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#TxTransForum



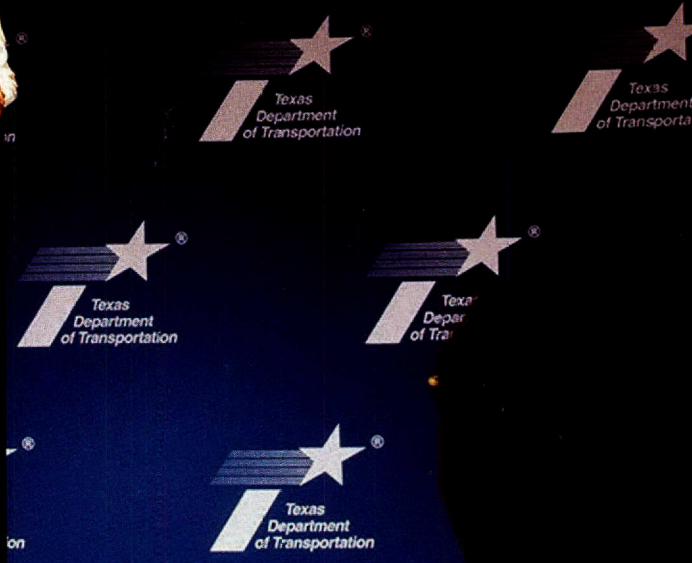
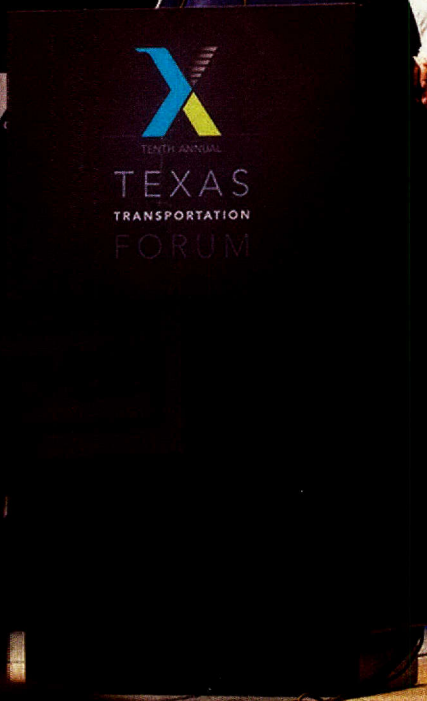
@SpaceX entrepreneur
@elonmusk will deliver the
keynote
to
TxDOT
in



Getting ready for the keynote
breakfast at the #TxTransForum
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FORUM OF THE FUTURE

What lies ahead for TxDOT? Public policy leaders and influencers met at the 10th Annual Texas Transportation Forum to discuss transforming transportation to meet the needs of tomorrow.



Message from the Executive Director


For years, transportation groups have called for additional investment in the state's infrastructure. And last year, Texans sent a clear message for transportation when they voted to transfer some of the funding from oil and gas production taxes to the state highway fund.

The \$1.74 billion from Proposition 1 — along with funding from other sources — will advance more than 200 projects around the state, including projects that will add lanes to overcrowded roads, build interchanges to connect major roadways, add passing lanes and shoulders to make roads safer and rehab some roads that are much in need of repair. The money is being put to use across the state, in large counties and small communities, in metro districts and rural areas.

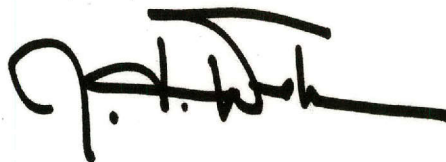
Let me highlight a couple of examples. For years, drivers in Tarrant County have taken a complicated mix of ramps and frontage roads to access I-30 and SH 360 in the Arlington Entertainment District. With the Proposition 1 funding, that extra maneuvering will be a thing of the past. Using more than \$120 million in Proposition 1 funding, in conjunction with other monies that had been set aside, we'll let a project late this year to build a new direct connector interchange. That's welcome news to drivers who have waited for road relief. In Childress, we'll use \$7.1 million of the new funding to widen U.S. 83 in Wheeler County, a major artery in the district.

More than \$260 million will be used to repair and rehab lane miles in energy-impacted areas around the state. We've already invested millions into shoring up and improving safety on these roads that are taking a literal beating from heavy energy sector traffic. With the Proposition 1 funding, more needed work will be done.

We really appreciate this first round of funding, and state leaders have said that they will do more. In his first State of the State Address in mid-February, Gov. Greg Abbott announced that his budget will add billions more annually to highway coffers by ending highway funding diversions and dedicating one-half of vehicle sales tax revenue to roads.

Texans demand and want roads and bridges that are safe, well maintained and less congested. The funding from Proposition 1 and any additional money we receive during this legislative session will go a long way toward getting some needed projects off the planning shelves, and we're looking forward to delivering what Texans expect. 

Semper Fi,



J. F. Weber
Executive Director

TxDOT photo



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8 ON THE COVER

Social Media Manager Becky Ozuna speaks to the crowd at the 10th Annual Texas Transportation Forum in Austin. Integrating innovation in the face of an ever-changing landscape was the theme of the forum. Policy makers, industry leaders and special guests discussed the transportation challenges and opportunities for Texas and TxDOT in the future.

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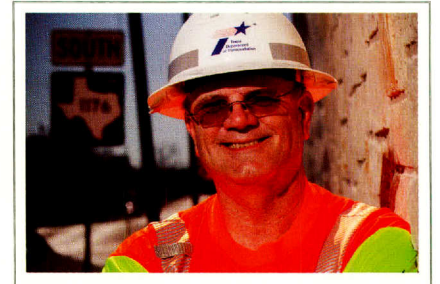
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5 THINGS


FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

1 Katharine Nees is the new director of the Strategic Projects Division. Nees, formerly deputy director of the division, has over 30 years of public and private sector transportation experience. In January, Kent Marquardt became director of the new Office of Strategic Planning. Marquardt most recently was the director of business development for Azbell Electronics.

2 The 2015 Texas Travel Guide and Texas Official Travel Map have been printed and are ready for travelers. The guide features a newly designed section with much more editorial content about Texas travel regions. Dramatic photography and engaging stories are sure to lure travelers to destinations statewide. To order your free Texas Travel information packet, containing the guide and map, visit: www.traveltext.com.

3 Audrey Thompson, the coordinator of TxDOT's statewide Wellness Program, has been selected to participate in Leadership Women's 2015 Leadership Texas Program. Thompson has also been active in her community, serving as president of Solar Austin, mentoring chair for the Association of Women in Energy and as a leader with the Mayor's Fitness Council.

4 The Wellness Program policy pertaining to employee use of 30 minutes, three times a week for exercise was recently revised. With the proper supervisor approval, employees may be allowed time to exercise 30 minutes up to three times a week during their normal work hours. The original policy required exercise time to be used in conjunction with the lunch schedule.

5 TxDOT IT recently launched an enhanced TxDOTNow Employee Self Service home page designed to streamline and expedite the ticket process for information technology services. The improvements are expected to reduce ticket resolution times, help eliminate confusion and organize all help requests in one location. The Submitting An IT Ticket How-To Guide provides step-by-step instructions on the new updates. 

