

What's Inside

Are you confused by the new federal funding program for transportation? So is just about everyone else. Even the experts aren't clear on every detail yet, but a primer on the law known as "ISTEA" should give you the basics. **Page 2**

Inquiring minds want to know. *Transportation News* editors have created a survey so you can tell us what's right and what's wrong with your employee newsletter. Sharpen your pencils and your origami skills. **Page 3**

Last month, "Earth Watch" addressed TxDOT's plan to abate asbestos in its buildings. But another asbestos problem lurks in structures acquired as part of right-of-way deals. **Page 5**

On our Covers

Do you have questions about salaries, maintenance budgets or the deputy executive director's hair? Lots of other employees do, too. In the special insert in this month's issue, called Q&A, Executive Director Arnold Oliver answers more than 100 questions on a host of topics. On our **inside cover**, David Bernsen, at 42, is one of the department's youngest commission chairman ever (though now his title is commissioner of transportation). In the interview beginning on this page, find out more about the man who leads the leaders of TxDOT.

TRANSPORTATION NEWS

Volume 18 Number 7

MARCH 1993



A newsletter published monthly by the Division of Travel and Information, Texas Department of Transportation, 125 E.

11th Street, Austin, Texas 78701-2483. Manuscripts, photos, news tips invited. Send submissions to above address or telephone the editors at 512/463-8588 or TexAN 255-8588.

Executive Editor Al Zucha
Editor Gina McAskill Scherffius
Associate Editor Jeff Carmack
Staff Cheryl Converse, Mel Cummings,
Kerry Kutch, Roger Polson,
Emily Willingham
Staff photographers Geoff Appold,
Jack Lewis, Gay Shackelford,
Griff Smith, Kevin Stillman
Photo librarian Anne Cook



Geoff Appold

Bernsen upbeat on future, excited about employees

David Bernsen of Beaumont became commissioner of transportation on Jan. 11 after serving as a commission member since November 1991. In the first of a series of interviews with commission members, staff writer Roger Polson finds out what the new commissioner thinks of TxDOT employees, transportation's future and how the department can be compared to a successful baseball team.

Transportation News: Many employees are still worried about possible closing of district offices. What can you tell them?

David Bernsen: Well, that's not going to happen. I believe that we need 25 district offices, that we need a presence in all the current districts. What I have found throughout the rural areas and throughout the state is that

department people are active, involved citizens in their communities. And it is important that the Texas Department of Transportation maintain a presence in those communities. It is something I will fight for. I want to relieve employees' fears about closing district offices.

What else are employees concerned about?
TN: One thing is early retirement and the effect it might have on the department.

DB: That's a mixed bag. You hate to lose the experience represented by the people who will be eligible for early retirement. That is something we will have to address. But it gives those people the opportunity to retire. They have spent long, dedicated years with the department, and it will give them a chance to retire

See Bernsen, page 6



This paper contains 50 percent recycled fiber, at least 10 percent coming from post-consumer waste. It is recyclable with other white paper.



ISTEA and highway funding: a primer

By Emily Willingham
Staff writer

ISTEA, PDP, STIP, CMAQ, PASS, TIP, STP, NHS, MPO.

What does it all mean? How does it all fit together?

The best way to explain is to begin at the beginning. The department has created Transportation Improvement Plans (TIPs) in the past. It has worked with metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to create TIPs. In the past, TxDOT and the MPOs could add projects to a TIP whenever they wanted to. They could add them regardless of funding constraints—if a project couldn't be funded that year, it would be put on the list for the next year. Not any more.

That's where ISTEA and PDP come in. Back when projects could be added to TIPs regardless of funds, we called it overprogramming, and it was a fact of transportation planning. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) required us to create three-year financial plans for Texas transportation. State law mandated that we limit projects to no more than 130 percent of projected revenue. MPOs can no longer add projects to their transportation plans whenever they want to. Everyone must program within fiscal limitations.

ISTEA placed new limitations on how TxDOT can spend money in certain funding categories. The federal bill also increased the number of funding categories. Before ISTEA, TxDOT worked with seven major categories when allocating funds for projects. Now, we work with three times that many.

The new funding structure is so different from the old, it could almost be denominated A.I., for After ISTEA. Before ISTEA (B.I.), the department received its minimum allocation dollars in one lump sum. After ISTEA, the funds are distributed in three areas—for cities with populations of more than 200,000, cities less than 200,000, and a "flexible" category.

Sound confusing? It gets worse. Before ISTEA, TxDOT could use funds from the old "Interstate

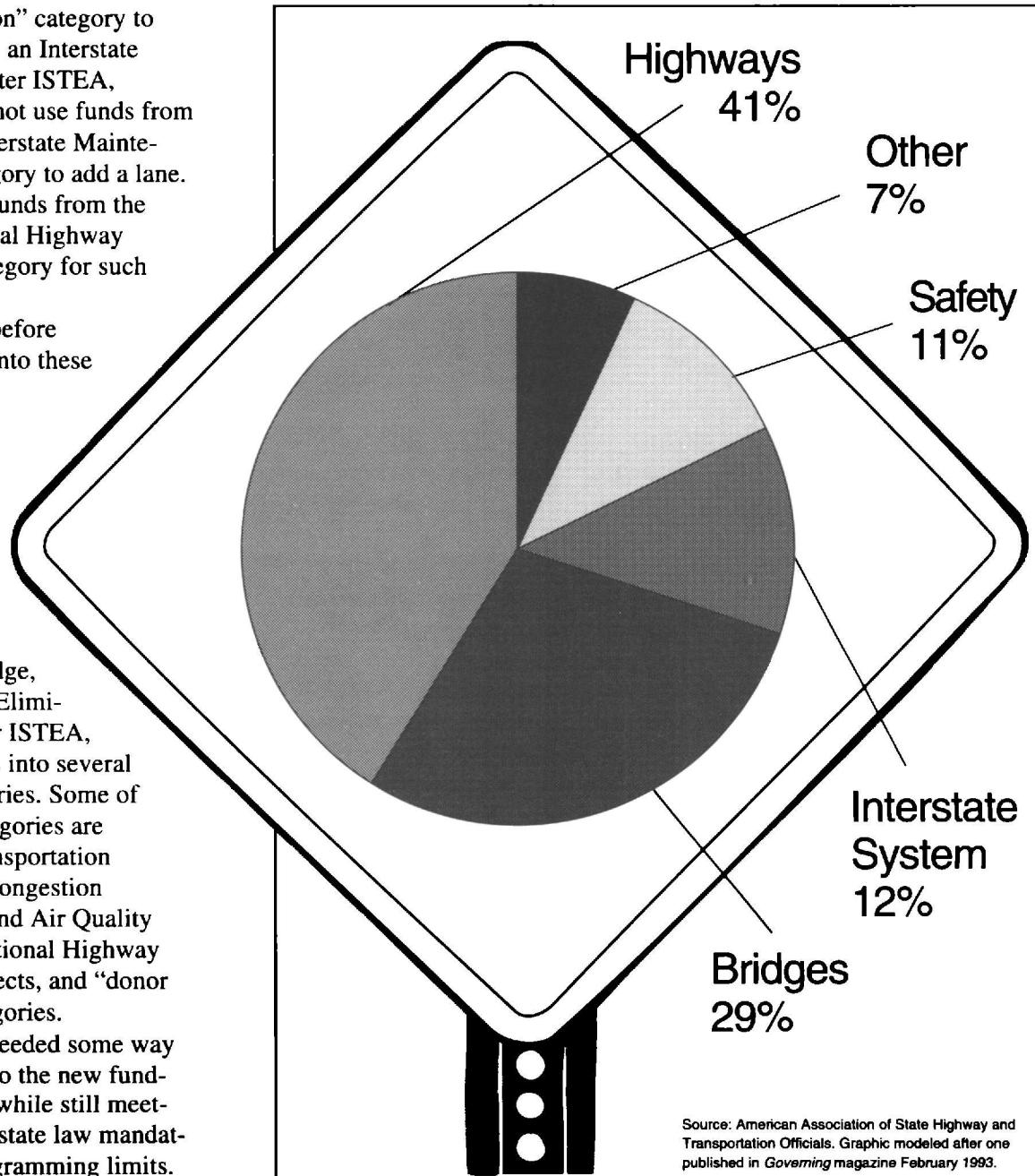
Rehabilitation" category to add a lane to an Interstate highway. After ISTEA, TxDOT cannot use funds from the new "Interstate Maintenance" category to add a lane. It must use funds from the new "National Highway System" category for such work.

Funding before ISTEA fell into these seven major categories: Interstate, Interstate Rehabilitation, Primary, Secondary, Urban System, Bridge, and Hazard Elimination. After ISTEA, funding falls into several more categories. Some of the new categories are Surface Transportation Programs, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality projects, National Highway System projects, and "donor bonus" categories.

TxDOT needed some way of easing into the new funding process while still meeting the new state law mandating overprogramming limits. The 1993 Transitional Project Development Plan (PDP) served as TxDOT's transition into a new funding era.

The PDP has three phases. In the first phase, funding levels for transportation programs are established and high-priority projects on the National Highway System are listed. Most of the projects in this phase of the 1993 PDP came from the 1988 PDP. Projects that weren't selected for this phase became pending projects for phases two and three.

In the second phase, ISTEA comes into play. The bill requires the department to work with MPOs to select high-priority projects and create a TIP subject to the public-involvement process. The ISTEA categories for projects in this phase are primarily surface transportation program (STP) projects, both rural



Source: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Graphic modeled after one published in *Governing* magazine February 1993.

Where other states plan to use ISTEA dollars

An American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials report shows that the states are ready to put new federal funds to use. *A Report on the Highway Program Capacity of State Highway and Transportation Departments, FY 1993-96* indicates that the

states have 11,637 projects ready for bids.

Collectively, these could obligate at least \$8.5 billion more than the \$18 billion in federal highway funds approved by Congress for fiscal 1993. ♣

Reprinted from *Governing* magazine, February 1993.

and urban. Projects not selected in this phase move onto phase three. Remember, during this selection process, TxDOT and the MPOs must always keep overprogramming limitations in mind.

In phase three, remaining projects are selected based on MPO priorities. ISTEA gave MPOs much more authority and flexibility in the selection process. Any projects left over after phase three are placed into a "hold" category for consideration in annual PDP updates.

The PDP helped bring Texas transportation projects within the financial constraints mandated by

the Texas Legislature. It helped TxDOT lay the groundwork for working more closely than ever with MPOs, as mandated by ISTEA. It helped TxDOT prioritize projects in the proper ISTEA and state-funded categories through three, hierarchical phases.

All of these acronyms can be as mystifying as a mile-long algebraic equation. But what they add up to is simple—a transportation plan that gives the people of Texas what they need—and what they want. ♣

From the
Executive
Director

.....

Executive Director Arnold Oliver's column this month appears on the first page of *Transportation News*' special insert, Q&A.

You tell us

A survey of *Transportation News* customers

We want your opinions and comments on your employee newsletter. Please fill out and return the following survey so we can find out how well *Transportation News* serves you. The information you provide will remain anonymous. Your responses will help *Transportation News* editors improve future issues.

After you fill out the survey, cut out this page and fold along the gray lines so the return address is on the outside. Staple and send interoffice mail, or cover the interoffice mail designation with a stamp and send through the U.S. mail. We appreciate your input and your readership.

Do you read *Transportation News*? (Circle one number.)

- 1 never
- 2 sometimes
- 3 usually
- 4 always

What is the one most important reason you read *Transportation News*?

How many of the articles in a typical issue of *Transportation News* do you usually read? (Circle one number.)

- 1 none
- 2 less than half
- 3 about half
- 4 more than half
- 5 all

Do you think *Transportation News* does a good job covering the following issues? (Circle one number for each category.)

	never	sometimes	usually	always
News of department actions and events	1	2	3	4
Employee and retiree activities	1	2	3	4
Employment conditions and personnel issues	1	2	3	4
Department policies	1	2	3	4
Effect of external forces on the organization	1	2	3	4
Information to help employees do a better job	1	2	3	4
Department's future plans	1	2	3	4
How the department compares with other organizations	1	2	3	4
The department's community involvement	1	2	3	4
Personnel changes	1	2	3	4

Please rank the preceding categories one through 10 to indicate how much they interest you. (Write a number from one through 10 at the left of each category.)

Please list other story or news subjects you would like to see published in *Transportation News*.

Do you know the guidelines for submitting stories, story ideas and photos to *Transportation News*? (Circle one number.)

- 1 No
- 2 Yes

How often do you read various kinds of articles in *Transportation News*? (Circle one number for each continuing feature or subject below.)

	never	sometimes	usually	always
Executive Director's column	1	2	3	4
Employee profiles	1	2	3	4
Retiree profiles	1	2	3	4
Earth Watch	1	2	3	4
Tech Trade	1	2	3	4
"Transitions" listings	1	2	3	4
Letters	1	2	3	4
Stories on:				
Construction projects	1	2	3	4
Commission actions	1	2	3	4
Events				
Personnel matters	1	2	3	4
Outside influences on TxDOT	1	2	3	4
Department plans for the future	1	2	3	4
Operations of a particular work unit	1	2	3	4

In November, *Transportation News* published a special "theme" issue on TxDOT's relationship with the environment. Would you like to see more special issues focusing on a single theme? (Circle one number.)

- 1 No
- 2 Yes

Please rate the content of *Transportation News*, 1 being uninteresting and 5 very interesting. (Circle one number.)

- 1 2 3 4 5

If you are familiar with other newsletters, how does *Transportation News* compare? (Circle one number for each category.)

	well below average	below average	average	above average	well above average
Overall appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Value to my job	1	2	3	4	5
Range of topics covered	1	2	3	4	5
Depth of information in articles	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of photos	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of writing	1	2	3	4	5
Reliability, accuracy	1	2	3	4	5

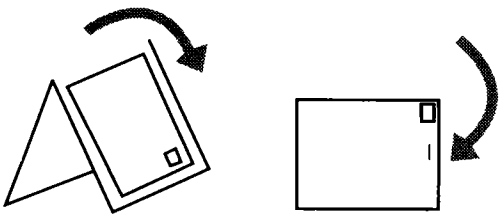
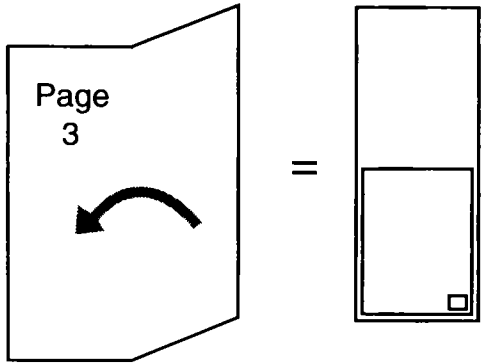
cut here

fold here

More on next page

fold here

Fold page 3 in on itself vertically.



Fold again so mailer shows

And staple or tape.

fold here

Transportation News reader survey
Division of Travel and Information (D-16)
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, TX 78701

**INTER-
OFFICE
MAIL**

cut here

Reader survey continued

When do you receive your copy of *Transportation News*? (Circle one number corresponding to the week of the issue month the newsletter usually gets to you.)

- 1 2 3 4 5 (later than the fourth week)

Would you like *Transportation News* to be (circle one number)

- 1 current format?
- 2 new format?

Would you like *Transportation News* to look (circle one number)

- 1 more like a newspaper?
- 2 more like a newsletter?
- 3 more like a magazine?

Would you like to see *Transportation News* (circle one number)

- 1 keep its name?
- 2 change its name?

If *Transportation News* started a column featuring questions from employees with answers from the administration, would you read it? (Circle one number.)

- 1 never
- 2 sometimes
- 3 usually
- 4 always

How do you feel about replacing the "Highway Family" stickers for employee vehicles with "Transportation Family" stickers? (Circle one number.)

- 1 Good idea; I'd put one on my car
- 2 Good idea, but I wouldn't put one on my car
- 3 Waste of money

Answering the following questions will allow us to see how closely our survey respondents match the demographics of the department.

If you are an employee, please list your district or division. If you are a department retiree, please indicate that. If you work outside TxDOT, please list your agency, firm or group affiliation.

If you are an employee, how long have you been with the department?

