

FIRE!

TxDOT crews assist Texas Forest Service; agencies join forces to battle wildfires

By Chris Bishop
Austin District Office

For many TxDOT employees, hot, dry weather is the cue to get more work done on the highways. For some, it is also the cue to prepare for emergency wildfire service.

The tinderbox conditions across Central Texas prompted the Texas Forest Service to set up response teams and equipment storage at different locations, putting TxDOT employees on standby alert. The local fire boss had to request assistance through the DPS Emergency Management Center to get authorization for TxDOT to help.

The Blanco County Maintenance Section in Johnson City has responded to two fires. On Aug. 16, seven employees, including supervisor Terry Brussel,

assisted at a fire off FM 2721 near the community of Post Oak.

The department dispatched two road grader/maintainers and a 1,200-gallon water truck. The heavy equipment scraped out a fire line, and supplied extra water for ground crews beating back flames.

It was hot, smoky work. For equipment operators, despite being isolated and somewhat protected inside the graders, it was still dangerous. Workers could not hear anything outside of the roar of their own equipment, and the sound of the flames.

At one point, Brussel said, a runner had to warn the TxDOT crews to back away, so helicopters could swoop in and drop water on the flames.

When the equipment was not running, employees walked the fire line, kicking

smoldering clumps of sod back into the burned area, so the flames would not spread.

The Johnson City crews came out for a second fire, on Aug. 27, and waited overnight at the scene. This time, dense brush and large boulders blocked all efforts to get the heavy equipment to the fire.

Brussel said firefighting was a nice change of pace from roadwork, and his employees like the overtime pay.

In exchange, the Forest Service appreciated the help. Brussel noted, "They recognize what we've done. A lot of my guys have been volunteer firefighters in the past. I'd say about 40 percent."

This was just the second time in 23 years, Brussel said, that he's been out on fire duty.



TxDOT equipment and personnel from the Fort Worth District assist Texas Forest Service firefighters at the Ranger Hill wildfire.



TxDOT equipment from Granbury backs up Ron Davis of the Texas Forest Service before heading to wildfires near Kerrville.

More on TxDOT fighting wildfires, Page 4

Straight Talk

Quality: TxDOT seeks, finds excellence



Wes Heald

In 1984 Congress designated October as National Quality Month. Each year, the President of the United States issues a proclamation encouraging business and government alike to recognize the importance of quality in the workplace during this month.

Many organizations now routinely designate the month of October to promote, educate and reinforce the concepts of quality and to recognize quality achievements in their organizations.

At TxDOT, we strive for quality as a part of our everyday work. Observing National Quality Month provides us an opportunity in TxDOT to emphasize quality in all that we do. And we take the time to recognize the efforts and contributions of so many of our staff.

For this reason, I am officially designating October as TxDOT Quality Month. I encourage you to use this month to seek out improvements in the way you work that will maintain quality while preserving precious

resources.

This is also a month to focus on our customers — both internal and external — and to strengthen partnerships with our consultants, contractors and suppliers.

It is also a great opportunity for each of us to assess our professional relationships with our co-workers and to make whatever improvements are appropriate.

I can assure you that the TxDOT Administration is committed to promoting quality. Earlier this year, Kirby Pickett and I conducted a thorough TxDOT Quality Program review with the staff of our Quality Management Branch in the Human Resources Division. We decided to strengthen this Quality Program with a number of special initiatives, some of which are being launched as part of TxDOT Quality Month.

In particular, we decided to establish a TxDOT Quality Council to oversee all Quality Programs at TxDOT. Kirby Pickett will serve as Quality Council Chairman and the council will include district and division representatives.

Another initiative I want to highlight is

the development of a page about TxDOT "best practices" on our Intranet. Many innovations and many employee ideas for improving the way we work are being identified through our Research and Technology Transfer Program, from suggestions many of you are submitting through the State Employee Incentive Program, from award nominations, and from other sources. We want all of you to benefit from these "best practices." The Quality Management Branch is developing this "best practices" page that is being introduced during TxDOT Quality Month. This will serve as a central location for posting innovations and as a resource to view and learn what others are doing.

I urge all TxDOT employees to join me in celebrating October as TxDOT Quality Month and to make a special effort to achieve quality in everything we do, from providing the best customer service possible to partnering with our consultants and contractors to build quality highways. ★

Charles W. Heald is TxDOT executive director.

State Employee Charitable Campaign invites us all to share



Cathy Williams

Every time we turn on the news we hear about people in need. A family loses everything in a fire. A worker falls ill from poisoning because he couldn't read the warning label on the chemical he was using. A new mother worries about her newborn lacking food or medicine.

Across the nation, charitable organizations serve people in need. But these agencies themselves are in dire need of assistance. However, the need is far greater than the available funds.

Even so, thousands of lives are touched and are improved every day through the work of organizations supported by the State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC). Such organizations include the likes of Ronald McDonald House Charities, ADAPT of Texas, or the Cancer Treatment

Research Foundation.

Because the need is so great, I have come to know that I can't help everyone. But through the SECC I can do my part to help.

I know some TxDOT employees who desire to donate to the campaign, to share some of what they have. But these same people may have felt their donation might be too small, or that it wouldn't make a difference. I used to feel that way.

There is no donation too small or too big to help people — in our local communities, across the state and around the world.

For those who may feel a donation is too small, please know that \$5 can save the lives of 50 babies suffering from life-threatening disease. A \$50 donation furnishes a wheelchair for a handicapped child. That same \$50 from you can even provide farm tools, seeds, building materials, pots and pans for emergency help to a family displaced by war.

The SECC offers Texas state employees

greater giving options with hundreds of charitable choices. The SECC is the only workplace campaign authorized by statute for state-agency workers.

The Texas Department of Transportation will join other state agencies in this year's SECC, which runs through Oct. 31. The theme for this year's campaign is "Committed to Caring." Your participation is strictly voluntary — you choose whether to give and how much.

I know TxDOT employees who have hearts as big as Texas. I know that TxDOT employees will be there for this plea of help. I welcome all TxDOT employees who want to make a difference to join me in helping this effort to again succeed — because we are committed to caring. ★

Cathy J. Williams is the assistant executive director for support operations.

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PUBLISHER

Eloise Lundgren

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Tim Cunningham

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Buddy Allison

CONTRIBUTING PIOs

Mark Cross

Randall Dillard

Julie Fernandez

Gabriela Garcia

Wendy Hopper

Kerry Neely

Cheryl Williams

STAFF SUPPORT

Wanda Burton

Al Glasscock

Monica Reyes

Amanda Martinez

Diana Ward

TRAVEL DIVISION

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Michael Amador

Geoff Appold

Griff Smith

Kevin Stillman

Stan A. Williams

PHOTO LIBRARIAN

Anne Cook

Got news?

Did your district newsletter run a story you think other TxDOT employees would enjoy reading? Do you know of a co-worker with an interesting hobby? We want your story ideas. To contribute, contact your district public information officer. He or she can pass it along to us. Or you can contact Executive Editor Tim Cunningham by phone at (512) 463-8955.

Submission info

- Photos and copy (articles, columns and letters) must be submitted by the second Friday of the month in order to appear in the most current issue of *Transportation News*.
- District employees should discuss potential submissions with their district PIO.
- Photos and copy should be sent as e-mail attachments to TCUNNIN as Microsoft Word files.
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A Day In The Life

Lawyer takes long, winding road to TxDOT

Right of Way Division's John Zimmerman and TxDOT 'made for each other'

John Zimmerman was destined to work for TxDOT. It was always in the stars for him to be an attorney working in the Right of Way Division. It might have taken him almost 20 years to get here, but it was inevitable.

Coming on board in May 1994, Zimmerman wears a lot of hats, particularly since the division has been two lawyers shy of operating at full strength at various times. As a matter of routine, he has handled day-to-day real estate issues and eminent domain, outdoor advertising issues (enforcement of sign statutes), disposition of surplus right of way, management of existing right of way, the acquisition and disposition of TxDOT facilities, and answered questions from the public.



Eloise Lundgren

In August, he was named director of the Right of Way Acquisition Section by division Director John Campbell. "What I do is so varied," he told me, "that it's really a snapshot of what the Right of Way Division does. Primarily, our job is to provide assistance and guidance to the districts in this complex process (land acquisition)."

But back to the wonderful story leading up to Zimmerman's decision to work for TxDOT. What a small world we live in indeed.

Born in an Army hospital in Longview during World War II, Zimmerman moved with his family to the Chicago area for a short time. Then the family moved to a rural farm near Columbia, Mo., and then back to Illinois where he attended kindergarten and first grade before moving again, this time to Washington state.

"My dad was an Army doctor," he said. "He was assigned to Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio after World War Two. Then, after the war, his early medical career took us to the other states, too."

After growing up in Washington, Zimmerman decided he needed to get away from home so he enrolled at the University of Oregon where he graduated with a degree in business administration. Then he started law school.

"I only got about half way through law school initially because the federal government decided to drop draft deferments for law school students," he said. "I decided to apply for a direct commission, and I received my draft notice and my commission into the Medical Services Corps the same day."

He was sent to familiar territory — Brook Army Medical Center, where he met his wife, Donna, who was a nursing student in San Antonio. They were married in 1970. Donna, a registered nurse since 1971, is the director of a licensed vocational nursing school in Jourdanon.

After a year in Korea, Zimmerman left the military in 1972 and returned to Willamette



Right of Way Acquisition Director John Zimmerman works with TxDOT district personnel in the often complex process of land acquisition.

University College of Law in Salem, Ore., where he graduated in December 1973.

"The energy crisis was upon us at that time," he recalled, "so we decided we needed to move somewhere we could be relatively sure of not running out of gas. Texas seemed to be the answer."

The Zimmermans moved to Jourdanon in June 1974. He was hired as a law graduate by a two-partner law firm since he hadn't passed the bar yet. He soon remedied that by taking the bar exam in the spring of 1974 and being admitted to the Texas Bar in October.

"I worked for them for about four years," Zimmerman said, "handling real estate matters, farm and ranch income tax returns and other routine legal issues."

But then he took his first step toward the right of way business.

"An Atascosa County commissioner wanted to have one of his county roads become an extension of Farm-to-Market Road 2146, and the county needed help in acquiring right of way," he said. "They hired our law firm and I ended up handling it — doing the title work, writing the offer letters, visiting and negotiating with the property owners, getting their signatures on deeds."

"I was kind of like a district right of way agent," he said. "Little did I know then what I would end up doing later in my career. As I look back, it was interesting to have had that

experience without knowing I would one day work for TxDOT."

He moved to Devine in 1978 to work for another law firm where he did a fair amount of real estate law and litigation and began developing expertise in oil and gas law. He handled another right of way issue, this time for the City of Devine and Medina County.

"The city and the county wanted to extend this farm-to-market road from what used to be U.S. 81 on through to Interstate 35 on new location, so I helped the city and county acquire the necessary right of way," he said.

Then, in 1982, Zimmerman opened a private rural law practice where he handled mostly rural real estate cases. But by 1991, it was time to do something else.

"The economy took a nosedive in the late '80s-early '90s," he said. "When my income dropped by about 50 percent, I decided to relocate back to Washington State. Also, I could be near my parents."

He took and passed the Washington Bar but didn't practice much law. "The economy there was also in a state of flux," Zimmerman said. "Besides, our kids didn't like it much, so we decided to move back to Texas."

Not wanting to go back into private practice, he considered working in the public sector. "I looked at several state agencies and

■ See ZIMMERMAN, Page 4

TxDOT joins forces to control Texas fires

By Susan Williams
Fort Worth District

Fire is just a spark waiting to happen in Texas due to the fact that 179 counties of 254 in Texas have signs of drought indicating extreme fire danger.