DRIVEN TO A *Higher Standard*


THE OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE, ETHICS AND INVESTIGATIONS

As a TxDOT employee, you may have questions about accepting gifts, running errands in a state vehicle or a possible conflict of interest with outside employment. You may have even wondered if it's OK for a TxDOT contractor to buy your child's steer at the local livestock show. The Office of Compliance, Ethics and Investigations is here to help you answer these and many other questions.

Because people have their own understanding of what ethics means, CEI works to ensure that each employee knows what ethics means to TxDOT. Through the outreach program, employees are educated on TxDOT's ethics policy and encouraged to set higher standards of conduct for themselves. Specific questions concerning the policy should be directed to OCE_Office@txdot.gov.

The office was established by state law and helps prevent and detect serious breaches of departmental policy, fraud, waste and abuse of office, including any acts of criminal conduct within the department. It has grown from a staff of five in November 2013 to 18 people today. With plans to hire six more employees this year, the office is comprised of three sections:

- Compliance, which monitors department policy manuals and legislative implementation, outreach and training;
- Investigations, which investigates serious violations of department policy; and
- Risk Analysis and Mitigation, which identifies potential risk areas for non-compliance.

It also monitors TxDOT's anonymous reporting system, TxDOT Watch. Through this independent third-party system, employees and the public can report cases of fraud, waste, abuse or violations of department policy. **TxDOT Watch can be reached at <http://www.txdotwatch.com/or> by calling 1-877-769-8936.** 



Omer and Betty Poorman attend the French Legion of Honor medal ceremony for Mr. Poorman. Following his retirement as District 12 engineer, the couple now live on their ranch in Cameron County. They have visited France twice over the years.

FORMER DISTRICT ENGINEER

Receives French Legion of Honor Medal



Consul General of France Sujiro Seam presents the French Legion of Honor medal to Omer Poorman, who was a District 12 engineer and served in World War II with the U.S. Army.


Retired Houston/Galveston Engineer Omer Poorman received the French Legion of Honor medal – the highest decoration France can give – at the home of the French Consul General in Houston on Dec. 18. Poorman and two other Texans were honored for their service in France during World War II.

Born in Katy on Feb. 21, 1924, Poorman joined the Army on June 7, 1943 and was sent to England with the 66th Infantry Division. He was aboard the S.S. Leopoldville with more than 2,200 other soldiers when a German U-boat torpedoed the ship as it crossed the English Channel.

“Our troop transport was sunk off the Cherbourg coast on the evening of Dec. 24, 1944. More than 800 lives were lost that night. Our division fought the Germans in the Saint-Nazaire and Lorient pockets,” Poorman recalled.

He went to Lorient and Saint-Nazaire for the remainder of the war, where he earned the Bronze Star Medal for exemplary conduct in ground combat against the enemy. After the war, he graduated as a civil engineer and joined TxDOT. Poorman was appointed as the engineer of the Houston District – which had been known as District 12 – in June 1973 and retired in 1986. Today, he lives on his ranch in Cameron County with his wife, Betty.

The Legion of Honor award was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, and is the highest decoration that the country can bestow. France is very graciously honoring U.S. veterans who served in that country during World War II.

“We have returned to France twice, and have always found the French people to be generous, helpful and kind,” Poorman said. 

AROUND THE STATE


From the Panhandle to the Valley and all points in between, TN brings you transportation highlights happening throughout our great state.

TxDOT photo



U.S. 87 Truck Relief in Big Spring The Abilene District is hard at work on a major project in Howard County. The southern half of the U.S. 87 truck relief route through Big Spring will improve mobility across the state. This section of roadway is part of the Ports-to-Plains Corridor and is a major thoroughfare for freight making its way across the country. Field work on the roadway began in early 2014.

Identifying the truck relief route as a priority project, the Transportation Commission approved funding for the second phase. Construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2016.

“This relief route is one of the largest projects the Abilene District has ever undertaken,” said Stan Swiatek, Abilene district engineer. “I’m proud of the Abilene district employees as they work to create a safer, less congested route through the Big Spring area that will serve the traveling public.” 



TxDOT photo

Once the full length of the relief route is completed, freight and other traffic passing through the area will stay on the relief route while traffic heading into Big Spring will continue into town. Separating these two types of roadway traffic will alleviate congestion in the city while allowing through traffic to continue on its way.

BIG SPRING

SH 71 Express Project Groundbreaking TxDOT, in partnership with the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and McCarthy Building Companies, celebrated the start of construction on the SH 71 Express project on Jan. 27. Officials from each organization, along with state and city representatives, marked the occasion with an official groundbreaking ceremony.

SH 71 is a vital roadway in Austin, connecting motorists to the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, the city of Bastrop and other central Texas communities. The \$149 million design-build project will enhance safety and reduce travel time and congestion on this heavily traveled roadway.

When complete, the project will bring much needed improvements to the 3.9-mile corridor between Presidential Boulevard and FM 973 in Travis County. Improvements include two new toll lanes, with one lane in each direction, new bridges over FM 973 and SH 130, ramps between the toll lanes and the mainlanes of SH 71 and SH 130, and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian access. The project is expected to be complete in late 2016. 

Local and regional mobility authorities and TxDOT officials turn shovels of dirt at the SH 71 Express project site located at SH 71 and FM 973 near the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in Austin.

TxDOT photo





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The ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on top of the 74-foot-high and 2,084-foot-long Valley Bridge. The bridge takes motorists by a unique stair-step structure cut out of an adjacent hill.

City, state and local officials came together to celebrate the opening of the U.S. 190 bypass. Front row, from left to right, are Copperas Cove City Councilman Gary Kent, Copperas Cove City Manager Andrea Gardner, Copperas Cove Mayor John Hull, Killeen Mayor Scott Cosper and TxDOT Brownwood District Engineer Elias Rmeili.

Back row, from left to right, are Coryell County Judge John Firth, TxDOT Waco District Engineer Bobby Littlefield, Central Texas Council of Governments Executive Director Jim Reed, retired TxDOT Waco District Engineer Richard Skopik, state Rep. J.D. Sheffield and Lampasas County Judge Wayne Boultinghouse.

Southeast Bypass Ribbon Cutting A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the southeast bypass in Copperas Cove, a reliever route for U.S. 190, was held on Jan. 29. The project came together through TxDOT's partnership with groups including the city of Copperas Cove, Lampasas County and the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization.

While most of the project took place in the Waco District's Coryell County, the Brownwood District also constructed a 2.7-mile long portion of roadway in Lampasas County in a separate \$6.48 million project on FM 2657.


The 5.2-mile, \$64 million bypass reroutes U.S. 190 to the south of Copperas Cove, making it faster for motorists to get through town and helps reduce congestion. It also provides a scenic drive for those traveling east and west through Central Texas. 



Historic Rainbow Bridge Gets Facelift

The Rainbow Bridge is the second tallest bridge in Texas. Built in the late 1930s and standing at 177 feet tall, it held the title of tallest bridge in Texas until 1995 when the Fred Hartman Bridge in Baytown was built. While most bridges built in the 1930s no longer exist, this bridge has a secure future by not only being a local landmark, but it is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Routine preservation of the landmark is performed every year. However, more intensive preservation is required on a bridge this age. Approximately every 20 years, the Rainbow's paint is stripped, needed repairs are made and the bridge is then repainted. The latest in-depth maintenance project began Jan. 5, and is being done by Saffo Contractors Inc. at a cost of approximately \$27 million. The two-lane cantilever bridge will be down to one lane of traffic throughout the project.

