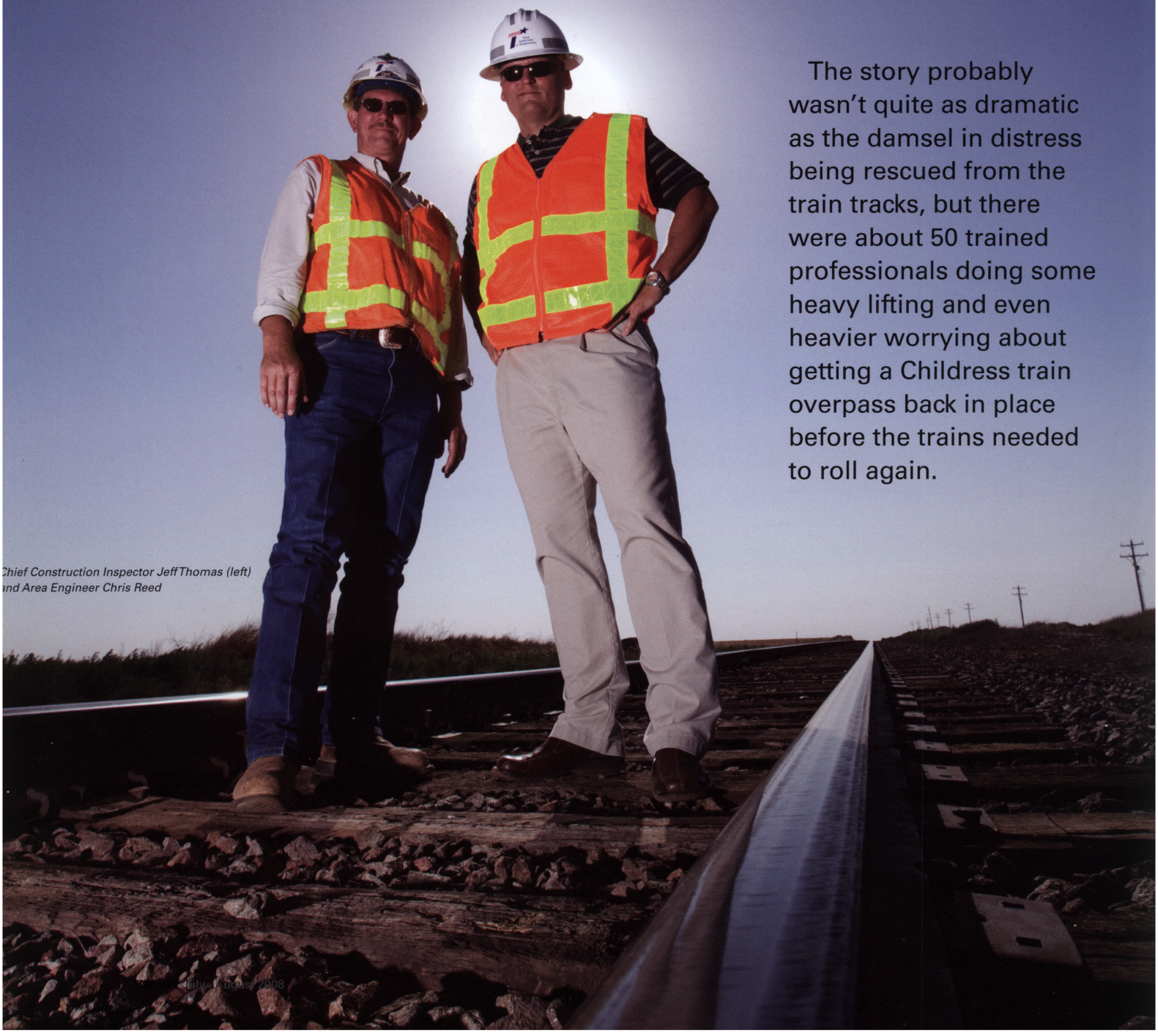
We are all focused on becoming more efficient, more accountable to citizens and more focused on quality service. These are the hallmarks of TxDOT and every employee. I appreciate what you do, and am proud of your hard work.

Amadeo Saenz Jr.

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

Building Bridges In Childress

District keeps train traffic on track



Chief Construction Inspector Jeff Thomas (left) and Area Engineer Chris Reed

The story probably wasn't quite as dramatic as the damsel in distress being rescued from the train tracks, but there were about 50 trained professionals doing some heavy lifting and even heavier worrying about getting a Childress train overpass back in place before the trains needed to roll again.

Trains rolling on newly completed railway bridge

photos by Tommy Hultgren

In August 2006, the Childress District began working on what appeared to be a straightforward road rehabilitation project, which included refurbishing of approximately two miles of roadway and drainage work underneath a train overpass. However, things became complicated when engineers discovered that two steel railroad bridges had to be completely replaced.

"We get more than 30 trains through Childress each day carrying coal to various power plants around the state," said Childress Area Engineer Chris Reed. "With that kind of payload being so critical to our state, there was no way we could shut down the railroad bridges for days on end. So the railroad company gave us a 15-hour window to demolish one old bridge and roll in a new one."