Are you male or female? (Circle one.)

How old are you? (Check one.)

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 50-65
- 65+

What do you consider your ethnic origin? Please write in a designation such as white, African-American, Latino or whatever term you would commonly use. Your answer to this question will also show us what terms *Transportation News* readers prefer.

What is your salary group? (Check one.)

- 1-8
- 9-13
- 14-17
- 18+

Thank you for helping us serve you better.

Right-of-way often holds nasty surprises

By Karen LeFevre
Division of Environmental Affairs

Getting the beer bottles out of the bluebonnets has cost TxDOT a lot of money and effort, but litter isn't the only environmentally damaging thing found along Texas highways. Unseen pollutants, like pesticides and highway runoff, can affect water quality, so the department works to reduce their effect on the environment.

While trash and water pollution can be managed, other hazards lurk on and below the right-of-way that are more difficult to control. When the department acquires property to expand or build highways, it often gets leaking underground petroleum storage tanks and buildings containing asbestos as part of the deal.

Before bulldozers take out buildings in a project's path, the department must inspect them to determine the presence of friable or potentially friable asbestos. Asbestos that is friable can be crumbled between the fingers, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. These particles may become airborne and lodge in the lungs of people who inhale them, causing respiratory disease and cancer.

A proven hazard to public health, friable asbestos in buildings to be demolished or renovated is regulated under the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP), autho-

rized under the Clean Air Act Amendment of 1990.

This emphasis on public health, as opposed to occupational safety, makes dealing with asbestos-laden buildings on the right-of-way a much different challenge for the department than creating and implementing an asbestos management plan for its own buildings.

The department contracts with about a dozen consultants to inspect right-of-way structures and issue reports on the presence or absence of regulated asbestos-containing material (RACM).

Because some demolition methods can cause asbestos to become friable, TxDOT details for the asbestos consultant how the building is to be removed, says William Curra, hazardous materials coordinator for the Division of Environmental Affairs. "For example, if a building is bulldozed, that might make the asbestos friable, so disassembly would be preferable," Curra explained.

The consultant's report is made available to salvage sale/demolition bidders, who then make either positive or negative bids. "A negative bid would result in the department's paying the salvage/demolition contractor to abate the asbestos and tear the building down. In those cases, the cost of abating the asbestos and demolishing the building exceeds the

salvage value of the structure. Sometimes, however, the sale of salvage materials offsets the abatement and demolition costs, and that results in a positive bid," said Curra.

Curra pointed out that issues can become complicated in certain cases, and not all of them involve right-of-way. "There are all kinds of non-regulated asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) in both department buildings and buildings on the right-of-way. The asbestos in floor tiles is not friable, for example," he said. "But many insurance companies won't cover demolition contractors involved in the removal of even non-regulated ACMs. One demolition contractor refused to take up floor tiles and reneged on his contract. Though not legally required to do so, the department used a licensed asbestos abatement contractor to remove the tiles, at a greater expense," explained Curra.

Sometimes the line between regulated and non-regulated asbestos blurs with circumstances, such as with the old Queen Isabella Causeway. The old bridge contains water pipe composed of 50 percent asbestos. Asbestos makes pipe strong and was commonly used in the past. The department's inspection of the bridge revealed no RACMs; the asbestos was not friable and therefore did not fall

under NESHAP regulations.

"The hitch is that during demolition, ACMs can become friable, then NESHAP rules take over," Curra said. "Because the water pipe on the old Queen Isabella Causeway contains asbestos, the department spent considerable money on a pre-demolition inspection and abatement plan."

The pipe will be disassembled piecemeal, by 15-foot lengths, under a separate contract from the bridge demolition contract. The department is going beyond statutory requirements and will use a licensed asbestos abatement contractor to disassemble the pipe, taking special care not to produce friable asbestos.

"But we must be prepared for the contingency that a pipe segment may fall, smashing onto the deck of a barge. Then the asbestos would become friable," Curra added.

The department's responsibility for proper handling of asbestos goes far beyond the confines of its office buildings. It encompasses every structure on the highway system and the right-of-way. In providing for pre-demolition inspections and abatement of asbestos in buildings along the right-of-way, the department is following not just the letter of the NESHAP regulations, but the spirit as well—to protect public health and promote a safe environment for everyone who travels on Texas highways. ♦

Earth Watch

Coatings expert gets 2nd Pollard Award

The second Albert H. Pollard Award for Merit was presented in January to Arthur Barrow, manager of the Coatings and Traffic Materials Section of the Division of Materials and Tests.

The annual award recognizes employees of the division who make outstanding contributions in research, design, construction, testing, analysis or administration.

Barrow was recognized for his work in determining the causes of

and implementing solutions to the statewide problems associated with coatings for concrete. In addition to an instrumental role in an extensive research project on the issue, Barrow prepared and implemented procedures and specifications to remedy the problems.

Barrow directed the development of new coatings and a specification for their use and control. He traveled throughout the state to oversee the initial applications,

ensure the specifications were adequate and correct, and train department and contractor personnel in using the new materials.

"As a direct result of Art's efforts, the problems of peeling and discoloration of coatings for concrete have been effectively eliminated," said Division Director Billy Neeley.

The award was established by a bequest from the estate of Bertie Pollard, wife of former Division of



Arthur Barrow

Materials and Tests employee Albert H. Pollard. Honorees receive a plaque and a \$500 savings bond. ♦ **Bunny Neible, Division of Materials and Tests**

Safety advocates spread the word at auto show

For the eighth consecutive year, the department has been an exhibitor at the Houston Auto Show, a nine-day event that attracts more than 400,000 people. This year's show was held Jan. 30-Feb. 7.

While auto manufacturers view the crowds as potential car buyers, TxDOT fears they may become accident statistics. That's why Houston District Traffic Safety

Specialist Sharon Johnson coordinates the displays in the auto show's Safety Exhibition.

This year, 12 organizations contributed to the safety exhibition. They included groups from law-enforcement agencies to Mothers Against Drunk Driving to the department's own MOVE IT campaign. Many groups participate annually.

The show included "The Convincer," a carriage on an incline that simulates the impact of a 10-mph head-on collision. The short ride convinces many of the importance of wearing safety belts.

The Texas Transportation Institute takes advantage of the car-oriented gathering to distribute public-opinion questionnaires on issues it is researching.

Younger attendees were entertained by Robo the Robot and Doc the Car, who answered audience questions. The friendly robots were at the exhibition courtesy of Harris County.

Cenikor, a nationally recognized center for drug abuse, staged an anti-chemical/drug puppet show for children. ♦ **Norm Wigington, Houston District**

Bernsen

From inside cover

and do other things—play golf, or take up another hobby or another job.

On the other hand, I am quite confident there are qualified people, young people, out in the district offices and at the lower division levels who can continue the rich tradition and quality of the programs we have in place. Initially, it may be troublesome, but I feel confident we have people who can step in and fill the gap.

One of the things I've seen through traveling and meeting with department people is that this a family. They've worked hard. They are loyal. And they are dedicated. We will be ready to go forward.

TN: How do you view the dramatic changes the commission has gone through?

DB: I've said this before—this is the youngest, the poorest, the brownest and most female commission in the history of the department.

I am excited about working with Anne Wynne. I think employees will find that she is very talented, dedicated and bright. She will be a great addition to the commission.

I've enjoyed working with Henry Muñoz for a year. He is likewise talented and dedicated and adds a new perspective to the commission. And I think the mix will be for benefit of the department and benefit for the people of Texas. It is an exciting time, and I'm fortunate I've been given the opportunity to work with these two fine individuals.

TN: How has your idea of this job changed over the year or so you have served?

DB: I have found that the employees are very dedicated and hard-working people. It's amazing to me, having been in the private sector, that we have so many long-term employees. That speaks highly of the organization itself and of the people of the organization. You have people who have spent their working lives trying to help the department and the people of Texas.

I have found that this department is involved in many more activities than just highways. People still refer to it as the highway department, but on closer examination they find this department is involved in so many different activities related to transportation. We will see that develop into the next century. ISTEA has dictated certain changes, and the philosophy of this commission will dictate other changes.

TN: Have you been to most of the districts?

DB: No, I haven't, and I regret that, but it's been quite crazy. I have been to many districts, and it's my intention to visit each district office by the end of this year and as many area offices as possible. I plan to do more of that after the Legislature gets out of session. I enjoy those visits, meeting the people and getting the lay of the land, so to speak.

TN: Have you had any experiences with employees that have crystallized your understanding of the department?

DB: Two things come to mind. One was in Longview. They mentioned that the last time they could recall a commissioner visiting there was sometime in the early '60s. That stuck in my mind. It made me more determined to visit the districts and area offices, not just go through in a hurry, but spend some time with people and see what they are doing and how they are doing.

The second event occurred at one of the district offices. I asked an employee in the lab what he was doing and how he was doing it. He spent 45 minutes to an hour explaining each instrument, how it worked, and what it did. The feeling I got from that meeting was that he was very proud of what he was doing and how he was contributing to the department.

I think this exemplifies the feeling I've seen in many other offices. This exchange started out like, "How are you doing? I'm the new commissioner," and he said, "Do you really want to know?" I said, "Yeah, tell me what you're doing." And he did. It was very enlightening because he took such pride in the job. And there

was no one else around, I just kind of wandered down the hall and stuck my head in the laboratory. You could see his enthusiasm. It was very refreshing.

TN: What advice

have you been given since you've been on the commission?

DB: (Laughing) I've gotten all kinds of advice. I've gotten advice from employees to visit as many offices and talk to as many people as I can, and I think that's excellent advice. I've gotten advice from outside that we need to remember that the citizens are our customers.

When I talk to county commissioners, judges, mayors or just private citizens, they are very pleased with what we do and how we do it, and they call our employees their friends. Our people go to church with them, they go to school functions, football games, they drink coffee with them at the local cafe. Its important that we continue that involvement. But there are certain areas where we can do better.

TN: Like what?

DB: There are opportunities that are going to have to be made available to everyone in this department. We've been criticized in the past for not having made more efforts for minorities and women, and we're going to give them that opportunity. That has been reflected in the commission, and it's something we're going to do.

Some of our programs can be fine-tuned. Having gone along the coastal area, I think we need to have some studies on evacuation routes, not so much the identification of the routes but whether they have the necessary capacity. I would like to see that done.

The commission is concerned about the border and the free-trade agreement. They will need our attention.

In larger cities, we will try to work harder to eliminate or relieve urban gridlock. In rural areas, you hear talk that we've done good, but we need to do better.

Aviation is another area. I would like to improve and upgrade the aviation aspect of the department. I think it's important that we help the rural areas and that we help those airports and work to upgrade and improve them.

I would like to push for TxDOT to take the lead in alternative fuels. The time is here, now. I've met with people in and out of the department, the gas producers and local industry people. They are ready to develop the necessary infrastructure to make alternative fuels work, and we should go forward, especially in urban areas where air quality is a concern.

TN: What about President Clinton's desire to pump more money into the infrastructure? How might this affect our ability to bring some projects on line right away, especially with the possibility of losing some people to early retirement?

DB: I'll take the first question first. I believe in a strong infrastructure. There are studies that show the countries and states with the best infrastructure are the ones that can compete economically. It helps safety, helps economic development and brings prosperity. And that's what the citizens of Texas want.

I agree with the president and his plan. It will create construction jobs but also help create permanent jobs as well. As a country, we've been lagging behind the Europeans and the Pacific Rim countries economically. As we enter the next century, we must be competitive with them. The free-trade agreement will help, but a solid infrastructure is necessary.

For the second question, I believe we are up for that task. Some of the younger people in the department will be given greater responsibility and be called upon to make sure it works. I met recently with the Texas congressional delegation and people in the Clinton administration and told them we are ready to do it and want to do it. I told them I was very proud of the Texas Department of Transportation and felt it was the finest organization in the country. I told them we were ready to do the job. Just send us the money and we'd handle it.

TN: Communicating with the public is becoming a job for more people within the department. How does this fit in your agenda?

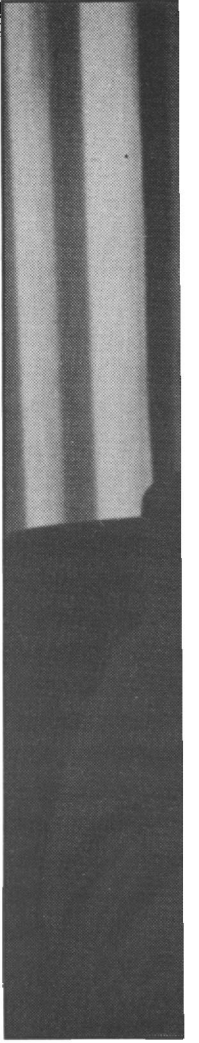
DB: It's critical and in the spirit of cooperation that we communicate with local and regional officials as well as the citizens. If people don't know what we are doing, they don't know all of the good things that we do. I advocate telling the people what we do. If they hear about all of our efforts, they will be amazed, and happier with us. Things besides highways, because people are generally pleased with the highways. I'm speaking of other programs like STEP (Selective Traffic Enforcement Program), the travel information program, efforts with the 911 emergency system in rural areas, our work with environmental mitigation, our efforts to plant trees and grass and wildflowers.

DB: What's happening in the Legislature that might affect the department?

DB: Well, elimination of the 30 percent overprogramming cap on the Project Development Plan is key. We need to increase our overprogramming so we can plan and work on projects in case extra money comes in. The

“This is the youngest, the poorest, the brownest and most female commission in the history of the department.”

“The governor has maintained an open door. If I have a problem, I can go visit with her, as can the other commissioners.”





Bernsen, like the other commission members, maintains an office in TxDOT headquarters in Austin as well as his private business office. Bernsen is a partner in a Beaumont law firm.

30 percent cap has created some problems in our long-range planning and we need to eliminate it. I think we have good support for that. Past that, I don't see any big problems.

TN: How is your working relationship with Gov. Ann Richards?

DB: We work very well together. I feel very fortunate that the governor has the confidence in me to appoint me to this position. She has opened up doors for people who would not ordinarily get the chance to work in government. This commission reflects her commitment to open the doors.

Our relationship is one of friendship and admiration and loyalty. She has said, "Y'all do a good job for the people of Texas." Henry Muñoz and I have been working for about 15 months, and it's been very enjoyable working with the department and the governor's staff. We have meetings with other department heads to make sure we are all on the same page, and that has increased the productivity of state agencies.

The governor has maintained an open door. If I have a problem, I can go visit with her, as can the other commissioners.

TN: You are active with the Martin Luther King Jr. support group in Southeast Texas. What is that?

DB: It is tied in with the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Atlanta, Ga. The mother of a friend of mine from Lamar University is the president. The center brings in speakers to help schools and parents in the community. The group is committed to the principles of Martin Luther King Jr., working for change through non-violence. It is trying to tie many elements or factions in the community together.

It deals with elementary-age children, high school students, mothers that are unwed. Gang violence is a primary concern not only in Southeast Texas, but all over. The center helps to get parents, educators and law-enforcement officials together and educate them about the various problems and solutions to gang violence. The support group meets with some of the younger people to help keep them away

from the gang violence and drugs, and to encourage them to stay in school and get an education.

TN: Are you still involved in sports?

DB: Yes, I'm involved with Lamar University athletics, as well as Little League, Pony League, and girl's softball. I have an 11-year-old daughter, Taylor, who tried out Saturday for softball, and my 13-year-old son, Cade, tries out for Pony League this coming Saturday. I will be helping out as time allows.

TN: Will you be managing or coaching?

DB: Well, I'll give him a few tips. Since my son was 7, I've managed a team. This year, I don't have the time. But I'll be out when I can to work with the pitchers or work with some of the

players. Likewise, I'll help with my daughter when I am able.

TN: You were a pitcher for Lamar University and won some awards, right?

DB: Yes. My mother recognized me. Actually, I've been fortunate. I've played on some good baseball teams. In high school, I played with Forest Park for the state championship in 1967 against the South San Antonio Bobcats. Their coach was Cliff Gustafson. He coached his last high school game, beat us for the state championship and went on to the University of Texas. As we say, the rest is history.