Until 1990, the bridge carried both eastbound and westbound traffic for SH 87 and SH 73. The building of the Veterans Memorial Bridge, adjacent to the Rainbow, gave way to the Rainbow only carrying westbound traffic from Bridge City to Port Arthur. Approximately 26,000 drivers travel the Rainbow Bridge daily. 



TxDOT photo

Workers use a lift to reach the deck of the Rainbow Bridge as they build a walkway.

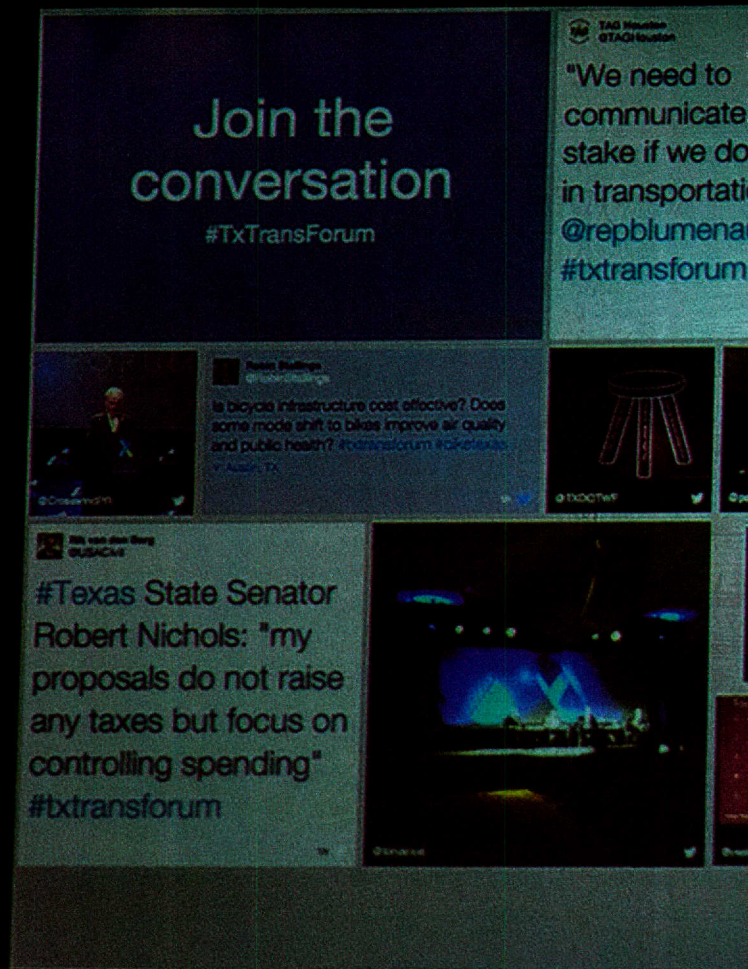
A NEW YEAR, A NEW FOCUS

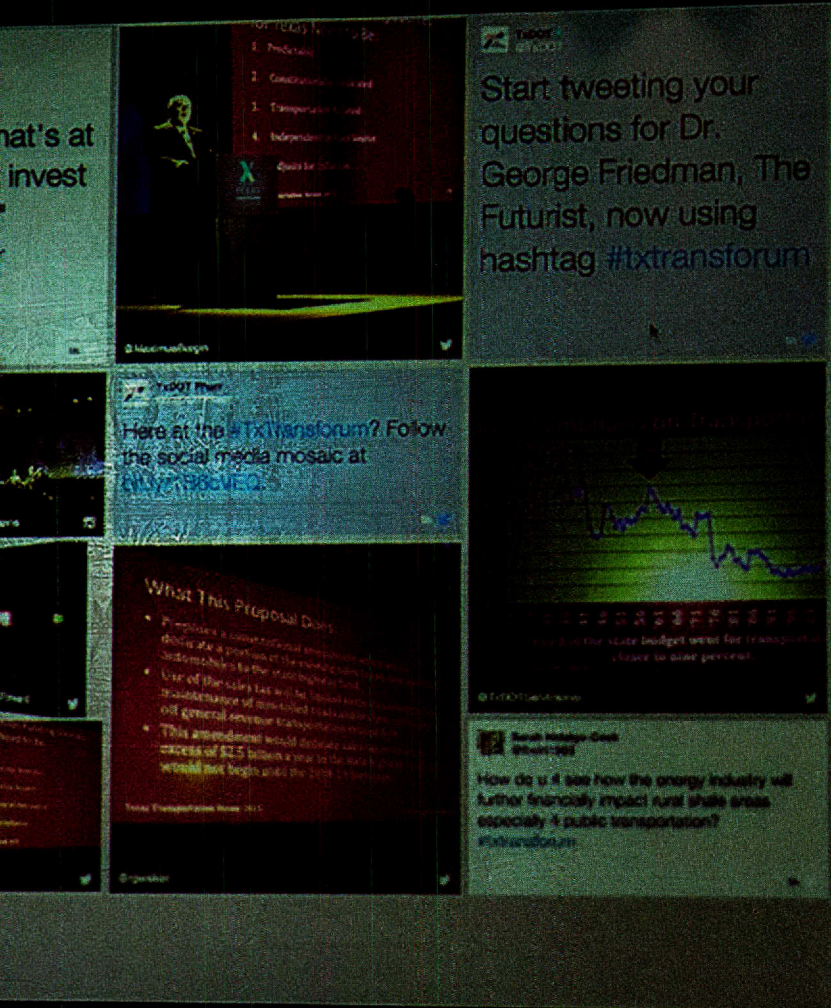
on the Future at the 10th Annual Texas Transportation Forum

While most of us were resolving to exercise more or quit a bad habit for the new year, transportation experts at the 10th Annual Texas Transportation Forum were resolving to transform transportation in Texas. It is an annual platform for transportation experts across the country to discuss transportation policy and share groundbreaking innovations. The forum was held in Austin on Jan. 14 through Jan. 16, and more than 1,500 people attended.

This was not a forum of years gone by. The 10th anniversary of the forum was highlighted with state-of-the-art interaction between the audience and speakers via Twitter. During panel discussions, the audience submitted comments and questions through tweets. In addition, a social media wall projected real-time Twitter feeds which included questions, comments, selfies and other pictures from forum participants. A drone was even spotted delivering papers to Texas Transportation Commission Chair Ted Houghton who gave opening remarks!

Chief Executive and Product Officer Elon Musk of Tesla Motors (right) answers questions from Chief Executive Officer and Editor-in-Chief Evan Smith of the Texas Tribune (left), during the luncheon keynote interview at Forum on Jan. 15.





The theme for this year's forum was Transformation of Transportation. The department's direction in the new year is clear and innovation will lead the way. Speakers from Administration said TxDOT will integrate the most current technology into transportation solutions and partner closely with local and regional leaders to ensure Texas retains a premier highway system well into the next ten years.

