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TRANSPORTATION NEWS
August - September 2006 Volume 31 Number 6

TxDOT fights energy shock

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On the cover:

Jeff Richardson, an environmental specialist in the Environmental Affairs Division, rides his bicycle to work — and back home — each day in an effort to combine exercise with his commute and commitment to improving air quality. He rides 10 miles each way, even when the temperature hit triple digits. For more about energy conservation and how TxDOT and its employees are coping, turn to pages 7-10.

TxDOT photo by Stan Williams

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Transportation News is published by the TxDOT Public Information Office
125 E. 11th St., Austin, TX 78701-2483
Phone: (512) 463-8588
Circulation: 18,298

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Printed on recycled paper by TxDOT, General Services Division

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

Straight Talk

Important tool: common sense

by Mike Behrens
Executive Director

Mike Behrens

Life is more complicated today. Now we use lasers, accelerometers and inclinometers to measure ride. We use algorithms to perform complex calculations to measure quality. We employ random-number generators to establish sampling points. We use laptops, desktops, tablets, and other special devices to document and record construction data.

While these high-tech tools are a great asset to our inspectors and engineers in the field, we should always remember and use this low-tech but highly valued tool — our common sense.

Using all of the tools available to us — combined with highly valued individual training, experience and skill — TxDOT people will help achieve the goals of the TxDOT plan focused on meeting "The Texas Transportation Challenge."

To meet this challenge, all of us with TxDOT work to achieve five goals: reduce congestion, enhance safety, expand economic opportunity, improve air quality, and increase the value of transportation assets.

We recognize our duty to keep alert for problems — just one way we work to achieve these goals. We do this through good inspectors and engineers who are wary of problems because of their experience and common sense.

When questions arise about quality or problems show up that aren't found through testing or high-tech tools, these inspectors take action by doing everything they can to investigate a problem — even to the point of stopping work.

These inspectors, through their working relationship with their area engineer, know what to do when facing concerns over the quality of the work.

I am aware of many examples in which inspectors and their supervising engineers deserve thanks for working together to address problems quickly.

I applaud everyone's efforts in TxDOT as we work to achieve our five goals. This month we recognize those who see that the construction and maintenance work performed by contractors meets the requirements of the contract — and the public's demand for high quality in every project.✪

TNotes

■ **North Texas partnerships:** The Texas Transportation Commission, at its meeting Aug. 24, put final touches on an agreement with North Texas transportation authorities establishing protocols to expedite delivery of transportation projects in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The agreement among the North Texas Tollway Authority, the North Central Texas Council of Governments/Regional Transportation Council (NCTCOG), and TxDOT authorizes and directs the state to proceed with CDA (comprehensive development agreement) procurements for various projects in the region.

"This protocol is an important step in implementing the strategy of regional empowerment," said commission Chair Ric Williamson. "I personally am convinced that this is a path one can go down and be successful at."

The action received unanimous commission approval after a roundtable discussion with officials from North Texas. These included Dallas County Commissioner Maurine Dickey; Tarrant County Commissioner B. Glen Whitley; City of Dallas council member Linda Koop, Regional Transportation Council Chair Cynthia White; Denton County Judge Mary Horn; Collin County Commissioner Jack Hatchell; and Michael Morris, transportation director of the NCTCOG.

■ **Strategic plan online:** TxDOT's strategic plan covering 2077-2011 is now available online [ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/lao/strategic_plan2007.pdf].

The 19-page document outlines the department's plans to solve the state's transportation problems.

The basis for dealing with that challenge includes the goals of reducing congestion, enhancing safety, expanding economic opportunity, improving air quality, and increasing the value of transportation assets.

— Judith Curtis, associate editor

Commission sees El Paso growth

by Mike Cox
Editor

EL PASO — For a few moments, Transportation Commission members looked at the figures being projected on the screen in the El Paso City Council chamber.

"I don't think many El Pasoans know about … this slide, and it's profound," Commissioner Ted Houghton said. The slide displayed four points:

- El Paso's population is projected to grow 60 percent by 2030.
- Motor vehicle traffic there is projected to grow 50 percent.
- An estimated $8.2 billion will be needed to provide congestion relief.
- Congestion costs $220 million a year in productivity loss.

"The message is that if we don't do anything now and we don't take advantage of innovative funding," said Borderland Mobility Coalition head John Broaddus, "we are headed for disaster."

"We better do something pretty fast or it's not going to be very much fun around here," chairman Ric Williamson said. "And it's that way across the state; it's not just El Paso."

"There's just a few words on this slide, but it has a big impact," Broaddus said.

Broaddus' presentation came as members heard from public officials, civic leaders and citizens in El Paso on July 27 at the commission's sixth-ever meeting in the border city.

Following the public comments, the commission approved the production of a non-technical version of the department's 2007-2011 Strategic Plan. It's now available through the department's Web site [www.txdot.gov].

"This text, which will be published for public distribution, expands upon and explains the agency's goals and strategies and tactics in way that more directly address the public need," said Coby Chase, director of the Government and Business Enterprises Division.

In other action on a largely routine agenda, the commission voted to accept a donation from SEMPRA Energy Inc. to relocate 3.3 miles of State Highway 87 in Jefferson County to allow for construction of a $700 million liquid natural-gas plant at Port Arthur. A company official said the highway work amounts to a $2.8 million donation to the state.

The commission's next meeting away from Austin will be Oct. 26 in Denton.✪

Through time, things tend to work out

Letter from the editor
by Mike Cox

Listening to El Pasoans express their opinions to the Transportation Commission at its late-July meeting in that border city, I reflected on an interesting irony.

Back in the late 1930s and early 1940s, my grandfather, L.A. Wilke, headed the staff of El Paso's Board of City Development. He later told me that one of the issues he and other El Pasoans battled the Highway Department over was getting a fully paved highway between Austin and the city at the Pass of the North.

Most of the highway had been hard-surfaced by that time, but a segment near Junction remained a gravel roadway. This annoyed the El Paso business community as well as anyone else who had to make the drive from far West to Central Texas and endure a dusty, rough stretch of roadway.

Now the main road to El Paso, Interstate 10, is smoothly paved and multi-laned. On a good stretch of it you can legally drive 80 mph.

■ **See Page 11**

Rain drenches El Paso

The big storm of 2006 for El Paso began Aug. 1 with slow, continuous rains. When it was all over, the city was drenched with a year's worth of rain — 15 inches in one day.

Streets flooded, roads crumbled and uprooted plants and debris created hazardous driving for residents seeking to escape the storm's effects.

Gov. Rick Perry declared a state of emergency in El Paso County after surveying the estimated $100 million in damage caused by three days of storms. Federal disaster status entitles an area to financial help from the government.