In 1967, I did make the Texas All-State Team as the pitcher/first baseman. In college, I received the Johnny Sain Award for the most valuable pitcher in the Southland Conference. A few years ago, I was the first baseball player inducted in the Lamar University Hall of Honor.

TN: Is your wife, Dinah, from Beaumont?

DB: She is from the Winnie-Stowell area in Chambers County.

She's a farm girl even though she doesn't claim it. She thinks she's so sophisticated (laughing).

TN: I'm sure she is.

DB: I'm sure she is too. She graduated from Baylor and got her master's degree from the University of Texas. I met her on a blind date in Austin. She was teaching at the Texas School for the Blind. After we were married, she worked for a while. Since we've had children, she has gotten involved in many civic activities in Beaumont.

TN: How do you like to spend your leisure time?

DB: I play golf when I can. [Former Commissioner] Ray Stoker has gotten me to play more. He is a terrific golfer. Also, I like saltwater fishing. I have a house down on the Bolivar Peninsula.

Baseball is still my first love. I try to go to as many games as I can. I've got season tickets to the [Texas] Rangers and the [Houston] Astros.

TN: What does your law practice involve?

DB: We do a little of everything. I do trial work. My partners do real estate, wills, contracts. We handle all types of lawsuits, primarily defense. There are 10 partners. I just started a new law firm in November; it's called Bernsen, Jamail and Goodson. My partners have been very supportive of the time requirements of my being on the commission.

TN: Do you have a favorite author?

DB: It's strange that you should ask that. I love history books. I've just built a new house, or I should say, my wife built a new house. I wanted a hunting room and a play room, what we call the mud room, where my son and I take all our muddy stuff off after we've been hunting, and then I have a library.

I collect books on political and general history. Then I've got what my wife calls my trash books, mostly fiction with spies and adventure. I'm fond of [Robert] Ludlum and [Tom] Clancy. I usually have two or three books going at the same time. I belong to a couple of history book clubs. I'm reading *The Rogue Warrior* right now about a Navy SEAL. I'm also reading a book on LBJ and just finished one called *The Forgotten Soldier*, a chronicle of a German soldier on the Eastern Front during World War II.

TN: What kind of radio station do you prefer?

DB: I like oldies. There was no music like in the '60s. I like the Doobie Brothers. And I listen to country and western—my daughter is a big fan so I listen to that too. But I prefer the '60s. I like Motown, and also other music from that era.

TN: Do you have any mentors or heroes?

DB: A man named John Gray, who was the president of Lamar University, helped me tremendously. Also Joe Fisher, who was a federal judge in Beaumont. I worked for him as a clerk. Both men are very wise and instructive.

TN: Do you have any parting words?

DB: At Short Course, I mentioned that there are changes coming. I believe they are for the best and that we can do our job better. It's been done very well in the past, but I think we can fine-tune it and do better.

If I could use a sports analogy, when you're pitching a baseball game, even if you win, not all of your pitches are right. You make a mistake, hang a curve ball or throw a fast ball down the middle of the plate.

With the department, it's the same way. The record is incredible, and the department has done a great job, but there have been suggestions about ways we can do it better. At the end of my term as commissioner, if I can say I've helped to make this a better department, then I will feel I've accomplished my task. ♣

“I have found that the employees are very dedicated and hard-working people.”

Sober Road Trip '93—Don't wreck your life

It's that time again. Millions of college and high-school students will be hitting the road in the next few weeks, heading for beaches, sun and fun.

The Texas Department of Transportation wants them to get there—and back—safely.

The department's spring break slogan this year is "Sober Road Trip '93—Don't wreck your life." TxDOT wants to make soda and sober driving a rule of the road.

Texas Department of Public Safety accident data show that traffic accidents increase during March, mainly because of spring

break. Students see their week off as a chance to go crazy, and to them, that often translates into getting drunk. Too many combine alcohol use with driving. Police departments along Texas beaches experience a large increase in alcohol-related incidents.

TxDOT will help keep students sober by sponsoring pit stops along the roads to surf and sun. Traffic safety specialists in the Fort Worth, Yoakum, Lufkin, Austin, San Antonio and Pharr districts will host Sober Road Trip '93 pit stops. They will offer students sodas, snacks and the TxDOT

traffic-safety message on sunglasses, flying disks or tank tops. The pit stops are held at department rest areas.

"The students really appreciate the department offering these pit stops and are somewhat surprised we care about their safety," said Gary Trietsch, director of the Division of Maintenance and Operations.

"We just want them to have a good time during their week off from school. Too many spring breaks have been ruined because students forgot their responsibility to not drink and drive," he said.

The biggest department spring break promotion will be on Galveston Island. Sharon Johnson, assistant traffic safety specialist in the Houston District, will hit the beaches with a coalition of volunteers to promote sober driving. Johnson and her group will get students to volunteer to take a breath test. Students who test absolutely sober will receive a tank top.

"The kids go crazy over these tanks," said Johnson. "They'll do just about anything for a free shirt—even throw away a can of beer." ♣ **Emily Willingham**

The lowdown on *Transportation News*

Transportation News (T-News) is a monthly publication designed to inform and to build community among the more than 15,000 employees and thousands of retirees of the Texas Department of Transportation. To help build unity among the geographically scattered members of the "transportation family," T-News covers a broad spectrum of department activities and personalities.

Background

T-News is produced by the department's Division of Travel and Information, on a schedule that calls for publication by the first of each month. A tabloid, it usually contains 16 pages. Standard features include:

- "From the Executive Director" (column)
- "Earth Watch" (article about the environment)
- Letters of commendation
- Calendar
- Service awards
- Retirements
- "In Memoriam" (deaths)
- "Transitions" (organizational and high-level personnel changes)
- "Tech Trade" (new technology or quick fixes)
- "On the Job" (employee profile)

The editors encourage employee contributions, including news stories or photos and news tips.

T-News covers **changes in legislation or benefits** that affect employees' working lives, spotlights individual employees and reports on other **department events or activities**. T-News serves as a central source for distribution of important **policy**, such as a four-page insert on the Strategic Plan.

We attempt to balance news from Austin headquarters with news from the 24 districts statewide. Public affairs officers in each district form a network for gathering news from the field.

We recognize **individual achievement** through news stories, publication of complimentary letters, and listings of service awards.

We also feature **group accomplishments**, such as the team efforts involved in the rescue of the child from the well in Midland, the cleanup after the Saragosa tornado and the Brownsville building collapse, and aid extended to the Monterrey, Mexico, area after a hurricane.

We present **news of a personal nature**, including features on employee hobbies, appeals for families with medical needs, retirements and deaths.

Professional photographers in the Division of Travel and Information shoot T-News photos whenever possible, and many quality photos come from the field. Photos of lesser quality, however, are sometimes the only ones available.

Imagesetting and printing are performed by contract outside the department.

Monthly cycle

Each issue is planned at least three months in advance, often with a central theme.

Copy is due the first week of the month. Art is due the second week, and pasteup takes place the third week. We attempt to go to press the third Friday, so the paper is printed and distributed by the first week of the month of publication.

Guidelines for inclusion

Because of the mission, size, budget and wide audience of *Transportation News*, standards must be set for including items in the publication.

Stories

Encouraged:

- News stories about events involving the department (floods, rescues, participation in local events)
- Stories containing workplace ideas that can be adopted
- Features about employees who are exceptional on or off the job

Marginal:

- Stories about events that take place in many districts (such as safety award banquets)
- Stories about common accomplishments (such as hunting and fishing successes, election as an officer in a community

organization, etc.)

- Stories about accomplishments of minor children of employees
- Stories about ex-employees (except retirees)

Not acceptable:

- Recipes
- Poetry
- Birth, death, wedding, anniversary announcements
- Individual stories about service awards and retirements
- Stories about the accomplishments of adult children or relatives of employees, unless of overwhelming importance or interest to other employees (example: the child of an employee wins a Rhodes scholarship; the brother of an employee is held hostage in Iraq)

Photographs

Subject criteria same as for stories

Preferred photos contain:

- Action
- Faces large enough to see clearly

Marginal photos contain:

- Large groups of people
- People standing and holding certificates, awards, etc.
- Someone handing a certificate or other item to another
- Someone sitting at a desk or working on a computer
- People standing around not doing much of anything

Tech Trade

Technocar new law-enforcement weapon

By Emily Willingham
Staff writer

Technological advances don't happen all at once. They take time. When *Star Wars* premiered, it seemed as though real space battles were only a few years away. That was 16 years ago, and we're still fighting our battles—on Earth. Still, there are many exciting technologies being developed on earth.

The Texas Department of Transportation and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) are helping to make Earth technology much more interesting. They're also helping the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) improve its law-enforcement efforts through technological advances. TTI recently introduced the Technocar 2000, a vehicle that can do just about everything but handcuff a criminal.

The car is actually a 1991 Camaro equipped to handle the latest in fast-emerging law-enforcement technology. It carries a hand-held computer that weighs only 2.9 pounds. A law-enforcement officer can use the computer to summon up your life story just by punching in a few numbers.

The computer can display accident report forms and citation forms, and digitizes signatures for storage in its database. Now, even your writing can be filed away electronically.

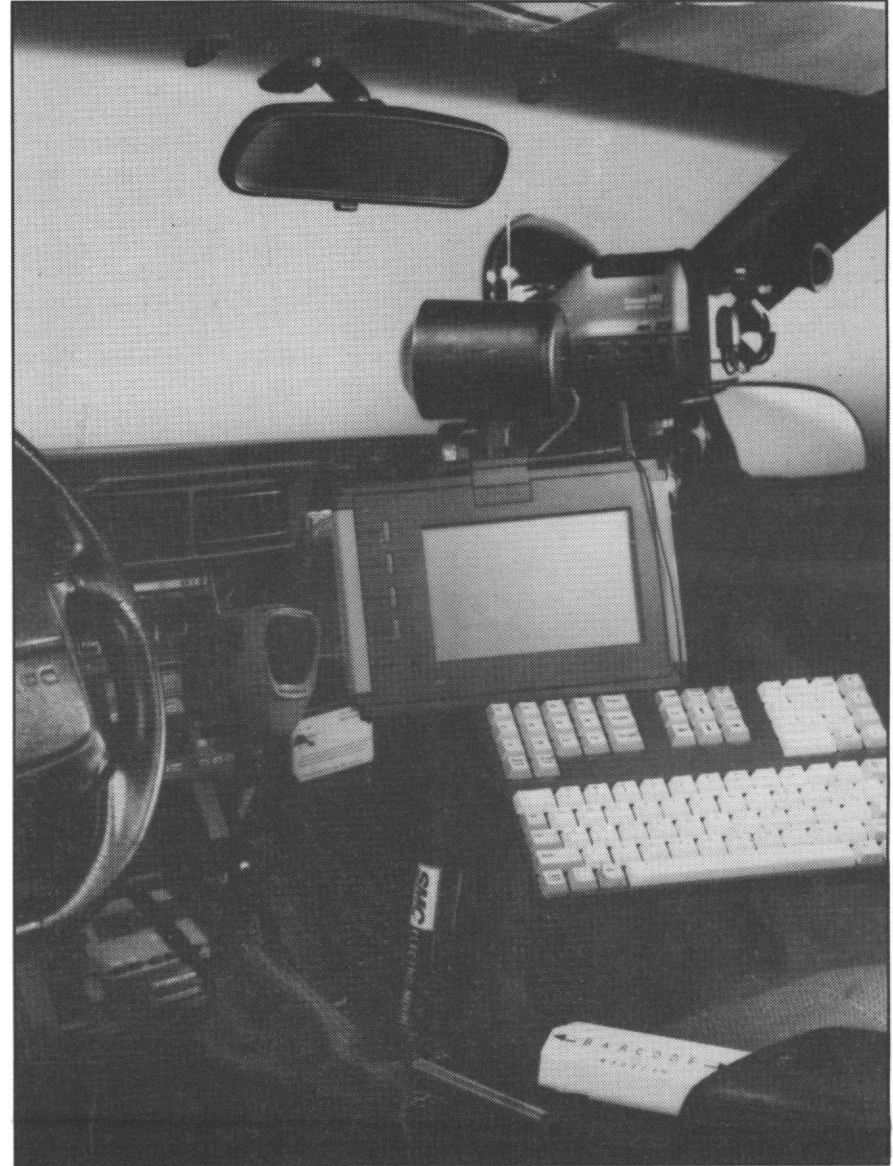
Officers will also be relieved of having to deal with all those

numbers and codes on the Texas driver's license. In 1995, the DPS will begin issuing licenses with a magnetic stripe. Technocar 2000 is equipped with a magnetic stripe scanner. All the officer needs to do is swipe the license through the scanner. The computer uses the information to automatically fill out the accident report or traffic citation.

Much of the new technology is designed to speed up the law-enforcement process and enhance the officer's safety. But some of the technology could help save motorists' lives.

The car will someday be equipped with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographic Information Systems that use satellite technology to pinpoint the scene of an accident. Right now, officers must use mile markers, landmarks and other imprecise indicators to advise emergency, maintenance and law-enforcement personnel of an accident location. That can mean slow response time, congestion, more accidents and loss of life. With GPS, the officer pushes a button on the palm pad three times and coordinates are automatically entered into the database.

Also part of the new law-enforcement equipment is the mundane video camera. But it can be the most important part. The Technocar 2000 is equipped with a camera that powers on when the car's emergency lights are turned



Chandler Arden, Texas A&M University, ©1993

on. It automatically records everything—and what it records can be used in court in DWI cases.

What's in the future for Technocar 2000? Voice-activated equipment, digitized photographs, but—no handcuffing capabilities. ➔

Some of the Technocar's gadgets include a sophisticated computer, a scanner and an automatic video camera. TxDOT is helping fund research into advances in law enforcement technology that can help save motorists' lives.

Calendar

MARCH

- 8-11 Achieving Service Excellence, Boerne, D-16
- 10-11 District Laboratory Meeting, San Angelo, D-9
- 16-18 Construction and Contract Administration Spring Meeting, D-6
- 22-23 Regional Information Resource Planning Meetings, San Antonio, D-19/IRM
- 23-25 Maintenance Conference, Austin, D-18
- 25-26 Regional Information Resource Planning Meeting, El Paso, D-19/IRM
- 24 Commission Hearing and Meeting, Austin
- 30-31 Regional Information Resource Planning Meetings, Dallas, D-19/IRM

APRIL

- 5-9 Texas Travel Counselors Conference, El Paso, D-16
- 6-7 Regional Information Resource Planning Meetings, Austin, D-19/IRM
- 6-7 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 21 San Jacinto Day (Holiday)
- 27 Commission Meeting, Austin

MAY

- 6-7 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 25 Commission Hearing and Meeting, Austin
- 31 Memorial Day (Holiday)

JUNE

- 2-3 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 29 Commission Meeting, Austin

JULY

- 7-9 Transportation Planning Conference, Corpus Christi, D-11
- 20-21 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 29 Commission Hearing and Meeting, Austin

AUGUST

- 12-13 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 24 Commission Meeting, Austin
- 27 LBJ's Birthday (Holiday)

SEPTEMBER

- 14-15 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 28 Commission Hearing and Meeting, Austin

OCTOBER

- 13-14 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 18 District Engineers and Division Directors Meeting, College Station, BCB
- 19-21 Transportation Short Course, College Station
- 28 Commission Meeting, Austin

NOVEMBER

- 16-17 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 25 Thanksgiving Day (Holiday)
- 26 Holiday
- 30 Commission Hearing and Meeting, Austin

DECEMBER

- 14-15 Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6
- 24 Christmas Eve (Holiday)
- 29 Commission Meeting, Austin

Service Awards

Paris (1)

30 years
Henry H. Blair
10 years
Joe N. Strickland

Fort Worth (2)

25 years
Douglas A. Clay
15 years
Grover A. Schretter
10 years
Benjamin Hinojos
Sherry T. Hoak
Gilbert I. Latigo
5 years
Gordon C. Abbott
Jerry E. Howard

Wichita Falls (3)

30 years
James H. Pierson
15 years
Melton A. Demoss
10 years
Kyle D. Walker
5 years
Marty W. Little

Amarillo (4)

10 years
Dale A. Dallas

Lubbock (5)

35 years
Milton G. Estep
20 years
R.L. Burnett
15 years
Phillip L. Barnett
Jerrell C. Otwell
10 years
Michael W. Killough
5 years
Anne M. Polk
Jerry O. Ritchie

Odessa (6)

40 years
Samuel O. Sanchez
30 years
William R. Wagon
15 years
Pamela P. Brown
10 years
John P. Cooper
Cleon L. Payton Jr.