Simply roll in a new one? That's the challenge that made this project so unique. TxDOT and its construction partners had to devise a way to construct two new bridges near the existing structures so each new bridge could literally be rolled into place after demolishing the old ones. This would be no easy feat, given the fact that each bridge weighed about 400,000 pounds and stretched 115 feet.

"We did have an option to build a temporary overpass so trains could be rerouted for the time it took to build new bridges, but that scenario put the budget way out of reach. We opted for the project that cost less in dollars but was greater in challenge," Reed noted.

Constructing the new bridges went as planned, and the team worked on hundreds of details to coordinate the big move. TxDOT's chief construction inspector for the job, Jeff Thomas, explained that the crew had to account for not only every foot that the bridge would move forward, but also that the entire span of the bridge also moved exactly as planned. "As we prepared to move the bridge, we had it cabled and strapped to control its movement over a track of large ball-bearing filled rollers. Our calculations showed that if the bridge would have moved only a foot ahead of plans, we would have considered that a 'runaway' resulting in major, time consuming adjustments to get the bridge back on track," Thomas said. "Likewise, the whole bridge had to be exactly in line with the existing tracks when it was finally in place. So every few feet, we'd stop and measure to make sure the move was on target."

> "So the railroad company gave us a 15-hour window to demolish one old bridge and roll in a new one."
>
> - Chris Reed, Area Engineer

Large cranes lifted sections of the old bridge out of the way. And while it took about four months to build the new bridges, it took only about an hour and a half to roll one into place. Once the new bridge was in the right position, it was secured and welded into place. The railroad company then set ballasts in place to stabilize the whole structure and welded new tracks on the new bridge to existing tracks.

Getting the bridge in place wasn't the only delicate aspect of this project. "We also had to install a 10-ton pre-cast concrete wall between the bridge and an abutment before we were through," Reed explained. "That little job had some suspense involved too, because the wall was a foot thick and the opening we had to slide it into was only 14 inches wide. Needless to say, it was nerve-racking to have only that 15-hour window to demolish an old bridge, move a new one into place and then secure the whole system.

"In the end, the first bridge took a little longer than 15 hours to complete. But the second bridge we installed a week later took only about 9 hours. We were a bit overly cautious with the first one but moved the second one in ahead of time because we learned and documented so much from the first move."

This project will be remembered around Childress for quite some time for its technical challenges as well as the improvements it will bring to the community. The drainage enhancements have stopped the flooding that routinely detained traffic in the past. Colorful murals painted on the underpass walls depicting Childress' World War II air base history and new lighting have transformed what was once an eyesore into an area of community pride.

"We'll probably never do another project quite like this one in the Childress District," Reed concluded. "Replacing those two steel railroad bridges was special, but the rest of the project included just about every other type of construction work we do at TxDOT. We're always ready for a challenge, but I think we're also ready for this one to be over." TN

by John Boggess

HR NEWS - EMPLOYEE BENEFITS SUMMER ENROLLMENT

It's time once again for all state employees to review their benefits selections and prepare for the upcoming Summer Enrollment period for Plan Year 2009.

Summer Enrollment is July 28 through Aug. 22 for all active employees (July 14 - 26 for retirees). All changes made during this enrollment period will become effective Sept. 1 and continue through Aug. 31, 2009.

As in previous years, some benefit costs will remain the same while others will increase. Below is a breakdown of those items:

What's Remaining the Same?

- HealthSelect - HealthSelect rates will not increase. That makes three years in a row at the same cost.
- Dental HMO - Dental HMO rates will not increase and remain at the level they have been since Plan Year 2007.
- Other Optional Benefits - The rates for the optional benefits of basic and optional term life, accidental death and dismemberment, and the short- and long-term disability income plans will remain unchanged for the coming plan year.

Go to the ERS website (www.ers.state.tx.us) and log in to ERS Online to:

1. Update your phone number, mailing address, and email address;
2. Update your personal information for dependents and beneficiaries personal information. (ERS will need your beneficiary's date of birth and Social Security number to promptly pay benefits);
3. View a summary of your current benefits; and
4. Update your benefits during Summer Enrollment or after experiencing a qualifying life event (QLE), such as marriage or divorce, adoption/birth of a child, etc.

What's Changing?

The HMOs that will participate in the Texas Employees Group Benefits Plan for Plan Year 2009 are:

- FirstCare for the Abilene, Amarillo, Lubbock, Temple and Waco areas;
- Scott & White for the Austin, Temple and Waco areas;
- Community First for the San Antonio area.

Based on enrollment and anticipated system use, an average HMO increase of five percent will be necessary.

- Mercy Health Plans will no longer provide coverage for ERS members living in the Laredo area, nor will Valley Baptist Health Plans provide coverage for members living in the Rio Grande Valley. To ensure health coverage is continued, ERS members and their currently covered dependents that used Mercy and Valley Baptist health plans will be automatically enrolled in HealthSelect.

Approximately 90 percent or more of the physicians who participate in the two HMOs are also part of the HealthSelect physicians' network, so it is anticipated that only a limited amount of employees affected by the change will have to change their primary care physicians, unless they choose to do so.

The self funded Dental Indemnity plan will also be going up by 5 percent. This is the first increase since 2003.