Damage to TxDOT right of way was heavy. Hundreds of storm-sewers clogged with sand. Pavement was damaged with potholes. In some cases, high water washed away pavement.

The El Paso District played a vital role in helping local officials deal with clean-up efforts. TxDOT

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... remembered by everyone for a long time." — Chuck Berry

TxDOT crews fight floods

■ Continued from Page 4

employees from outside the immediate area traveled to El Paso to help. They came from Dell City, Van Horn, Sierra Blanca, Marfa, Marathon, Presidio, Fort Davis and Alpine, and from the Lubbock, Odessa and San Angelo districts. To the effort, other TxDOT sections and districts lent 62 pieces of equipment — dump trucks, loaders, pumps and water trucks.

"The willingness of the construction inspectors and personnel to assist the maintenance sections with the clean-up efforts was admirable," said Rick Romero, assistant East Area engineer. "They worked 'mano a mano' for up to 20 hour days, as a true TxDOT family. There was no distinction of titles."

Zane Webb, director of TxDOT's Maintenance Division, said the department has gained a reputation as a key part of whatever community it is located in.

"TxDOT is the 'go to' agency in this area to get things done," he said.

El Paso's district engineer, Chuck Berry, echoed those sentiments. "We have spoken with a lot of people who have been in El Paso a long time and no one has ever seen anything like this flood. The fantastic work of our TxDOT employees will be remembered by everyone for a long time. We are very proud of them," he said.

Heavy rains returned in early September, causing some TxDOT crews to work over the Labor Day weekend, again to ensure the safety of the traveling public.✪

— reported by Blanca Del Valle, El Paso District PIO

Amarillo fights flood and fire this year

AMARILLO — After the Panhandle fires of March, TxDOT employees came to the service of the community once again in late August — this time to help control traffic as torrential rain pounded the city.

Workers from the Amarillo Loop Maintenance Section led by Joe Don Prather and the Amarillo E-Way Maintenance Section headed by Russell Luther closed off several major roadways through the city.

Low-lying areas on the city's major east-west route (Interstate 40) were flooded at Ross, Lakeside, Washington and Bell streets. Crews also closed off U.S. 60 under a railroad overpass at Heather Street. Other flooded areas included Loop 335 at 34th and 45th Streets, and I-27 from Sundown to the new McCormick overpass.

TxDOT was on the scene each evening to block traffic well into the early morning. Workers stayed on to remove mud and debris left under overpasses.

Department employees in Amarillo prevented motorists from entering areas that were too dangerous to drive through, possibly preventing serious injury or death. Crews also opened roadways as quickly as possible for morning commutes.✪

— Paul Braun, Amarillo District PIO

TxDOT in the news

■ CONROE — TxDOT has agreed to accelerate its plans for expanding the overpass at FM 3083 and Interstate 45. The revision in priorities requested by Conroe officials will advance construction by a year. The $9.3 million project is to begin summer 2007. City officials sought the speed-up due to traffic congestion, which consists of more than 135,000 vehicles a day passing through the area where the construction will occur. (Conroe Courier – 9/12/06)

■ GALVESTON — The Texas Transportation Commission at its August meeting approved $2.2 million for future projects including engineering and design plans for future construction and pavement improvements at Scholes International Airport. TxDOT expects to provide $60 million for planning, building and maintaining roughly 275 community airports. Arrivals and departures from community airports account for more than 3 million flight hours a year. (Galveston Daily News – 9/4/06)

■ HOUSTON — More than 400,000 trees have been planted along Houston freeways in the past 6 years. "The natural look is what we're going for," said Dana Cote, TxDOT's chief landscaper in the Houston District. "We're very pleased with the way it's turning out." The freeways, criticized for being ugly and tree-free, are looking more like forests than concrete jungles. The beautification project is funded with tax money and donations. (KHOU-TV Houston — 8/17/06)

■ TYLER — Visitors were allowed onto a new segment of Loop 49 at the site of an opening ceremony Aug. 19. Loop 49, which opened for traffic Aug. 22, will be toll-free until November. Festivities include a ribbon-cutting, classic-car parade and more. Revenue generated by tolls will help pay bonds issued to complete Loop 49 between U.S. 69 and Interstate 20. (Longview News Journal — 8/16/06)

■ FORT WORTH — A one-mile extension of State Highway 360 is scheduled to open in October, eight months earlier than expected. TxDOT spokesman Val Lopez says the projected early finish by construction crews on the segment south of Interstate 20 is due to aggressive work during recent dry weather. Approximately 30,000 vehicles are expected to use the $16.7 million segment daily. (Fort Worth Star-Telegram — 8/8/06)

■ HOUSTON — Sections of four highways will change to contraflow lanes if a mandatory evacuation of the Houston-Galveston region is announced according to TxDOT officials. Interstates 10 and 45, and highways 59 and 290 will turn into one-way traffic for evacuees heading north out of Houston. TxDOT crews have installed blue signs with yellow lights on the evacuation routes to notify motorists of contraflow operations. Roads through Brazoria County will likely not change to contraflow because of highway design and lack of staffing, officials noted. Changing highway lanes to one-way requires that side roads entering the highway be blocked so traffic cannot enter traffic going the wrong direction. (The Facts — 8/8/06)

■ GALVESTON — TxDOT shut down the Galveston Causeway while a demolition crew on Aug. 13 set charges to remove the remnants of an old drawbridge for further construction. The demolition blasts are scheduled to occur periodically into next year. (Galveston Daily News — 8/7/06)

■ AUSTIN — To encourage motorists to take a break from driving, TxDOT is building 102 rest areas in the state equipped with free Wi-Fi for wireless personal computers.

"The only way you can really train people to stop regularly is to make nice and interesting, attractive places to stop," says Andy Keith of TxDOT's Maintenance Division. Texas maps and roads along highways will remind drivers about the free Wi-Fi operations. Since it's free, money is made through advertising. The remaining rest areas to be constructed should take about 10 years to complete. (KXAN-TV Austin — 8/1/06)✪

— Bill Powell, TxDOT PIO

Cost of fuel spurs effort to conserve

by Judith Curtis
Associate Editor

Consider this, especially if you're cringing from the last check you wrote for cooling your house or filling up your gas tank. The Texas Department of Transportation pays 16,800 utility bills every month for its 1,600 buildings, its pump stations, highway lighting fixtures and traffic signal lights throughout Texas. Those bills continue to rise, reflecting the increased cost of fuel that utilities pass on to their customers. For the first three quarters of fiscal year 2006, the cost to TxDOT went up 24.5 percent, or $21.3 million. A similar increase is expected next year.