The audience heard from demographers, futurists and lawmakers. Speakers and panelists spoke on topics ranging from the make-up and future of the transportation workforce and the effect of the current European economic crisis on the U.S. economy, to the use of autonomous vehicles and Google maps for accident avoidance.

Transportation funding was also a hot topic. While speakers differed on ways to fund an annual \$5 billion shortfall in transportation funding, they agreed that viable funding must be predictable, constitutionally dedicated, independent of fuel sources and adjusted for inflation.

While legislators look for ways to put more money into the transportation system, TxDOT has been making sure that it is effectively using existing state resources. The funding conversation included savings by the department of approximately \$100 million on things such as fleet operations, electronic documents, supply chain updates and even a different email system.

Also highlighting the conference was an appearance by Tesla founder, Elon Musk. He announced that he wants to build a "test track" for his idea for a futuristic high-speed transportation system called the Hyperloop, adding that Texas is "the leading candidate" to host the track. Musk was also in Texas to lobby the Texas Legislature to allow Tesla to sell cars directly to Texans, instead of through dealerships as currently required under law. Hailing from California, he described the current laws restricting Tesla's operations as "un-Texan."

Numerous awards were announced throughout the conference. The forum opened with the Road Hand awards which are given to citizens who spend countless hours supporting TxDOT's efforts to make transportation in Texas the best in the nation. The 2015 Road Hand Award winners are Jungus Jordan, Fort Worth city councilman; Tom Mullins, president and chief executive officer of the Tyler Economic Council; David A. Garza, Cameron County commissioner; and Will Conley, Hays County commissioner. Also, John W. Johnson, former Transportation Commission chairman, was honored with the Russell Perry Award that recognizes citizens for creating public awareness of the need for and benefit of good transportation facilities in the state.

Continued on next page

A NEW YEAR, A NEW FOCUS

Continued from previous page

TxDOT Deputy Executive Director John Barton received the inaugural Gov. Rick Perry Leadership in Transportation Award. This award will be presented annually to leaders who have shown a commitment to advancing transportation infrastructure in the Lone Star State. In keeping with the technology theme, Barton's award was created on a 3-D printer.

Attendees heard from Houghton and Transportation Commissioner Fred Underwood as they reflected on their nearly 20 years of combined service to the commission. Both agreed that they have seen a lot of changes in transportation during their tenures. Chairman Houghton, known as a tough negotiator on behalf of the department, reiterated his focus on the importance of partnering with local and regional communities, and Commissioner Underwood stressed that the strength of TxDOT is its employees. Underwood has championed employee safety throughout his tenure.

As stated by Barton in closing, "Transportation is an essential element of our growing prosperity in Texas. We must maintain a healthy transportation system to support a healthy economy. This means we must embrace technology and incorporate it into our transportation solutions. And I promise to you we will not disappoint."

Next year's Transportation Forum will be held from Jan. 3 through Jan. 6, 2016 in Austin at the J.W. Marriott. Make your plans now to attend and participate in the ongoing discussions of the best transportation minds. **TN**

TxDOT photo



Office Technician Ana Alvarez (left) and Special Projects Coordinator Katy Venable with the Travel Information Division (right) host the mobile TxDOT Gift Shop.

TxDOT photo

Texas Growth Past, Present & Future

Dr. Lloyd Potter, Texas State Demographer



Texas State Demographer Dr. Lloyd Potter discusses understanding and communicating demographic processes in Texas.

TxDOT photo



Texas Transportation Commissioner Jeff Moseley (left) visits with Deputy Executive Director John Barton (right).

TxDOT photo



State Sen. Robert Nichols provides an outlook for the 84th Legislative Session.

TxDOT photo



Former Transportation Commission Chair Deirdre Delisi speaks to the audience at Forum.

TxDOT photo



Information Specialist Catherine Cromer and Travel Counselor Gloria Tapia with the Travel Information Division serve as ushers.

TxDOT photo



Toll Operations Division Specialist Erica Ramirez (left) and Heather Johnson with Atkins Consulting (right) serve as ushers during the Forum.

AUSTIN DISTRICT EARNNS EXCELLENCE AWARD

TxDOT photo



Austin District Award: From left to right, Georgetown Area Engineer Mark Jones, Construction Inspector Jason Hudson, Georgetown Assistant Area Engineer John Peters, Waco District Engineer Bobby Littlefield, Waco Deputy District Engineer Andy Petter and General Engineering Technician Sherman Coots. Hudson, Peters and Coots show their 2014 Journey Toward Excellence Awards.


Three employees in the Austin District's Georgetown Area Office have received a coveted transportation award for their hard work and leadership.

Sherman Coots, general engineering technician; Jason Hudson, construction inspector; and John Peters, Georgetown assistant area engineer, are winners of TxDOT's 2014 Journey Toward Excellence Quality Team Award. The Journey Toward Excellence Awards recognize TxDOT teams who demonstrate leadership and commitment to improving our services, products and processes, while obtaining tangible results.

Last December, Waco District Engineer Bobby Littlefield presented the awards to the three recipients. The employees are part of the I-35 Traveler Information and Mobility Coordination Team and manage two I-35 corridor reconstruction projects for the Waco District. The two projects include the I-35 Section 1B project in Salado, with a construction cost of \$70 million, and Section 1C in Belton, with a construction cost of \$110 million.

Employees across the Austin and Waco Districts are using a coordinated approach to improving 96 miles of I-35 in Central Texas. They are working together to mitigate issues between construction projects and to provide local and long-distance travelers with real-time information about construction activities, work zones and lane closures.

Intelligent transportation systems have also been installed throughout the construction zone to provide real-time traveler information during this reconstruction, all in an effort to minimize the amount of travel delays for motorists.

"Each of these recipients has achieved significant positive, measurable results and are well-deserving of this award," said Mark Jones, Georgetown Area Engineer. "They demonstrate great leadership in their field of expertise and make an impact on all stakeholders, including employees, contractors, suppliers and the public. I'm very proud of them and thankful for their continued commitment toward excellence." 

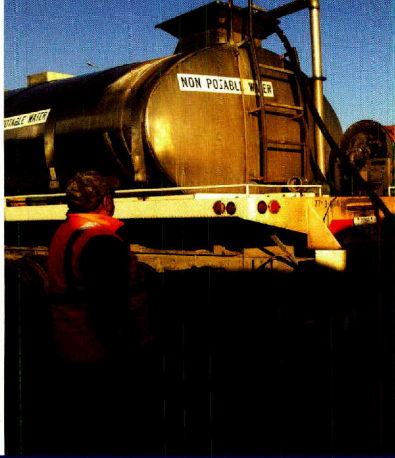
CREWS VS. COLD

> TxDOT WINTER STORM RESPONSES <

Each winter, TxDOT employees from across the state work together to help the public and each other during times of inclement weather. They fight snow and ice with every available resource. Here are stories from this past winter season.

This painted snowplow was used on FM 292 in Parmer County near the New Mexico state line. The area received 12 inches of snow during this past winter season.





FORT WORTH DISTRICT'S COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP WINTER WEATHER PREP

In preparation for the College Football Playoff National Championship game held in North Texas on Jan. 12, TxDOT planned well in advance to respond to winter weather. The Fort Worth and Dallas districts worked closely with regional planners, counties, cities, transportation providers and the statewide Emergency Operations Center in developing a plan. Motor graders, snow plows, sanding trucks and herbicide units, as well as additional materials, were staged in strategic locations throughout the Metroplex.