Important Summer Enrollment Reminders:

If you have had any changes in your status, such as an address change, etc., please remember to update your personal information at ERS OnLine (http://www.ers.state.tx.us). While you're there, you can review a summary of your current benefits, family members' status, beneficiary information and other important aspects of your plan.

For additional assistance, District employees should contact their local Human Resources Officer or HR Staff, Division and Office employees should contact their respective HR-Campus, and Administration employees should contact the Human Resources Division-Personnel Administration Section.

Texans Shape Path of I-69/TTC

The bold vision of an interstate-quality highway running through south and east Texas remains intact, but the focus will now be on upgrading existing highway corridors rather than on new location routes.

In the works for more than 16 years, Interstate 69 originally was proposed as a superhighway spanning from South Texas to Northeast Texas – the Lone Star link in a national trade route connecting Canada and Mexico. Congress designated the route as a High Priority Corridor in 1991, but funding has always fallen far short of the multi-billion price tag.

Now, as TxDOT proceeds with environmental studies, the department is recommending to federal transportation officials that the 650-mile project be developed along existing highway facilities, instead of creating new corridors through the Texas landscape. The revision narrows the I-69/TTC study area to existing alignments, including U.S. Highways 59, 77, 84 and 281 and State Highway 44.

TxDOT officials announced the modified plan in early June, after carefully weighing 28,000 citizen comments submitted via e-mail, direct mail and during 47 public hearings held earlier in the year along the proposed corridor route. Overwhelmingly, Texans urged that the project not cut through undeveloped land within the I-69/TTC study area.

"We asked Texans to become more involved in the decision-making process, and they did not let us down. We listened as they voiced their concerns and issues about I-69/TTC. And, we also agree that along this corridor, improvements can be made to the existing facilities to keep Texas moving," TxDOT Executive Director Amadeo Saenz said.

TxDOT's recommendations for I-69/TTC will be based on guiding policies recently adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission. They include limiting tolls to new lanes added to an existing highway and maintaining the number of lanes that are not tolled.

"In essence, we're doing what the commission recommended for us as well as following the public comments we received," Saenz said.

TxDOT will make a formal recommendation to the Federal Highway Administration later this year or in early 2009. The Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) will be submitted for public review prior to federal approval.

Throughout the planning process, TxDOT will continue talking to the public about I-69/TTC. All Texans are encouraged to ask questions and share their ideas at the department's "Keep Texas Moving" website (www.keeptexasmoving.com). TN

OVER THE FENCE

Q **Does TxDOT's recommendation that the I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor project use existing highway facilities wherever possible mean that the state no longer needs up to 1,200 feet of right of way for the project?**

A When it comes to I-69/TTC, we do not currently envision that a 1,200 foot corridor will be developed. We will work with local officials and with our corridor advisory committees to determine how to meet the transportation need. As a need is determined, we will look at existing highway corridors first and consider adding new lanes along the existing roadways. We still want to accommodate various modes of transportation, including rail and utilities, but they do not necessarily have to be in the same corridor.

Q **Does the recommendation to use existing facilities to develop I-69/TTC have any impact on TTC-35?**

A The recent announcement only pertains to I-69/TTC, but we have already considered the issue as it relates to TTC-35. Our recommended study area for TTC-35 follows Interstate 35 from San Antonio to Laredo. North of San Antonio, it is as close to I-35 as we consider feasible due to existing development. The narrowed study area recommended for TTC-35 incorporates 195 miles of existing highways and 214 miles of existing rail.

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

Updates are posted weekly on www.keeptexasmoving.com

Meet the New TxDOT Commissioners

Commissioner Deirdre Delisi and Commissioner William Meadows *TxDOT photos by Michael Amador*

Governor Rick Perry recently appointed Deirdre Delisi and William Meadows to the Texas Transportation Commission. Delisi will serve as the Commission Chair. She has more than 12 years of experience in government policy and served as chief of staff to Governor Perry. Meadows is chairman of Hub International Rigg. He served as vice chairman of the North Texas Tollway Authority and is a past appointee to the Texas Water Development Board. He formerly served as a city council member and mayor pro-tempore for the City of Fort Worth.

Are you enjoying your new job? What has your first few weeks as commissioner been like?

Delisi: Absolutely. It is a fabulous opportunity. TxDOT is a great state agency, a crown jewel of state government. It is an honor to be a commissioner of this department. It is a tough job, but with great challenges come great opportunities. I look forward to working with the great employees that make TxDOT such an outstanding agency.

Meadows: Absolutely, I am enjoying it. I am challenged by it. I am impressed by the size, scope and importance of the agency.

Prior to becoming a commissioner, what were your impressions of TxDOT? Have they changed at all?

Meadows: I have always had great appreciation and respect for TxDOT. After being named commissioner, I was given a book about the history of the department. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. It reminded me of the department's legacy of success. The agency has an extraordinary story.

Delisi: I knew about the goals and mission of TxDOT. I did not know how large it is and that it has so many diverse responsibilities. It has been heartwarming to learn so many employees view it as a "family business." Not just because so many employee's parents, or grandparents or, now, their sons and daughters work for the agency. It is how invested employees are in making TxDOT a success. I am very impressed with the work ethic of department employees and the environment and job culture they have created.