As motorists drive Texas roads there are signs that fire has preceded their visit and caused loss to land, homes, businesses, outbuildings, and even vehicles and farm equipment.

The Fort Worth District offers assistance to the Texas Response 2000 Fire Prevention Team headquartered in Granbury.

"TxDOT is at the disposal of the Texas Forest Service offering our assistance 24 hours a day until the fire risks have subsided. Requests from the Forest Service have mainly been for equipment like crawler loaders and motor graders, but manpower consisting of equipment operators and mechanics are also in demand,"

said Richard Schiller, Assistant Maintenance Engineer at the Fort Worth District.

Since Aug. 19, TxDOT emergency standby teams, alternating amongst district maintenance crews, have offered 24-hour weekend availability to the Texas Response Team residing in Granbury.

"We just flat do not have enough manpower to cover the state of Texas. Our firefighters are spread out with fires across the entire country such as the ones in Idaho and Montana. The Caterpillars and operators sent by the Texas Department of Transportation have been instrumental in helping contain the fires in this area. These guys (TxDOT Caterpillars) can go anywhere from the creeks to the ravines and the operators know how to use the equipment which is needed in fires such as the one in Ranger Hill," said Chief Law Enforcement Officer Ron Davis with the Texas Forest Service.

The Ranger Hill fire in Eastland and Palo Pinto Counties began Aug. 29, from a vehicle fire on I-20, 5 miles east of Ranger, TX, burning an expanse of 3,050 acres.

"During the Ranger Hill fire it was critical to have equipment sent from TxDOT to construct the fire lanes for structure protection. The terrain is rugged and having the access to skilled operated motor graders and crawler loaders was invaluable to contain the fire," said Traci Bowen, Fire Prevention Specialist.

When asked what can most of us do to help with the fire situation, Bowen expressed, "follow safety fire precautions and pray for rain."

The following are fire precautions from the Texas Forest Service that you can practice as citizens:

■ Limit, as much as possible, activities that could lead to an accidental start of a wildfire such

as careless debris burning, equipment use and improper disposal of smoking materials.

■ Create a defensible space of at least 30 feet around your home and outbuildings; closely mow lawns; trees should be pruned and spaced widely apart.

■ Establish fuel breaks along roadways, between buildings and fields or woodlands.

■ Watch out for sparks when using welding equipment outdoors.

■ Motorists should avoid driving or parking vehicles in grassy areas where tall, dry grass comes into contact with hot pollution control equipment under your vehicle.

■ Make sure that no metal hangs from your vehicle or trailer that could be a possible fire hazard due to contact with the road surface as you are driving down the highway. ★

Zimmerman

Continued from Page 3

found that TxDOT had exactly the kind of job I was looking for," he said. Kind of like that old saying — "made for each other," huh?

Apparently, most folks in the right of way business would agree. According to John Campbell, ROW Division director, Zimmerman "is a favorite contact with our district right of way counterparts, largely due to his willingness to help and his friendly disposition."

All 25 districts have a ROW section with a ROW administrator. This is largely a result of the Interstate program of the 1950s.

"In the early days of the old highway department," Zimmerman said, "the state didn't do much direct right of way acquisition. It was up to the department to build and maintain the roads, but it was up to the counties to acquire the required land for right of way."

"The Interstate program was the first time we had lots of federal dollars to buy land," he continued. "The department knew it was going to have to buy a lot of land in a hurry and relocate the property owners, so the

department established the Right of Way Division during the early part of the Interstate program and districts had to establish right of way sections."

Zimmerman believes the districts are still understaffed. "Districts vary on how much knowledge and experience their right of way agents have in order for them to clear titles. In recent years, we've started contracting with private vendors to help with right of way acquisition."

TxDOT has offered a basic ROW course, and the division is working on updating a newer version. "We also have some training in the mill on eminent domain issues," he said. "TxDOT averages about 25 to 30 parcels going to eminent domain each month."

"I can certainly appreciate what district right of way agents go through when they go through the process to acquire property for projects," he said. "The bottom line is we can't build or expand roads without right of way, and it's often a long, involved process."

Whenever he can find the time, Zimmerman likes to boat, fish and water ski. "I grew up on Puget Sound," he said. "I

loved to fish for salmon. Down here, I fish for bass.

It's a little harder to do in Texas (water recreation), but I have a boat and a trailer, so we go to the coast and the lakes around the state."

The "we" is his family: Donna, sons Shane and Wade and daughter Wendy. Shane is working on a graduate degree in Tyler and Wade is finishing his bachelor's degree at Sul Ross. Wendy completed her senior year of high school where she was head cheerleader and homecoming queen. She will attend Angelo State University this fall and also made the cheerleading squad as an incoming freshman.

It's pretty easy to see why Zimmerman is a popular guy in the districts. I learned more about ROW in just the short time I spent with him than I have in the nearly six years I've been at TxDOT. He likes his job and people, talks to you in plain English and has a wealth of knowledge.

Zimmerman is now serving as interim director of the newly formed Acquisition Section. Combining all of the direct land acquisition functions — appraisal, deed acquisitions and eminent domain, along with any associated relocation procedures — this section should help expedite overall right of way acquisition.

Sure glad fate led John Zimmerman to TxDOT. ★

Eloise Lundgren is director of the Public Information Office.

After growing up in Washington, Zimmerman decided he needed to get away from home so he enrolled at the University of Oregon. He earned a degree in business administration. Then he started law school.

Eligible employees consider BRP options

Human Resources explains choices available regarding Benefit Replacement Pay

By Barbara Struss
Human Resources Division

In the 1995 Texas state legislative session it was determined that the state's participation in paying federal Social Security, or FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act), taxes for state employees would be separated from state responsibility.

Even though the Legislature chose to disengage the state's involvement with this benefit, it elected to compensate employees through another means.

This meant that employees assuming payment of these taxes would receive what is now known as Benefit Replacement Pay (BRP) to offset the loss of these state-paid Social Security benefits.

Employees who meet eligibility requirements receive the same salary benefit as the previous state-paid Social Security. The Legislature established the following eligibility requirements for employees to receive the BRP benefit:

- Employees with continuing service who were on the payroll of TxDOT, or another state agency, on Aug. 31, 1995, are eligible to receive BRP, or

- An employee hired after Sept. 1, 1995, is eligible to receive BRP, if the employee was on a state agency payroll on Aug. 31, 1995, and if not more than one year has lapsed between the last date of termination and the new hire date.

If the FICA wages are \$16,500 or more annually, TxDOT provides its employees an option to level, or average over a 12-month period, their BRP compensation amount (\$1,026.86).

When leveling the BRP compensation amount (\$1,026.86), salaried (paid once per month) employees will receive \$85.58 per month for eleven months and \$85.48 the twelfth month.

Employees paid on an hourly basis (paid twice per month), if leveling, will receive \$42.79 for 23 pay periods and \$42.69 for the final pay period of the year.

Whether eligible employees are paid as salaried or hourly, BRP leveling establishes the net salary (gross salary after deductions) at about the same amount for the entire calendar year.

For clarification purposes, employees who are ineligible to level BRP compensation are identified as follows:

Employees with annual FICA wages below \$16,500.

Employees participating in TexFlex benefits, if the benefits cause FICA wages to be less than \$16,500.

Part-time employees.
Employees in a leave-without-pay (LWOP) status.

Rehired retirees.
The choice of BRP leveling is available once annually, usually each November, for eligible employees.

The Finance Division (FIN) notifies each district, division and office prior to Dec. 1 of the leveling option for eligible employees along with detailed information concerning BRP.

At this same time, the Employee Benefit Replacement Pay Leveling Form is provided by FIN so employees may select the leveling option or change their BRP leveling status.

If selected, the BRP leveling designation may not be withdrawn and will remain in effect

through Nov. 30 of the following year.

As stated above, employees eligible to receive BRP, and who participate for a full calendar year in the leveling option, receive \$1,026.86 in BRP benefits.

This figure may be less, however, if a BRP leveling employee terminates his or her employment during the year.

When terminations occur mid-year, there is no benefit replacement pay settlement for the difference between what was paid and what would have been paid if the employee had not leveled.

For this reason, an employee who plans to retire, or otherwise terminate employment during the coming year should not level.

Since retirement annuities through the Employees Retirement System (ERS) are calculated using the highest 36 monthly salaries, the BRP leveling option should be considered.

This means that, for employees approaching retirement, it may be advantageous to not level their BRP benefits.

If not leveling, an employee would experience several months at a higher gross salary, and thus, a higher retirement contribution.

To determine the higher gross

salary and the number of months it will be earned, divide the BRP gross income amount (\$16,500) by the monthly salary. As an example:

$\$16,500$ (BRP gross income amount) divided by $\$2,750$ (monthly salary) = 6 months

A non-leveling employee would experience a higher gross salary for 6 months. $\$1,026.86$ (BRP benefit amount) divided by 6 months (number of months of higher gross salary) = \$171.14 per month

The \$171.14 per month figure represents the higher BRP amount for non-leveling employees, as compared to \$85.58 for levelers.

So, this means that for employees contemplating retirement, the calculation of their highest 36 months of salary would be impacted when considering the higher monthly figure earned by non-levelers.

The higher the salary, the longer an employee must not level in order to maximize the retirement benefit.

The chart below reflects how many years of not leveling is required to gain the maximum benefit in the 36 month retirement annuity calculation. ★

Benefit Replacement Pay/Monthly Annuity Calculation	
WITHOUT Leveling Determining Factors	WITH Leveling Determining Factors
Maximum FICA wage = \$16,500 BRP Maximum = \$1,026.86 (6.22% x \$16,500) X=Employee's monthly salary Y=Number of months to reach BRP maximum Z=BRP monthly amount to be added to X for annuity calculation	Maximum FICA wage = \$16,500 BRP Maximum = \$1,026.86 (6.22% x \$16,500) X=Employee's monthly salary Y=Number of months to reach BRP maximum (always 12 months when leveling) Z=BRP monthly amount to be added to X for annuity calculation
Formula to Calculate Salary Amount for Annuity Calculation	Formula to Calculate Salary Amount for Annuity Calculation
Maximum FICA wage / X = Y (\$16,500 / X = Y) BRP maximum / Y = Z (\$1,026.86 / Y = Z) X + Z = monthly amount used for annuity calculation	Y = 12 Z = \$85.58 for 11 months and \$85.48 for 1 month \$85.58 + X = Monthly amount used for annuity calculation
EXAMPLE (Salary = X = \$2,750 per month)	EXAMPLE (Salary = X = \$2,750 per month)
$\$16,500$ (Max FICA wage) / $\$2,750$ = 6 months to reach BRP maximum $\$1,026.86 / 6 = \171.14 per month for BRP $\$2,750 + \$171.14 = \$2,921.14$ Monthly amount used for annuity calculation	12 months (always for levelers) to reach BRP maximum \$85.58 for 11 months and \$85.48 for 1 month for BRP $\$2,750.00 + \$85.58 = \$2,835.58$ for 11 months, and $\$2,750.00 + \$85.48 = \$2,835.48$ for 1 month Monthly amounts used for annuity calculation
Using the example salary of \$2,750.00, it will take six years of not leveling for the maximum benefit in the calculation of the highest 36 months for retirement to be realized. 6 months of higher BRP x 6 years = 36 months There are no salary changes reflected in the calculations.	Your Human Resources representative can offer additional information.

TEX, DOT promote safety with covers

ABILENE, Texas – Merkel Elementary School children are among those in several other Taylor county schools that will be covering schoolbooks this year with TEX and DOT's "Tools for Schools" book covers provided by the Texas Department of Transportation.

TEX and DOT are two cartoon characters that, along with their dog Buckles, help TxDOT provide information about transportation and safety.