Employees from across the state were also brought in to augment Fort Worth and Dallas districts maintenance staffs. TxDOT pretreated area roadways and continually monitored the forecast and conditions throughout the championship weekend. The efforts of these statewide forces contributed to ensuring that all those who participated in the weekend events did so under the safest conditions that TxDOT could provide.

A TxDOT employee draws liquid pretreatment from a tank during winter weather operations.

LUBBOCK DISTRICT CREWS BATTLE 12 INCHES OF SNOW

As Texans were ringing in the New Year with family and friends, Lubbock District crews, along with their neighboring districts, were battling ice, snow and frigid temperatures in a winter storm that covered the far west portion of the district in 12 inches of snow.

Among the frozen landscape and cadre of TxDOT snow removal equipment, were two snow plows that stood out among the ranks. Emblazoned with stamped Mustangs and playing cards, the snow plows were painted as part of a Lubbock District community involvement program.

TxDOT joined forces with Bovina Independent School District elementary and middle school students, and Parmer County 4-H members, in early October to paint two snow plows being used during this season's winter weather operations.

Taking every opportunity to incorporate safety into their programs, the student-designed and painted snow plows were unveiled at a school safety day or career day.

FLEET OPERATIONS EQUIPS DISTRICTS WITH LOW-COST DE-ICING METHOD

With several severe storms in recent years, some districts began turning to low-tech, low-cost brine for pretreatment and de-icing, and experienced very good results. Brine, a simple salt water solution, can be applied to roads before a storm to prevent ice accumulation.

After a storm hits, crews can continue spraying brine to de-ice any trouble spots. Like Texas, other states are expanding their use of brine as a proactive approach to winter highway safety.

To get brine equipment to districts quickly, the Maintenance Division assessed statewide priorities and worked with the Procurement and Support Services divisions to purchase equipment and identify storage needs.

The Fleet Operations Division built a brine maker prototype and developed plans that district shops could use to build the devices in-house with locally available parts. Fleet staff also built and distributed kits to equip all herbicide rigs for de-icing operations to allow trucks to help in any part of the state during winter storms.

Districts and divisions identified 37 locations to strategically place new brine-making equipment. Twenty-nine units are already in place. Additional equipment may be added in the future as resources and priorities are identified.


Fleet Operations Division Machinist Fred McKenzie, left, and Metal Fabrication Specialist Stephen Wehring, right, work on a brine maker prototype in the Fleet Operations General Shop.

THE BROWNWOOD DISTRICT LENDS A HAND DURING NEW YEAR'S ICE STORM

Freezing rain and sleet showers moved into the Brownwood and Abilene areas on New Year's Eve. However, throughout the day on Jan. 1, it became apparent that the Abilene District would be hit harder by the winter storm, so crews from the Brownwood District moved in to help.

In all, 15 employees from Brownwood's Eastland, Brown, Coleman, Mills and Stephens counties assisted the Abilene District with ice-clearing efforts.

Crews from Eastland, Stephens and Brown counties were tasked with helping in Callahan and eastern Taylor counties in the Abilene District. Brownwood crews took 10 maintenance employees, a 6-yard dump truck and two herbicide trucks, each loaded with 1,200 gallons of brine. Five employees from Coleman and Mills counties took two maintainers, two 10-yard dump trucks with sand spreaders and one pickup to assist on U.S. 84 in southern Taylor County.

Staff brine-treated I-20 at the Eastland and Callahan county line and continued toward the city of Abilene, and back, until the road was clear of ice. In addition to TxDOT crews, the Texas A&M Forest Service contributed five employees and three maintainers. 

During an early January winter storm, Brownwood District used herbicide trucks filled with brine to treat roads to prevent ice from forming on area roads.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT HOUSTON TRANSTAR

Like a scene from NASA's Mission Control Center, there sits a large room full of computer screens, large video monitors and two-way radios. From here, TxDOT staffs the Houston TranStar control room, monitoring state road conditions in the Houston District.

Houston TranStar is a partnership of four government agencies – TxDOT, the city of Houston, Harris County and the Metropolitan Transit Authority. TranStar is responsible for providing transportation management and emergency management services to the Greater Houston region. The collaboration provides a unique service to the traveling public, emergency responders, event planners and others.

TxDOT staffs the control center 24 hours a day. They constantly check roadways for incidents, post messages on dynamic message signs located throughout the district, communicate with maintenance staff, log incidents and take calls from the public. Much of their work makes its way onto the Houston TranStar website at www.houstontranstar.org via speed maps, incident data and traffic updates.

TxDOT Houston TranStar Director David Fink said the hard work of Houston TranStar's staff is vital to the district.

"The staff is invaluable. They keep the traveling public informed and they handle major incidents. This keeps traffic moving and roads safer," Fink said.

On one recent morning, Fink's team was faced with heavy fog in most of the district. While crashes were minimal,

the roads were clogged and traffic moved at a snail's pace. The TranStar staff, including Traffic Management Operations Technicians Tiffany Lopez, Henry Kellumen, Suzanne Johnson, Rita Carrier, Vincent Hubbert and Matt O'Brien, continually checked on roads, listened to radio traffic and took calls. Their goal was to keep morning commuters informed and updated.