With the heavy workload and low pay, some people wonder why anyone would want to be a commissioner. Why did you want to be a commissioner?

Delisi: It is a tremendous opportunity to give back to our state. I believe strongly in public service. I have had the pleasure to work for many great public servants in my career. To me, it is very satisfying to give back. I enjoy work that has a positive impact on the daily lives of Texans and I imagine most TxDOT employees feel the same way. It is important to make a difference, to give something back.

Meadows: I believe we have an obligation to be engaged and contribute back to our community and state. That is really what it is about.

As a commissioner, what are your goals for TxDOT?

Meadows: The real goal—the fundamental goal—is to strive to improve the effectiveness and efficiency in which we deliver projects to the citizens we serve. That is first and foremost. We need to be good partners. I do not think there is a single entity in the state that can use a single delivery method that will get the job done. Our success will depend on partnerships, transparency and communication.

Delisi: Most importantly, my goals are to get infrastructure built to ease mobility problems and enhance safety across the state. I am also focused on helping guide the agency through the sunset review and legislative session. The goal there is to have TxDOT emerge as a stronger and better agency at the end of the process to better meet the transportation needs of this state.

If you could sit down and talk with each TxDOT employee individually, what would you want to accomplish in that conversation?

Delisi: I would want them to know how important the job before us is. It is a big job and certainly not something one person can do. It will take a lot of

effort and hard work by the entire TxDOT team, and I do view it as a team. I am very interested in employees' ideas and innovations. I appreciate all that employees do to serve Texas.

Meadows: I would want to talk about the challenges we face together. It is imperative that we have high performance. I know TxDOT and our employees and I know they can, and do, perform at the highest level. It will take that effort because the challenges we face are very significant. We will need to work together in a dedicated and focused fashion. It will be a rewarding experience.

The discussion about possible department restructuring has some employees nervous. Any words of wisdom?

Delisi: I have experienced several restructuring efforts in the past. I can absolutely say that, as far as any possible restructuring at TxDOT, intentions are positive. The goal is to have a better, stronger agency that can more effectively and efficiently meet the transportation needs of Texas. Change can be positive, especially with the right goals in mind. Change is not something to fear. It will provide opportunities for TxDOT and employees.

What would you want employees to know regarding the ongoing sunset review and the upcoming legislative session?

Meadows: From my perspective, it is important we all recognize that basically the sunset review is a very good process. There is absolutely no reason to fear it. It is a very constructive process. The fundamental question that is asked is what makes us, or any agency, better. We should not fear anything, but work with the process to determine how we can be as efficient and effective as possible.

Delisi: There is no question that transportation will be an issue in the forefront of debate. I welcome that debate and discussion. For a long time, transportation has been on the back burner. It is good for people to focus on it. As I said earlier, I want this agency to be stronger at the end of the process and better able to serve our state. There have already been a lot of positive discussions with legislative leaders. I think it will be a good session for TxDOT. I hope that employees will stay focused on doing the job we are expected to do: meet the infrastructure needs of Texas. If we stay focused on that, everything else will fall into place.

What do you think will be the biggest change in transportation in the next 25 years?

Delisi: That is a great question. In many aspects, Texas is not different than any other state. We will continue to have challenges that will require us to be more creative in how we plan, finance and build transportation improvements so they last longer, work better and are friendly to the environment, which we must protect. What sets Texas apart from other states is our explosive population growth, which will continue to be a challenge. TxDOT has always been a leader in transportation and we have not stepped back at all. We need to maintain a "can do" attitude and find solutions rather than throw up our hands and give up. We still have challenges due to a growing population and shrinking resources. We are well-positioned to meet the challenge.

Meadows: First and foremost, financial resources are the biggest challenge. Certainly it is the biggest issue in the short term. In the long term, it is how to fairly and equitably determine the ongoing source of financing to get projects moving across the state.

A second challenge facing our state will be to determine the proper balance of transportation modes. That will be a difficult, important and challenging decision that needs to be made.

According to media reports since your appointment, you have talked about the importance of local control and local decisions regarding transportation. Can you expand on that?

Delisi: During the last several legislative sessions there has been policy direction that we need to get away from an all-powerful transportation commission. We need to partner with local communities and local leaders. Local officials are in a better position to know the local transportation needs and priorities. They know what local people want.

Let me explain that in the form of an analogy. My mother makes quilts. A quilter starts by making individual segments or pieces. The individual pieces my mother makes are absolutely beautiful. However, the finished quilt is all the individual pieces put together. So, no matter how beautiful the individual pieces are, if their fabric and color do not complement each other, your quilt is not going to end up the way you want it.

TxDOT's role is like that of a quilter. We must make sure the individual transportation pieces can be sewn together to provide a seamless statewide system that meets our overall transportation needs, including mobility, safety, environmental and economic needs.