Mary Beth Kilgore and Brenda Mitchell visited with school officials at Merkel, Tye and Trent elementary schools recently to deliver book covers that promote TxDOT's new



Internet-based educational resource for students and teachers.

Kilgore, Abilene district public information officer, said that TxDOT's Kid's Page has something for every student regardless of the student's age or reading level.

"The page contains photos and facts on a variety of trans-

portation topics including road and bridges, construction equipment and machines, different kinds of transportation, school safety, traffic signals and signs, recycling, litter prevention, archeology, bats, coastal erosion and wildflowers."

The website also contains facts about Texas, coloring pages that include K-1 level text and a section with puzzles and TEX and DOT's Coloring and Activity Book.

Mitchell, district traffic safety coordinator, added that along with information for students, there is a resource page for teachers.

"The Teacher's Tote Bag con-

tains links to many educational websites. As TxDOT continues to develop this teacher's resource page, we will provide publications for teachers to download and print from the Web site to enhance classroom instruction on a variety of transportation-related topics," Kilgore said.

Kilgore and Mitchell are visiting elementary schools in the Abilene district's 13-county area.

They are delivering the "Tools for Schools" book covers and discussing the Department's new web site with school administrators.

Look for the Tools for Schools logo on TxDOT's home page at www.dot.state.tx.us. ★

TxDOT offers safety tips for teachers and children on fact-filled Kid's Page

AUSTIN—Students, parents and teachers looking for transportation safety information during this back-to-school season can find it on the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Kid's Page at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/KidsOnly/splashpg/splashpg.html>.

This site offers safety tips about buses, crosswalks, neighborhood walking and playing, and bicycle and helmet safety.

"Safety must be the top priority as pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists share the road," said Kerry Neely, TxDOT's community relations manager.

"We have developed a School and Neighborhood Safety section as part of the Kid's Page, which is a great aid in teaching kids about traffic safety."

TxDOT's Tools for Schools Kid's Page is a colorful and helpful website designed for users of all ages. In addition to back-to-school safety tips, it offers a variety of transportation-related information about different modes of transportation; Texas history, flags and facts; roads and bridges; construction equipment and machines; traffic signals and signs; recycling; litter prevention; archeology; bats; coastal erosion and wildflowers.

"TxDOT's Kid's Page has something for everyone regardless of age or reading skill," said Neely. ★

Kudos for Kid's Page

"When I got the information on your site I couldn't wait to see it. I thought it was GREAT!!! I am a fourth-grade social studies teacher. I found all kinds of information I can have my class look up on Texas. I know they will love it too. Thank you so much for all the work you put into getting this site ready for us. I know we will use it in our classroom regularly."

—Stinnett, TX, fourth-grade teacher

"I just wanted to let you all know that I thoroughly enjoy this site. I have three young boys, and I know they will like it when I show them this. I'm going to share it with their teachers also in case they haven't run across it yet."

—Alvin, TX, parent

"I was observing a fourth-grade classroom today, and they were discussing the regions of Texas. I showed a teacher the TEXAS information on your site and she was thrilled! It fit right in with what she was doing! She came up with three things she was going to use it for right on the spot so it made me feel good that the first reaction from the first teacher that saw it was so positive! Way to go!"

—Plano, TX, elementary school principal

"I love it!! It is so "kid friendly." Wish I could make my own homepage that good."

—Plano, TX, education technology coordinator

Dallas District chosen for \$1 billion pilot project

By Jim Dobbins
Environmental Affairs Division

The Dallas District is one of 10 sites in seven states selected for a pilot program designed to streamline and accelerate highway construction projects while protecting the environment.

The project, the only one in the Southwest, is the Loop 12/Interstate 35E corridor major investment study and environmental assessment. This 13.5-mile project, located in Dallas and Irving, features a mix of improvements to existing highways, reversible high-occupancy vehicle lanes, commuter or light rail, and pedestrian and bicycle

access.

The project is expected to cost about \$1 billion.

Originally scheduled for letting in fiscal year 2009, the project's letting date could be moved to fiscal year 2005 or 2006, according to Dallas District environmental coordinator Dan Perge.

"We are very excited about the selection of this project for the streamlining pilot program. We are honored that this is one of 10 projects selected from among many across the country," Perge said.

"We are looking forward to developing some time-saving processes in order to speed-up

the process. I have a lot of ideas, but nothing specific has been decided yet."

Congress mandated such "environmental streamlining" in Section 1309 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21).

Section 1309 calls for a coordinated review process to expedite federal highway and transit projects. The environmental streamlining section establishes a coordinated review process by which the U.S. Department of Transportation works with other federal agencies to cooperate in advancing transportation projects.

"Everyone says they want to cut federal red tape — and it's up

to us to find out how," said John Horsley, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), which initiated the pilot program.

"We want to protect the environment, but we also must deliver the transportation projects essential to the American economy," he said.

The metropolitan site for the project is part of one of the Environmental Protection Agency's non-attainment areas for ozone pollution.

Other environmental issues are related to the presence of wetlands and levees along the Elm Fork of the Trinity River. ★

Bass receives Motor Carrier LEAD Award

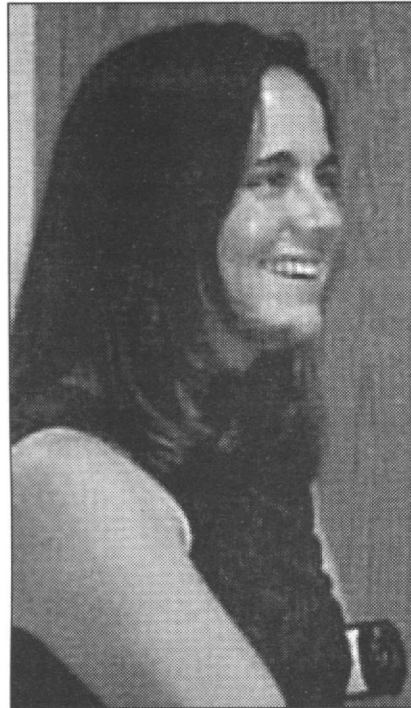
By Carol Vinton
Motor Carrier Division

For Mallie Bass, Sept. 8 was turning out to be a hectic day.

Although she had planned to take off work at noon, Motor Carrier Division (MCD) Director Lawrence Smith had asked her earlier in the week if she could stay until mid-afternoon. Apparently, several state representatives from the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (WASHTO) were planning a visit to TxDOT's Motor Carrier Division.

Since Mallie is the primary permit officer responsible for issuing oversize/overweight permits under the WASHTO Regional Permitting Agreement, it was obvious that she would be very qualified to answer any questions about how Texas' program works. What Mallie didn't know, as she spent her morning running reports and preparing information for the visitors, was that Smith had another reason for keeping her in the office.

Sept. 8 was also the day that



Mallie Bass receives the Motor Carrier Division LEAD award.

MCD employees celebrated their fifth year of providing quality customer service to the motor carrier industry and the public. They celebrated their "birthday" with barbecued brisket, cake, and numerous side dishes provided by employees.

Along with that celebration,

Smith announced the winner of the 2000 MCD LEAD Award. Mallie was surprised to learn that there weren't actually any visitors expected that day, but that Smith had invented the story to keep Mallie from leaving early. You see, Mallie Bass was the recipient of the 2000 LEAD Award, and it just wouldn't do for her not to receive it in person.

Since 1998, the MCD LEAD Award has been presented annually to a MCD employee or district permit coordinator who best exemplifies the qualities of Leadership, Enthusiasm, Attitude, and Dedication. When nominating Mallie, MCD's Permit Branch Manager Curtis Wagner praised her willingness to go the extra mile and her enthusiastic dedication to performing assignments in a highly productive manner.

As far as issuing permits goes, Mallie consistently managed to exceed production goals while maintaining a 100% accuracy rate over the past year. Wagner describes her as very dependable and "ready to accept any challenge."

Mallie was also praised for her high standards, her initiative in

proposing ideas and solutions to problems, and her determination to make permitting processes "user friendly" for both internal and external customers.

Mallie says that receiving the award was "a shock. I never expected to receive something like that." She also stated that she didn't "really feel like this is my personal award, since all members of our team are equally responsible for the success of our programs."

Mallie, a 12-year TxDOT employee, is skilled in the issuance of general oversize/overweight permits as well as many specialty permits including WASHTO and Superheavy permits. She was also responsible for setting up the accounting functions for WASHTO permits as well as processes to implement WASHTO permit issuance.

Despite her surprise at winning the 2000 LEAD Award, Mallie is an experienced award winner. In 1997, Mallie and other members of MCD's Continuous Improvement Team on Permit Operations received TxDOT's Journey Toward Excellence Team Award. ★

TxDOT rewrites construction, maintenance specifications

By Thomas Bohuslav
Construction Division

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is rewriting its "Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Highways, Streets and Bridges." These specifications are considered the standard for many agencies in Texas and nationally.

TxDOT's specifications have evolved since the first specification book was published in 1938. The department rewrites its specifications about every 10 years. The last major rewrite was published in 1993, with the 1995 publication being primarily a conversion to metric units.

The question now arises, "Why do a rewrite?" A rewrite is needed for two reasons.

First, the specifications need to be updated. Changes in regulations, industry practices and in national standards; the need for improved efficiency in contract administration; contractor operations; and the introduction of new materials necessitate this update.

With this rewrite, TxDOT will try to cut excessive language,

eliminate overly restrictive requirements, and focus requirements on performance and results.

Second, TxDOT maintains corporate knowledge by using both experienced people (those who have been involved in rewriting previous specifications) and newer employees with experience in specification requirements.

Hopefully, these newer employees will be around at the time of the next specification rewrite.

This will provide a pathway to transfer technical knowledge and experience and ensure that TxDOT has a solid background in developing and interpreting specifications.

Recognizing that tendencies are to rewrite what is already written, individuals involved in the specification rewrite task are being asked to make a major change in the format and style of the specifications.

The first change will involve revising the language from passive voice to active voice and the mood to imperative. In changing the voice, the word "shall" that has traditionally been used

throughout the specifications will no longer be used. In changing the mood, sentences will start with a verb and the contractor will be the understood audience.

Without providing an English lesson, I'll present an example. Under current specifications in Article 204.2 Materials, the first sentence reads: "Water shall be furnished by the contractor and shall be clean and free from industrial waste and other objectionable material."

Written in active voice and imperative mood, the statement is rewritten as "Furnish water free of industrial waste and other objectionable material." The rewritten sentence is more direct and concise.

The second format and style change will revise the outline format of the specifications. We will standardize the Articles as follows: XXX.1 Description; XXX.2 Materials; XXX.3 Equipment; XXX.4 Construction or Work Requirements; XXX.5 Measurement; and XXX.6 Payment.

In making both the voice and mood change and revising the outline format, we will completely rewrite the specifications.

This is of benefit both to TxDOT and industry in that it provides an opportunity to make deep and meaningful positive

changes.

Here is where the assistance of industry is needed.

We recently provided information regarding our specification rewrite to various associations representing industry. The information provided included the specifications to be revised over the next two to three years, the deadlines for each specification revision, and the identity of the responsible individuals.

We have tasked each subcommittee with specification rewrite responsibilities to provide industry, as represented by various associations, with an opportunity for input early in the specification development process.

Each subcommittee will tailor this task for each specification with varying approaches, such as informal meetings, requests for input, or formal meetings. TxDOT wants to solicit input before we begin the rewrite.

After a draft version is completed, it will be sent to the appropriate associations with a 30-day comment period provided.

Our goal is to publish the specifications in July 2003. This is an aggressive timeline for a monumental task. Constructive participation is needed to move these specifications to a more performance-focused and result-oriented standard. ★

These specifications are considered the standard for many agencies in Texas and nationally.