San Angelo (7)

35 years
Jimmie A. Machann
30 years
Kenneth R. Baylor
Ernest P. Carroll
25 years
Jimmy G. Basquez
15 years
Leonard L. Sanchez
5 years
Ernie D. Covington

Abilene (8)

40 years
Otis H. Jones
35 years
Bobby C. Satterwhite
15 years
Reynoldo S. Ramos
10 years
Clyde L. Prince
Jimmy G. Redwine
5 years
Daniel P. Richardson
Glenn P. Wiggins

Waco (9)

35 years
James E. Goains
20 years
Irwin G. Hines
10 years
Charles R. Padgett
David J. Pittman
Charles E. Smith
James R. Stimmel Jr.
5 years
Kelly G. Daugherty
Tony C. Gregory

Tyler (10)

30 years
Thomas S. Cash
Laurent O. Hallonquist
Olen R. Odom
25 years
Emmitt H. Venable
Wendel L. Womack
15 years
Stephenia C. Hunt
10 years
Jerry L. Frick
5 years
Thomas M. Jones Jr.
Daniel M. McClanahan

Lufkin (11)

30 years
James D. Parker
25 years
Truman H. Johnson
10 years
Clyde J. Mathews Jr.
Curtis W. Shoemaker
5 years
Sally J. Quick

Houston (12)

35 years
Lupe Alderite
30 years
Harold L. Heidemann
Harold M. Joiner
Feriss L. Markert
Austin D. McMahan Jr.
Weldon E. Ray
25 years
Francis C. Courtright
Willie Grayer
20 years
Judith W. Davis
Richard A. Spence
Shirley D. Woods
15 years
Donald J. Lorenz
Lyle A. Smith
Michael Tagliareni
10 years
Yimkei G. Cheung
Russell D. Shelton Jr.
Larry R. Stephenson
5 years
Nelson T. Christensen
Paul B. Eley
Ernest C. Krolczyk Jr.
Walter F. Noske Jr.
Lisa A. Perez
Glenna J. Wranischar

Yoakum (13)

35 years
Bobby C. Nobles
30 years
Lloyd E. Cody Jr.
25 years
Anthony J. Kutac
20 years
Carl L. O'Neill
James L. Skrovan
5 years
Jimmy C. Barger
Donald W. Petru

Austin (14)

30 years
Howard W. Chapman
Billy D. Smith
Loney W. Smith Jr.
25 years
Dennis W. Friedrich
Victor L. Mazinke
20 years
Edward Villalpando Jr.
15 years
Mario E. Hernandez
Frank R. Saldaña
10 years
Wilie C. Brundige
5 years
William H. Braswell
Jack L. Housworth Jr.
Calvin R. Thomas
Terry L. Walker

San Antonio (15)

40 years
Richard D. Lockhart
35 years
Leroy G. Seibert
30 years
William W. Hughey
Victoriano J. Leal
Alvin R. Williams
30 years
Herman W. Dolle
Rodolfo Z. Uriegas
Stayton H. Woodall Jr.
25 years
Lester E. Potter
20 years
Flora W. Burke
Santos A. Garcia
Billy W. Harvey
Martin M. Uriegas
15 years
James V. Bates Jr.
William A. Miller
Richard Salas
10 years
Karen S. Gibson
5 years
John P. Gianotti

Corpus Christi (16)

25 years
Jose Lopez
Rene Valerio
5 years
Maximino Perez Jr.
Curtis W. Shandy

Bryan (17)

35 years
Floyd C. Boriskie
25 years
Reynolds McClure
Thomas J. Strauss
20 years
Larry J. Kopecky
15 years
Blane A. Laywell
Robert Ramirez
10 years
Paul A. Gurka

Dallas (18)

25 years
Wilford L. Mosley
20 years
Charles M. Musketnuss
James H. Pickel
Philip E. Simons
15 years
Mildred G. Brooks
Richard S. Dorsett III
Shirley W. Erby
Cathy W. Masters
Shirley B. Smith
10 years
Chester L. Davis
Stacy E. Kimberlin
5 years
Matthew D. Holboke
Lawrence E. Jones
Monnie H. Matthews

Atlanta (19)

30 years
James W. Oney
25 years
Rodger D. Jones
20 years
Connie L. Hudson
10 years
Jon S. Williamson
5 years
John M. Burns

Beaumont (20)

35 years
Johnnie L. Zeigler
30 years
Henry L. Ellison
Edward W. Higginbotham
Alfred E. Smith
25 years
Albert L. Morgan
20 years
Thomas D. Black
Doc J. Jeanise
10 years
Jerry J. Broussard
Charles Brown
Donald D. Long
Donnie D. McInnis

Pharr (21)

30 years
Harry W. Kiehn
25 years
Ruben P. Lopez
20 years
Gilberto Garza
10 years
Gilberto Peña

Brownwood (23)

35 years
Melvin L. Crabtree
Thomas P. Edwards
30 years
Lewis W. Perkins
15 years
Richard L. Belvin

El Paso (24)

30 years
Richard A. Hubbard
25 years
Carlos V. Dominguez
Victor L. Esparza
Sabino Talavera Jr.

Childress (25)

25 years
Jackie N. Burrows

Administration

20 years
Rae S. Barho
Shirley K. Macik

Automation

25 years
Billy G. Caffey
Sharon V. Dungan
15 years
William E. Kokas
Larry C. Smith
10 years
Louis D. Sierra
5 years
Bryan C. Davis

Construction and Contract

Administration
15 years
Baldemar P. Maldonado

Equipment and Procurement

25 years
Mirlyn M. Griffin
20 years
Beverly A. Houston
15 years
Ellen A. Glass
5 years
Jerry R. Jones
Patrick H. Lea Jr.

Finance

25 years
Jackie D. Straley
15 years
Donna L. McGee

Highway Design

15 years
Ann M. Irwin
Wayne C. Young
10 years
Thomas D. Beeman
5 years
Barbara A. Stocklin

Maintenance and Operations

25 years
Gary K. Trietsch
5 years
Duwayne D. Murdock Jr.

Materials and Tests

30 years
Charles D. Jennings
25 years
Albert L. Pozzi
Lawrence W. Worden
10 years
Karl J. Janak
5 years
Angie R. Gardner

Motor Vehicle Titles and

Registration
25 years
Terald D. Houghton
20 years
Rosie B. Patton
Frances D. Stastney
Rebecca E. Swank
15 years
Joey M. Connell
Jeanne H. Ramirez
Margaret P. Wood

Right-of-Way

10 years
Sammy W. Mitchell

Transportation Planning

30 years
Harrison L. Scott
10 years
Don R. Noah

Field changes

In the last issue, the name of Bobby J. Doherty, who retired in November with 30 years service from the Austin District as a Roadway Maintenance Supervisor II, was confused with that of his son.

The cover photograph of commission member Anne Wynne in the February issue was taken by staff photographer Kevin Stillman. *Transportation News* regrets the omission of his credit line.

In last month's Transitions, the chairwoman of the Division Child Care Task Force was omitted. Bunny Neible of the Division of Materials and Tests will head the committee.

Valley travel center display wows visitors

A kiosk built by department shops is drawing tourists "like a magnet," said Valley Travel Information Center manager Sam Martinez.

Alcoves in the travel literature display feature lighted transparencies of Texas scenes from the Hill Country, mountains, plains, canyons, the Piney Woods and Gulf Coast. Text supplements the full-color photographs, all by Division of Travel and Information photographers.

"We designed the kiosk to encourage Winter Texans and other visitors to the Valley to see more of Texas on their trip home," said David Linzey, assistant director of travel services for the division.

Linzey, with ideas from Martinez and travel services director Milton Meharg, designed the kiosk. John Cauley of the Division of Equipment and Procurement Technical Support made the shop drawings, and carpentry shop employees Tim Traylor and John Whittenbaugh built the kiosk. Department electricians and painters also pitched in.

"We really needed the additional literature display space. We



Kevin Sullivan

continue to get rave reviews and compliments from visitors," said Martinez. Travel and Information folks pitched in to help Equipment and Procurement employees install the kiosk in October.

Although no final cost estimate has been made on the kiosk, Linzey said it's a safe bet it cost much less than the \$25,000 estimate from a contractor for a smaller unit. ➔

Tourists at the Valley Travel Information Center in Harlingen browse through travel literature displayed in a colorful kiosk designed and built by department employees.

In Memoriam

Edgar V. Bailey, Onalaska, retired from Beaumont District in 1970, died Dec. 27, 1992.

Verlie J. Bergeron, China, retired from Beaumont District in 1984, died Dec. 9, 1992.

George L. Betts, Seymour, retired from Wichita Falls District in 1970, died May 4, 1992.

Thomas W. Blackwell, Brownwood, retired from Brownwood District in 1980, died Dec. 10, 1992.

John B. Buford, Brownwood, retired from Brownwood District in 1985, died Jan. 7, 1993.

Cecil Caldwell, Clarksville, retired from Paris District in 1984, died Jan. 17, 1993.

William A. Croson, Tyler, retired from Tyler District in 1969, died Dec. 5, 1992.

J.T. Dover, Breckenridge, retired from Brownwood District in 1975, died Dec. 28, 1992.

Roman Escobar, San Diego, retired from Pharr District in 1973, died Dec. 16, 1992.

Jack B. Fraser, Waco, retired from Waco District in 1971, died Oct. 28, 1992.

Bisente F. Fuentes, Iraan, retired from Odessa District in 1983, died Nov. 27, 1992.

Johnny L. Hamilton, Corpus Christi, retired from Corpus Christi District in 1989, died Dec. 7, 1992.

Dennis Hammons, Borger, retired from Amarillo District in 1976, died Jan. 1, 1993.

Wesley D. McCurdy, Shetman, retired from Paris District in 1978, died Feb. 1, 1993.

James F. Middleton, Paris, retired from Paris District in 1984, died Jan. 8, 1993.

Albert P. Mills, Pilot Point, retired from Dallas District in 1975, died Dec. 28, 1992.

Homer Monroe, Electra, retired from Wichita Falls in 1985, died Jan. 9, 1993.

James B. Morton Jr., Italy, retired from Brownwood District in 1985, died Dec. 16, 1992.

Byford H. Pike, Nacogdoches, retired from Lufkin District in 1974, died Dec. 4, 1992.

Armando D. Prieto, Del Rio, retired from San Angelo District in 1990, died Nov. 29, 1992.

Ricardo S. Rivera, El Paso, retired from El Paso District in 1975, died Dec. 10, 1992.

Naomi C. Ware, Dallas, retired from Motor Vehicle Division in 1962, died Oct. 10, 1992.

To keep retirement listings up to date as possible, *Transportation News* will now publish retirements reported to the Division of Human Resources as soon as possible. Not all retirements are reported directly to the division, however; retirements reported by the Employees Retirement System will be published as they are received.

December

Paris (1)
T.C. Collier, 28 years
Maintenance Technician III

Amarillo (4)
Kenneth R. Dillard, 25 years
Roadway Maintenance
Supervisor III
Marion E. Schroeder, 22 years
Maintenance Technician III

Lubbock (5)
Kenneth T. Timms, 30 years
Maintenance Technician II

Odessa (6)
Ben E. Muschalek, 28 years
Engineering Technician V

San Angelo (7)
Charlene S. Carr, 31 years
Administrative Technician IV

Houston (12)
Dennis A. Davenport, 25 years
Engineering Technician III
Richard D. Marshall, 35 years
Engineering Technician V

Retirements

Yoakum (13)
Ernest D. Davis, 28 years
Maintenance Technician III
Alton Oncken, 33 years
Maintenance Technician III

Austin (14)
W.D. Hunnicutt, 30 years
Maintenance Technician III

San Antonio (15)
Arnulfo T. Rodriguez, 29 years
Maintenance Technician III

Corpus Christi (16)
Erasmus De La Rosa, 8 years
Assistant Foreman
Ramon Longoria, 27 years
Maintenance Technician II

Dallas (18)
Ruby Y. Allen, 25 years
Auditor II

Pharr (21)
Jose Garza, 24 years
Roadway Maintenance
Supervisor III
Lawrence R. Wilks, 40 years
Staff Services Officer II

Brownwood (23)
Alfred V. Machen, 35 years
Engineering Technician V

Childress (25)
T.J. Brooks, 18 years
Maintenance Technician III
Hubert C. Moore, 24 years
Assistant Foreman

January

Houston (12)
Jerry L. Ashcraft, 36 years
Engineering Technician IV
Automation
Forrest L. Radcliff, 10 years
Engineering Specialist I

February

Houston (12)
Charles A. Frey, 35 years
Engineer V
Bryan (17)
Roger D. Gibson, 14 years
Maintenance Technician II
Dallas (17)
Thomas E. Grant, 25 years
Engineering Technician IV
Beaumont (20)
Arthur J. Reetz, 47 years
Engineering Specialist I
Motor Vehicle Titles and Registration
Delton B. Ross, 30 years
Chief Investigator

March

San Angelo (7)
Simon B. Rodriguez, 39 years
Maintenance Technician III
Austin (14)
Julian C. Limon, 31 years
Maintenance Technician III
San Antonio (15)
Baldemar M. Olvera, 30 years
Maintenance Technician III
Aviation
Clarence J. Lyons Jr., 22 years
Program Specialist II

Transitions

Appointment effective March 1
Salvador Mercado, area engineer for Laredo Residency Office, Pharr District.

Letters

On June 22, I was driving to Dallas from Houston. About mid-morning, I had a flat tire and found myself stranded just outside Fairfield.

I want to thank **Ricky Allen** of the department and Sam Fuqua (of Phillips Contractors of Joshua) for their help and politeness to me that morning. As a woman alone in a car, I was quite scared. Messrs. Allen and Fuqua made me feel at ease and dealt with the situation rapidly. They also recommended I stop in Fairfield to check the air in the tire. I followed their instructions and, indeed, it did need air.

I felt you should hear something positive about your road crew. If possible I would like you to pass the enclosed copy of this letter to Phillips Contractors so that Mr. Fuqua's company is aware of his good deed.

I know this letter is several months late but it does not diminish the importance of the help I received.

Linda L. Hanson
Sugar Land

Allen is a maintenance technician with the Freestone County Maintenance Section, Bryan District.

I have always had deep regard for the Texas Highway Department. That was boosted 100 percent recently when I had the misfortune of a flat tire.

My wife and I were on our way to central Texas from Galveston when I ran over a spike in the road just outside Sealy.

As luck would have it, a retired employee saw what happened and proceeded to take full charge of changing the tire and putting on the spare so that I could get to a service station.

Randall Jones, the retired employee, who lives between Fort Worth and Cleburne, refused compensation of any kind, and in fact did not want

any thanks as he said he was "doing my job."

A sincere "thank you" to the department and its employees.

Al and Alice Wilks
Galveston

I have worked for the department for over six years and keep hearing about the "highway family." I didn't fully understand the meaning of that until recently.

The last week of September, I was in a state car alone traveling to several districts. The first stop I made was in Lampasas for something to eat. When I returned to the car and put the key in the ignition, it broke off. At first, I panicked. Then I called the maintenance section in Lampasas and **Sid Greer** came to my rescue. He called a locksmith, stayed with me until it was fixed, and worked out payment. Rather than being alone in a strange town, I spent a couple of hours talking to a "family member."

It is a good feeling when you're on the road to know that every few miles you have some family that will help if you have trouble. Thank you, Mr. Greer.

Hazel Reinert
Division of Human Resources

Greer is roadway maintenance supervisor in the Lampasas Maintenance Section.

Thank you so very much for returning my purse. Almost everything was intact.

You have proven that there are still honest people in the world. Had this happened in my area, I'm sure it would never have been returned.