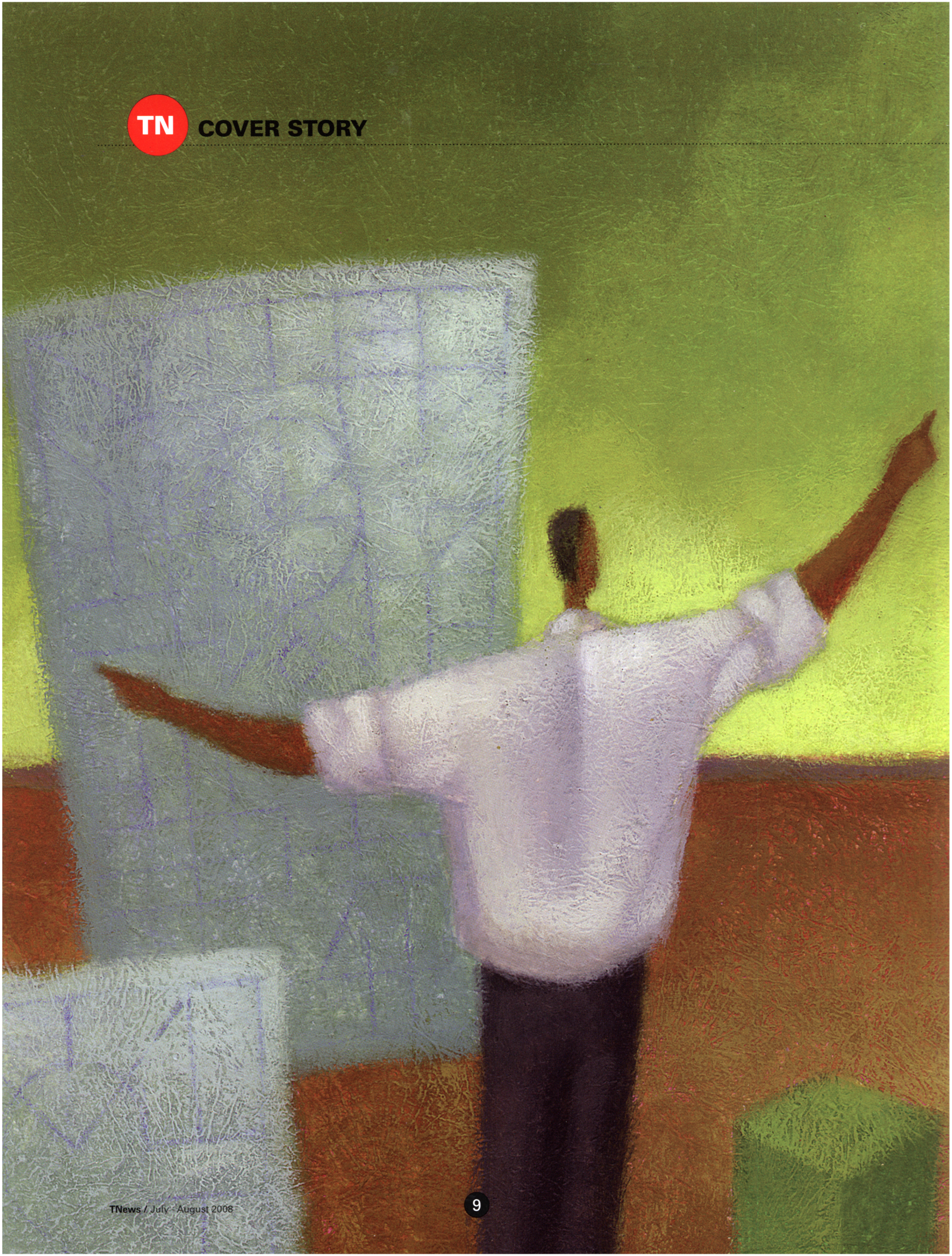
How will your experience with the North Texas Tollway Authority help you as a state transportation commissioner?

Meadows: I have served in many different positions with public agencies and entities. For instance, I was mayor pro-tem and on the city council in Fort Worth. Local infrastructure was a big issue, how you finance and deliver projects. Essentially, it is the same issue whether it is the city, NTTA or TxDOT. The real lesson I have learned is the importance of partnerships to get things done. We will work very diligently to develop new strategic alliances.

Anything final you want to say to employees?

Delisi: I am excited to be a part of TxDOT and I look forward to meeting as many employees as possible. The dedication and knowledge of department employees is very impressive. I look forward to employees teaching me.

Meadows: I would like to remind them of the legacy of excellence and the history of success of this agency. Every employee should be proud of what this department has done and what it stands for. Today we are working on the legacy we will leave. We need to continue to deliver the quality service that this department has always stood for. There have been extraordinary accomplishments since this agency was created in 1917. What we do today will determine how we are remembered.



Taking a Closer Look at TxDOT

Sunset Commission Issues Staff Report

Improving efficiency, strengthening accountability, and restoring the public's trust – those are the basic recommendations for TxDOT that were outlined in the recent Sunset Advisory Commission's staff report, which was released in early June.

The 146-page review of the Department included some possible actions to help achieve these goals, including the elimination of the Texas Transportation Commission and replacing it with a single Commissioner of Transportation appointed by the Governor with Senate confirmation every two years. In addition, the Sunset report proposed creating a legislative oversight committee, streamlining the transportation planning process, improving contract development and oversight, and conducting the next review of TxDOT in four years as opposed to the usual 12 years.

Amadeo Saenz, TxDOT's Executive Director, said that while the Sunset review process if far from over, the focus on enhancing the agency is good for all employees as well as all citizens. "With the release of the Sunset Advisory Commission's staff report on TxDOT, we have reached a significant milestone in a process that will ultimately make our department better. As expected, the report also includes recommendations for many changes aimed at building public trust, openness and accountability.