Hold on, there's more. The department — with nearly 17,800 pieces of equipment — has more vehicles in its fleet than any state government. Some 9,000 of these are on-road vehicles. While they use less fuel than five years ago, fuel costs were up 27 percent for the first nine months of last fiscal year.

The cost of diesel, used to fuel heavy machinery, rose a whopping 49 percent. The cost of propane jumped 20 percent.

While no department-wide figures are available, it's safe to say that TxDOT and its employees feel the pain at the pump. As it is, though, TxDOT can't drastically cut back on using dump trucks on construction jobs or pickups on maintenance rounds.

"We have to serve the traveling public and keep our roads well-maintained for their safety," says Curtis Reinert, alternative-fuels analyst. Gas and diesel will have to be bought to do TxDOT business, regardless of the

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Many TxDOT employees be

Share the Ride: Since they began car pooling to work at TxDOT's Littlefield area office four months ago, the three TxDOT employees collectively save $800 in gasoline costs.

"It's definitely a good raise," said Tanner Stansell, design technician. He, along with design technician Dustin McNabb and engineering assistant Shelley Harris, commute to work together for 35 miles each way.

McNabb, whose gasoline bill used to be $450 a month, cut it to $150. Harris used to budget about $350 a month for gasoline and now spends about $200. And Stansell, who once had a $300 gasoline bill, now spends about $50 a month.

Exercise to Work: Jeff Richardson, an environmental specialist in the Environmental Affairs Division in Austin, rides his bicycle the 10 miles to work — and back — each day (See *Transportation News* cover).

"I figured I need exercise and I have to commute to work, so why not kill two birds with one stone," he said.

Richardson says bike commuting requires dedication. "It's tough to hop on the bike when it's raining or the heat index is 110 degrees, but I try not to fall into the trap of making excuses for not riding."

Fortunately, Richardson works in a building that has showers. Once at work, he cleans up and changes his clothes before starting his day.

Dim Bulbs: Tom Schwerdt, a paint chemist in the Construction Division, exchanged all his incandescent light bulbs in his home for compact fluorescents.

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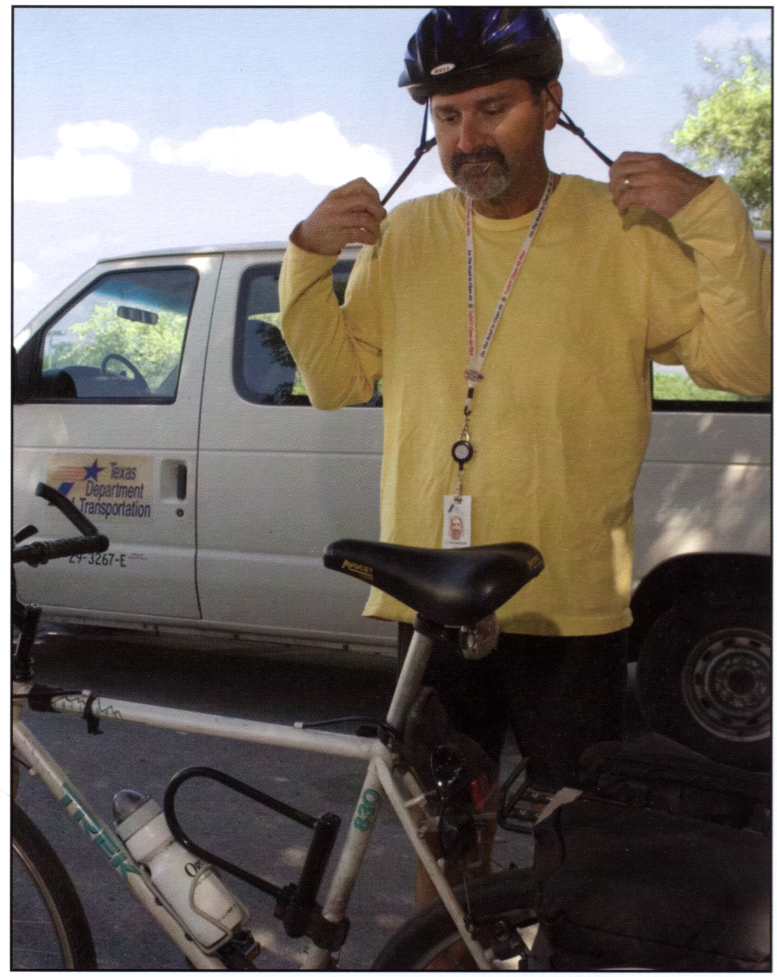

TxDOT photo by Stan A. Williams

Jeff Richardson prepares for a bike ride home after work.

TxDOT spurs efforts to save

■ Continued from Page 7

cost. "We have a limited amount of money," he says. "We have to take money away from someplace else. It's just like your household budget."

Facing such circumstances, TxDOT began more than a decade ago to convert its gas-guzzling vehicles to those with better fuel-efficiency. TxDOT has the largest alternative-fuel fleet in the nation, says Reinert. "We are doing everything possible to maximize mileage," he says. "Our equipment administrators are doing their best to keep fuel use down while meeting our primary mission: to maintain the roads for the safety of the traveling public."

As part of its decade-old effort to find alternatives to gasoline-powered cars and trucks, the department has purchased hybrid cars — models that use ethanol or can switch between gasoline and ethanol. Among its on-road fleet, TxDOT has 4,545 vehicles using alternative fuels. Another 970 vehicles use gasoline,

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at high cost of energy

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The Environmental Protection Agency says the bulbs use about one-quarter the electricity of traditional light bulbs — and they put out less heat.

Chicken-Fried Fuel: Debbie Hicks and her son, daughter and son-in-law are just about set up to make their own fuel for the vehicles on their 160-acre farm as well as the pickups they drive to work. The ingredients: used cooking oil from nearby restaurants transformed into bio-diesel fuel. This is a family of TxDOT employees — Debbie works in the Central Dallas area office; daughter Sarah Hatley works in the Canton maintenance office; and son Miles works in Dallas maintenance.

By investing $3,000 in the vats and chemicals required to convert the oil to fuel, the family expects to pay only about 75 cents a gallon to fuel their private and farm fleet.

Think Small: Simplifying saves. Stan Hopfe, who works in Austin's Design Division, saved $90 a month in gasoline by cutting in half the four trips he used to take to visit relatives in Houston. He also is selling his house and plans to buy a smaller one that doesn't rack up the monthly $500 energy bills he has been paying.

He said the choice, for him, was simple as he weighted the costs involved: "Cooling and heating rarely used airspace — or having additional funds to buy books, music, movies and a nice dinner?"