TQI Partnering (Precious Cargo Program) from left: Penny Beaumont, Susan Lancaster, Bernie Fette, Mike West, Terry Sams, Linden Burgess, Mark Ball and Jay Nelson.



Quality Initiative Award, Breaking the Mold (Helicopter-mounted Laser Survey) from left: Jim Langston, Larry Redden, Harry W. Thompson.



TQI Risk Taking (Total Maintenance and Operation of Highways Contracts Team) from left: Zane Webb, Carlos Lopez, Joe Graff, Larry Colclasure, Jay Nelson, Mike Heise and Paul Montgomery.



State Quality Initiative (Road to Recycling Project) from left: Sam Reyes, Howard "Mickey" C. Cochran Jr., Larry Zatopek, Rebecca Davio and Tony Tijerina.

Initiatives in quality honored at luncheon

Quality Committee praises those who 'make a difference'

AUSTIN, Texas — The 2000 Texas Quality Initiative Making a Difference Awards were presented last month to those responsible for four outstanding efforts at TxDOT. Michael Behrens, TxDOT assistant executive director for engineering operations and chairman of the Texas Quality Initiative Steering Committee made the presentations at the Associated General Contractors annual awards luncheon Sept. 7 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Austin.

The Texas Quality Initiative (TQI) is a partnership consisting of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Associated General Contractors of Texas, Texas Hot Mix Asphalt Pavement Association (THMA-PA), Texas Aggregates and Concrete Association (TACA),

Texas Chapter-American Concrete Pavement Association (TACPA), Texas Public Works Association (TPWA), Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), Center for Transportation Research (CTR) and Consulting Engineers Council of Texas (CEC).

TQI is dedicated to continuous quality improvement in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of Texas highways and in promoting partnerships to improve highway quality.

The TQI Awards, in the past, have been presented every other year and have served as the process to select nominations for the National Quality Initiative (NQI) Awards. Last year, TxDOT's Dallas North Central Expressway S-2 Project was the national winner of the prestigious NQI Achievement Award.

This year the NQI introduced the Making A Difference Awards, and the TQI Steering Committee agreed to follow suit by establishing the TQI Making A Difference Award. This new award is presented in four cate-

gories: Partnering, Breaking The Mold, Risk Taking, and State Quality Initiative

■ Partnering

Partnering is in practice all across the United States today and continues to pay big dividends. Some have added new meaning to the term and have expanded its application to other cooperative quality endeavors, such as highway design, construction and maintenance, materials supply, subcontracting, communication, and conflict resolution.

This team award is designed to show the pro-active and innovative methods being used to improve performance.

Texas Quality Initiative, Making a Difference, Partnering Award was presented to TxDOT Dallas District and Texas Transportation Institute, Texas A&M University for the "Precious Cargo Program."

Responding to a tragic school-zone accident and the resulting community concerns, Dallas District with assistance from TTI effectively partnered with numerous school districts, community groups, and others to develop an initiative that addresses prevention of school zone traffic problems. This initiative, named "Precious Cargo," has become a model for other departments of transportation around the country.

■ Breaking the Mold

Improvement in quality does not occur without some change. This team award identifies champions of new ideas whose innovative departure from current practice produces major results.

Texas Quality Initiative, Making a Difference, Breaking the Mold Award was presented to TxDOT Lufkin District and Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade and Douglas for the Helicopter-Mounted Laser Survey for I-69.

Faced with having to meet an original project schedule now requiring full schematic design instead of just a conceptual design for a 42-mile long corridor newly designated as part of IH-69, the Lufkin District, Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade and Douglas, and the entire US 59 Master Plan Team selected, tested, and implemented the first-time use of light detecting and ranging technology for highway surveying in Texas. This unprecedented testing and use of light detecting and ranging technology represents a new standard for obtaining data for designing highways through thickly vegetated and inaccessible areas.

■ Risk Taking

There is some risk involved in almost any attempt to improve. Texas Quality Initiative,

■ See Quality Awards, Page 11

October
being observed as
TxDOT Quality Month

Awards honor construction, design projects

By Julie Fernandez
Public Information Office

Ten TxDOT construction projects and two design projects won industry recognition last month with the annual Project Awards.

The Project Awards, distributed Sept. 7 during the Austin conference of Associated General Contractors, are designed to honor those in the field who overcome the challenges of a difficult project.

"All of our projects require cooperation, but some require more cooperation than others," said Executive Director Wes Heald. "These awards recognize the folks who have exemplified a special spirit of cooperation."

CONSTRUCTION AWARDS

Abilene District

Area Engineer Arthur R. Barrow and Superintendent G.G. (Sarge) Strickland of Price Dirt and Paving Contractors teamed up to complete two projects involving unusual materials and construction techniques new to the Abilene District. The projects included rehabilitation of existing roadway and lighting and safety on Interstate 20 in Mitchell and Nolan counties.

A 12.5-mm Superpave hot mix was used for the riding surface. This material can experience difficult placement properties when made within specification parameters, and this project experienced this phenomenon.

However, the team successfully placed the material by modifying materials, mix proportions, rolling patterns and transport practices.

Cooperative efforts worked well again when a modification of the mix design was required. The project sequence on both projects required milling off the top two inches of existing pavement after the base repair. A surface treatment was then required to seal any cracks uncovered by the milling process. When cracks up to two inches were uncovered, crack seal material – manufactured on site – was used although crack seal season was over. Rolled roofing shingles were also used on top of the crack seal material to help bridge gaps caused by cracks.

The Nolan County project was the first to use crumb rubber and a first for the contractor. High mast lighting assemblies, new to the area office, were included in the Mitchell County project. All projects were completed on time and within budget, in spite of the interesting challenges.

Amarillo District

Engineer technician **Edwardo Olivarez** and superintendent **Bobby Johnson** with **Gilvin-Terrill, Inc.** worked together to rehab 3.98 miles of existing pavement on busy U.S. Highway 287. This section had proven troublesome over the last 10 years with repeated rehabilitation projects. Traffic flow, work zone safety and material storage were

challenges throughout the project.

Open communication between the contractor and TxDOT proved successful. The team decided the bottom 10 inches of base would be best stabilized with cement, requiring the base to be placed in two different layers and processed with two completely different types of materials. They also decided that "asphalt stabilized base" would be replaced with "rework base material." This decision removed the requirement of an onboard pugmill and resulted in savings for TxDOT without compromising the pavement structure. Koch Materials helped to process an asphaltic stabilization design unfamiliar to the district and contractor. They provided on site personnel to assist, and the contractor was extremely cooperative in performing the required manipulations to produce an excellent base material. A safety feature added to this project was the addition of rumble strips on shoulders.

The practices and procedures learned on this project are now used to develop plans for future projects.

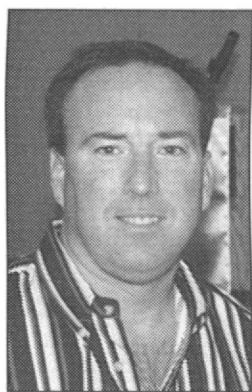
Childress District

Engineer technician **Robert "Todd" Nelson** and Superintendent **Randy Martin** with **Gilbert Texas Construction Company, Inc.** are responsible for the construction of a Super-Two section of U.S. Highway 62/83 – a project with significant impact on quality, safety and public relations. This six-mile section of U.S. 83 ran through a business area, a strip mall, a residential area and a hospital – the only regional trauma center for several counties.

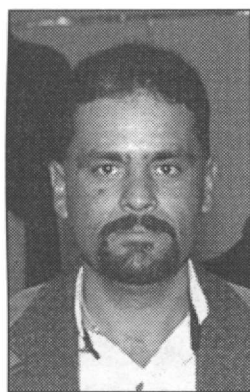
The project consisted of widening pavement on both sides, removing the existing pavement section and lime stabilizing the subgrade. A flexible base section was then placed with a hot mix asphalt-riding

■ See Project Awards, Page 10

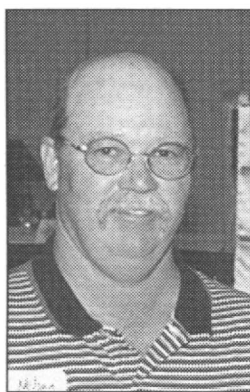
PHOTOS BY
GEOFF
APPOLD



BARROW
Project IH20
Abilene District



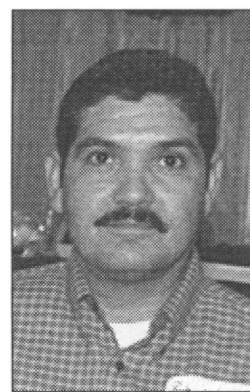
OLIVAREZ
Project 287
Amarillo District



NELSON
Project 83
Childress District



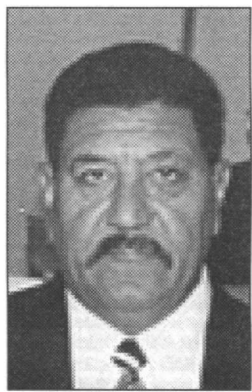
VALDEZ
Project SH 358
Corpus Christi Dist.



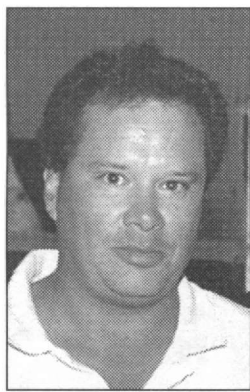
LOPEZ
Project SH 358
Corpus Christi Dist.



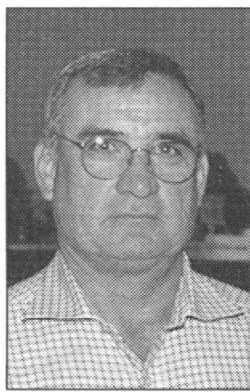
SKINNER
Project US 181
Corpus Christi Dist.



ORTIZ
Project US 181
Corpus Christi Dist.



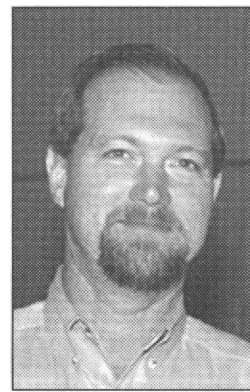
WINNER
Project Loop 250
Odessa District



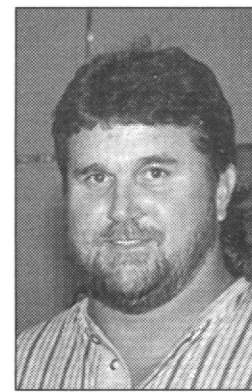
COBARRUBIAS
Project US 77/83
Pharr District



RUFFIN
Project US 377
San Angelo District



QUALLS
Project VA (Mission
Trails, Phase 1)
San Antonio District



WILLIAMSON
Project FM 2964
Tyler District

Project Awards

Awards cite cooperation in projects

Continued from Page 9

surface. Removing the material to expose the subgrade caused a potential access problem with each adjacent landowner and businesses. Key to the success of the project were periodic meetings with everyone affected to identify issues in advance.

Considerations for safety took a front seat throughout the project. The project included the removal of a narrow creek bridge in a high water table, solving a potential pavement edge drop-off problem and installing storm sewers under five lanes of traffic. The entire project was completed well ahead of schedule and construction engineering costs were held very low.

Upon completion, the City of Childress passed a resolution proclaiming Jan. 20, 2000 "Gilbert Texas Day" in appreciation for the cooperative and timely completion of this and another adjacent Gilbert Texas Construction Company project.

■ Corpus Christi District

Construction inspectors **Ruben G. Lopez** and **Raul Valdez Jr.**, and superintendent **Manuel Chapa** with **Haas-Anderson Construction, Inc.** teamed up to complete a \$5 million project 52 days early.