Jane Huber
Irving

*This was received by **Al Bazan**, maintenance supervisor for Culberson County, El Paso District.*

TRANSPORTATION news

Texas Department of Transportation

March 1993

TEXAS STATE DOCUMENT
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PAN AMERICAN
EDINBURG, TEXAS 78539-2999

U.S. GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT
DEPOSITORY LIBRARY NO. 610

APR 29 1993

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PAN AMERICAN
EDINBURG, TEXAS 78539-2999

Everything you
ever wanted to
know about
TxDOT, but
were afraid to
ask—in Q&A

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
AUSTIN, TEXAS
PERMIT NO. 2209

TRANSPORTATION
news

P.O. BOX 5064
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78763

FORWARDING AND RETURN
POSTAGE GUARANTEED
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

See special insert

“Mr. Oliver, please tell me...”

Questions and answers
from Short Course Q&A sessions

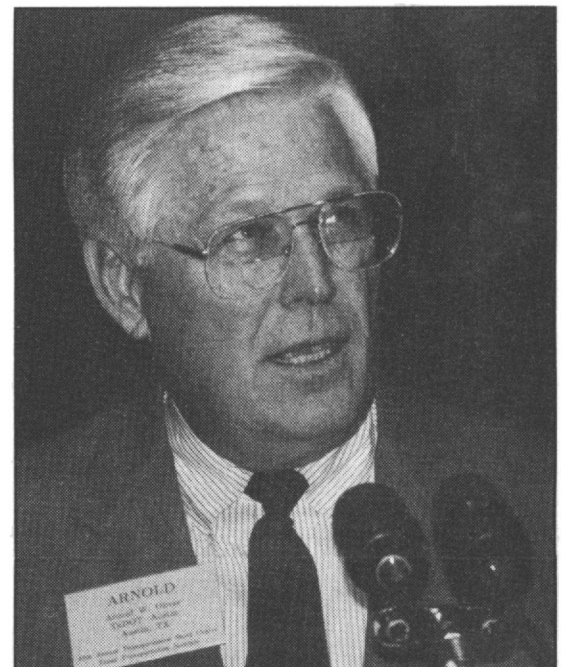
From the Executive Director

For the first time two years ago at the Transportation Short Course, I stood up in front of the general session and answered questions submitted by attendees. An hour wasn't enough time to address all the questions, so I promised to get them all answered one way or another.

I apologize for not following up on that last year, but in this month's special insert you'll find answers to most of the questions asked this year. Many asked the same thing, with different wording, so I answered the basic questions. The Division of Planning and Policy helped me research the more complex ones answered here.

Short Course is a great time to answer questions because it's the largest gathering of department people. But not everyone can be there, so, through this publication, I hope many of your own questions are answered.

We confirmed during reorganization that people are eager for information from top levels. I strive to be a reliable, credible source of that information. All of us in the administration realize it's important to take every opportunity to communicate with the rest of the department. We know that at



Geoff Appold

most big department meetings, everyone ends up talking about communication and its role in solving and preventing problems.

Perhaps some may regard these questions and answers as a meaningless gesture, a futile exercise. But it's not so. Questions, and proposed solutions, influence policy decisions at the highest level. Input from employees who are doing the real work is vital. They—you—are the people who have to deal with everyday problems.

I thank you for participating in this forum and making your voices heard through other channels. You've asked incisive questions, and you've been astute in pointing out problems.

A genuine desire to understand department issues is a trait of an excellent employee. Sometimes people hesitate to ask if they think they have a dumb question. But I truly believe that the only dumb question is the one never asked.

“Mr. Oliver, please tell me...”

At the 1991 Transportation Short Course, employees were apprehensive about the reorganization ordered by the Legislature. In addition to merging the department with other transportation agencies to form the Texas Department of Transportation, the Legislature directed the department to operate with fewer district offices. This would require that several, unspecified district offices be downsized. Employee morale was affected by the uncertainties they experienced. Which districts would close? What would happen to those employees?

To give a large group of employees a chance to resolve their doubts as much as possible, a question-and-answer session was scheduled at the opening session of Short Course. Employees were encouraged to write out their questions anonymously and take the opportunity to ask Arnold Oliver, the department's executive director, to provide the best answers at that time.

The employees attending Short Course participated actively and submitted more questions than could be answered in the limited time available. Oliver gave the answers he could supply and agreed to provide additional answers as they became available. As the process of considering how district offices would be downsized continued during the fall and winter, the Legislature passed a resolution directing the department to halt all activity related to reorganizing the department into fewer districts until June 1993. This resolution effectively stopped the reorganization, at least for the short term. Most of the remaining unanswered questions related to reorganization of the districts became moot at this point.

The 1991 question-and-answer session proved to be so useful in giving employees an opportunity to communicate directly with the chief executive officer that it was repeated at the 1992 Short Course. Oliver answered numerous questions during the one-hour session and has since answered almost all of the other questions submitted. Where numerous questions dealt with the same subject matter, they have been combined and the answer designed to supply the requested information. Each topic area was assigned to an analyst with the Division of Planning and Policy to organize the questions and collect any information required for Oliver. Where possible, information on developments since Short Course has been incorporated into the answers to make them more useful.

To give employees not attending Short Course a voice and an opportunity to ask questions, each district engineer and division director was asked to obtain a representative sample of their employees' questions before Short Course and submit them anonymously. Many employees took advantage of this opportunity to participate in the 1992 question-and-answer session and their questions are included in this summary.

Oliver answered some of these questions during the 1992 Short Course question-and-answer session videotaped by the Division of Travel and Information. The tape of that session is available from the Division of Transportation Planning at TexAN 241-7644 or 512/465-7644.

Background

During the last decade, the Texas economy could be described as bleak. The general lack of growth in the private sector has significantly reduced revenues coming to the state. The lack of revenue generation has been further compounded by the real estate bust, the savings-and-loan debacle and the collapse of the oil and gas industry.

In the face of mandates from federal courts for prisons, education and human services, the Legislature, along with significant input from Comptroller John Sharp's report, attempted to cut costs and downsize state government. Consequently, the Legislature had held the line on state employee salaries and benefits. In many if not most cases, state employees' salaries have not kept pace with inflation.

These kinds of times also make the Legislature look more closely at privatization of the public sector. With the increased scrutiny of state agency operations comes more accountability and control and the subsequent need for increased paperwork to monitor our progress.

The uncertainty of reorganization and reauthorization of the national transportation act, as well as the hiring freeze anticipating the unknown, have produced much anxiety in our organization. Please keep these factors in mind as we discuss numbers of employees, salaries and workloads.

Staffing

Q: Is a mandatory reduction in force anticipated from this legislative session and, if so, will there be retirement incentives?

A: You hear the same rumors we hear. I would like to point out that TxDOT has proven through its hiring freeze of roughly one year ago that the employee level can be reduced through attrition without a formal reduction in force.

Q: Do you expect the state, including TxDOT, to be mandated to reduce forces? In the near future? If so, to what extent do you think the department will be affected?

A: Money is tight at both the state and federal levels. Nevertheless, there have been no indications that TxDOT should expect any reduction in our staffing levels. Instead, our "crystal ball" seems to suggest a need for increasing rather than reducing the TxDOT staff.

Some of the "increased personnel need" is driven by two elements: All levels of government have increasingly recognized the importance of developing and improving the transportation infrastructure. And, passage of ISTEA, the federal transportation act, has placed even more responsibility on TxDOT in areas such as additional oversight of construction projects and additional coordination with local officials.

Q: Why do the district offices continually gain staff and staff support, but the office managers in the field (maintenance and area offices) have no help? Why isn't there anyone to question our workloads and stress levels? Why won't someone do something about the situation of field offices not being able to hire additional personnel to sufficiently handle the ever-increasing workload

that overworked and stressed office managers are having to bear alone?

A: District staffing guides have been updated based on new projected district workloads. We believe that the new district FTE allocations will give the district engineer more flexibility to match people with the work.

Q: Why are there fewer and fewer people to work on the roadway and do the work, and more and more people to work in the district offices and at Austin to take care of paperwork? The department is going to sink in paperwork.

A: Along with decreased funding also comes increased scrutiny, accountability and, consequently, more paperwork. Also, many of the new work requirements are different from our traditional work.

Standard District Structures

Q: Our district recently hired a director of administration; his duties were previously performed by others, and many in our district thought this new position (requiring a personnel slot) was unnecessary. Now we are told that we must undergo a reduction in personnel slots and the losses will come from the area engineering offices and maintenance sections. Should we continue to expand the district administration at the cost of field personnel?

A: History shows that our people get the job done regardless of the organizational structure. The standard district structure gives us a consistent process to compare needs and allocate resources based on those needs from a statewide perspective. Our intent is not to expand administration at the expense of the area engineering offices.

Q: What do you foresee as the function and responsibilities of the rural residency in the future?

A: The standardized district organization structure, issued earlier this year and directed for implementation on Sept. 1, 1992, formally established the area engineer office to replace the residency offices in each district. Likewise, the related position description in the Classification Manual has been revised to reflect this transition. A formal directive is being developed to comprehensively describe the enhanced role expected for the area engineer. We also expect that area engineers will provide increased department visibility and quality service for local needs and problems through improved responsiveness and communication.

Privatization

Q: What is the purpose of maintenance contract programs (i.e., pothole, mowing, herbicide) when funds can be used more effectively by the addition of equipment and employees? If maintenance employees can do the work cheaper and better, why are we being forced to go to contracts? When, if at all, do you see the first major layoffs occurring in the maintenance sections of TxDOT due to contracting out work to private companies?

A: The Legislature has set the amount of maintenance work to be done by contractors, with the provision that it be done at rates equal to or less than our costs. The state auditor is helping us monitor this provision. We expect that if any reduction in force is required, it could be accomplished by attrition, without layoffs.

Q: How much more privatization is going to occur?

A: There will be continuing interest from the Legislature to continue to privatize, at least to the extent that it is cost effective to do so.

Q: Why is the department furnishing or selling traffic paint

and beads to contractors?

A: The department has changed from an oil-base to a water-base paint that is still being developed. At least for the near term, we need to continue selling to contractors to ensure quality through our testing. Our special purchases of paint are of such magnitude that contractors are not able to purchase the same specification paint at comparable cost. The department has, however, stopped selling beads to contractors.

Maintenance

Q: Why has maintenance suffered the wrath of the budget axe in both material and personnel?

A: The Legislature believes it is cost effective if we contract with the private sector to perform some of our maintenance work, if the contractors' charges are at least 10 percent less than our costs. As we continue to increase the amount of our contracted maintenance, the reasoning is that we should, over time, need

fewer department maintenance personnel. Over the past few years, while we have substantially increased the amount of maintenance contracted, our maintenance work budget (activity 202) has shown a slight increase. In FY 1989, it was about \$457 million and, although it declined to about \$400 million in both FY 1990 and 1991, it is back up to \$462 million for FY 1993.

Q: Will efforts be made to change the legislation requiring all maintenance expenditures to be spent in a fiscal year? Why can't our 202 budget be more evenly distributed throughout the fiscal year?

A: We have no plans to request any legislation that would change how we expend our maintenance funds. Funds from the 202 budget are distributed to the districts and may be spent when the districts decide that they need to be spent. Usually they are spent fairly evenly throughout the fiscal year. Weather may cause some minor variations. This past year there was severe flooding, and we requested that Gov. Ann Richards allow us to transfer \$25 million from the construction budget to cope with this emergency. This request was approved, and there was an unusual infusion of funds during the spring and summer.

Q: Why are BRINSAP activities funded out of the maintenance budget?

A: Bridge inspection activities are designed to meet federal safety examination requirements and to discover bridge maintenance problems. Since the inspections often discover bridge maintenance needs, the administration decided that BRINSAP activities would be funded out of the maintenance budget. This is being reconsidered.

Construction

Q: When will decisions be made on the amount of work each district will receive? Employees are worrying too much about this, which affects their performance. Whenever employees have a hatchet hanging over their necks, they tend not to work as hard.

A: Well, state and federal dollars have been projected for the next 10 years. We're in the process now of finalizing a project development plan that will tell the districts what they have in terms of a 10-year work program. Last June, district obligation authority, which is the amount of money available to a district to let projects in the current year, was set and that was consistent with projected available cash flow. So districts do have the work and also a mandate to develop a backlog of construction plans.

Q: When are we going to get our funds from the "feds"?

A: The federal government reimburses the department each month. The amount we receive depends mainly on the amount of work accomplished on federal-aid projects. We are already receiving appropriations from the new federal transportation bill (ISTEA). These funds will continue for at least five years.

Q: When are funds going to be allocated for the trunk system, and what priority will it have over other projects?

A: Currently, we are dedicating \$75 million for each year of the next biennium for the trunk system. About \$906 million of the National Highway System funds are also programmed for the trunk system in the transitional PDP for the next 10 years.

There are approximately 10,000 miles identified as the Texas Highway Trunk System, including the Interstate system. We now have about 5,000 miles of four-lane highway, so our goal is to upgrade an additional 5,000 miles of two-lane to four-lane roadways. It is not a question of which system will be given priority, but how the entire system will best function to meet the transportation needs of the state. The trunk system will be built in tandem with the other systems to meet this goal.

Q: Due to new Environmental Protection Agency standards, additional work and costs will be incurred. Will federal-aid funds be increased for this additional work or will our construction budget effectively be decreased?

A: The new EPA standards will result in additional work and costs. As with anything we undertake, if funding that could be used for construction purposes is diverted to any other cause, then the construction budget is constrained by that amount.

Should we continue to expand the district administration at the cost of field personnel?

Why has maintenance suffered the wrath of the budget axe in both material and personnel?

Q: What is the outlook for Houston? Our budget was cut drastically even though we are the fourth-largest city in the nation. Can we afford something like this right now? Could it cost us more to catch up with the city's problems in the future if we do this?

A: Houston is, of course, a major concern for the department. It is interesting to note that one of the questions responded to at Short Course was, "Why does Houston get all the money?" It may be that "who gets all the money" depends on your point of view.

Houston does get a large portion of our funding and our attention. We try to be as objective in our funding decisions as possible. Factors such as population, congestion, and projections about future trends play a large role in determining funding allocations. The health of large urban areas determines to a great extent the economic status of our state. They really are the engines of our economy. That is where the major problems are, so that is where the dollars are going.

Also, changing dynamics in our state dictate where we should allocate our resources. If Waxahachie needs additional infrastructure to meet the demands of a Superconducting Super Collider or if the Rio Grande Valley requires additional attention because of increased traffic due to the effect of the North American Free Trade Agreement, we must be flexible enough to respond to these changing dynamics. Without this flexibility, our state would run the risk of stagnating in our efforts to develop economic opportunities for our citizens.

Q: What is the status of the proposed extension of I-27 south from Lubbock?

A: The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) provided \$2.9 million over six years for a feasibility and route study for a highway to connect Lubbock with Interstate 20, and for preliminary engineering and design for that highway.

The process of selecting a consultant to conduct that route study has begun. The first step will be to identify a corridor, then a route within that corridor. There will be opportunity for public participation in the corridor and route selection process, as well as in any environmental processes that should follow. There is discussion about extending the proposed highway south of I-20 to I-10. Legislation authorizing such an extension of the project passed the U.S. House of Representatives late in the last Congress, but was not passed by the Senate.

General Budget Issues

Q: Will the added funds from the lottery affect TxDOT?

A: The lottery generated \$203 million by the end of the last fiscal year. Only \$63 million had been projected. These funds do not directly benefit the department. However, if the lottery had not been approved, Article 5 of the General Appropriations Bill would have mandated an across-the-board reduction of funding by 2 percent for all state agencies. Also, at least in part because of the lottery, the comptroller was able to certify that enough funding was available to give state employees a small pay raise

this past fiscal year and that funds would be available to give an additional 3 percent pay increase effective in December (i.e., the Jan. 1, 1993, paycheck).

Q: When "extra money" is "found" and distributed to the districts at the end of the fiscal year, why does everyone feel compelled to spend every cent of the taxpayers' money in that fiscal year? Why can't the money be carried into the next fiscal year to be allocated for critical projects which may arise?

A: There is no such thing as "extra money." If funds appropriated to TxDOT and budgeted for a certain purpose are not spent, they remain in Fund 6 (the Highway Fund) and are available for reappropriation in the next biennium for whatever purpose the Legislature approves. The department's spending requests are submitted in a formal document, the Legislative Appropriation Request, but the Legislature determines how our funds are to be expended. In a few cases, funds budgeted for construction and right-of-way purchases for example, unspent funds may be carried forward from the first year of a biennium to the second year, but never from one biennium to the next.