Electrify Yourself: William Burdette prepares for his daily commute to work as an information specialist in the General Services Division by plugging in his new, all-electric scooter. Its top speed is 40 mph, and each daily charge costs him about 18 cents in electricity. That's a huge change from the commute he and his wife (who also is going to buy an electric scooter) used to take in their Lincoln Town Car, which got 10 mpg and cost them $150 per month.

"My commute is fun now," said Burdette, "and my scooter looks pretty cool."

Keep Things Cool: Ike Brown, engineering technician in the Dallas District, saved money on his electric bill by erecting a wooden cover for his air-conditioning unit and installing misters that cool the unit with a fine spray.

Every Little Bit: Susie Jones, with Dallas District's administrative services, believes that many little measures add up to a lot of savings. For example, she installed thick, dark curtains to keep out the intense daylight in her home. She keeps her summer thermostat at 86 degrees and her winter temperature at 65. Her husband installed solar screens on all the windows, and they mulch their vegetables to reduce watering. Her family also keeps its vehicles tuned and they fill their gas tanks when it's cooler. Monthly savings: $80.

"We owe it to our own families as well as the world's families for a better future," she says.✪

Check it out: www.drivecleanacrosstexas.org

e energy, funds statewide

■ Continued from Page 8

and 4,623 use diesel fuel.

Consequently, use of gasoline has dropped from a high of more than 8 million gallons a year in 1989 to 2.3 million gallons in 2005 — a reduction of more than 70 percent. At the same time, use of alternative fuels has risen from 228,000 gallons a year in 1993 to 4.9 million gallons in 2005.

By moving away from gasoline and toward more environmentally friendly fuels, the department is achieving multiple goals simultaneously, says Don Lewis, the department's fleet manager.

"Home-grown fuel like ethanol is made of corn, and that supports our Texas farmers," he said. Homegrown fuel, by definition, relies on domestic energy sources. Therefore, he says, "It reduces our dependence on foreign oil." Alternative fuels also deliver cleaner air and increased fuel economy.

As the Trans-Texas Corridor develops, says Reinert,

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Ideas multiply to help save energy

Though making one change in how you use (or don't use) energy may seem small, each effort combined can add up to major savings. Here are additional tips and resources on how to beat the high cost of energy and fuel. You'll help keep the air cleaner in the process.

IN THE CAR

- Use the Internet to check prices, store-opening times and product availability instead of going there in person.
- Join a car pool, a van pool, walk, bike take public transit to work.
- Don't brake or accelerate suddenly; it eats up gasoline.
- Use cruise control and observe the speed limit.
- Keep your tires properly inflated; check them once a month.
- Remove extra weight from your trunk.
- Don't store luggage on top of your car.
- Make sure you take your vehicle in for regular maintenance.
- Consider trading that huge SUV for a fuel-efficient car.
- Avoid using the drive-through at stores, fast-food restaurants and banks.

AT HOME

- Install ceiling fans.
- Clean or replace air conditioning/heating filters regularly.
- Run dishwashers and washing machines only when you have a full load.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Insulate water pipes.
- Turn your hot water temperature down to 120 degrees.

AT WORK OR HOME

- Use Texas low-emission diesel fuel.
- Avoid re-fueling gasoline-powered vehicles between 6-10 a.m.
- Avoid mowing on ozone-action days.
- Buy Energy Star products.
- Purchase only low-emission/spill-proof gas cans.
- Save a trip — direct deposit checks.

MORE INFORMATION

- www.drivecleanacrosstexas.org
- www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips
- www.fypower.org/res/tools/energy_tips.html
- www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/drive.shtml
- www.ase.org/section/_audience/consumers

TxDOT policies promote savings

■ **Continued from Page 9**

it will contribute to greater fuel economy and less pollution. "Once the TTC gets built," he says, "we'll see cleaner air and fuel savings, which go hand in hand because congestion will be reduced."

Other measures the department is taking to reduce energy and fuel use:

■ Installed two windmills at safety-rest areas in Culberson County in West Texas and Gray County in the Panhandle. The energy created supplies the rest areas with 20 percent of their electricity.

■ Replaced incandescent traffic-signal lamps with LED (light-emitting diode) lamps. In the Houston District, the switch has saved about $600,000.

■ Implemented a policy prohibiting TxDOT vehicles, when possible, from idling for more than five minutes.

In addition, the department put together an energy reduction plan at the direction of the governor's office, which has directed all state agencies to reduce energy use by five percent.

The plan, outlined last December and updated quarterly, includes such measures as replacing nearly 60 roofs since 2004 and upgrading insulation and heating/air-conditioning systems. Also undertaken: replacing lighted signs on highways with reflective, non-lighted signs; keeping fleet engines properly tuned; keeping tires properly inflated; and educating employees on energy-saving techniques for driving.

TxDOT predicts that by taking these steps — installing new insulation, air conditioners and other energy-saving materials when renovating or building new buildings, — the department will see a four-percent savings in electric consumption and a three-percent drop in natural gas consumption by 2008.✪

'Achiever' title honors Romero

Goodwill taps office tech in Houston

by Norm Wigington
Houston Public Information Office

"I am really glad I did not move to Louisiana with that job ... That job doesn't exist anymore, and who knows what life would have been as a Katrina refugee."
— Christopher Romero

Christopher Romero, an office technician in the Houston District's Human Resources Department, received the Goodwill Temporary Service Achiever of the Year award in June.

Romero was named 'Achiever' by the Goodwill Business Advisory Committee. The Houston group recognized Romero for overcoming a series of challenges that devastated his personal and professional life.

Romero began working at TxDOT in August 2005 as a temporary employee from Goodwill Temporary Services. Months later, in January 2006, he began work as a regular TxDOT employee.

Born in Germany, Romero was adopted into a military family and spent most of his youth traveling the world with his family. He graduated from college in the Philippines.

While working in the oil industry in Houston, Romero learned that job was moved to Louisiana. He chose not to move with his job. Without a new one, he found himself in an emotional spiral and a medical crisis.

"It was the triple whammy," Romero says. "In hindsight, I am really glad I did not move to Louisiana with that job. ... That job doesn't exist anymore, and who knows what life would have been as a Katrina refugee."

Romero found resources in Goodwill that enabled him to succeed in dealing with his multiple life issues. "I remembered a good friend," Romero says, "who told me that if the bottom ever fell out to go to the Goodwill. They have programs; they can help."

The mission of Goodwill Houston is to provide training, education and employment to people facing employment barriers so they can become independent, contributing members of the community who gain purpose, well-being and dignity.✪

Letter from the editor

■ **Continued from Page 3**

These days, other transportation issues are on the minds of folks in El Paso.