The project improved intersections on Texas 358, also known as South Padre Island Drive — the primary transportation artery in Corpus Christi with a daily traffic volume average of more than 140,000 vehicles. To gain extra lane width at the busy intersections, side slopes were removed and replaced with retaining walls.

Major challenges were expected, as work was under way during two Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons. However, full cooperation between TxDOT and Haas-Anderson lessened a potentially adverse affect on motorists and retailers. Work was done during

evening and off-peak hours. Message boards, police assistance and extensive media coverage kept the public informed.

Through successful partnering, time and costs were reduced by changing the proposed procedure for installing the retaining wall drill shaft. The drill shaft subcontractor modified his sequence of work to install the drill shafts from the main travel lane, blocking the shoulder and one lane of freeway. Because of the aggressive schedule, work at the primary intersections serving shopping and mall areas were finished before the second busy shopping season, much to the delight of holiday shoppers and area retailers.

■ Corpus Christi District

The Corpus Christi District is recipient of a second construction award. Engineering technician **Brian D. Skinner** and engineering specialist **Vicente T. Ortiz** worked with superintendents **James Pintens** and **Gary Kelley** of **Bay LTD** on major improvements to U.S. Highway 181 — the only north-south connection across Nueces Bay. Providing vehicle access and emergency service from one side of Portland to the other was critical to project planning.

This \$11 million project required widening the road to a full freeway and lowering the pavement to raise the clearance of a 14 foot, 5 inch underpass to 18 feet. More than 180,000 cubic yards of dirt also had to be removed.

Because of limited right of way, the usual practice of retained earth walls could not be used. More than 70,000 square feet of walls using more than 700 drilled shafts were required for the project. The drilled shafts were tied to cast-in-place vertical walls. These were new to the district and featured large graphic representations of fish and birds native to the area.

Mother Nature provided a major challenge when 14 inches of rain fell within a six-hour period. Frontage roads and adjacent streets flooded, and large volumes of water in the construction canyon posed a threat

of serious mudslides of the project's earthen walls to the only roadway through the area. Large volumes of excavated dirt remaining in the area were pushed against the existing dirt walls for support.

Through innovative handling of construction operations, this major improvement project to U.S. 181 was completed on time and with few disruptions to both regular traffic and emergency vehicles.

■ Odessa District

Engineer technician **Richard L. "Rick" Winner** and Superintendent **Roland Pinkerton** with **Reece Albert Inc.** teamed up with more than 30 partners to improve 1.7 miles of Loop 250 in Midland.

A notable result of the \$7.9 million project was a value-engineering change order that saved \$43,500 in retaining wall construction costs. Groundwork for the spirit of partnership began with a daylong session where 30 individuals, from contractors to subcontractors, to testing and engineering personnel, carefully worked through "worst case" scenarios.

Daily briefings followed to proceed with a project that met a myriad of problems, such as: traffic control during a major Fourth of July fireworks display, dust control during baseball games at the Texas League stadium; revisions in the project's sign specifications to match TxDOT's new sign standards, retrofitting light fixtures to conform to Federal Aeronautic Association specifications, and perhaps most significantly — an unexpected 30-day addition to the project to reconstruct the intersection of Texas 349 with Loop 250.

Despite the complexity and size of this major urban construction project, the work was completed ahead of schedule and within budget — a tribute to the commitment of every partner involved.

■ Pharr District

Construction engineer technician **Francisco Cobarrubias Jr.** worked with superintendent **Leon Wright** with **Williams Brothers Construction Co., Inc.** to widen and extend a major thoroughfare in Brownsville to coincide with the completion and opening of a new international bridge. U.S. Highway 77/83 South connects directly to the proposed Veterans Memorial International Bridge at Los Tomates.

TxDOT's San Benito Area Office and the contractor

received the Excellence in Partnering Award from District Engineer **Amadeo Saenz** for its commitment to finish the project on time. They worked together to resolve traffic control issues, conflicts with utilities and delays and public concerns.

Construction created environmental concerns requiring close coordination with agencies to protect wildlife habitats. Utility and weather delays also posed potential for the project to fall behind. However, commitment stood firm and completion of the main lanes stayed on schedule because the fabrication and delivery of materials was placed on a revised and accelerated schedule. The project also took on a change order to build phase 2 concurrent with phase 1 of the U.S. 77/83 improvements.

At the opening ceremony of the new international bridge, Texas Gov. **George W. Bush** and President **Cedillo** of Mexico spoke of the importance of the new facility to the continued commerce between two countries.

■ San Angelo District

Construction inspector/engineer technician **Troy D. Ruffin** and **Pete Hipolito** with **Relmco, Inc.** confronted the challenges of rebuilding a washed out low water crossing where there were no physical monuments remaining to locate the crossing.

Everything to tie the crossing with the existing topography of this project on U.S. Highway 377 was lost during two separate floods in 1998.

This crossing was one of four rebuilt to pre-flood conditions on U.S. 377 and Ranch-to-Market Road 479. The two roads are major collectors with U.S. 377 and provide a vital north-south link from Interstate 10 in Junction to Del Rio. The entire scope of the project changed with the loss of the original low water markings. The crew faced the challenge of placing retaining walls in swift water currents 14-foot deep and paid close attention to not pollute the pristine waters of the South Llano River. This highly visible project required close cooperation in determining materials, construction phasing and traffic control.

Because of the close relationship and can-do attitude developed throughout this challenging project, construction of the other three crossings went exceptionally well. This major north-south link was reconstructed with no adverse impact on the environment or the traveling public.

The Project Awards honor those in the field who overcome the challenges of a difficult project.

■ See Project Awards, Page 11

Project Awards

Citations detail excellence in team efforts

Continued from Page 10

■ San Antonio District

Construction inspector **Reginald M. Qualls** and Superintendent **Jim Smith** with **E.E. Hood & Sons, Inc.** teamed up on a project of intense public interest in San Antonio. They successfully completed phase 1 of the Mission Trails Project, a 12-mile transportation improvement project designed to improve accessibility among the five missions of San Antonio.

Phase 1 involved three miles surrounding the San Francisco de la Espada Mission in south San Antonio. The \$3.8 million dollar project added a 10-foot-wide walkway for hikers and bicyclists and a rest area with restrooms and a scenic view. A new roadway was also constructed with parallel paver bands to delineate the mission trail and much needed drainage and utility improvements.

The local community charged with protecting the city's historic missions scrutinized the project. Monthly meetings were held to update the residents on the project. Great care was also taken to preserve native trees and plants and to install pollution and erosion controls to protect the river. When conflicts arose between drainage and utility placement, the team worked together to minimize project delays by re-phasing the project work sequence. Team members also spent much of their own time at local hardware stores to find dark green residential mailboxes to match the green illumination

poles, bollards and pedestrian rails along the roadway. The completed project was recognized locally by both politicians and the media.

■ Tyler District

Engineering technician **Jimmy D. Williamson** worked with Superintendent **Roy C. Traylor** with **Simon Traylor & Sons, Inc.** to complete this \$2.4 million project in Smith County nine months early.

The project included both rehabilitation and widening of Texas 110 and the construction of left turn lanes at Farm-to-Market Road 346. Traffic flow and work zone safety were challenges throughout the entire project.

The team met one-on-one with residents within the work area to provide up to date information on the project status. With careful planning and close cooperation, they provided continuous access to the residents and businesses along the construction project.

The team met daily to discuss construction activities, contract compliance and construction progress. These meetings proved beneficial, since numerous construction activities had to be rescheduled in the field during construction. Numerous utilities had to be located in order to lay and extend drainage structures. They also had to decide the length of the roadway that could be scarified and reshaped and still be able to provide safe access to about 4,000 vehicles daily.

The project received accolades from local residents and retailers and was the subject of several "thank-you" letters to the editor of the Tyler Morning Telegraph newspaper.

DESIGN AWARDS

■ El Paso District

Design engineer supervisor **Mark Charles Longenbaugh** confronted the challenges of designing the reconstruction of Doniphan Drive in El Paso, an industrial road located in a complex area of multiple utilities and potential hazardous contamination. Doniphan Road lies in a flat river bottom area next to the Rio Grande River. The existing right of way is only 80 feet wide and accommodates a roadway typical section 64 feet wide.

Doniphan Drive is a major utility corridor, with five utilities running within the existing right of way and throughout the project limits. Logenbaugh had to furnish a corridor assignment to each utility in the border area between the right of way boundary on the industrial side of the roadway and the back of the proposed curb. This border space was about 9 feet, 4 inches wide, and had to accommodate all utilities and a storm sewer system. The storm sewer was designed to fit under the roadway. A new dewatering specification was written to accommodate the high volume of water pumped out to place the storm sewer line, sanitary sewer line, water lines and storm sewer inlets. Coordination was paramount in this instance between TxDOT and city utility districts.

A challenging aspect of the design was to prevent hazardous contamination of groundwater and soil during de-watering and trenching operations. New specifications were developed for a jet grout stabilized trench, a ground water mobile treatment system unit, and a jet grout panel cut-off wall used in the area — a first for any previous TxDOT projects and for the state.

■ Fort Worth District

Retired engineer **Joe Potter** is no stranger to historic bridge restoration projects. He has been the designer of several such projects in the Fort Worth District. This award honors his work on the Lancaster Bridge at Clear Fork Trinity River.

Constructed in the mid-1930s, the Lancaster Bridge is one-half mile long and approximately 3,000 feet wide. A paint job and a concrete overlay of the bridge were originally planned, but upon inspection, cracks were revealed in the bridge deck and it was contaminated with salt. This factor turned a minor bridge repair job into a major reconstruction project that was delayed for two years in order to acquire more funding. Potter designed the renovations to bring the bridge load rating from Texas 15 to Texas 20. Improved beams were installed and material was added to strengthen the structure that had problems with the deck truss under the bridge. Potter used a special computer program to determine the stress level of the bridge, analyzing the crush unit as a space frame and boosting substructure supports. Potter also had to obtain design exceptions on both the bridge width and the bridge railing.

The bridge also needed a good paint job. The painter used a steel grit to remove old paint and help reduce hazardous waste material. Potter worked closely with city and historical association officials on an approved paint scheme, and to ensure the historical integrity of the bridge remained intact. Potter completed the restoration project in time for the opening of the Fort Worth Stock Show, under budget and with 29 days to spare. ★

Quality Awards

Continued from Page 8

Making a Difference, Risk Taking Award was presented to the Total Maintenance and Operation of Highways Contracts Team, led by the Maintenance Division with participation by Traffic Operations Division and the Dallas and Waco Districts.

In 1999, for the first time in its history, the Texas Department of Transportation awarded two separate contracts for the Total Maintenance and Operation on sections of its interstate highways in Dallas and Waco districts.

This is the first time this type

of contract had been used in Texas and the first time, so far as is known, that this type of contract had been let to bid anywhere in the United States using a low-bid process. The two contracts involve an unprecedented level of risk for the department and for the contractor.

■ Quality Initiative

Quality in highway design, construction, maintenance, and operations programs can best be accomplished by state quality initiatives formed by local industry organizations joining the state highway agency and the local

Federal Highway Administration Division to develop and nurture strategies to achieve better quality and better performing highways. This team award is given to recognize a premier state quality initiative.

The Texas Quality Initiative, Making A Difference Award, State Quality Initiative was presented to the TxDOT General Services Division's Recycling and Recycled Products Program — Road To Recycling Project.

The Road to Recycling Project is part of a formal TxDOT statewide recycling program begun in 1994 to promote waste reduction and the use of

recycled products in all aspects of the department's operations. Road to Recycling initiatives have increased awareness, fostered development of high-quality recycled materials, and significantly increased the use of recycled materials in road construction throughout Texas and beyond.