Reorganization and Downsizing

Q: Where is the department headed in the next two years?

A: We have an unprecedented opportunity to expand and increase our influence on the quality and variety of transportation options available to the public. Because of legislation at both state and federal levels, we will be able to increase and expand our transportation planning, undertake additional maintenance and construction programs and give greater emphasis to environmental considerations.

We have a new name, a new mission, new employees and new authority to conduct statewide, multimodal transportation planning and to follow on with construction or assistance to other agencies or governmental entities to serve the traveling public in many new ways. It will take more than the two years cited in the question to accomplish all our objectives, but I foresee this department continuously improving its performance in every area of our responsibilities. It is an exciting time to be a part of the Texas Department of Transportation.

Q: What is the status of the reorganization? What action is expected from the Legislature? What do you expect to be the mechanics involved in officially dissolving the "reorganization statute"? What is the status of the opening of a district in Laredo? Even if the earlier mandate to close a certain number of districts is a dead issue, will there be any other realignment of district boundaries (such as according to metropolitan planning organization boundaries)? How will the department handle such a recommendation if made during the next legislative session?

A: Unless there is a major shift in what we believe to be the predominant views of most legislators, we do not expect a renewed, concerted effort to reorganize this department during the 1993 legislative session. In fact, we are confident that many legislators are interested in sponsoring a bill to repeal the earlier

mandate and support the formal establishment of the Laredo District. Other than the counties in districts adjacent to the new Laredo District, we don't anticipate any major geographic realignments in the near future. However, there may be some consideration given to streamlining or even restructuring the number of area engineer offices and maintenance offices/sections within existing districts.

Q: Why was the much-needed reorganization of the department's headquarters ceased when the realignment of the districts ceased?

A: The department has made many improvements in our headquarters division organization in the recent past, but because of the

What is the status of the reorganization?

Legislature's interest in our district office organization, the districts did take precedence last year. The Functional Review of Austin Divisions studies resulted in a number of changes, but an actual "reorganization" has not been suggested. We have created some new divisions (i.e. for public transportation, aviation, civil rights, environmental affairs) and some special offices (International Relations, Information Resources Management). We have also reassigned certain responsibilities from one division to another as it became evident that such changes would improve our operations. Our organization is not static, and as we see opportunities to make improvements, we will do so.

Q: Assuming the Legislature repeals the district realignment mandated during its August 1991 special session, how will district boundaries/offices be affected by the uniform regional service areas mandated during that same special session?

A: A state agency task force, headed by the comptroller's office, has completed its analysis and evaluation and issued guidelines for all state agencies to consider. Essentially, the state was divided into 10 areas along the boundaries used for the 24 councils of government across the state. It is not clear what the legislative intent may have been with respect to our department. However, it does not appear that the uniform regional service area requirements will affect our district structure.

Q: Events over the past two years have given the appearance that efficiency and top-quality workmanship are not the department's top priorities. Politics seem to weigh heaviest when decisions related to department policy are made. How can the department create an extra district after recommending closure of several, and how can the department create an extra level (higher level) in management, and expect the lowest levels to feel more empowered? Two years ago today, you stated that it was your intent to move more control from the divisions to the district offices. We have seen the opposite. Has your direction changed and if not, when will we see the change?

A: Despite events and actions that may seem subjective, or even political, we will promote and tolerate only those practices that help us achieve our overall goals of efficiency and excellence, including meeting the goals of a more diverse work force. While we are seeking to expand the role of area engineers, we

recognize that many of our activities are getting more complex, which requires maintaining some centralized level of oversight, support and control to ensure compliance. However, this does not change our basic objective to encourage that not only actions but decisions be made at the lowest practical level.

Q: In light of the recent reorganization, how do you perceive the importance of the right-of-way function in the overall mission of the department?

A: Your point is a good one! Very often, the right-of-way function and staffs have been the unsung heroes of our project development process. Certainly, smooth and efficient acquisition of right-of-way is critical to keeping a construction project on schedule, hence the importance will continue and probably increase. Just as with many activities in the department, we will seek to enhance the significance and recognition of all our functions and employees.

Q: I don't believe that the engineering divisions need to be regionalized. What do you think?

A: While I generally agree, we will certainly explore all realistic proposals to get our mission accomplished at the lowest practical cost to realize the highest quality products, programs, projects and services.

Certification and Licensing

Q: Is there any progress in requiring certification for engineering technicians? I believe there would be merit in requiring tests for engineering technicians before promotion to higher group levels.

A: There is no plan to certify engineering technicians at this time. Their salary group, as in all jobs, should be based on their job duties and responsibilities.

Q: Why, with all the money spent recently for safety-toe boots to provide a safe work environment for our employees, would the state not provide added funds to pay for commercial driver's licenses for residency/area office personnel so they can continue to assist maintenance personnel during icy road conditions to prevent maintenance crews from being out on the roads longer than standard driving times recognized by federal law?

A: The Division of Human Resources provided training for all employees in positions that require a commercial driver's license, and the department paid for those employees to take the test the first time. Employees hired after this initial test must have a commercial driver's license as a condition for employment if the position requires it. The department did not pay for the test if an employee's position did not require the license.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Q: Mr. Oliver, please tell me why the opportunity for advancement for women is far less than that of men. I do not understand why the state has the "good-ol'-boy" philosophy that males work harder and are

more productive and they are the breadwinners of the family. I'm here to tell you I have received excellent evaluations from the time I started with the state seven years ago, and I have yet to see an equal advancement of myself as compared to male co-workers who started at the same time.

A: We recognize our low numbers of women and minorities in the upper management positions of the department, and we're now trying to address that area. I think that if you will recall Commission Member Muñoz's remarks this morning, he referred to that. We are making progress in that area. Probably not fast enough, but we are making progress. I can't speak for other supervisors in this department, but from the time I became a payroll supervisor, I tried to see to it that women in my employ got equal pay for equal work. And I have always been an advocate for that and will continue to be so.

Q: Last year, I was concerned about the seriousness of the department towards equal opportunity employment. Since then I have seen drastically improved efforts at the division level. However, I believe that supervisors at all district and area levels should be more aware of the goals and objectives of the

department towards an equal opportunity for all. An awareness session, similar to the one about sexual harassment, may be needed by many employees to achieve this goal.

A: That's more of a statement than it is a question, and it's a statement that I support wholeheartedly. EEO training for all employees to increase their awareness and sensitivity will be provided in 1993 and thereafter on a periodic basis.

Q: Tell me, how do we manage to retain our minority engineers and technicians? Once trained, these individuals are quickly recruited by organizations with more salary latitude than TxDOT.

A: I guess the only response I can make to that is that money isn't everything. If money was the prime motivation for people in this department, you would not have seen the quality people up here on the stage today to receive those awards. The only thing I can say to address that, and this is one of our better recruiting tools in the minority area, is that once they come to work for us, they feel that spirit of pride that we referred to earlier, and like it. And it begins, in some instances, to replace money and other material benefits.

Q: How does the administration expect us battling in the field to retain our better employees?

A: Traditionally, the department has never been able to completely compete with the private sector. We've always tried to provide interesting and challenging assignments with responsibility that make the job rewarding and provide a sense of satisfaction. Also, many of our employees value what has been a very stable working environment.

Q: Why are supervisors being told from the higher echelon, "You will fill this position

with a minority, if you don't have any that meet the minimum qualifications, go find them or rewrite your minimum qualifications so a minority can meet them"? Should we overlook qualified people and lower our standards just to meet a minority quota?

A: I don't think in any sense of the word that we are lowering our standards to meet a minority quota. I think that in years gone by the major thrust of our affirmative action plan has been to say, "We'll accept all minority applicants, here we are, come to us." I can tell you there is competition out there for qualified minorities, and the competition is tough, and they're not going to come to you on their own. They are out there, and you can find them if you try, but it takes effort and recruitment. And that's all we're saying. We're not saying, lower the standards.

I think you need to look honestly, however, any time you post a job, at what the minimum qualifications for that job need to be. And we hope that we don't have supervisors out there writing specifications for a job around a certain individual. But certainly we're not advocating lower standards, we're just advocating that we need minorities in this department, we intend to have minorities in this department, and it's up to you to find them. They're there if you work hard enough, and I think I could call on about a dozen district engineers who would get up and testify to you that if you put in the effort you can find them.

Work Time

Q: Why can't employees get paid FLSA overtime or compensatory time when they work more than eight hours a day instead of having to work more than 40 hours a week?

A: The law is very clear. There is no obfuscation here. Overtime or compensatory time is allowed only if an employee actually works in excess of 40 hours in a work week. And a workweek is defined as Saturday through Friday.

Q: What is the department's current position on flex time, both on hours per day and days per week?

A: We have a flex-time task force looking at that problem. We will be developing a flex-time policy for this department in the very near future.

Hiring Process

Q: What is the status of standardizing our hiring selection process?

A: Administrative Circular 4-92 provides a standard hiring process from job vacancy notices to screening and selecting applicants for all positions. Those processes should be in place throughout the organization.

Q: Are we going to show our commitment to groom executives for state service by affording resources to vary their experience in the various aspects of transportation? Do you think that employees should be promoted within their section, or is it better to transfer someone in?

A: To answer the second question first, the most qualified applicant should be promoted to fill vacancies. Sometimes the most qualified person will be someone already employed in that section and sometimes it will be someone

else. In some cases, lack of adequate relocation assistance probably prevents some qualified applicants from applying for vacancies they could capably fill.

In regard to varying the experience of employees as an aid to developing their potential, quite a bit of that happens already. Our employees are encouraged to participate in a variety of training and educational opportunities that provide increased exposure to different skills and techniques. Graduate engineers have formal requirements that lead to licensure as professional engineers, and the department assists our young engineers to accomplish those varied assignments. We have many employees who take college courses, with financial assistance from the department, to increase and vary their experience and knowledge in subjects related to our responsibilities.

Also, employees often transfer to new jobs in the department for the purpose of varying their work experiences, which improves their potential for advancement. We all should take advantage of these opportunities to improve and vary our skills, so we can increase our contribution toward meeting the department's responsibilities.

Job Requirements

Q: Please tell me how the department can advertise a DE's position requiring only three years' experience, while an area engineer's position is required to have five years.

A: I think that just reinforces what you've always thought about district engineers anyway.

But seriously, there is an answer to that question and it's really two-faceted. Number one, in filling positions, we certainly consider experience. It's a very valuable indicator of the background a person has and the capability he or she may have of handling the technical aspects of the job.

But it's not the only criterion, by any stretch of the imagination. The other thing is that these are minimum experience requirements, and we do give flexibility to people advertising any of these vacancies to waive or modify those experience requirements listed in the classification schedule, if they have a reason to do so. One of the things we are trying to ferret out in this is, who are the bright young people out there who are going to be the leaders of tomorrow?

That doesn't mean necessarily that they are all going to be serious contenders for each of these positions. But we are trying to find out who those people are, who's interested. And if we get resumes in as a result of these applications, even if they're not successful getting this job, at least we have spotlighted some of the rising stars and people who may make good ones in the future. In short, experience is not everything, but it's important.

Another point is that three years' experience is registration plus at least three more. Most of the time registration takes about five years. So you're actually looking at a minimum of eight years experience before they will even be allowed to submit a resume. So far we have not hired anybody with just eight years experience. But it does give us an opportunity to see who's interested and who may be coming up.

Q: What is the administration's view on degree requirements for salary groups 12 through 20?

A: It depends on the duties and responsibilities of the job being performed. Sometimes expertise needed is gained through on-the-job experience and sometimes expertise needed requires a college degree.

Q: Why does the state allow only a certain percentage of maintenance employees to be Maintenance Technician IIIs?

A: Essentially, the answer is that we are removing all of those caps on maintenance technicians. Management principles say that in any organization your ratio of workers should resemble a pyramid. You should have a larger number of lower-skilled, lower-paid workers at the bottom, and the pyramid will gradually ascend until you get to the top. A few years ago, what we found was that essentially we had an inverted pyramid. We had a lot of people at the top of the pyramid and not enough people at the bottom. So we tried, through attrition and other means, to equalize it somewhat. We are in the process now of removing those caps and we are depending on the district engineers and division directors to manage their personnel in a proper manner that will maintain the correct balance of employees to the greatest extent that they possibly can.

Salaries

Q: Why not give pay raises more often? If we cannot hire more employees, why can't those of us who are doing all the work get some kind of raise? What is the outlook for a pay raise for the department's employees?

A: I can't tell you that; it will all depend on how much money is needed and how much money can be raised in this next session of the Legislature. The only thing I can tell you is that we're long overdue; we need one. We are authorized a 3 percent pay raise for this year, if the comptroller can find the money. Whether that will come about or not depends on the comptroller's operation. We will certainly support any legislation or any effort we believe will help in that situation. (Note:

Comptroller John Sharp did find the money and state employees received a 3 percent raise effective Dec. 1, 1992.)

Q: If those of us in maintenance and engineering are considered professionals, why do salaries in the private sector far outweigh ours?

A: Well, the simple answer to that is that the Legislature sets the resources we can use. Unlike the private sector, we simply don't have the ability to pass on increased costs to our customers. And unfortunately, the mood today is we either do without it or we do with less. The emphasis is always to do more with less. That's an environment we have to live with.

Why do salaries in the private sector far outweigh ours?

If we cannot hire more employees, why can't those of us who are doing all the work get some kind of raise?

Q: [Commissioner of Transportation Ray] Stoker mentioned a 30-40 percent difference in the cost of living in small cities versus large cities. Why doesn't the state compensate employees in high-cost areas? Why is there a difference in pay scales in each district, and why is maintenance pay below engineering? Why is it so difficult for an employee to be paid a respectable wage for his or her abilities?

A: The department is limited by the state salary structure. To assist in dealing with this limitation, the department provides the Functional Classification System. The Classification Section of the Division of Human Resources develops functional job descriptions, job families and corresponding salary levels

within the state structure. The salary level is based on complexity of the work and level of responsibility.

The intent is to provide internal (department) equity. For example, an engineering technician in Childress performing

the same work as an engineering technician in Dallas would be classified the same and in the same salary group. Most department employees fall into the higher levels of job families and this allows supervisors to pay employees a respectable wage.

Q: Since the role and responsibilities of resident engineers have continued to grow, why has their salary never been considered?

A: That's a good question. I asked that same question about my salary. Recently, the city of Austin published a list of the salaries of the management positions in the city government. If I worked for the city, I would be 18th on their list.

There has to be hierarchy in the pay scales. It's always been there. Resident engineers have always made less than people higher up the organizational ladder. There was a time when the responsibilities of that resident engineer were greater and far more complicated than they are today. So there's always been hierarchy of pay in every organization. I've always said that the area engineer position is the best one in the department; it just doesn't pay like it.

Other Compensation

Q: What is the status of the productivity bonus program that was addressed in the administrative announcement dated Aug. 17, 1992?

A: I believe an announcement was made yesterday that those checks are in the mail, is that right? Seriously, those checks are in the process right now of being mailed to the districts, so all employees below the exempt classification will be receiving those checks in the very near future. (Note: Most TxDOT employees received this bonus by Oct. 23, 1992.)

Q: What are your plans to help engineers financially in professional organizations? What about officers in these organizations? We are not able to keep up with the cost of living. Are you going to help?

A: We are forbidden to pay for professional dues for the individual to organizations such as

this. However, we can assist in travel expenses in instances where these people hold offices or have been asked to prepare a presentation and that office and that presentation are for the benefit of the department. So there is not much, but a little bit of help there.

Employee Assistance

Q: A degree of urgency seems to pervade the entire organization now, unlike years ago. Everyone is trying to do much more with the same resources. We veterans feel a loyalty to the department such that the extra load is worth working harder. New employees may have no such feeling of commitment. Is the continuing sense of urgency throughout the department really unavoidable? Doesn't the high stress level make it difficult to keep new employees? Employee morale is still low; could we initiate some intensive program to get us back on track ... perhaps hire a consultant to come up with an effective plan?