Bottom line: Over time, things work out. That's a concept as durable as El Paso's Franklin Mountains.

■ And the rains came — The day before the July 27 commission meeting, commission members took the Wyler Aerial Tramway up the side of a very hot and dry Franklin Mountain to get a 4,692-foot overview of the upper Rio Grande Valley and a briefing from El Paso District Engineer Chuck Berry on planned transportation improvements through and around the city.

A few days after the commission and TxDOT staff had left town, El Paso got more rain in a day or so than it gets in most years.

The monsoonal weather triggered flash flooding resulting in millions of dollars in property damage, including transportation infrastructure. Blanca Del Valle, the district's public-information officer, provides a report of TxDOT's handling of the crisis on pages 4-5.

■ Road culture — TxDOT employees really seem to like reading about the road in popular culture. Eyvonne Rogers of Human Resources e-mails: "I enjoyed your articles [on road songs and road movies] for April and May. ... I wanted to remind you about the Chevy Chase vacation movies. Especially the one with the old lady roped to the top of the car. And don't forget "Speed" with Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock in a bus from one side of an unfinished overpass to the other. ... Not a voluntary road trip, but a road trip!

■ Speaking of road trips — The rising price of gasoline is affecting TxDOT employees and TxDOT as an agency. Associate Editor Judy Curtis has looked at what our employees are doing to cut costs and what $3 a gallon gas means for TxDOT. Please see her interesting stories packaged in a four-page pull-out section on pages 7-10.✪

A TxDOT Childress District crew (Butch Nichols, Phillip Gray and Larry Gambol) works on clean-up in Childress Fairpark after a tornado on May 12 caused widespread damage.

TxDOT photo by Mark Hightower

TxDOT helps in tornado aftermath

by Barbara Seal
Childress District
Public Information Office

CHILDRESS — It began like any other day in Childress during tornado season. By early afternoon on May 9, the storm clouds started building.

That evening, the three major television stations that Childress relies on for weather updates were reporting only severe thunderstorms in the area. By the time the National Weather Service reported a tornado in Childress, it was too late.

The tornado traveled along a 2.5-mile path that extended along the northwest, north and northeast sections of the city of Childress, causing close to $6 million in damage.

The twister appeared on the northwest side of Childress, just east of the TxDOT District Office. It traveled through the northwest residential area, ripped up trees and tore up roofs on houses, but did not injure anyone. By the time it made it to the city park, it was an F3, with winds between 113-157 mph.

The park sustained the most significant damage. The tennis court, a youth group's "hut," and an historic building used to store the city's emergency equipment were all destroyed. The public swimming pool was damaged

The tornado continued east to the Childress Cemetery, blocking the entrance, breaking and uprooting trees as well as many historic headstones. At final count, 495 trees at the city park and cemetery were either destroyed or damaged.

Trees and power lines were down and across roadways all over town. TxDOT was quickly called in to help with the dangerous job of closing roads and working traffic control in 16-hour shifts over the next three days.

"The electricity was out, telephone lines were down and no cell phones were working, but TxDOT was needed," said Chris Medford, Childress County maintenance supervisor. "Not everyone realized we had experienced a tornado. I had to go door to door to alert some of my maintenance crew to go to work."

According to Medford, they removed tree limbs from roadways and used rakes and shovels to remove debris from people's yards and houses. A covered bridge built as part of a TxDOT enhancement project was ripped from its wooden beams and blown east. TxDOT's special-jobs crew pulled the bridge out of the park lake using a crane.

"For the third time this year, Childress TxDOT has responded to natural disasters," said Medford. "We sent two crews to south Texas to help with the hurricane relief, worked the Panhandle fires and now a tornado."

"TxDOT has some resilient people working for them," he said. "Every time I call, they are always willing to go — and never complain."✪

DISTRICTS

Abilene
August — (10) Ervine P. Session.
July — (25) Billy K. Stennett; (10) Scott E. Darrow, Yvetta R. Youn.
June — (20) Edward L. Hart; (10) Armando T. Hernandez.

Amarillo
August — (25) Amado Arrellano; (15) Derek S. Pope; (10) Juan L. Ramirez, (5) Bernardo G. Ferrel, Anselmo Vela.
July — (40) John E. Hudspeth; (25) Jackie L. Fowler; (10) Florencio S. Maldonado Jr.; (5) Rocky D. Andrews.
June — (20) Louis B. Gallegos; (10) Cary L. Lowe.

Atlanta
August — (5) Kevin S. Lee, Dana C. Moore.
July — (25) James C. Landers; (20) Danny C. Weathersby; (10) John M. Smith, William B. Squyres, Vicki J. Yazell.
June — (20) Jerry V. Best.

Austin
August — (10) Gary W. Morris; (5) Jamie S. Boado, Anson K. Haynes.
July — (30) Michael E. Barnard; (20) James S. Voigt; (5) Michael M. Caddell, Lee A. Guthridge, Kon Q. Kwan, Seth C. Pennington, Shannon L. Tucker, Mark E. Wishert.
June — (25) Timmy J. Stacy; (20) Joseph G. Carrizales; (10) David L. Martinez, Deana M. McHorse, Gilbert Porras, Max D. Thomas; (5) Jerome F. Mechler, Alan D. Williams

Beaumont
August — (25) Mark S. Rutledge;
July — (25) Charlene S. Kent, George G. Oge III; (20) Jackie D. Apshire, Carlene R. Corbello, Andre L. Haynes, Lila L. Peveto; (10) David G. Rebert; (5) Darlene L. Boles;
June — (25) John V. Ritter; (20) William R. Graves; (15) Donald R. George, Eugene Haynes Jr.; (10) Debra A. Hurst, P.W. McKey; (5) Gordon R. Bland, Robert C. Higgins Jr.

Brownwood
August — (20) Michael R. Smith; (15) Laura J. Pierce; (5) Dale B. Spurlen.
July — (10) Martin H. Pinson.
June — (25) Travis J. Bundick, Michael A. Webb; (5) Rudy R. Martinez.

Bryan
August — (25) Steven M. Huff; (20) Dayne M. Golightly, James E. Sanders.
July — (10) Dave A. Cole, Charles R. Mason.
June — (25) Glen A. Price; (20) Jeaneane L. Dyer; (5) Billie J. Endler, Michael S. Sutphen.

Childress
August — (25) Jim L. Fox, Robert M. Hosea; (10) Russell D. Favor, Larry L. Thompson; (5) Jerry W. Jones.
July — (10) Van N. Criswel.
June — (20) Ben Kautz, Michael W. Ritchie; (10) Paul E. Henslee; (5) Martha R. Lambert.