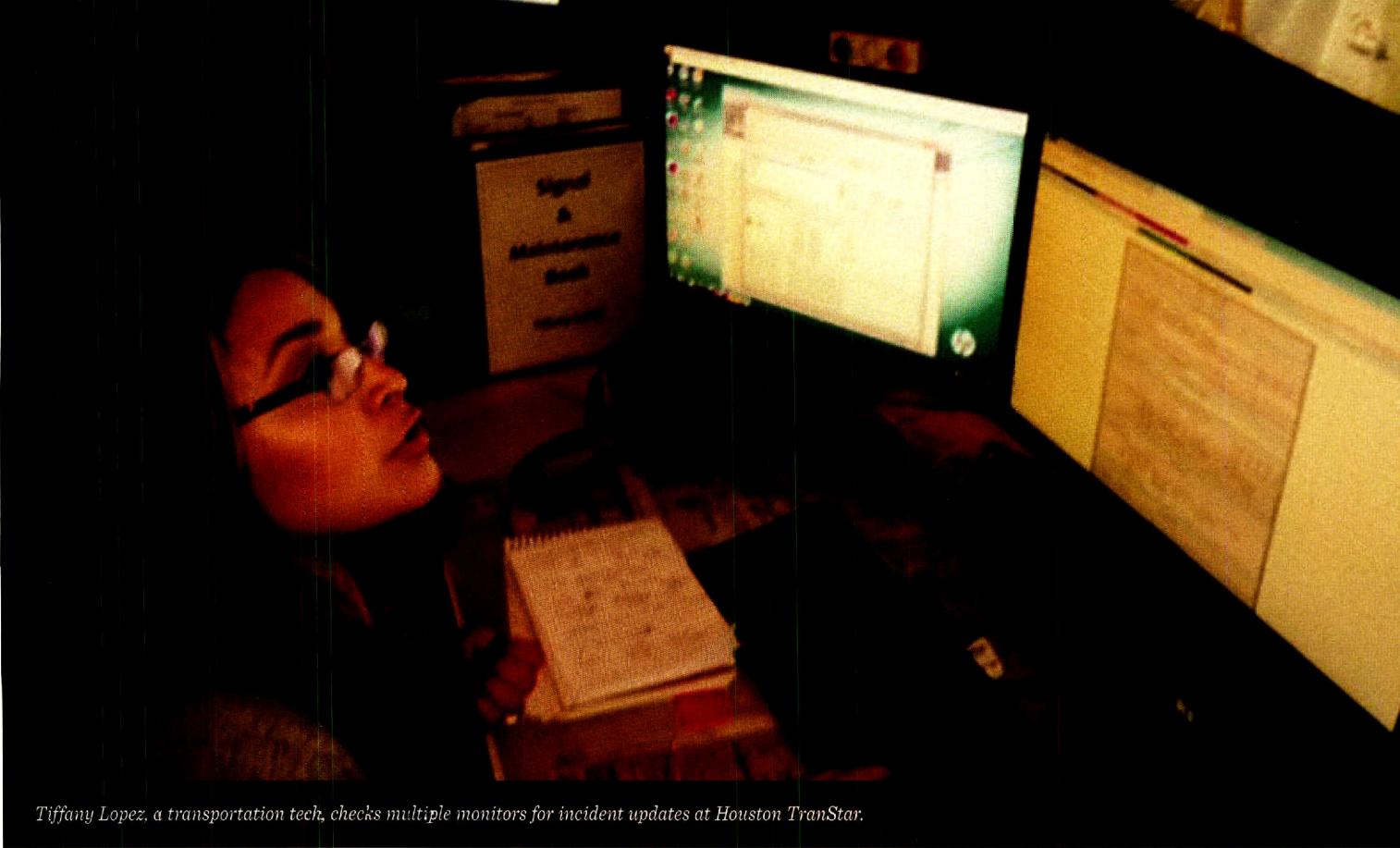
"We try to help the public out as much as we can," said Lopez. "I try to locate incidents as quickly as possible and get the incident information up on the message boards to warn drivers."

Lopez, like her colleagues, takes incident management very seriously. She originally worked for the city of Houston's Safe Clear program that works to keep highways clear of stalled or disabled vehicles. She said working at TxDOT allows her to help more people and keep roads safe.

While Houston TranStar is prepared to handle weather events such as icy conditions or hurricanes, a clear, beautiful day can also yield its share of activities.

"It depends on the day. Anything can happen," said Kellumen, who has been with Houston TranStar for 19 years. "On a clear day you can have multiple fuel spills and major accidents. It doesn't matter what the weather is."


Floor Lead Suzanne Johnson helps manage incidents while also assisting other staff members. In her role, she works to keep TxDOT directors, the Public Information Office and other officials aware of major incidents, including overturned 18-wheelers, chemical spills and fatal accidents.

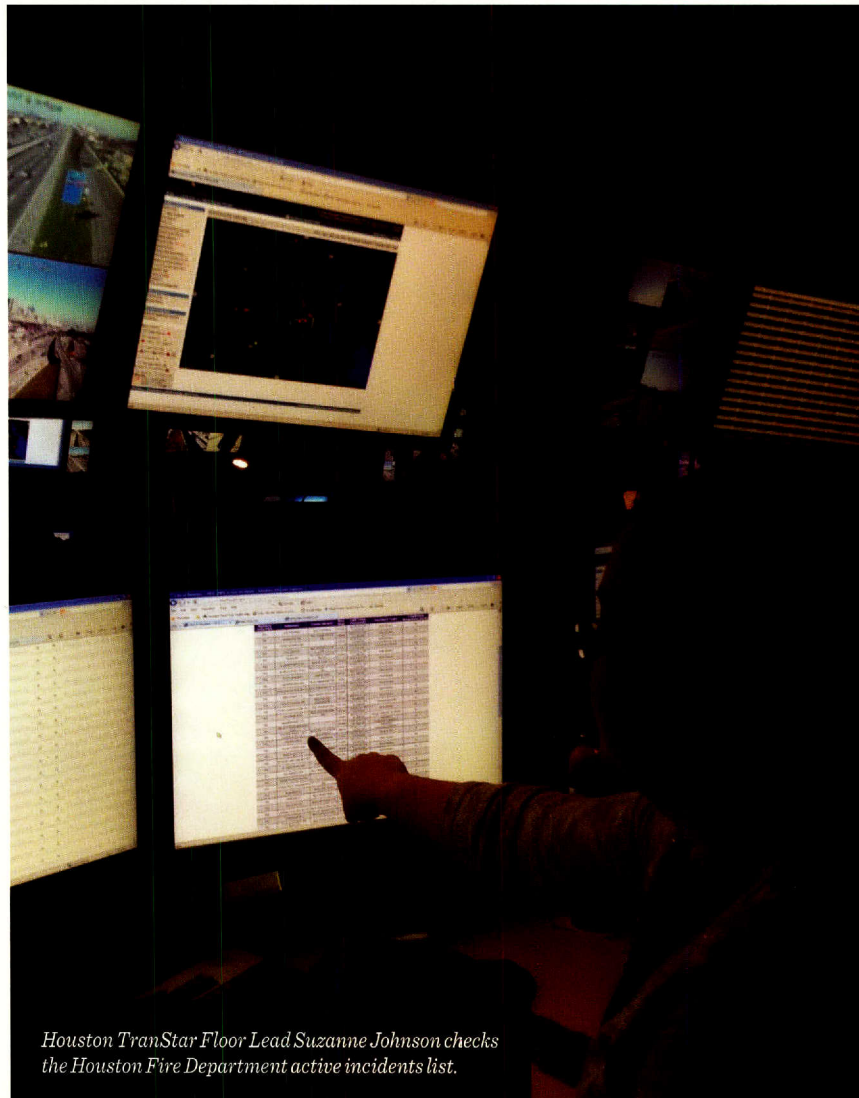


Tiffany Lopez, a transportation tech, checks multiple monitors for incident updates at Houston TranStar.

“The staff is invaluable. They keep the traveling public informed and they handle major incidents. This keeps traffic moving and roads safer”

“I’m glad that I’m in the position to make the traveling public’s journey a little easier and smoother,” Johnson said. “We are making a difference.”

The work doesn’t stop following the evening rush. Staff members, including Operations Technicians Pablo Garcia and Ted Wallace, give those evening travelers a helping hand. When freeways are closed for construction, the Houston TranStar staff works diligently to warn motorists as they approach the closed section of the roadway. It is this dedication that helps move traffic and keeps motorists safe. 



Houston TranStar Floor Lead Suzanne Johnson checks the Houston Fire Department active incidents list.

TxDOT Helps Make Holidays Brighter

TxDOT employees throughout the state gave needy families in their communities a memorable holiday.



Bryan District

Started in 2008 in the Bryan District headquarters, "Bryan Angels" has become a holiday tradition. Using coffee funds and fundraisers, the committee purchased gifts for the children of needy district employee families. The program was open to any employee of the Bryan District who needed help purchasing presents for their children. The names of employees remain anonymous. In 2014, the seventh year for the project, the committee purchased \$1,440 in gifts for 14 children.