In summary, the Sunset report stated that significant changes were necessary in order to restore the public's confidence and trust in the agency. By abolishing the five-member commission and appointing a Commissioner of Transportation to oversee the agency, the Sunset Advisory Commission believes TxDOT would achieve significant strides in rebuilding the public's confidence and also move forward with effectively meeting the state's growing transportation needs.

> "We embrace these objectives and look forward to continued work with legislators and staff on the Sunset Commission."
>
> - Amadeo Saenz, Executive Director

The Sunset report also recommended that, upon the appointment of a single Commissioner, the Department would not need both an executive director and a deputy executive director. Therefore, Sunset stated that eliminating one of those positions would provide the funding necessary for the Commissioner's salary.

The report, however, is only the first step in the overall review process of the department. On July 15, a public hearing will be held on the report and any additional recommendations may be discussed. A decision hearing on any proposals to be adopted by Sunset will be held in late September, and then finally any recommendations adopted from that hearing will be included in draft legislation to be considered by the 81st Legislature beginning in January.

"We embrace these objectives and look forward to continued work with legislators and staff on the Sunset Commission," said Saenz.

To read the complete report, visit www.sunset.state.tx.us. To read TxDOT's response, go to www.txdot.gov. TN

Summer Fun, Sunscreen Should Go Hand in Hand

Whether you spend all day on the job outside, or you have just a short walk to and from the parking lot to your office, you know that the Texas heat can be quite severe this time of year. And spending too much time in the blazing sun, even for just a few hours, can give you sunburn that will make you wince if touched and possibly damage your skin.

The occasional summertime sunburn can be quite painful for a few days, but excessive exposure to the ultraviolet rays from the sun is a major contributor to most skin cancers. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has indicated that one in five people will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. The CDC also estimates that skin cancer will claim the lives of 9,500 people this year.

The good news is that there are ways to reduce ultraviolet exposure to protect yourself. Here are a few suggestions so you and your family can enjoy the outdoors this summer and keep your skin safe as well.

Wear a broad brimmed hat, wear long sleeves, and use a sunscreen with an SPF 15 rating or better. Sunscreen should be applied before sun exposure and reapplied two to three times during the day for best protection. UV rays also can harm your eyes, so don't forget to protect them too while out in the sun. Many sunglasses provide 99 percent protection from UV rays.

TxDOT provides tinted safety glasses and sunscreen with an SPF 30 rating for employees who spend lots of time in the sun. If you're interested in learning what kind of safety glasses TxDOT uses, just go to the OCC site, click on the "Safety" tab and go to the Safety Catalog. TN

BARRIE'S BACKYARD

Controlling Pests the Natural Way

The "green" bandwagon is certainly growing and being eco-friendly does benefit our environment. Controlling pests the natural way in your yard and garden this summer is also a good move with advantages you may not have thought of.

In the past, it was the norm to get out the chemical bug spray and dose the entire yard. Those chemicals did indeed kill the pests, but they also killed the good bugs known as beneficial insects. Beneficial insects include dragonflies, ladybugs, butterflies, lacewings and other pollinating insects. And they're valuable because they keep the pests in check.

The good news is that there are non-toxic products available today that are safe for your garden, pets and family.

The most effective control depends on the pest you need to eliminate. Let's start with the most bothersome summertime pest, the mosquito. The very best way to control mosquitoes is to eliminate their breeding areas. Make sure to drain all garden pot saucers, clogged gutters, irrigation valve boxes and any other places that hold stagnant water. For bird baths or rain barrels, toss in a mosquito dunk or Bti product, which are effective in killing mosquitoes, gnats, and blackflies, without harming other organisms.

You can find this product at any home improvement store or garden center. If you're planning a backyard cookout and want the yard free of uninvited guests, sprinkle dry, minced garlic around the yard. Try spraying yourself with a mixture of vanilla extract, orange oil and water. At least you'll smell good!

To keep your pets free of fleas, try mixing a few drops of an "essential oil" into your pet's shampoo. Spray the oil on their hair brush and on their bedding material too. You can find orange, lavender, vanilla, peppermint, and cinnamon oils at most health food stores. Another natural flea controller is diatomaceous earth (DE). Just dust DE powder around the lawn and even on your pet to help prevent a flea problem.

What about pests that feed on your prized garden plants? First try knocking them off with water from a high pressure nozzle. Many bio-degradable insecticidal soaps are available that are non-toxic to people and animals. Be sure not to over apply — too much can harm beneficial insects. Another organic approach is spraying with a product containing the citrus oil d-Limonene which kills many flying and crawling insects on contact.

Looking for an eco-friendly approach to weeds? Many have found success with this basic recipe for organic herbicide: Mix one gallon of 10 percent white vinegar, 2 oz. of orange oil and 1 tsp. of liquid soap.

The bottom line is to always look for the product that offers the lowest toxicity. TxDOT takes the same conservative approach when treating highway rest areas and landscaping around TxDOT offices.