Corpus Christi
August — (20) Max A. Lopez; (15) Connie M. Avalos; (10) Juan Valenzuela; (5) Frances Garza, Jeffrey W. Hartung Sr., Renee T. Williams.
July — (20) John A. Hernandez, Randal W. Moff, William H. Reitmann; (10) Michael A. Trevino, Richard Valderrama; (5) Donald L. Stimson Jr.
June — (25) Ricardo A. Padilla.

Dallas
August — (35) Adnan M. Turk; (25) Mark A. Marino; (20) Kim C. Limberg; (15) James M. Palmgren; (10) Siddig M. Dali, Azeemuddin Husain, Suzy A. Oviedo, Clifford N. Titus; (5) Carla S. Bates, Terry L. Clark, Adnan A. El-saad.
July — (10) Makram Bataineh, Subreana J. Curry, Rajesh N. Gurnani, Larry M. Howe, Kevin J. Smith, Jimmy R. Vrzalik; (5) Willie Bolden II, Ryan L. Brizgis, Mohammad H. Moabed, Miachel K. Mosley, Mark W. Wiley.
June — (40) Charles L. Carson; (25) Lanny R. Surratt; (20) Debbie J. Adams, Walter R. Fisher III, Jane M. Heady, Gary L. Moonshower, Maurice Pittman; (15) Latashia M. Miller, George E. Nichols Jr.; (5) Joshua A. Cotton, Kareem Doucette, Larry P. Gatlin, David R. Gentle, Brian D. Kosich, Jason L. Mashell, MaryLou Reinhardt.

El Paso
August — (20) Aurelio Saldana Jr.; (10) Alberto F. Dominguez, Daniel L. Erwin, Rudy Valdez; (5) Jose M. Balcazar, Alberto Barragan, Sammy M. Nunez.
July — (25) Mark N. Crews; (20) Jose Corral; (10) Robert W. Stallard; (5) Susan J. Freres, Victor E. Garcia, Fernando Herrera.
June — (20) Chris Carreon, Ricardo Mendez; (5) Timothy R. Caswell, Ruperto R. Salcido.

Fort Worth
August — (35) Ronnie Brady; (20) Scot D. Smith; (15) Charles E. Fojtik Jr.; (10) Tiffany N. Thomas, Evans Thomas Jr.; (5) Kathryn L. Leatherwood, John M. Smith, Ruben F. Torres, Curtis W. Wuemling.
July — (25) John C. Purpura Jr.; (20) Roy K. Lankford, Chris W. McLain; (15) James E. Cockerell, Shirley K. Griffin; (10) Michael E. Cater, Albert W. Stein; (5) Peter Cucchiara, Brad A. Root.
June — (25) Debra T. Roysdon; (10) Jimmie S. Gustafson; (5) Christian J. Houghton, Toney R. Kemp, Eddy W. Shearman.

Houston
August — (35) Lester R. West; (25) David J. Ladet, Mohammad Mosaffa; (20) Michael J. Warnasch; (15) Edna F. Blanton; (10) Dana D. Cote, Kenneth Edwards, Lee H. Hamberry, David Houston, Joe B. Lindsey, Osita O. Okoronkwo, Boris Shurin, Mark E. Thomson; (5) Romany W. Shahat, Michael J. Thurner.
July — (30) William A. Cargile; (25) Debra T. Primrose, Sylvia A. Ricicar, Darrell D. Vanover, Carlos E. Villalta; (20) Richard T. Lumpkin, Sammie L. Wright; (10) Martin L. Anders, Alfred B. Bishop, Stephanie M. Cribbs, Maria A. Faria Wade, Martha I. Gallegos, Bunard Spivey Jr., Debra K. Tiemann, James D. Worschesik, King Yuen; (5) Jennifer E. Green, James R. Kenner, Jonathan P. Ryza, Michael P. Schoonover, William E. Turner.
June — (25) Frank L. Shell, Harry L. Wicks; (20) Steve J. Calles, James R. Craddock, John P. Cunningham, Frederick M. Falkenberry, Robert J. Fanning Jr., Dan H. Hale, Douglas L. Hirsch, Lealand W. Kelley Sr., Cheryl F. Koslosky, Larry L. Larsen, Jay K. Moseley, Donald G. Norwood, Bill R. Petroski, Robert L. Schlafer, William L. Stone Jr.; (10) Michael Awa, Teresa J. Chance, Funso A. Ekibolaji, Enrique Sanchez; (5) Corando I. Algria, Christopher A. Baker, Bart B. Brenk, Rafael Cortes, Trent W. Kubena, Abel G. Martinez, Rodolfo T. Sandoval, Stephen A. Stakemiller, Jahangir Yaghmaeian.

Laredo
August — (25) Alfredo M. Esquivel; (5) Alberto Chavez Jr.
July — (10) Miguel Hernandez; (5) Jesse J. Gonzalez, Fernando J. Lozano.

Lubbock
August — (10) James C. Jackson, Larry Valdez.
July — (20) Stevan Perez, Kelly J. Roberts; (10) Joaquin Ayala, Melinda S. McCandless, Rodger D. McKenzie; (5) Timothy S. Diller.
June — (25) Alan K. Beyer; (20) Bobby E. Carter, Jerry W. Cash, (15) Leonard G. Bryan, Raymond Smith.

Lufkin
August — (10) Javier Hernandez, Doug Y'Barbo.
July — (5) Edward F. Garza.

Odessa
August — (25) Steve W. Esparza, Israel P. Rubio; (20) Arthur L. Waguespack; (10) Roy S. Garcia, George R. Salcido, Mike Valenzuela.
July — (25) Jose G. Morales; (10) Ricardo C. Betancourt, Rafel O. Martinez, Heather C. Sinclair; (5) Robert E. Silva Jr.
June — (30) Richard K. Hopkins; (25) Arturo R. Gonzales Jr., Bobby J. Meroney; (5) Martin W. Glass.

Paris
August — (10) Jeffery B. Daniels, Kent D. Hall; (5) Jennifer D. Medders, Cynthia E. Smith.
July — (25) John A. Yant; (10) Wayne Kelso Jr., Bily J. Skidmore, Leann B. Watson; (5) Paul C. Burnett.
June — (20) Louis R. Cartwright; (5) Carey R. Endrizzi.

Pharr
August — (5) Sharon M. Slagle, Hazel M. Zepeda.
July — (25) Arnoldo A. Martinez Jr.; (20) Oscar Garcia, Joaquin Gonzalez III; (10) Elma Henriksen, Tomas Villegas III; (5) Ismael Contreras, Edelmiro Perez.
June — (25) Jose L. Garcia; (20) Homero Bazan Jr., Luis C. Peralez, Bobby G. Reese; (10) Amy L. Rodriguez; (5) David R. Vera.