A: The administration is concerned whenever the employees are concerned, and we know that all of us in state government are being asked to do more with the same or fewer resources. According to exit interviews with former employees, however, employee turnover has not increased because of high stress or low morale; regular retirement and insufficient salary remain the most frequently mentioned reasons for leaving.

Although it seems to me that morale has improved since the "roller-coaster" events of the past year, I realize there may be a need for more attention to reassuring the staff. Hiring a consultant seems to be premature at this point, but I will ask the Division of Human Resources to create a task force of employees to determine if there is a problem and see what action they recommend. After the task force has completed its work, we will look at the alternatives and take whatever action seems warranted.

Q: What is the status of the substance abuse program? Have we identified who is to be tested besides the Marine Operators?

A: We are identifying other positions that comprise safety sensitive activities. However, no list of additional employees to be tested has been finalized.

Automation

Q: Can we expect, in the near future, to have our automation equipment (personal computers) upgraded to stay in step with current technology, and can additional units be obtained for the area offices?

A: Yes and no. But seriously, we are continually upgrading the equipment. Those of you who sat in on the commission meeting this morning where the initial automation operation plan was presented heard some detailed plans for upgrading our equipment and what it will cost. We expect to spend about a billion dollars over five years on automation equipment, about half of it related to traffic management.

We have not had a full procurement of automation equipment for about three years, because of cash flow problems and reorganization uncertainties, but we will this year. Districts and divisions have a budget cap on the amounts they can spend, but a lot of flexibility in how they spend they spend their automation equipment budgets. Overall, I think our auto-

mation equipment situation is pretty good, and after our next procurement, it will be even better.

Q: What is the likelihood of the divisions using the single entry screen (SES) for timekeeping purposes?

A: The Single Entry Screen System is a single automated data entry system that allows data to be entered simultaneously into the department's four principal automated resource management systems: the Equipment Operation System (EOS), the Maintenance Management Information System (MMIS), the Materials and Supplies Management System (MSMS) and the Salary and Labor Distribution System (SLD).

Without SES, one is required to "sign on" to one of those systems, enter information about daily work, sign off that system, sign on to another system, enter essentially the same information, and so forth. SES was created to simplify entry of this information, thus reducing the time and effort required to enter the data and reducing the chance of errors. At the present time, SES is being used only for maintenance crews. This is sort of a "test run." If it proves successful there, we will probably extend SES to the rest of the department.

Employee Empowerment

Q: What steps will the administration take in the future to further empower TxDOT employees for quality government and transportation services? Please tell me how you plan to reduce the bureaucracy within TxDOT and empower employees. Please tell me your intentions for implementation of empowerment.

A: I think Henry [Associate Executive Director Henry Thomason] covered that a while ago in his presentation. I just might say one more thing. Empowerment is not allowing people at the bottom level to do their own thing. You cannot violate department policy. What it simply means is that whatever position you are in, whatever area of responsibility you have—we want you to have the ability and the authority to meet that responsibility and also have accountability for your actions.

But there have to be parameters around anything. So that means you have to be trained, to be schooled, you have to understand what's expected of you, what power and authority you have, what the consequences are and what the rewards are going to be. But it doesn't mean an area engineer can say, "Well, I don't have to listen to the construction engineer anymore, I don't have to follow this district policy, I don't have to follow this Austin policy." That's not empowerment.

And there's another element of empowerment that's important. And that is the responsibility of upper management to remove as many barriers from your path and your ability to make decisions as we possibly can. We realize there are a lot of barriers we have erected over the years out there, so we'll be addressing these issues of empowerment. I might also say that our commitment to implementation of a process

of continuous improvement is a long-term proposition for this department.

Q: Is Executive Order 11-90 a real objective for the department? If so, why have so few employees heard of this order? What can be done by the non-management employees to help this order succeed?

A: I'm not sure, but I think when we published Executive Order 11-90, did we not send a copy of that to each employee in the organization? I thought we did, so each one of you should have received a copy of that. I signed it on Sept. 25, 1990, and I wasn't joking. It's not an objective of the department, it is a TxDOT policy. The policy requires uniform, comprehensive, coordinated, and humane practices and procedures throughout the department that are grounded on high standards of personal and professional conduct, mutual respect and maximum realization of the potential of every TxDOT employee.

Now, I'm not as concerned about whether or not employees have or have not heard about Executive Order 11-90 as I am about ensuring that the executive council, the Division of Human Resources, and above all TxDOT managers, supervisors and TxDOT employees are operating consistently within the letter and intent of that executive order.

Non-engineering Personnel

Q: Will non-engineers ever become or be considered for the position now called district engineer?

A: As you may have heard, the FHWA recently named the first non-engineer as administrator of one of its divisions. However, TxDOT today remains essentially an engineering organization while the FHWA is essentially an administrative organization. TxDOT's role is slowly evolving, but I do not foresee any of our districts being managed by a non-engineer.

Q: Please tell me, when will the

department give the same level of opportunity and reward to non-engineers as it does to engineers?

A: Who sent that question? It is a good question. We're changing and we're adding more non-engineering fields such as civil rights, environmental specialists, etc., all the time. Our primary role is still engineering; that's still the main thing that we do, although we are taking on a lot of other areas and responsibilities that are not so specifically engineering related. As we expand our work force, you'll find that we will need even more non-engineers in leadership roles.

When I came to work in 1960, all the district engineers, and all the division directors positions with the exception of two (I think finance and possibly human resources) were filled by an engineer. Now then, I believe that the majority of those division director positions, over 50 percent of those, are now filled by non-engineers. Engineers are required now only where that particular expertise is felt to be mandatory.

When will the department
give the same level of
opportunity and reward to
non-engineers as it does to
engineers?

Q: Do you give a damn about anyone who is not an engineer?

A: I could be facetious with that question, but with all sincerity I have to tell you that I care about everyone in this department. I'm an engineer because my job requires it. In my entire career, all the jobs I've held in the department have been because they required an engineer.

But I want you to know that some of the most valuable lessons and some of the greatest training that I have received in this department, most of it on the job, came from people who were non-engineers—like old chief inspectors who probably knew more from a practical standpoint than I could ever learn in college or learn in 20 years experience on the job. So I'm deeply indebted in my career to those people that I worked with who were not engineers, and I respect the rights and the careers of everybody in this department whether they're an engineer, a non-engineer or whatever background they have.

Training**Q: With the focus on Total Quality Management, will the department sponsor a master's program in management similar to the engineering master's program?**

A: The department created the Master's of Science in Civil Engineering program to help our engineers earn an advanced engineering degree and to simultaneously bring some practical experience to the transportation research program the department sponsors, primarily with the University of Texas and Texas A&M University. Each participant is required to work on a department-sponsored research project while they are working on a master's degree.

Since this is primarily an engineering organization, we must ensure our complement of engineers is well educated and our research is based on real-world engineering experience. Most of the other professions the department needs are currently readily available, including people with advanced degrees. At this time, I do not see a need to fund a master's program in management.

Q: What is being done to train managers in the new hiring procedures? This also includes training in other areas, such as sexual harassment and cultural diversity.

A: The Division of Human Resources is reviewing existing curriculum and incorporating the new hiring procedures. Training is scheduled to begin in early 1993. The Division of Civil Rights and the Division of Human Resources are comparing the use of in-house instructors versus contracting this training. We hope that during this fiscal year, this training can be accomplished. The statewide sexual harassment prevention training program should be complete by Nov. 1, 1992.

Q: Why is money being wasted by letting people from Austin spend the night at Lago Vista during training when it is not that far for them to drive in every day?

A: Like the annual TxDOT Short Course, the department's management training courses at Lago Vista are important to help us do what we do even better and more efficiently. The benefit our managers get from attending these courses doesn't all happen in the classroom. Perhaps the most important aspect of our training at Lago

Vista is getting people together with their counterparts from across the state, sharing ideas over dinner, after class or at breaks, and building relationships. Driving back and forth from Austin each day would deprive Austin employees of these important benefits.

Also, for Austin employees to drive back and forth to Lago Vista each day would increase the risk of traffic accidents for them.

Q: When will the districts and divisions be made aware of our responsibilities regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

A: [Former] Commissioner of Transportation Ray Stoker has declared that TxDOT should be "the leader in state government" in complying with the ADA. Training will be essential to our fulfilling that leadership role. And as a consequence, we are designing a new training program for all department employees. The program will address both the requirements of the ADA, and the importance of heightened sensitivity of all employees, especially of department managers, to the needs of people with disabilities.

Q: Do you agree that the metric conversion will require special training and orientation for our technical and professional employees?

A: The TxDOT Metric Conversion Committee has a task force looking into the need for training. The task force will look at other places that have converted to metric to determine whether orientation and training was needed, and by whom. If orientation or training is determined to be needed, the task force will look at what kinds of training have been effective in those areas where it has been provided. TxDOT is capable and will develop any necessary training programs.

Equipment**Q: Why are we receiving new vehicles that run only on compressed natural gas when no service stations for CNG exist in our district?**

A: State law requires that we convert our fleet to alternative fuels. CNG-fueled vehicles are better for the environment and better for the Texas economy. CNG refueling stations have developed more slowly than expected, but are now becoming more readily available. Out of their commitment to the alternative fuels program, TxDOT districts, where CNG refueling stations were not yet available, preferred to keep CNG-powered vehicles and wait for the support systems to develop.

Q: Why are a rubber tire loader and track loader not considered heavy equipment, and why is there not more money appropriated for salaries of employees operating those pieces of equipment?

A: The functional job description for the heavy equipment operator lists certain equipment that an employee in that classification must operate, and that list does not include rubber tire loaders or track loaders. The Functional Classification Task Force developed the list based on such considerations as the complexity of the equipment and the skill required of its operator, and not merely on the size of the item. All district offices had an opportunity to review and

comment on the heavy equipment operator functional job description, including the list of equipment. If you feel the list needs to be revised, ask your district engineer to recommend such a change to the Functional Classification Task Force.

Short Course**Q: Has any consideration been given to discontinuing the annual Short Course in light of the state's present and projected economic problems?**

A: The annual TxDOT Short Course represents an important opportunity to learn how to do what we do better and more efficiently. The education, sharing of new technologies and opportunity to build more effective relationships provided by Short Course are clearly of far more benefit to the department than the per diem, travel and production costs of the event.

Do most people just go to Short Course to get drunk?

Q: Do most people just go to Short Course to get drunk?

A: TxDOT policy clearly prohibits the illegal use of drugs, inhalants and alcohol in the workplace, as well as coming to work impaired. This includes normal work hours for employees not at their job site but representing the department in an official business capacity such as at Short Course or a workshop or conference. Now, for other than business hours, the department does not condone inappropriate activities.

Q: Will Short Course ever again be scheduled in spring, as in past years, rather than in fall, as it is now?

A: Every year, Short Course brings together about 15 percent of the department's people for the better part of a week. We think it's more reasonable to hold it in the fall, when the weather is more likely to be unfavorable for construction and maintenance, than in the spring, when fair weather is more probable. Short Course is important to effective communication and coordination within the department, but we've got to do our best to use the good weather we get for our outdoor activities.

Q: Why does Short Course have to be in College Station every year? Wouldn't it be just as good and maybe save some money to have it in a more central location, like Austin?

A: Part of the reason is tradition, and part of the answer is that TTI has the support staff and the facilities to host the event. The tradition of coming to College Station once a year to learn and visit with old friends is enjoyed by many in the department. It has proven to be cost-effective as well.

Effects of Political Action**Q: What course of action will TxDOT take now that the North American Free Trade Agreement has been signed?**

A: Each nation must pass implementing legislation before the agreement becomes effective. The Texas Transportation Commission and TxDOT are working closely with the Office of the Governor, other state agencies and the Texas congressional delegation, as well as with our counterparts in the three other southwestern states along the border between the United

States and Mexico. Commission member Henry Muñoz chairs the Southwest Border Transportation Alliance, which includes representatives of state transportation agencies in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The purposes of the group include developing a common agenda on NAFTA issues from which to speak with a unified regional voice in Congressional hearings, and in coordinating with the Mexican states across the border.

TxDOT and other state agencies are working with a consultant selected by the Governor's Office to help Texas demonstrate to the federal government that implementing NAFTA will create a need in Texas for supplemental federal support. TxDOT is working to identify any improvements to the transportation infrastructure that would be necessary to support the increased traffic resulting from NAFTA.

TxDOT is also working to identify possible sources of funding for any necessary improvements to the transportation infrastructure. TxDOT is working with the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations to identify issues in NAFTA that we believe should be addressed in the implementing legislation.

Q: Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency issued stringent regulations concerning storm water management, and the Legislature set certain requirements concerning the stockpiling and use of recycled asphalt pavement. Please tell me when all the mandates from the Legislature will stop, and we can design the components of our projects based on sound engineering judgment and experience, rather than across-the-board mandates.

A: In this state and in this nation, our elected representatives are the final authorities on governmental operation, subject to judicial review. Executive branch agencies, like our department, are responsible for discharging our assigned responsibilities to the best of our abilities, even if we believe those assignments include what, in our judgment, are ill-advised requirements. Of course, if asked, we will do our best to advise our representatives of potential problems in proposed legislation or regulations. Often, however, we are either not asked, or our representatives are not persuaded by our concerns. We just do the best we can.

Q: We need to get politics out of the department and get it back like it was years ago. Can we?

A: I'm afraid the answer to that is no and the only solace I can give you there is that 20 years from now these will be the good old days.

Q: We know what the Texas Transportation Commission members and TxDOT staff think about TxDOT, but what does the governor think about TxDOT? As state agencies go, does Gov. Richards think we are better than average, average, or below average?

A: You've asked the wrong person this question! I believe we've done a great job in the past. However, that doesn't mean we're perfect. On the contrary, we are continually striving to

improve our performance in every way. I expect we'll continue to get better and better.

I'm sure that Gov. Richards is aware of our department's long history of professional and technical expertise in transportation. We hope that both Gov. Richards and the people of Texas are aware of our mission, our vision and our philosophy, all of which are stated in the department's Strategic Plan. Knowing that, I would hope the governor would conclude that we are among the best state agencies.

We need to get politics out of the department and get it back like it was years ago. Can we?

Q: What were the results of the Governor's Ombudsman listening post?

A: Most of you are aware of this. There was a listening post set up by the Governor's Ombudsman Office in certain areas of the Austin administration and other offices to give our employees an opportunity to make any observations they thought would be of interest to the governor's office. We do not have the results of that yet and at this point we have no news to report.

Quality

Q: What is TxDOT doing to ensure "Continuous Improvement" or "Total Quality Management" among department employees?

A: Continuous Improvement in TxDOT will ultimately involve and enhance the contributions of each and every employee. It is important to me and to the future of the department that, in our quest for quality, we transcend the paradigms of bureaucracy and that we achieve the ultimate both in taxpayer satisfaction and in the quality of the products and services we provide.

We have begun this journey with our commitment to provide the resources required. One of our first steps has been to create the Office of Quality Management, and to ask Deborah Morris to help chart the department's course. But our journey will

not be completed overnight. It will require continuing commitment and fortitude. I hope you share my expectations for Continuous Improvement and will contribute your ideas and energy as we move forward.

Q: Do you really believe that a contractor will control the quality of his hot mix asphaltic concrete better than a TxDOT inspector? Why?

A: Yes, I think we can expect better hot mix. The contractor will suffer direct financial losses if he fails to deliver a quality product. We think that will get—and keep—a contractor's attention.

Q: When will the new Specifications Book be published?

A: I understand that the new "spec book" will be ready for the printer by March 1, and should

be distributed later in the spring or in early summer.

Bid Justifications

Q: Typically, bid overrun justifications are not required when a bid is within 20 percent of the engineer's estimate, and are required when the bid overruns that estimate by more than 20 percent. Thus, if a project estimated at \$1 million is actually bid at \$1.1 million, or \$100,000 over the estimate, no bid justification is required. However, if a project estimated at \$25,000 is actually bid at \$30,000, only \$5,000 over the estimate, a bid justification memo is required. It seems inequitable to require justification for a \$5,000 bid overrun on the second project while no justification is required for a \$100,000 bid overrun on the first project. Why is the requirement for bid overrun and bid underrun justification memos based primarily on percentages without considering project size or total project cost?