Efforts to promote and use recycled materials in road construction have paid off with noteworthy accomplishments including the purchase of more than \$214 million in recycled road construction materials and the diversion of more than four million tons of recycled materials from landfills. ★

TxDot Roundup

Texas Highways magazine offers first CD: 'Under the Texas Sky'

AUSTIN – Looking for the perfect Christmas gift? Look no further. Texas Highways magazine is releasing its first music CD, *Under the Texas Sky*, in partnership with Rounder Records. Long known as one of the pre-eminent roots music labels, Rounder Records has been recording folk, bluegrass, traditional country, Cajun, zydeco, and other styles for more than 25 years.

From the hundreds of recordings in the Rounder Records library, the magazine selected 12 titles that evoke the spirit of Texas.

Artists on the CD include Nanci Griffith, Tish Hinojosa, Riders in the Sky, Johnny Gimble, and Wylie & the Wild West with guest vocalist Ray Benson on one of the CD's best known tunes, "Jingle, Jangle, Jingle." The CD is a mix of traditional and contemporary folk, country, and bluegrass sounds.

Kathy Murphy, Travel Publications Section director and publisher of the magazine, worked closely with Rounder Records in developing a CD collection that readers of Texas Highways would enjoy.

"TxDOT employees are our favorite ambassadors for Texas Highways magazine," says Murphy. "They love the magazine and have a special Texas pride. Just as the magazine reminds them of why Texas is special, I'm sure this CD will too. It's not available anywhere else, which is why I think this collection will make a wonderful gift for family and friends who enjoy both music and the Lone Star State."

Texas Highways magazine adds the CD to its family of products which includes posters, note cards, and calendars. The CD is available for \$12.98 plus shipping and handling. It can be purchased from the Texas Highways Gift Shop, 150 Riverside Dr., Austin, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., or by ordering through the magazine's customer service number, 1-800-839-4997. ★

Awards recognize professionalism of department's communicators

AUSTIN – Professional communicators from TxDOT, recognized for outstanding professional achievement, received awards recently from the department's Public Information Office.

Winners received the awards in August at Texas A&M University as part of a training conference conducted by the Public Information Office.

Travel Division's entry "Building Bridges" won in the audio-visual category.

Richard Goldsmith, Environmental Division, was recognized in the graphics category for a poster titled "Endangered Species."

Mark Ball, Dallas District, and the Texas Transportation Institute were honored for their efforts in the media/community relations category for their entry "Precious Cargo."

The TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office entry "Texas Transportation Priorities" won in the publications category.

Susan Sampson, Auto Theft Prevention Authority, won in the writing category for the entry "Annual Report."

Brian Fariello and Laura Lopez were recognized in the website category for their

entry "Transguide." ★

Accidents can and do happen; safety awareness aids prevention

Third-party motorists have hit TxDOT vehicles and equipment from the rear 84 times since Sept. 1, 1999.

On the other hand, TxDOT has rear-ended third-party vehicles 30 different times from Sept. 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000.

The Occupational Safety Division encourages each district to review lighting arrangements on equipment and vehicles along with conspicuity tape, use of flags, etc. to help identify our equipment and vehicles.

In addition, it is essential to keep in mind and use the following safe-driving recommendations provided by the National Safety Council.

Defensive driving means looking out for other drivers.

The two-second rule opens up a safe following distance between you and the vehicle ahead.

Here's how it works:

Start counting when the car ahead passes a fixed object, such as a tree, a telephone pole, a billboard, or a tar strip. Count "one thousand and one, one thousand and two." This lets you measure two seconds.

If your car reaches that fixed object before you stop counting, you're too close.

Ease off the accelerator a mile or so per hour. This will widen the gap. Then check your following distance once more.

In bad weather, double your following distance to 4 seconds or more. This will allow you a longer stopping distance.

If you're being tailgated, use a four-second following distance between your vehicle and the one ahead and slow down. This will encourage the bad driver who's tailgating to pass your vehicle.

When you haul a trailer or camper, add one second to your following distance for every 10 feet of additional length. The added weight of the trailer requires a longer stopping distance for your vehicle. ★

— OCC

Newly published rules detail efforts to protect environment

Recently published federal rules will affect many TxDOT construction and maintenance activities.

Permits issued under the authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act regulate the discharge of dredged and fill materials into streams, lakes, bays, wetlands, and other bodies of water. These permits, referred to as Nationwide Permits (NWP), cover 44 separate activities. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issues the permits.

Such permits must be obtained before many TxDOT construction and maintenance projects may start.

Permits affected by the new rules used by TxDOT include:

NWP 3 for Maintenance Activities — This permit is modified by the addition of two new parts. Part (ii) provides for the discharge of dredged or fill material into bodies of water for the removal of accumulated sediment and debris around bridges and culverts, and the placement of new or additional rip

rap to protect these structures. Part (iii) provides for the discharge of dredged or fill materials into bodies of water for activities associated with the restoration of upland areas damaged by natural events, such as floods and storms.

NWP 14 for Linear Transportation Crossings (formerly Road Crossings) — This permit is modified to allow no more than 1/10 acre to be lost due to the placement of fill material in bodies of waters without coordination with USACE. Previously, up to one-third of an acre could be affected without coordinating with USACE.

NWP 26 for Headwaters and Isolated Waters — This permit expired and has been replaced by six modified permits and five new permits. The revised permits that will affect TxDOT are NWPs 3 and 14 (see above). The new permits that will impact TxDOT are NWPs 41 and 43 (see below).

NWP 41 for Reshaping Existing Drainage Ditches — This new permit allows for no USACE coordination if the material excavated from a drainage ditch is not permanently discharged into any body of water and if 500 linear feet or less of ditch is impacted. TxDOT must coordinate with USACE when more than 500 linear feet of ditch is impacted.

NWP 43 for Stormwater Management Facilities — This new permit allows for no USACE coordination for discharges or excavation for the construction of new or modified stormwater management facilities that cause the loss of 1/10 acre or less of non-tidal waters. Impacts to more than 1/10 acre of non-tidal wetlands will require USACE coordination.

Some guidance has been prepared by ENV and has been sent to the districts. More guidance is being prepared by the Environmental Affairs Division to provide the districts more detailed information about these permits. More information is available through district environmental coordinators or Dennis Nielsen of ENV's Water Resource Management Branch at 512/416-2721. ★

Editor's note: the USACE regulatory web site for more updated information can be found at: <http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/>

Conference set for April on transportation planning

The eighth annual Transportation Research Board conference on the application of transportation planning methods will be held April 22-26, 2001, in Corpus Christi at the Omni Bayfront Hotel.

The conference is sponsored by the Transportation Planning Application Committee of the Transportation Research Board and the Texas Department of Transportation. The program emphasizes practical, innovative, and timely technical and policy approaches to transportation planning.

For more information, contact Tim Juarez, Transportation Planning and Programming Division, (512) 486-5026, or Michelle Conkle, also of TP&P, (512) 486-5023. ★

Bryan's Carpenter: Man of many talents

TxDOT 'cowboy' takes to photography, enjoys art technique

By Richard Goldsmith
Environmental Affairs Division

Mike Carpenter looks like a homegrown Texas cowpoke — in his straw hat, smoking unfiltered Camel cigarettes — and he lives like one, too.

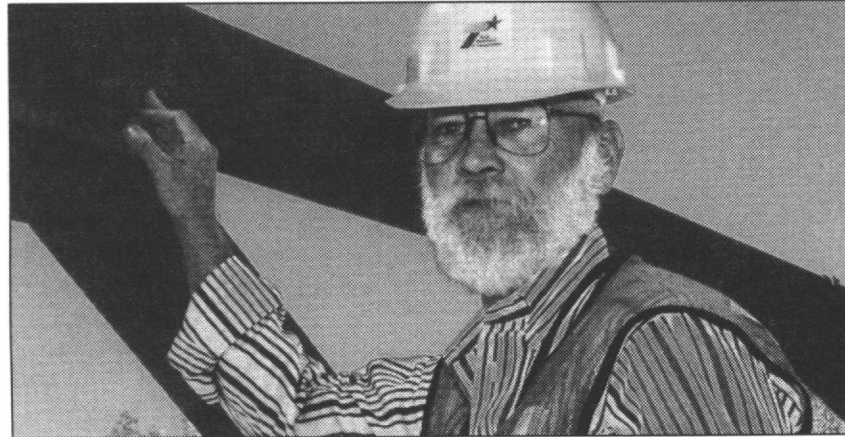
Carpenter, Bryan District's environmental coordinator, lives on a riverside expanse of land in rural Central Texas with his horse. The "old-fashioned cowboy" is known by his co-workers as someone always ready to lend a hand, said Environmental Division biologist Dr. Karen Clary.

"He's a real positive person. He just keeps going," she said. "It doesn't matter what it is, he always delivers," she said.

Instead of punching cattle, though, Carpenter spends his time monitoring the fragile ecosystems in the region.

Endangered species and water quality issues take most of his time, Carpenter said.

For example, Carpenter has been instrumental in what could become TxDOT's first conserva-



tion easement, one for an endangered plant known as Navasota ladies' tresses, a slender-stemmed perennial herb that is 8 to 15 inches tall and a member of the orchid family.

"That's our claim to fame here," Carpenter said of the endangered plant.

Endangered Houston toads inhabit four counties in the Bryan District. The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker inhabits one county in the district. The area is also home to some threatened bald eagles.

Lately, Carpenter said, changes in the Nationwide Permits issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have kept him hopping with questions from the district's 10 maintenance offices.

But Carpenter finds almost any project interesting because they all pose challenges.

"Every time we go out in the field, it's a unique situation," he said.

Some of those unique situations include archeological digs. Carpenter attends these digs to help out, ENV archeologist Steve Ahr said.

"He's a very helpful person," Ahr said. "He was instrumental in some of the work we did in Milam County on two potentially significant archeological sites."

Home for Carpenter is a cabin only yards from the bank of the Brazos River. He likes to sit on the deck and watch the river flow while he drinks his morning coffee. He owns a horse and helps a friend with a herd of 14 cattle

Helpful

Mike Carpenter, Bryan District environmental coordinator, is always willing to lend co-workers a hand.

that are kept on the 100 acres where Carpenter lives.

Carpenter is an avid photographer and artist. "A lot of my photos are meant to be incorporated into my pen and ink drawings," he said. He works in a style known as pointillism, which involves creating images with a series of small dots.

"Most of the time I'll draw someone or something and then give it away as a present."

Carpenter may look like the prototypical Texas cowboy, but he's not a native of the state. The Ohio-born Carpenter moved with his family from the Midwest when he was a sophomore in high school.

"We had relatives in Florida and South Texas. We flipped a coin and Texas won," he said. ★

Texas counties breathe relief — at least for time being

By Wendy Block
Environmental Affairs Division

Texas counties that were scheduled for nonattainment status under tougher federal air quality standards can breathe a small sigh of relief — for now.

The U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to review the EPA's eight-hour ozone standard this month to decide if tougher federal clean-air standards are enforceable.

Until that decision is made, the EPA can designate new areas as nonattainment, but it cannot enforce the standard and require transportation conformity in those areas.

Until an area is designated as nonattainment, it does not need to submit a transportation conformity plan, a document that shows that forecasted on-road mobile source emissions would not exceed a certain limit. Without a conforming transportation plan, a nonattainment area is unable to fund added capacity for new location projects.

Therefore, to be prepared for a possible nonattainment designation when the court makes its

Under the new standard, the fourth highest level each year for three years is averaged.

ruling, many of these potential nonattainment areas are working with TxDOT and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) to prepare transportation conformity documents.