San Angelo
August — (35) James L. Anderson Jr.; (5) Ralph Gonzales, Cathy C. Jinkins, Joe Rebelez Jr.
July — (25) Joe W. Garmon; (20) Robert R. Hidalgo; (10) Richard J. Andrews, Diane M. Burnett; (5) Raymon C. Cedillo, Tony J. Dillon.
June — (25) Tommy F. McSherry; (20) David Sanches; (15) Debra A. Hopper; (10) Timothy W. Kresta; (5) William L. Knight.

San Antonio
August — (25) Kenenth W. Zigrang; (20) Jack E. Persyn; (10) Maria H. Gloria, Kathy L. Murray; (5) Eliza G. Reyna, Johnny V. Sandoval.

Service awards

July — (40) Ignacio C. Villarreal Jr.; (25) Robert A. Gonzales; (20) Ricardo Castaneda, Peggy J. Hooper, Gregory A. Malatek, David R. Scheel; (15) Freddie G. Esparza; (10) Robert B. Hartmann, Veronica Saavedra; (5) Ryan F. Dreibrodt, Richard C. Lopez, Leticia G. Montalvo, Javier C. Rodriguez, William J. Thomas.
June — (40) Gilbert L. Meier Jr.; (25) Eutimio Garcia; (20) Arturo Canales, Sherri L. Icke, Ronald W. Lemmons; (10) Brian K. Williams; (5) Lorenzo Moralez, David O. Valdez.

Tyler
August — (25) Timothy J. Thompson; (10) Rosa M. Fletcher; (5) Jeremy G. Barnett.
July — (25) George J. Beddingfield, Randall C. Ralson; (20) Linda P. Carlile; (15) Roderick A. Allen; (10) Bryan E. Sessions; (5) George W. Fleming, Andres Ramirez.
June — (10) Robert D. Hood.

Waco
August — (25) Michael D. Bassett; (10) Arilyn J. Carter, Duane D. Cowart, Tony R. Love, Charlie R. Phillips, Sherri L. Robelia; (5) Stanley R. Hensley, Ronnie W. Parker, Vivian A. Springman, Alva B. Stem Jr.
July — (10) Mary L. Howell, Craig Reavis, Dale M. Sinkule.
June — (25) James M. Alspaugh; (15) Willie R. Degrate; (10) James R. Erwin, Jaime A. Olvera; (5) Deborah J. Hall, Paul D. Hoffman, Blanchard L. Lenoir.

Wichita Falls
August — (35) Ralph D. Self Jr.; (20) Joyce M. Bujak; (15) Curtis L. Senn; (10) Richard B. Ross.
July — (25) Richard R. Fenoglio; (20) Jim L. Keck, Tommy D. Price, Terry A. Symank; (15) Louis S. Smith.
June — (20) Tommy D. Cole, Mark J. Marin; (10) Mitchell E. Nava; (5) Crystal D. Damron.

Yoakum
August — (5) Charles A. Pate.
July — (30) Allen R. Hoerig; (20) David A. Kelly, Tommy D. Parr; (10) Darrly J. Pesek; (5) Manuel R. Isaacs.
June — (10) Walter E. Carroll, Pete D. Castaneda.

■ DIVISIONS

Aviation
June — (20) Lowell C. Bridwell; (15) Edward M. Mayle; (10) Charles R. Graham.

Bridge
June — (20) Timothy E. Bradberry; (5) Lora J. Teed.

Construction
August — (25) Gary L. Graham, Larry G. Miller; (5) John E. Wirth.
July — (15) Darrell L. Owens; (10) Debar J. Barton; (5) Claudia A. Izzo.
June — (5) Melissa R. Adamcik.

Design
August — (5) Christopher G. Lindsey.
June — (15) Patricia A. Davis; (10) Narendra N. Patel.

Environmental Affairs
August — (10) Jenise K. Walton.

Finance
August — (5) Jose A. Ruiz Jr.
July — (10) Diana Ruiz; (5) Jose A. Ruiz Jr.
June — (15) Rafael Delgado Jr., Pearlie M. Rowland; (10) Cynthia B. Crain, Sheryl Y. Denmon, Lucia Elizondo, Brandie P. Lewis.

General Services
August — (20) Gary L. Baisden; (10) Arthur T. Leifeste; (5) Reuben J. Calderon, James W. Corcoran, Abel G. Davila, Kent S. Thayer.
July — (20) Gary L. Baisden, Albert J. Fairchild; (15) Alma C. Piper; (10) John P. Hummell.
June — (25) Scott D. Burford; (20) Eddie J. Brown; (15) Cheryl K. Converse; (10) Johnie Q. Muller; (5) Martin G. Boehringer, John A. Landa.

Human Resources
August — (10) Martin E. Anderson.
July — (10) Angela L. Carrizales.

Information Systems
August — (25) Lealean W. Peace, George M. Sheilds; (20) Suzanne Moses; (10) Barry L. Sylvester, Lewis L. Tsin; Kaye L. Wade; (5) Caroloan A. Pham.
July — (25) James K. Olinger, George M. Shields; (20) John C. Pratt; (15) Jennifer Pennington, Frank A. Russell; (10) Jonathan Catron; (5) Rebecca A. Mason.
June — (20) Arnulfo X. Arredondo; (5) Christopher M. Lofton.

Maintenance
August — (15) Stephanie A. Kleiber; (5) James D. Sprouse.
June — (20) Timothy L. Hazlett; (15) Victor Cabello; (5) Sean M. Goltz.

Motor Carrier
August — (20) –Robert W. Frizzell; (5) Cecil M. Johnson.
June — (10) Jesse T. Kirk, James J. Mangawang.

Motor Vehicle
August — (20) Elizabeth M. Moreno.
July — (5) Jose Catache Jr.

Occupational Safety
August — (20) Martha G. Thompson.

Public Transportation
August — (10) Robert G. Williams.
July — (5) — Gurjeet K. Gill.

Traffic Operations
August — (10) Debra D. Vermillion.
July — (35) Alfred H. Kosik.
June — (10) Fabian J. Kalapach; (5) Punarvasu R. Bhakta, Alexander G. Power.

Transportation Planning & Programming
August — (25) Victor J. Holubec, Herman M. Nelson; (15) Jennifer L. Bierman; (10) Janie S. Bynum, Rodney D. Coursey.
July — (25) Wayne A. Dennis; (5) Faustino Martinez Jr.
June — (20) Richard C. Peters; (10) Laura T. Perez; (5) Gabriel Contreras.