A: We are responsible for ensuring that the bids we recommend to the commission are reasonable. However, we are also responsible for ensuring that the rules for providing justification memos are as simple as possible. The 20 percent standard seems to meet both requirements.

Q: A justification is always required when there is only one bidder. Why are one-bidder justifications needed?

A: We want to be sure that every bid is reasonable. Since there is by definition no competition between contractors on a one-bid contract, we take the extra precaution of requiring justification.

Lettings

Q: Will major projects in smaller urbanized districts be considered for letting?

A: When the cost of the project is within the district's letting cap, the decision on whether to let the project is made at the district level. When the cost of the project exceeds the district's letting cap, special circumstances may nevertheless require

Do you really believe that a contractor will control the quality of his hot mix asphaltic concrete better than a TxDOT inspector?

that the project move forward. This year, the commission has set aside \$200 million as a discretionary fund that can be used to fund special situations like this.

Q: Each month the department lets projects on the second or third week of the month. Typically, the Texas Transportation Commission meets the following week. This gives area offices, districts and divisions less than one week to prepare any one-bidder justifications or overrun and underrun memos. To compound the problem, this is also the week that federally required plans, specifications and estimates are due in Austin. Has the commission considered re-arranging the typical schedule for monthly lettings and commission meetings, perhaps to

hold the lettings a week after the commission meeting?

A: We like to have at least two weeks between the letting and the commission meeting. As a rule, lettings are set in the second week of the month, and the commission meeting in the last week of the month. In fact, this leaves only one week for compiling post-letting documentation, since the commission briefing books are mailed to be received by the commission members one week prior to the date of the commission meeting.

The administration is aware that this tight schedule makes it difficult to prepare briefing information on lettings. It's not only tough for area offices, districts and divisions, but hard on the administration offices as well. In some instances, however, it just can't be helped.

Several factors affect the dates of both the letting and the commission meeting. In addition to the internal ones you mentioned, some external factors are: the needs of the construction industry, the availability of hotels in Austin and the schedules of the members of the commission. Whenever possible, we certainly want to schedule lettings and commission meetings in a manner that allows all department staff to accomplish their responsibilities most efficiently. We are therefore reviewing our scheduling practices and considering possible solutions.

Retirement and Insurance

Q: Is there going to be an incentive for early retirement this year?

A: I don't know. Is there going to be a better incentive program offered to the employees who are considering early retirement? Again, I don't have an answer. One of the things we do know, however, is that [Associate Executive Director] Marcus Yancey tells me that under most incentive retirement plans that have been put forward, approximately 6,000 state employees would be eligible to take advantage of one of these plans. About a third, or approximately 2,000 of these employees, would come from this agency. Another thing is that a significant early retirement program could seriously impact the fiscal soundness of our retirement system.

Q: What can be done to equalize health benefits for all employees?

A: The question is apparently aimed at the state's contribution toward insurance premiums. Uniform ("equal") basic health benefits are available to all employees because basic health coverage is considered vital, while optional coverage is provided as a choice to those preferring the additional coverage. Legislation was passed in the last session that allowed the state to pay a varying amount for dependent coverage.

Now, discrimination can be looked at from many perspectives, but the state's concern is to make basic health benefits available and affordable to all employees and their dependents.

Functional Title Classification

Q: What is the status of the functional title classification? My supervisors and I have been told that my position has been capped. However, this was in 1986, and I am still listed as a "nonclassified." Division of Human Resources personnel claim no cap has been put on anyone's position, yet. What

gives? I have had significant increase in responsibility and excellent reviews, two merit raises, but no promotion in six years. I begin to believe the Division of Human Resources is being used as an excuse.

A: Some positions, such as the maintenance technicians, have been capped in the past. The intent of the functional classification system is to pay employees for the duties and responsibilities performed in their work. To reach this intent, I have issued a TxDOT Directive 8-92, removing all position allocation or "caps" from all positions.

Q: Why were "graphics technician" job classifications omitted from the revised functional classification?

A: During the review of the functional job descriptions, several districts commented to the Functional Title Classification Task Force that the Interactive Graphics Technician job descriptions should be combined with the Design Technician job descriptions. As computer usage increases in the department for drafting and design, Interactive Graphics becomes an integral part of these jobs (i.e. the Intergraphics machines are becoming the standard tool of the trade)—your job should be properly classified by the Design Technician job classification.

Q: How much longer will it take to finish the classification audits for automation?

A: A study of the automation jobs is scheduled to begin in May 1993 and to be completed by Aug. 31, 1993.

Q: When will personnel who went unclassified under the new functional classification manual (due to performing several different jobs) be able to be classified again?

A: It depends on the particular combination of jobs being performed. The typical combinations will be studied first with the one-of-a-kind combinations coming last. Also, with the standard district reorganizations, some of the more unusual combinations may "fade away."

Q: We (in a division) have been told for two years now that the divisions will be reviewed for job position classification. What has been done in this area, when will all divisions be reviewed, and how soon thereafter will promotions, as appropriate, be given?

A: Divisions will be studied in 1993. Any resulting upgrades will normally be handled as reclassification, same as the district functional job matching was handled. Reclassifications are done every September, and usually those are done with no change in pay. (The employee's pay step is adjusted.)

General Operations and Policy Issues

Q: What exactly is the department's mission?

A: To support and promote the efficient and effective movement of people and goods, thus supporting a strong Texas economy, while giving appropriate consideration to preserving the environment. You will find it stated more

formally in our Strategic Plan, but I think that covers the essential elements.

Q: What are your thoughts regarding anonymous letters sent to the administration requesting some type of investigative effort? Some employees may perceive the normal grievance process or other avenues through supervisory channels as being blocked for various reasons, fear of retaliation, distrust of management, etc. How do you think this should be addressed, especially with the new emphasis on total quality management?

A: I have a very negative reaction to anonymous letters. You can't ignore them because sometimes there are some indications of problems. But by the same token, you have no way of substantiating or verifying the charges in those things. I can tell you this, I will not institute an investigation of any person in this department based on an anonymous letter. We have procedures

that we worked very hard and spent a great deal of resources on to put in place for every employee who is unhappy about any situation in this department to have a process to go through. All the letters that come to my desk say the same thing: I can't go to my supervisor, I can't go to my district engineer, I can't go to anybody and I can't sign this letter because I'll be retaliated against.

I discussed with the district engineers and division directors yesterday a little bit about what is retaliation. And I'll use this example again, and I think you need to examine what you really feel about retaliation. If you have been going to coffee with somebody for 10 years, have a good working relationship, you fish with them on the weekend, you have them over to cook steaks out in the backyard on Saturday night, and one day, for whatever reason, that person files a grievance against you or someone else, I can guarantee you that human nature being what it is that relationship will not be the same in the future, whether those allegations are proved true or false.

Now then, if that person no longer invites you to go to coffee, no longer invites you to go fishing, no longer invites you over for steak cookouts, I maintain that is not retaliation. What you have done is change a human relationship. I doubt there is anything that can ever restore that relationship to what it was. Now then, if that person is a supervisor or in some way affects directly your job conditions, demoting you, transferring you to a lesser job, or transferring you to a job that is obviously below your dignity or below your talents, or whatever, then that's retaliation. But just the fact that a relationship changes, in my opinion, is not retaliation.

Now you may be afraid of that relationship changing, but that's no reason for you to be able to hide behind the anonymity of a letter leveling charges that, because they're anonymous, cannot be substantiated. Every person has the right to face his accuser. That's a

What are your thoughts regarding anonymous letters sent to the administration requesting some type of investigative effort?

constitutional right in this country. Enough said.

Q: Please tell me why we pray before district engineer/division director meetings, Short Course, etc. Isn't this a violation of the separation of church and state? Shouldn't we stop?

A: Department policy concerning prayers before meetings is being reviewed. This is a complicated area of law and court decisions, and we are trying to establish a policy that is both satisfactory and legal.

Q: Why do highly paid people have to take time from their work just to personally obtain keys to a state car? This takes about 30 minutes of time and about six miles of personal vehicle travel.

A: I guess this question must come from someone in one of the Austin divisions, and it refers to picking up a car for out-of-town travel on department business. This has been something of a problem for us. It's complicated by the fact that there is not enough parking space at Camp Hubbard to provide parking for personal vehicles while their owners are traveling in state cars.

We used to deliver automobiles to the various work sites where our people needed them to go on a trip. We really didn't have the staff to do this in a reasonable time during periods of peak use, however. For a while, we tried a shuttle-bus system. Employees could ride the shuttle to pick up their cars. Unfortunately, use of the shuttle was not sufficient to justify continuing it.

We do maintain shuttle cars at most locations. An employee who needs a car for out-of-town travel could use one of these cars to drive to Camp Hubbard with a co-worker to pick up a travel car. Similarly, upon the employee's returning the travel car to Camp Hubbard, a co-worker in a shuttle car could meet the returning employee there, and they could both return to their duty station. If that doesn't seem to work well, you should discuss the problem with your supervisor and see what can be worked out.

Q: After manual change copies, etc., are received at the district office, numerous telephone calls must be made to the field offices to see if they received their copies, costing telephone calls, time and a tremendous amount of postage. My question is, at a time when the department has asked for different ways to save money, why did Austin start sending mail, circulars, announcements, directives, manual changes, etc., directly to the maintenance sections and area residences?

A: The answer to that is quite simple. The district office wasn't sending them to you. You weren't getting the information. Now we are mailing them directly to you so that you get exactly the same information the district engineer gets. Now then, if he is spending the money for telephone calls to call you to find out if you've got the directive or if you got that instruction, we have accomplished our purpose, I guarantee you. And that money on those telephone calls is money well spent as far as I'm concerned. Communication is the key to

everything, as you heard Commissioner Stoker say this morning. We're improving, and we think we improved a great deal when we began to mail you those things directly instead of letting them sit in a distribution center at the district office for two weeks before you got the word.

Q: When will the first state bicycle facility be opened?

A: In June 1992, the El Paso District completed pavement marking and sign installation for a bicycle route on 10.6 miles of Loop 375 connecting Interstate 10 on the west with US 54 on the east. The project was done in conjunction with

applying a new asphaltic concrete surface to the main lanes of Loop 375.

Instead of merely sealcoating the highway's shoulders, the district applied an asphaltic concrete overlay to provide a smooth travel way for bicyclists. The bicycle lanes are separated from the main lanes by striping, and are clearly marked as bicycle lanes by bicycle lane diamond paint markings and by signing. Since the shoulders have been transformed into bicycle lanes in both directions along this stretch of highway, bicyclists have more than 20 miles of facility. This especially scenic route is used extensively by bicyclists.

Miscellaneous

Q: Please tell me why we go through this charade when the questions asked will have no influence on what you do? This hollow exercise neither placates nor solves anything.

A: Well, I guess we have to ask ourselves, "What's the purpose of trying to answer questions?" For some of you, I think I've answered your questions, and if I have, then we've accomplished our mission. To the others, some of these questions do raise questions in our own minds about some of our procedures. There are none of these questions without merit, and you may not realize it, but we do make some changes and make some policy statements based on some of the things that are raised by these questions.

Q: Last year you said you would eventually answer all questions in a memo. I don't believe you ever did this. Will you answer all questions this time?

A: We did not do that, and I do believe that we promised that we would answer those questions. For that I apologize. We will answer the questions this time, possibly in *Transportation News* or a newsletter of some type. The problem was that my memory is so short and my staff wasn't taking good notes last year.

Q: Mr. Oliver, why the hell are you still here? With all the problems you've had to deal with, aren't you sick of your job?

A: I have to tell you that several times a week I ask myself that same question. But on a serious side, I'm here because I care about this department and because I care about you. I have some

33 years with this organization, it's been good to me, it's provided me an opportunity to develop my skills, to share those skills, however limited they may be.

But above all, it has allowed me to associate with some of the finest people that I will ever know in my entire lifetime. And I could go on for the rest of my life, however long that may be, without making another friend and die happy in the knowledge of the number of friends I have in this department and the number I've been privileged to work with and share with. So I'm here because I made a commitment a long time ago to this department.

I can remember [when] I went to work in the Wichita Falls District and worked there for 12 years. My wife and I had purchased our first home, we had put a lot of money and a lot of effort into it and in the 12 years I had been in the district, nobody had been asked to move. The resident engineer in Graham passed away suddenly and I was asked by [District Engineer] Bob Schleider to move, to go to Graham.

As most of you who had to contemplate moves last year because of the reorganization know, that is a kind of trying process; it's stressful and difficult to make a decision. Do I pick up roots and move and if so, what happens? What happens to my kids, to their education, and what about my financial status? Will I lose money on the move, will I make money, is the promotion worth it?

All these myriad questions go through your mind. We had a pretty good life, we had established roots, good ties in the community, we had a good house, we loved it. We were totally, perfectly happy and satisfied. We did a lot of praying about that decision, the first one we had been asked to make like that. We finally came to the conclusion that, well, if it was the Lord's will that we move, then things would work out for us.

But we also made the commitment that, if we moved and gave up what we had there, that the only way we could ever recover would be to play the string all the way to the end. And that means making the commitment that

whatever I was in the department, that it was my job to take care of the job at hand. And that my supervisors were the best judge of what I could do and what I could not. If they felt I could do a better job for the department in some other place than where I currently was, then I would be shortchanging not only myself, but shortchanging the department if I didn't accept that responsibility.

I've told many of you that the only job I asked for in the department was the first one, when I went to work fresh out of the University of Texas. All the other assignments I've ever had in the organization, including this one, I have been asked to take. So I'm here because of you and I'm here because I'm dedicated to this department. I've given the best years of my life to it and I will continue to do so as long as I have the privilege to work with people such as you.

More on back cover

Please tell me why we go through this charade when the questions asked will have no influence on what you do?

Please tell me why we pray before meetings. Shouldn't we stop?

From page 11

Q: Mr. Oliver, please tell me why has the Teasip/Aggie DE ratio changed so drastically for the worse?

A: Well, personally I thought it had changed for the better. Of course, that all depends on your point of view. What does it mean? I'm serious about this. We have outstanding people in this organization from, I guess, every university you can think of. That means our universities are turning out well-educated people, they're turning out talented people and you are making the most of that. I commend those of you who have taken the time to bring yourselves to that point.

Q: Has anyone really thought about the implications of converting to metric? For example: will the Extra Mile Award become the Extra 1.6 Kilometer Award?

A: I don't believe the federally mandated conversion to metric will extend to renaming the Extra Mile Award, but we will meet the Oct. 1, 1996, deadline for conversion of our plans and specifications to metric measurements.

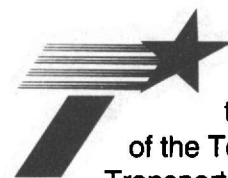
Will the Extra Mile Award become the Extra 1.6 Kilometer Award?

Q: With Mr. [Former Commissioner of Transportation Ray] Stoker's emphasis on fitness in mind, when will the locker rooms at the Riverside Annex in Austin be completed? We still need lockers, benches and shower curtains.

A: As I understand it, the lockers and benches have been ordered and all the furnishings should be installed early in 1993. Since this office complex is located on Austin's Hike and Bike Trail around Town Lake, we hope this will make it possible for our employees to exercise.

Q: If Roger [Welsch] doesn't wear a wig, did he have a transplant? If we really have cooperation in this department, why doesn't Roger share his toupee with Byron [Blaschke]?

A: We didn't really get an answer to the question we had last year on this subject, but this year, in addition to these two questions, we did get an answer contributed by an employee of TTI. Today a card was turned in that says "No, my dad really doesn't wear a toupee!" It is signed Marla Welsch Hodgson.



Q&A is a special supplement to *Transportation News*, the employee newsletter of the Texas Department of Transportation. Q&A was designed and published by *Transportation News* staff, Division of Travel and Information. Answers were researched and written by Division of Planning and Policy staff as follows: budget-related questions, Dr. John Robey; reorganization and downsizing, Vic Holubec; pay, affirmative action and personnel actions, Susan Tutt; privatization, staffing and workload, John Staha, P.E.; general operations policy issues, David Soileau; retirement, insurance and employee classification, Art Elliott, P.E.; miscellaneous questions, Russell Cummings.

Short Course



Everything you ever wanted to know about TxDOT, but were afraid to ask

March 1993