To find out more information on Texas insects, both pests and beneficials, check out The Texas Bug Book—*the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, by Malcolm Beck and Howard Garrett. For more information on the topic of organic gardening, visit the Dirt Doctor Howard Garrett's website: www.dirtdoctor.com. TN

by Barrie Cogburn

HORIZON
THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION

Engaging the Public: The Art of Enlightenment

From *Horizon* Spring 2008:

The Spring 2008 edition of Horizon is available on TxDOT's website, www.txdot.gov, at the following link: ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/gbe/horizon/horizon_spring2008.pdf

This article is an excerpt from a larger study prepared for sponsors Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Arizona Department of Transportation (AzDOT). The findings and opinions within do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of either the FHWA or AzDOT.

The Importance of Public Participation

Although a representative democracy, the United States requires an active and caring citizenry if it is to remain a legitimate democracy. A participatory democracy has three important redemptive qualities. First, it strengthens the democratic spirit through its educative function. Second, it helps build and strengthen communities. And third, participation helps turn institutions into more effective instruments of society.

The Cumulative Curve of Involvement

In an ideal world, public participation would run throughout the project or policy from the outset. But this ideal has proven difficult to achieve and maintain. Initial interest in a project or policy will be low because plans are general and agency credibility is lacking. But as plans become more developed and citizens see how they will be affected, a "cumulative curve of involvement" develops and public participation tends to increase.

It is common for a project to proceed unabated until the latter stages of the planning process whereby it then meets virulent public opposition and negativity. Recognizing this recurring pattern, the Montana Department of Transportation created a task force to examine this recurring problem and made the following recommendations:

1. More Personal Contact – The task force contends that early informal meetings with landowners, interest groups, and citizens can help the agency attain important and early information and feedback.

2. Clear Communication – The task force recommends using informal, clear, and concise language.

3. Talk and Act – When issues or problems are identified, team members are urged to act. The task force also recommends actively seeking out potential project opponents and adversaries.

4. Keeping People Informed – The agency must inform more than just those whom attend formal procedures. This can be done through a variety of mediums, i.e., newspapers, radio, and television. Although public attendance at meetings is still low, the department is trying new ways to seek public awareness.

Defining the Public

Current transportation planning literature often uses the terms "customers," "constituents," "clients" and "stakeholders" to describe the people transportation agencies serve. It may be worthwhile however, to see the public not as any of these but as the proprietor and employer of any given agency.

Implementation

A policy is only as successful as its implementation is successful. Many programs succeed in preparation for participation but fail to handle all the subsequent information. As a result, decision making authority often remains strictly to the politicians, their advisors, and the relevant influential few in the community. TN

by Matthew Lindstrom, Ph.D, Saint John's University/ College of Saint Benedict and Martin Nie, Ph.D, University of Montana

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30 Larry E. Decker; Benito C. Olibas Jr.
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25 Toby J. Frederick Jr.

MILESTONES

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20 Vennie A. Gardner

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05 Andrew S. Griffith

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10 Steve E. Riley

Government & Public Affairs
10 Gabriela T. Garcia

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Motor Carrier
10 Bettie N. Houston

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25 Gary R. Love; Barry L. Six
20 Stephen E. Anderson
15 Jeffrey M. Sweetland

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20 Keith B. Sliger

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10 Haydee C. Contreras

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20 Paul K. George

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35 Melissa H. Wilson
10 Gabriel D. Bautista

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15 Sofia V. Dovalina; Patricia A. Thames
10 Patty M. Baker; Brenesa P. Brown; Charon R. Clayton

Audit
15 Karin M. Faltynek

General Counsel
20 Joanne R. Wright

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05 Frank Espinoza Jr.

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10 James C. Billek; Chad A. Franks; Kevin M. Kalstad

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15 Taina D. Bonilla

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15 John Sifuentes Jr.
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30 Rickey L. Minyard
10 Tony C. Kidd

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20 Ralph Aleman; Gerald W. Welder
15 Kenneth D. Kunkel
10 Steve J. Acuna; John D. Cobb; Marcus Jacinto; Doyle E. Perkins Jr.

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15 Vickie K. Hodges
10 Vicki N. Farmer; Fred C. Marrs
05 Jason S. Salg

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25 Bartola M. Diaz
20 Arlene Fresquez
10 Michael A. Armendariz; Marion W. Hodson; Monica G. O'kane; James M. Weber

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15 Jason A. Creamier; Ronald T. Perry; Rudy L. Ray
10 Hector Diaz; Jerry L. Loges
05 Roel D. Rodriguez

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10 Tinker R. Ramsey

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10 Dustin N. Mcnabb

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10 Donald M. Maddux

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10 Deborah A. Hensley

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20 Stanley L. Evans
10 Jerry L. Hale; Linda J. Jacks; Leigh A. Jeans

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15 Leopoldo Johnson; Joseph E. Leal Jr.; Lucila T. Saenz
10 Robert A. Casarez

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30 Martin R. Green; Pablo Rubio
20 Travis W. Murr
10 Jason W. Medders; Edmund J. Probst

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10 Donna D. Beasley; Delia V. Navejar; Marina G. Reyna

Civil Rights
25 Efrem M. Casarez Jr.