The "Bryan Angels," a group of Bryan District employees show off some of the Christmas gifts they provided to the children of district employees. In the back row, from left to right, are former Bryan District Engineer Catherine Hejl, Transportation Funding Specialist Darla Walton, Contract Specialist Sandy Perry, Bryan Public Information Officer Bob Colwell, Human Resources Specialist Elizabeth Holick, Safety Officer Robyn Neveu, Accounting Specialist Leigh Ann Greer, Office Technician Lynn Bush, Information Resource Support Specialist Sheryl Petroski, Human Resources Specialists Janice Robertson and Susan Smith. In the front row, from left to right, are Office Technician Dusti Mooney and Auditor Jennifer Stamush.



On display are the more than 80 new toys TxDOT employees in El Paso collected for local foster children.

El Paso District

El Paso District employees participated in a local toy drive to benefit foster children. The program was facing a shortage of gifts, so TxDOT employees contributed 85 toys. The names, ages and gift requests of the foster children were placed on gingerbread man ornaments that were hung on a Christmas tree in the district office. Employees were asked to purchase toys for each child represented on the tree.



Toll Operations Division

In February, the Toll Operations Division's "TxTag Santa Mechanic" commercial won the Bronze Telly Award in the category of Regional TV and Multi-Market Cable for Public Service. The commercial, which ran during the holidays, shows Santa acquiring a TxTag in order to deliver gifts. Every year, the Telly Awards honors outstanding local and regional television advertising, films and video production, receiving more than 12,000 entries annually across the U.S. and the world. To watch the award winning video, visit TxTag.org.



Sam Reyes, Recycling and Sustainability Program coordinator, and Jace Cabezut, recycling specialist, show off the collection of pet supplies donated from Austin-area employees.

Support Services Division

TxDOT's Recycling and Sustainability Program in the Support Services Division led a recycling and donation drive for Austin Animal Center. TxDOT employees donated about 200 pounds of pet food, as well as numerous pillows, towels, sheets, collars, leashes, pet carriers, toys, beds and other pet supplies to benefit homeless pets at the shelter.



Employees in the Amarillo District coordinated the donation of gifts at The Children's Home in Amarillo. Pictured from left to right, Amarillo District Maintenance Support Technician Stephanie Morrow, Fleet Operations Division Office Technician Beth Risley, Amarillo District Secretary Levita Joyner, Amarillo District Engineer Ron Johnston, Amarillo District Director of Transportation Planning and Development Gus Khankarli, Amarillo District Office Technician Elcine Tucker and Amarillo District Maintenance Section Supervisor Brent Lane.

Amarillo District

The Amarillo District made the holiday season a little brighter for 47 kids at The Children's Home in Amarillo, delivering gifts to each of them on Dec. 17. District volunteers received information on the ages and gift wishes of 41 kids at the home. They also provided gifts for a family of six. In addition, the Canyon, Hereford and Vega maintenance sections provided six bicycles with matching helmets for all the kids to share. The Children's Home provides a loving and stable living environment for children and young adults who, for various reasons, have no home or family of their own. This is the second year the Amarillo District has provided holiday gifts to the kids.



Odessa District employees pose in front of the Christmas tree with donated gifts at the district office. Front, from left to right, Business Services Supervisor Lennerd Byrd, General Transportation Technician Debbie Hensley, Director of Operations Chad Windham, Office Technician Elaine Munoz and Human Resources Specialist Rodney O'Neal. Back, from left to right, General Engineering Technician Jack Lambert and Human Resources Specialist Kristy Collins.

Odessa District

The Christmas spirit was alive and well in the Odessa District during this past holiday season. A group of employees sponsored six children, from infants to mid-teens, through Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Each of the children were given donated presents.

TxDOT BOOK PEERS INTO EARLY TEXAS POTTERY

"Peering through the Sands of Time," published by TxDOT, presents the results of TxDOT-sponsored archeological excavations in northeast Texas. The excavations revealed a late Titus-phase (15th through 17th centuries A.D.) Caddo dwelling in Camp County.

The publication describes what was learned about this ancient homestead. It also explores how Caddo pottery may have been made, drawing on the insights of a modern potter. Discussions focus on Caddo ceramics and the rich ceramic-making tradition that contributed to their heritage. The reader is taken through how the Caddo made pots for everyday use as well as special, ceremonial occasions. The experience includes the exploration of the rich cultural heritage and history of the Caddo in northeast Texas through photos, slideshows and interactive images.

"Peering through the Sands of Time" is available both as an e-book and as a PDF. The e-book takes advantage of several features of this format. It contains extensive galleries that show pictures of the excavation and artifacts. The electronic version also has interactive three-dimensional models of some Caddo pots that can be rotated and explored, along with modern replicas. The PDF provides the main text of the publication and many of the images found in the e-book.

To download the e-book, visit iTunes or to view the PDF version, visit the Google Play Store. 

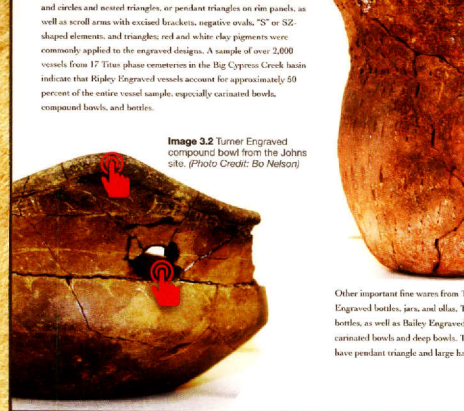
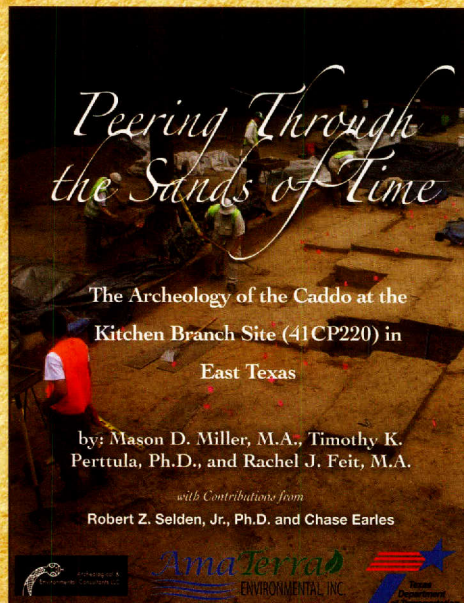


Image 3.2 Turner Engraved compound bowl from the Johns site. (Photo Credit: Bo Nelson)

Other important fine wares from Titus Engraved bottles, jars, and ollas. Titus bottles, as well as Bulley Engraved, carinated bowls and deep bowls. Titus have pendant triangle and large hat.



Peering Through the Sands of Time

The Archeology of the Caddo at the Kitchen Branch Site (41CP220) in East Texas

by: Mason D. Miller, M.A., Timothy K. Pertulla, Ph.D., and Rachel J. Feit, M.A.

with Contributions from Robert Z. Selden, Jr., Ph.D. and Chase Earles




TEXAS HIGHWAYS Gift Shop STAYS TRUE TO TEXAS

Our True Texas products celebrate exceptional Texas creativity by highlighting Texas-based artisans. The products are all designed and predominately manufactured in Texas, many of them by hand. If you like buying local, this is the category for you.