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA is required to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to regulate certain pollutants that are harmful to the environment and public health. In 1997, the EPA revised its air-quality standards for ground-level ozone, a primary component of smog.

In the past, if an area went over the 0.12 parts-per-million (ppm) level more than three times in a three-year period it was declared non-attainment.

Under the new standard, the fourth highest level each year for three years is averaged. If this number is more than 0.084 ppm, then an area is in non-compliance.

In May 1999, the District of Columbia Circuit Court of appeals ruled in favor of challengers to the eight-hour standard who were not satisfied with

the result of the EPA's process to change the original one-hour standard.

Until the Supreme Court reconsiders this case, the eight-hour ozone standard is legally unenforceable.

Nevertheless, the EPA required all states to submit lists of areas that do not meet the new standard.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush submitted his recommendation, which was based on a recommendation from the TNRCC, to the EPA on June 26.

Bush recommended that all counties now designated nonattainment (except El Paso County) should keep that designation under the eight-hour standard.

This recommendation would result in Harris, Brazoria, Galveston, Fort Bend, Montgomery, Waller, Liberty, Chambers, Dallas, Tarrant, Collin, Denton, Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin counties being listed as nonattainment for both the one-hour and eight-hour ozone standard.

All counties in metropolitan statistical areas where there are marginal violations of the eight-hour standard should be designated "unclassifiable," which is defined as an area that cannot be classified using available information.

This list includes Travis, Williamson, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Comal, Bexar, Guadalupe, Wilson, Smith, Gregg, Upshur, Harrison, Parker, Hood, Johnson, Kaufman, Rockwall, and Ellis counties.

All other counties should be designated attainment. The EPA will review this recommendation.

The EPA already rejected Ohio's request to designate marginal areas as unclassifiable, so it is likely that it will similarly reject Texas's request. At that point, Texas will then have a 120-day consultative period to redefine its designations.

But until then, all that the residents in these "unclassifiable" areas can do is wait for the court ruling and work with both TxDOT and the TNRCC to prepare contingency transportation conformity documents in case they are declared non-attainment. ★

Service Awards



Ablene District
15 years
 Elmer L. Graham
 Paul J. Hoelscher
 Juan D. Martinez
5 years
 Patria R. Clark
 Bradley J. Pylant

Amarillo District
30 years
 Michael W. Goode
20 years
 Helen H. Crain
 Jimmy L. Harris Jr.
 Timothy I. Monson
15 years
 Samuel T. Edmiaston
 Melvin L. Lowe
 Robert P. Moss

Atlanta District
20 years
 Johnnie B. Haskins
15 years
 Carlos Ibarra

Austin District
20 years
 Teddy P. Hernandez
15 years
 Mark R. Petrussek
 Bruce E. Rohe
10 years
 Eddie W. Cooper
 Larry D. Robison
 Barbara J. Russell
 Richard G. Sanders
 Dennis D. Simon
5 years
 Carol J. Simmons

Beaumont District
30 years
 W. D. Mellen
15 years
 Danny L. Evans
 Cheryl J. Horn
 Cecii D. Raiford
 Gerald W. Tynes

Brownwood District
15 years
 Russell K. Stone
5 years
 Marcus L. Lindsay

Bryan District
15 years
 Ricky E. Fischer
 James W. Steele Jr.

Childress District
30 years
 Kenneth W. Patterson
20 years
 Gary D. Clinton
 Ernest Lucero
15 years
 Don A. Baxter
 Justin W. Rose

Corpus Christi District
35 years
 Jesus S. Hernandez
15 years
 Ramiro M. Dominguez
 Maricela Guerra
5 years
 Dolores H. Gonzalez
 Sandra Harris

Dallas District
20 years
 Juan A. Perez
 Mark L. Ross
15 years
 Anthony D. Atkins
 Charles D. Boykin
 Aileen S. Brown
 Gary D. Charlton
 Scott L. Deason
 Robert L. Johnson
 Kim C. Limberg
 Oscar O. Ruiz
 Barbara N. Shamburger
 Theandrea L. Thomas
10 years
 Hubert B. Braden III
 Edward L. Henderson
 Patricia M. Hickman
 Victoria P. Houston
 Sherry L. Perkins
 Dennis R. Slauenwhite
5 years
 Ray G. Corona
 Mohsen R. Sokhanvar

El Paso District
15 years
 Tracy W. Griffin

Fort Worth District
30 years
 Raymond J. Edmundson
20 years
 Joe Diles
 Alan B. Donaldson
 Janice L. Jennings
15 years
 Barry D. Hurley
10 years
 Wendell C. Davis
 Kathryn S. Driskell-neely
 Nolan D. Gage
 Henry B. Rowan Jr.

Houston District
30 years
 Rita K. Lee
 Elvis N. Lunsford
 Ervin Ramirez
25 years
 Fred R. Murphy
20 years
 Roger B. Herndon
 Mohammad R. Rafipour
 Loren W. Rice
 Bennie J. Smith II
15 years
 Jackie L. Bertolino
 Kimberly I. Dukes
 Tonya M. Keneda
 Trang T. Le
 Robert N. Lockard
 Ned A. Long Jr.
 James A. Paradowski
 Michael P. Schaefer
10 years
 James B. Carroll
5 years
 Samuel E. Ainabe
 Herral S. Montalvo Jr.
 Joseph F. Snyder

Laredo District
20 years
 Ezequiel H. Cedillo

Lubbock District
30 years
 George M. Dozier
25 years
 Robert G. Langehennig
20 years
 Lyndell D. Davis
15 years
 Larry D. Johnson
 Jose L. Trevino
10 years
 Heath C. Bozeman
 Leroy C. Tedford

Odessa District
35 years
 Royce D. Reynolds
15 years
 Paul J. Henderson
10 years
 Gay D. Brooks
5 years
 Andres N. Fuentes

Paris District
35 years
 Willie D. Booker
20 years
 Stevie J. Evans
5 years
 Mark E. Miller
 Michael K. Taylor

Pharr District
40 years
 Leopoldo A. Morales

San Angelo District
25 years
 Ronald H. Stringer
20 years
 Robert A. Miller
5 years
 Diane F. Weishuhn

San Antonio District
35 years
 Olivia J. Labrie
30 years
 Robert Rodriguez
 Larry G. Strey
15 years
 Timothy J. Carroll
 Alvin D. Egnaw
 Albert Thompson
5 years
 Patricia H. Ballenger

Tyler District
15 years
 Frank L. Waltrip
5 years
 Jerry D. Williams

Waco District
25 years
 Sharon W. Wiese
15 years
 James D. Barron
 Steven G. Roseberry
5 years
 Theresa S. Dudik

Wichita Falls District
20 years
 Scotty L. Cox
5 years
 Monty F. Brown

Yoakum District
15 years
 Glen R. Kloesel
5 years
 Larry L. Cockrell
 Kathryn C. Davis
 Steven W. Immenhauser
 Marvin D. Sturm

Administration
20 years
 Joanne M. Walsh

Aviation Division
10 years
 Bijan T. Jamalabad

Bridge Division
15 years
 Mark A. Steves
10 years
 Kathleen A. Custard

Construction Division
15 years
 Dennis B. Fisher
 Debra L. Simpson
10 years
 Elizabeth J. Lukefahr
 Mark S. Pavlik
 Paul S. St. Louis

Design Division
15 years
 Juan I. Gonzalez

Finance Division
20 years
 Marcia L. Houston
 Kathy W. McCann
10 years
 Diana M. Napier

General Services Division
10 years
 Rick N. Greer
5 years
 Joe Y. Canales

Human Resources Division
5 years
 Florence Iroanya

Information Systems Division
30 years
 Joan E. Lee
15 years
 Byron B. Kunze

Maintenance Division
30 years
 Maggie K. Braden
20 years
 Roger S. Williams

Motor Vehicle Division
10 years
 Loren D. Brunke
5 years
 Molly D. Singletary

Public Information Office
15 years
 Albert H. Glasscock
 Diana T. Ward

Right of Way Division
15 years
 Pam H. McDavid
10 years
 Nancy B. Owen

Traffic Operations Division
15 years
 Richard E. Herndon
 Robert E. Packert
10 years
 Tasha D. Vice

Transportation Planning & Programming Division
10 years
 Diana E. Vargas

Vehicle Titles & Registration Division
35 years
 William D. Pool
30 years
 Jesus Rios
25 years
 Jesusa R. Duron
20 years
 Rene Medrano
15 years
 Cathy J. Hickman
 Pamela J. Minnick
10 years
 Gloria J. Chambers

Retirements



FEBRUARY
Austin District
 Henry R. Zimmerman Jr.,
 Engineering Specialist III,
 34 years

MAY
Information Systems Division
 Katherine S. Bruder
 Systems Support Spec.III,
 33 years

Olivia H. Bartsch,
 systems Analyst II,
 29 years

JULY
Houston District
 Raymond J. Gardner,
 Trans Maint Specialist III,
 15 Years

AUGUST
Corpus Christi District
 John S. Arnold,
 Engineering Technician V,
 32 Years

Houston District
 Jerry L. Huggins,
 Engineering Specialist II,
 28 Years

Houston District
 Franklin C. Zaruba, Engineering
 Specialist III,
 36 Years

San Angelo District
 Wayne Ketchum,
 Engineering Technician V,
 26 Years

Waco District
 Wilburn R. Geltmeier,
 Dist.tRadio Shop Coordinator, 30
 Years

SEPTEMBER
Dallas District
 Ghaleb M. Sunna,
 Director II,
 27 Years

Lufkin District
 Jerry W. Crisp,
 Building Maint Mechanic IV,
 33 Years

Wichita Falls District
 Charles W. Ulbig, Transportation
 Maint Spec III, 38 Years

General Services Division
 Gloria Joan Moore,
 Administrative Technician II,
 15 Years

Vehicle Title and Registration Division
 Ronald L. Stone,
 Program Administrator II,
 30 Years

In Memoriam



Ablene District
 L. J. Lynch, Maintenance
 Technician III, retired in 1980,
 died June 30, 2000.

Amarillo District
 Raymond R. Loften,
 Maintenance Technician III,
 retired in 1990, died June
 24, 2000.

Austin District
 Donald R. Walden,
 Engineering Technician V,
 retired in 1984, died June 7,
 2000.

Beaumont District
 Daniel T. Davis Jr.,
 Engineering Technician III,
 retired in 1979, died May 15,
 2000.

Corpus Christi District
 Edward M. Farley, Engineering
 Technician III, retired in 1982,
 died June 29, 2000.

Dallas District
 Willie Anderton Jr.,
 Maintenance Technician III,
 retired in 1986, died June
 25, 2000.

Fort Worth District
 Fredrick B. Morris,
 Maintenance Technician III,
 retired in 1978,died June 13,
 2000.

Houston District
 Roy L. Bryant Sr.,
 Maintenance Technician III,
 retired in 1991, died May 19,
 2000.

Houston District
 Juan Garcia, Maintenance
 Technician III, retired in 1984,
 died May 30, 2000.

Albert L. Rollins, Engineering
 Technician V, retired in 1982,
 died July 17, 2000.

Lufkin District
 Dorothy D. Parker, Auditor II,
 retired in 1989, died June 9,
 2000.

Odessa District
 Justin M. Bingham, Engineer
 V, retired in 1978, died June
 17, 2000.

Paris District
 Aubrey L. Peebles,
 Maintenance Technician III,
 retired in 1980, died June
 30, 2000.

Pharr District
 Onofre Soliz, Maintenance
 Mechanic III, retired in 1978,
 died July 29, 2000.

Rafael Z. Vela, Maintenance
 Technician III, retired in 1987,
 died June 21, 2000.

San Angelo District
 William B. Fletcher, District
 Roadway Maintenance
 Supervisor I, retired in 1993,
 died June 20, 2000.