Retiree Report

MARCH 2008

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30 Victoria H. Duke
26 Jesse P. Domingue

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28 Clarkie G. Dellis

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22 Dayne M. Golightly
10 Gurald T. Vanveckhoven

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20 Monnie H. Matthews

Fort Worth
13 Marvin G. Masten

Houston
27 Stacey H. Turley
24 Lloyd E. Dumont Jr.
21 Harold E. Whited Jr.
20 Gary D. Lyke
18 Norman M. Wigington
06 Kenneth D. McCollum

Lubbock
27 Delwin T. Newton

Lufkin
21 Hughie Burrell

Pharr
30 John L. Solis III

San Antonio
41 Thomas E. Ortmann
22 Thomas Obiedo

Divisions:

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05 William B. Prokopik

General Services
25 James V. Collier
13 Eliza L. Fanuel

Travel
14 Leticia M. Ramirez

Vehicle Title & Registration
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Retiree Report

APRIL 2008

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28 Robin A. Outhouse

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22 Rudy E. Stuchly

Lubbock
30 Jerrell C. Otwell
13 Weldon L. Baker

Odessa
21 Samuel F. Jackson

Paris
14 Gloria Borrego

San Angelo
32 Charles O. Hall

San Antonio
19 Ray H. Fontenot Jr.

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38 Doyle E. Bood
34 Keith E. Miller
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23 Sherwood E. Helms Jr.
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26 Dirinda J. Sharp

Public Transportation
04 Christine R. Hernandez

Technology Services
17 Glenn C. Laxson

Travel
22 Dawn L. Worthington

Vehicle Titles & Registration
20 Sandra K. Johnston

In Memoriam

MAY - JUNE 2008

Districts:

Houston
Phillip G. Fosdick
Clerk II
Years Of Service: 3 Yrs, 1 Mo, 27 Days
DOD: 06/13/2008

Laredo
Fred R. Martinez
General Engineering Tech. II.
(Carrizo Area Office)
Retirement Date: 12/31/04
Years Of Service: 18 Yrs.
DOD: 05/05/08

Pharr
Geronimo G. Garcia
District Engineer
Retirement Date: 10/31/91
Years Of Service: 40 Yrs. 10 Mo.
DOD: 06/02/08

San Angelo
Antonio Cruz
Maintenance Tech.
(Brackettville Maint. Sect.)
Retirement Date: 09/30/88
Years Of Service: 22 Yrs.
DOD: 05/18/08

Divisions:

Finance
Cyndi B. Crain
Accountant III
Years Of Service: 11 Yrs. 2 Mo.
DOD: 6/10/08

WHERE AM I?

Travel Information Division Photo Librarian Anne Cook supplied TN with this photo thought to be taken in the 1940's or 1950's. There is only one identifiable business and it is a GM dealer. Aside from several palm trees and a railroad with four tracks in the center of the picture, there are no other identifying features. 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 May/June TN was identified as US 90 in Del Rio, Texas by Pablo Resendez, a Transportation Maintenance Technician for the Bracketville Maintenance Section. Pablo says the "Gay 90" drive-in theater was a place he went, like many other TxDOT employees who called, to see movies when he was a kid. According to Greg Newman, Equipment Repair Shop Coordinator, Del Rio, the drive-in has been torn down and replaced by a Border Patrol Station, and the "Hide-A-Way" went out of business and a convenience store now occupies the building.

UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

July 9
Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security – El Paso
TxDOT will monitor this hearing

July 15
Sunset Commission Public Hearing on TxDOT – Austin
The hearing will offer the public an opportunity to comment on TxDOT and the Sunset staff's recommendations for TxDOT.

July 22
Legislative Study Committee on Private Participation in Toll Projects – San Antonio
TxDOT scheduled to testify at this hearing

July 31
Texas Transportation Commission Meeting – Wichita Falls
This will be the first commission meeting in Wichita Falls since April, 1996.

Aug. 1
Northeast Texas Regional Mobility Council – Commerce
Local and regional leaders will meet to map the transportation future of Northeast Texas.

Aug. 12
Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security
TxDOT will monitor this hearing

Aug. 12
Legislative Study Committee on Private Participation in Toll Projects
TxDOT will monitor this hearing

Aug. 20-22
Save a Life Summit – Fort Worth
Traffic safety professionals and advocates will share insights and best practices to make Texas roadways safer.

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.

Buddy Baseball League coaches and Paris District employees **Keith Hollje** and **David Norris**, are sharing their love of baseball this summer with Down syndrome children. Fellow TxDOT employees say it's a joy to watch Keith hold a child so she can bat without her walker. Then David takes the child's hand and they make their way to first base. The members of the Heat baseball team, including the children who are completely immobile, enjoy the thrill of playing team sports for a couple of great coaches.

Tyler District's **Donald McQuitty** and his wife, **Sheryl**, were named Gregg County Foster Parents of the Year by the Gregg County Child Welfare Board. Donald says the need for foster families in Texas is great and he sincerely appreciates the three other Tyler District foster families and their positive influence on children in Tyler.

With the help of a TxDOT sponsorship, ENV Project Management Section employee **Julia Ragsdale** recently completed 40 hours of training to become a "Texas Master Naturalist." She also has committed to an additional 40 hours of community service as part of the program. 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.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Give us your feedback about TN!
Take the survey on Crossroads.