Travel
August — (25) John G. Appol.
June — (25) Leonel Garza; (20) Lucia B. Cordova, Donna J. Watson; (5) David B. Copeland, William B. Dollar.

Vehicle Titles & Registration
August — (20) Sharon J. Allen; (10) Charles K. Caldwell, Joan R. Minton, Susie B. Watson; (5) William C. Bauder, Melissa C. Frescas.
July — (25) Patricia K. Combs, Kathy M. Roberson; (15) Monica C. Hernandez; (10) Helen Guerrero, Conrad Munoz, Suzette R. Towery.
June — (35) David G. Linzey; (10) Jerry L. Johnson Jr., Tania M. Sanders; (5) Friend J. Jackson, Joyce Z. Juarez.

■ OFFICES

Administration
July — (15) Phyllis R. Chandler.

Business Opportunity Program
July — (5) Gloria B. Brown.

Public Information
June — (5) Ann M. Zeeck.

It's a record — 9 of 10 in Texas use safety belts

AUSTIN — TxDOT announced Sept. 7 that use of safety belts in Texas topped 90 percent for the first time. A record 90.4 percent of motorists use safety belts, up from 89.9 percent last year.

Since enforcement and education efforts began in 2002, safety-belt usage in Texas has jumped more than 14 percentage points. Since 2002, this increase translates into an estimated 1,200 fewer traffic-crash fatalities and 28,000 fewer injuries.

"Increasing safety on Texas highways is something we work on every day," said Hope Andrade, transportation commissioner. "We are pleased that more and more Texans are doing their part to make our highways a safer place by the simple act of buckling their safety belt every time they get in their vehicle."

"Click It or Ticket" raises awareness and pressses enforcement.✪

Exit Ramp ( ) = service years/month of retirement

■ DISTRICTS

Abilene
Glenn P Wiggins (18/June)

Austin
John W Bowen (17/June)
Gary W Comer (36/June)
Cecilia A Stalmach (20/June)

Beaumont
Julia H Thompson (27/June)
Samuel Jackson (15/June)

Bryan
Jerry R Waters (29/June)

Corpus Christi
Luis R Aleman (24/June)

Fort Worth
Pamela K Spivey (17/June)
Jimmie S Gustafson (10/June)

Houston
Shirley M Reamy (21/June)
Sylvia A Ricicar (25/June)
Michael S McCoy (17/June)
Joseph H Bourdier, Jr (21/June)
Jose D Corvalan (27/June)
Allen L Duncan (28/June)

Lubbock
Bobby J Beakley (6/June)

Paris
Kenneth W Matthews (25/June)
Eva N Flenniken (19/June)

Pharr
Arnold A Martinez, Jr (25/June)
Bobby G Reese (20/June)
Ricardo Villarreal (37/June)
Manuela E Castillo (34/June)

San Antonio
Kenneth L Ricks (36/June)

Tyler
Jerry D Sims (20/June)

Waco
Bernadette Little (12/June)

Yoakum
Robbin G Odom (28/June)
Walter E Carroll (10/June)

■ DIVISIONS

Environment Affairs
Nancy A Kenmotsu (10/June)

General Services
John B Tijerina (29/June)

Planning & Programming
Ruth E Roeber (21/June)
William T Theis, Jr (21/June)

Public Transportation
Lorraine B Avila (3/June)
Lucinda Cervantes (2/June)
Shirley A Milam (2/June)
Loretta J Light (2/June)

Vehicle Titles & Registration
Robert M O'Neill (7/June)

■ OFFICES

Civil Rights
Jimmie C Tarlton (6/June)

General Counsel
Richard D Monroe (8/June)

Calendar

2006

September

12-14	Environmental Coordinators Conference, Austin, ENV
23-24	Rosh Hashanah
28	Commission Meeting, Austin

October

2	Yom Kippur***
3-4	General Services Division Conference, Austin, GSD
10-11	Transportation Short Course, College Station
19	ATPA Board Meeting, Austin, ATPA
24-25	Public Information Office Conference, FTW, PIO
26	Commission Meeting, Denton
31-1	TxDOT/CCT Concrete Paving Conference, Austin, CST

November

1	TxDOT/CCT Concrete Paving Conference, Austin, CST
6-9	Research Management Committee Mtg., Arlington, RTI
11	Veterans Day
14-16	Traffic Safety Project Management Course, CC, TRF
16	Commission Meeting, Austin
23-24	Thanksgiving*

* = all agencies closed
** = skeleton crew holiday
*** = optional holiday (in lieu of any state holiday where a skeleton crew is required)

The complete TxDOT Calendar is on the intranet at http://crossroads/org/pio/articles/calendar.htm

In Memoriam

Austin
Jeannie T. Walker
network specialist
died July 27, 2006

Corpus Christi
Bert M. Asensio
engineering technician
retired September 1993
died Aug. 22, 2006

Fort Worth
W.D. Youngblood
maintenance technician
retired 1991
died Aug. 21, 2006

David Dennis
Equipment Repair Shop coordinator
died Aug. 9, 2006

Jean Travers
accountant
retired 1991
died Aug. 4, 2006

John "Eli" King
mechanic
retired 1982
died March 29, 2006

Houston
Thomas L. Emerson
engineering technician
died Aug. 2, 2006

San Angelo
Doris L. Mills
retired November 1984
died July 23, 2006

Wichita Falls
Elmer H. Adkins Jr.
maintenance technician
retired November 2000
died July 19, 2006

Bridge Division
Allen Steves
engineer
retired
died July 8, 2006

Transportation Planning & Prog.
Thomas L. Alford
engineer
retired
died Aug. 6, 2006

backtracks

While most travelers usually have a destination in mind, the route chosen often plays a vital role in helping someone find their way. The question: What town is this and what highway? If you have more information about this picture, contact Anne Cook at (512) 486-5838 or by e-mail at acook@dot.state.tx.us

The backtracks photo in the last issue of *Transportation News* was identified by Ann Gallaway, a TxDOT Travel Division employee as the old Rash Hotel in Aspermont. Ann also pointed out the old Stonewall County courthouse in the background as verification.✪

Looking Back

Item: Dian Neill has been named the new director of the Division of Motor Vehicles. Neill, who began her career with the highway department 19 years ago as a file clerk, is the first woman to assume the title of division head in the 69-year history of the agency. — **Item:** A retirement dinner for Engineer-Director Mark Goode has been scheduled for Aug. 29 in Austin.

— from ***Transportation News***,
Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation, August 1986

TRANSPORTATION NEWS

125 E. 11th St.
Austin, Texas 78701

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