Tyler District
 Edwin M. Campbell, Engineer
 IV, retired in 1975, died July
 26,2000.

Neal B. Hart, Maintenance
 Technician II, retired in 1970,
 died July 17, 2000.

John A. Miller, Roadway
 Maintenance Supervisor II,
 retired in 1992, died July 5,
 2000.

Elton J. Winchester,
 Maintenance Technician III,
 retired in 1987, died July 30,
 2000.

Wichita Falls District
 Robert E. Shipley, Engineering
 Technician III, retired in 1986,
 died July 4, 2000.

Transportation Planning and Programming Division
 Kathryn H. Butler, Manual
 Traffic Count Supervisor,
 retired in 1982, died July 27,
 2000.

The Good Life ★

Retirees share tales of fun activities from hobbies to travel

TxDOT retirees have found some interesting – and colorful – ways to spend their leisure time.

Varinia Gann of Manchaca, who retired from the General Services Division in July after more than 26 years of service is now a massage therapist and performs hula dances for the residents of nursing and retirement homes.

Vennie G. Davis, 53, who retired from the Information Systems Division in September 1999, is an assistant pastor at Turning Point Bible Fellowship Church. Davis, a resident of Austin, is also a Christian radio show talk show host.

Shirley Zigler, 63, who retired from the Beaumont District's Orange Maintenance Section, moved to Toccoa, Ga., where she and her husband started a home-building business. The couple has since retired again, Zigler said. "We're now looking forward to spending winters in Florida and enjoying three great grandchil-

dren."

Some retirees report volunteering for jobs that bring them into contact with others who share their interests. **John W. Clark**, 56, who retired from the Cultural Resources Section of the Environmental Division in September 1998, served as a volunteer for the recent Highland Lakes Scottish Festival. The Austin resident also attends bimonthly meetings of a group of professionals interested in Spanish colonial history. When Clark is not working on a book about his family history, he studies genealogy, works part time for an environmental consulting company, gardens and reads.

Joe Wyson, 75, who retired from the old Highway Design Division in July 1986, is interested in Texas history. "I'm still buying private libraries and book collections and selling books," writes Wyson, also of Austin.

Design Division retiree **Milton Bell**, 64, also dabbles in the publishing field. He serves as a con-

sultant for a publishing company and also works part time at the University of Texas. His hobby, he said, is building scale models.

Wilbert Hall, 72, who retired from what was known as the Automation Division after 35 years, also indulges in quite a few hobbies – including "finger exercises, (taking) four laps around the living room, listening to the radio – Oldies 103.5 FM."

Another Automation Division retiree, **Hilliard Smith**, 68, teaches defensive driving when he is not doing volunteer work for his church, visiting grandchildren or traveling. Smith, of Austin, retired from the division's Quality Assurance Section in September 1993 after 25 years of service.

Travel occupies many of the department's former division employees. **Lindsey F. Hobbs**, 73, of Spicewood, spent 24 days in a motor home traveling Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Arizona and Utah. Yellowstone National Park and the Grand Tetons were among the highlights of the trip, said Hobbs, who retired from the Automation Division in June 1986 after 38 years of service.

Ray L. Posival, a 1993 retiree from the Finance Division, took a transatlantic trip last summer, an 18-day, 16-night tour of

Eastern Europe. Posival traveled in June with a group of 41 tourists to Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Germany. "Highlights of the trip included a dinner cruise on the Vltava River in Prague and a boat ride on the Danube River in Hungary," Posival said. "The most beautiful country we visited was Moravia, while the most beautiful cities in the world were Prague and Budapest."

Ever since **Jeanne Swanson**, 56, a Traffic Division retiree, moved from Austin to Peralta, N.M., she need go no farther than her own backyard to enjoy the good life. A 12-year veteran of TxDOT, Swanson married rancher/artist Ed Lynch. At her New Mexico home, she gardens, takes trail rides, meets new friends and corresponds with the friends and family she left behind in Texas. "And I smile and laugh often," Swanson said. ★

Transportation News is seeking contributions to its monthly "The Good Life" on the activities of retirees. To contribute, retirees can fill out cards available from district and division offices or mail information to Tim Cunningham, executive editor, Transportation News, 125 E. 11th St., Austin, TX, 78701.

It's time to renew

State law says anyone receiving *Transportation News* by mail must make a request to remain on the mailing list.

Here's your chance. Fill out the form below and send it to *Transportation News*, 125 E. 11th St., Austin, Texas 78701, attention: Monica Reyes. Include mail label on other side.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

ZIP code: _____

Park dedication honors retiree; he designed beauty, landscapes

By **Sandra Parker**
Brownwood District

ATxDOT retiree who has devoted his working life to beautifying the roadsides of Texas has been honored in Brownwood with a local park dedication.

A crowd of friends, family and local citizens were on hand to honor former landscape architect Ben Lednický at a ceremony held in his honor in August.

The park, on US 67/377 at the Pecan Bayou in Brownwood, is now known as the Ben Lednický Park.

The Texas Highway Department, as it was called in those days, was only 20 years old when Lednický joined its ranks.

After graduating from Texas A&M with a degree in landscape architecture in 1937, he hitchhiked to Austin and applied for a job with the landscape section of the Maintenance Division.

The landscaping development section was created in October 1933 and was in the budding stage when Lednický came on board making \$100 per month as a "roadside developer."

Craig Steffens, retired director of landscape architecture and one of the speakers at the dedication, shared memories and experi-

ences that he had with Lednický.

"Ben and I spent many a night at the maintenance section barns. We weren't given much money for a night's lodging and food. Ben made sure I brought my bedroll so we could stay for free out in the barn. I think he may have been one of the first people to realize the need to recycle. We would stop along the roadway and he would have me out helping him pick up bottles and cans and things to help clean up the right of way. I finally realized that these were the old returnable bottles and Ben was selling them when we got to our destination," Steffens said.

Steffens presented Lednický with a framed cartoon painted by former co-worker and TxDOT retiree K.D. Collinsworth. Collinsworth is well known for the cartoons he created about highway humor during his career. Samples of his work can be seen in the Greer building.

TxDOT Executive director Wes Heald, who considers Brownwood his home, was a guest speaker for the ceremony.

"People don't realize what an influence Ben has had on landscape development from Brownwood to the far reaches of west Texas – all on meager funds," Heald said. Lednický retired in 1976 after 39 years of service. ★

Photo shows family's 'treasure'

By Sandra Parker
Brownwood District

Lampasas office technician Shawn Weeks and her husband, Shannon, knew they had a timeless treasure in a photograph of their young daughter Miranda. They just didn't realize how timeless it was going to be.

Starting in December, Miranda Weeks' picture will be on display at the International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum in Oklahoma City. An entire gallery at the museum will be dedicated to the exhibit, which will feature wall-size photographs of the 50 winners chosen from a field of 256 applicants in a contest sponsored by the International Professional Photographers Guild (IPPG). These 50 will be included in a Y2K time capsule.

Patsy Stoneham, who owns Patsy Stoneham Photography in Lampasas, took the photograph for the Weeks family as an Easter picture in 1998 when Miranda was 3 months old. She entered the picture in the contest because she felt it was a good representation of the contest's theme, "Children of the Millennium."

Nancy Montgomery, director of communications for the IPPG, said the intent



Miranda Weeks, daughter of Lampasas' Shawn Weeks, will become part of a Y2K time capsule.

was to capture what life was like for children of this age. The photos will be scanned and the images burned into a compact disc with names, ages and hometowns of all the children in the photographs. It is not certain how long the time capsule will be stored before it is opened, but it will be stored at the museum either underground or sealed in a wall.

The museum attracts

about 300,000 tourists and photography enthusiasts each year. Its purpose is to document the history of photography, showcase outstanding talent, foster education and highlight new technology.

"We are typical parents. We're proud of our daughter and like to show pictures of her to everyone," Weeks said. "We just didn't expect to show this many people. It's really great." ★

Dallas district hosts international HOV conference

By Montrose Cunningham
Dallas District

In Texas, ever since the first High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane opened in 1979 on Houston's North Freeway, HOV lanes have been a hot topic statewide. The 9.5-mile contraflow lane, currently the longest in the state, was successful beyond all expectations. Although it only operated for less than three hours in each peak period, it moved more than 16,000 people per day.

Staggering numbers, no doubt, but such success also brings up larger issues and questions. What are some of the challenges and opportunities for HOV lanes in the future? How do you increase public awareness? What are the current trends worldwide?

Issues such as these were among the many that were

addressed and discussed at the 10th Annual International HOV conference, held in Dallas. The conference, hosted by Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and co-hosted by TxDOT and the North Central Texas Council Of Governments (NCTCOG), brings together practitioners, researchers, planners and engineers from all over the world to discuss ongoing and emerging trends on HOV facilities.

Michael Behrens, TxDOT Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations, was among the various speakers at this year's conference. Dallas District Engineer Jay Nelson was the moderator for a panel discussion on HOV roles in operations, demand management and environmental issues.

"HOV lanes are an important tool in increasing mobility," said Nelson.

Along with Houston,

Dallas is also the home to some of the premier HOV systems in the nation. Under the partnership of TxDOT, DART and NCTCOG, 23 miles of HOV lane construction have been built. Included in this is Dallas' HOV lane along Interstate 635, which carries more than 50,000 people each weekday.

There's also the contraflow lane on Interstate 30. This highway, which has a low traffic demand in the off-peak direction, allows a lane to be "borrowed" for an HOV lane during the peak period. There are also HOV lanes on Interstate 35E and U.S. 67 which are "concurrent flow," that is, the same direction of travel as the highway lanes.

Nelson, along with DART President/Executive Director Roger Snoble, received a joint award in leadership. ★

Calendar



OCTOBER 2000

- 4-5 Bid Letting, Austin, CST
- 4-5 District Equipment Supervisors Meeting, Austin, GSD
- 9 DE/DD/OD Meeting, College Station, ADM
- 9-11 2000 Transportation Short Course, College Station, ADM
- 9-11 "Partnership for Sustainability, A New Approach to Highway Materials," Houston, CST
- 11-13 NIGP Seminar: General Public Procurement, Houston, GSD
- 12 NIGP Seminar: How to Write RFPs, San Antonio, GSD
- 13 NIGP Seminar: How to Process and Evaluate Bids, San Antonio, GSD
- 16 SignCAD 2000 Training & User Group, Corpus Christi, TRF
- 18-19 NIGP Seminar: CPPB/CPPO Review, Austin, GSD
- 21 NIGP Seminar: CPPB/CPPO Exam, Austin, GSD
- 23-25 Texas Vegetation Management Assoc. Annual Conference, College Station, MNT
- 24-27 Project Management Course, Corpus Christi, TRF
- 26 Commission Meeting, Austin

NOVEMBER 2000

- 1-3 Annual State Rodeo Competition & APM Meeting, Waco, OCC
- 6-9 Research Management Committee Meeting, Corpus Christi, CST
- 8 NIGP Seminar: Specification Writing, San Antonio, GSD
- 9-10 Bid Letting, Austin, CST
- 9-10 NIGP Seminar: Contracting for Services, San Antonio, GSD
- 11 Veteran's Day (holiday)
- 14 Board of Directors Meeting, Austin, TTA
- 15-17 NIGP Seminar: Intermediate Public Procurement, Houston, GSD
- 16 Commission Meeting, Austin
- 23 Thanksgiving Day (holiday)
- 24 Day after Thanksgiving Day (holiday)

DECEMBER 2000

- 5-6 Bid Letting, Austin, CST
- 6-7 NIGP Seminar: Contracting for Services, Dallas, GSD
- 7-8 NIGP Seminar: Inventory and Warehouse Management, San Antonio, GSD

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