In an attempt to more closely match the authenticity of Texas Highways' editorial content, magazine staffers embarked on a mission in 2014 to feature True Texas products at the magazine's Gift Shop. Specialty products made by artisans from all across the Lone Star State are now available at <http://shop.texashighways.com/>.

The online store features handmade leather goods from Satchel & Page in Austin, candles from Circle 21 in Amarillo, stoneware from Luling Icehouse Pottery, yarn bowls from ClayThings Pottery and Sculpture Studio in Cove, ornaments from Kitty Keller in Seguin, wind chimes from This and That in Nederland, reclaimed Texas wall hangings from Hemlock & Heather in Austin and many more items. New products arrive several times a month.

Texas Highways readers have shown their support of the gift shop program by spending 60 percent more on products in December 2014 than the previous year. One reader who ordered rolling pins designed by Coulbury Design in Austin said, "I started about three or four years ago trying to buy things made in Texas. I saw your product in Texas Highways while in a doctor's office and knew immediately that this would be perfect for this year's gift. They came on Friday and my expectations were exceeded. Beautiful!" 

BUILDING THE NEXT ICONIC DALLAS BRIDGE



Above is a rendering of the Horseshoe Project Margaret McDermott Bridge on I-30 over the Trinity River approaching downtown Dallas.

MARGARET MCDERMOTT BRIDGE FACTS

DIMENSIONS

- » Height of the arches: 328 feet
- » The top of the arch starts out on a radius of 550 feet, and the bottom of the arch ends on a radius of 1,350 feet
- » Length of the arch: 1,311 feet
- » Bridge deck length: 1,125 feet

FOOTING INFO

- » Concrete in each footing: 890 cubic yards and 200,000 pounds of reinforcing steel on each footing
- » Each footing has 12 battered shafts and 4 vertical shafts

DRILL SHAFTS

- » Each drill shaft is 48 inches in diameter, and averages 80 feet in length

FABRICATION

- » The transition bent formwork was fabricated by Aluma Forms in Canute, Kansas


The next iconic landmark bridge in Dallas is taking shape just west of its downtown area on I-30 over the Trinity River. Serving as a new spectacular gateway into the city, the Margaret McDermott Bridge will soon marvel drivers with its beauty and complexity, and will complement the adjacent Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge north of I-30.

The first large, steel pieces of the dual arches that will span more than 1,300 feet across the Trinity River at a height of 328 feet arrived in Dallas in mid-November and the first piece was installed on the eastbound arch on Jan. 7, 2015.

The Margaret McDermott Bridge is named after the philanthropist and wife of the founder of Texas Instruments. She was the first person to make a substantial personal contribution that ensured the city of Dallas could secure the famous Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava as the designer to meld architectural beauty with functionality for both bridges over the Trinity River. The city worked with TxDOT, the Texas Legislature and the region to make funding a priority for the I-30 bridge and include the bridge as a part of the TxDOT Horseshoe Project, which is rebuilding the downtown Mixmaster and the bridges over the Trinity River on I-30 and I-35E. The new bridge features pedestrian and bicycle access connecting to downtown, the floodway and the Oak Cliff neighborhood.

The \$798 million Horseshoe project, so named for its U-shape, began construction in August 2013 and is expected to be completed in mid-2017. TxDOT contracted with Pegasus Link Constructors, a joint venture between Fluor Enterprises and Balfour Beatty Infrastructure, for the project, which will construct five miles of major interstate improvement, including the replacement of 37 bridges in the downtown Mixmaster and across the Trinity River. In fact, the tagline for the project is "Fixin' the Mix."

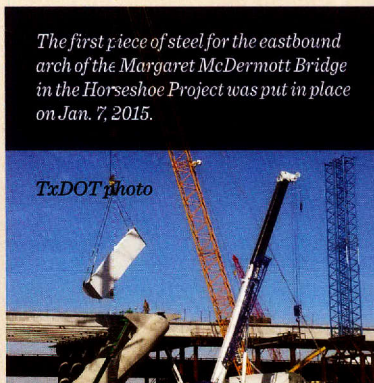
More than 460,000 vehicles use the I-30 and I-35E Mixmaster interchange through downtown per weekday, and approximately 140,000 vehicles per weekday cross the Trinity River on I-30.

The McDermott bridge is being fabricated in a facility in Tampa, Florida by Tampa Steel Erecting Company and will be transported to Dallas piece by piece. American Bridge will be the contractor on site building the arches. 



TxDOT photo

The first piece of steel for the Margaret McDermott Bridge over the Trinity River arrives in Dallas in mid-November 2014.



TxDOT photo

The first piece of steel for the eastbound arch of the Margaret McDermott Bridge in the Horseshoe Project was put in place on Jan. 7, 2015.


BRAZOS RIVER BRIDGES WIN ENGINEERING AWARD

Another award was added to the accruing collection of accolades for TxDOT's extradosed bridges over the Brazos River in Waco. In December, the Finley Engineering Group Inc., which worked with prime contractor Lane Construction as their construction engineering support, was announced as a winner of a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers Engineering Excellence Award. Finley Engineering Group provided construction engineering analysis to Lane Construction.

The new bridges used an innovative design which is highly aesthetic, durable and cost-effective. The project was completed near budget and four months ahead of schedule — prior to Baylor University's 2014 football season opener and the grand opening of the university's new stadium — to tremendous celebration (and huge amounts of traffic).

The bridges now provide increased mobility and safety for the 115,000 vehicles daily that pass over the river, two-thirds of which is pass-through traffic, and 25 to 30 percent is long-haul trucking vehicles. The striking new structures are a regional landmark for the local community, the traveling public and over 100,000 tourists annually who visit the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco (right across the river from the new stadium).

The extradosed bridges are the first of their kind in Texas and only the second built in the United States, and construction posed new and different challenges for both the construction crew and TxDOT's project team. Finley Construction Group's efforts were essential to the safe and successful completion of the bridge construction.

The Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers awards ceremony will be held at the group's annual conference in August. As a result of winning the state-level FICE award, the project is now eligible for the national American Council of Engineering Companies' Grand Award for Engineering Excellence. 

TxDOT's new I-35 Brazos River Bridges received a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers Engineering Excellence Award for the prime contractor's construction consultant, Finley Engineering Group. It will now be entered into the national American Council of Engineering Companies awards competition.



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY TURNS ★ 30 ★

On March 9, 1985, now recognized as International Adopt-a-Highway Day, the first Adopt-a-Highway signs in the nation were erected in Texas on a two-mile stretch in Tyler. This March 9 will mark the 30th anniversary of the program and its successes made possible by coordinators and volunteers throughout the state.

The first Adopt-a-Highway project emerged out of Tyler in response to concerns about the cost of litter to the public and the state's natural beauty. Today, Texas has over 4,000 Adopt-a-Highway volunteer groups covering 9,000 miles of roads and saving an average of \$4 million per year. This homegrown TxDOT initiative has led to a movement involving nearly 90,000 groups in 49 states, Puerto Rico, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.

Any individual, family, group, organization or company interested in being a part of the program can contact their local coordinator to apply. Each two-mile stretch of highway must be adopted for at least two years and cleaned four to six times per year.

TxDOT photo



Adopt-a-Highway: sections of roadway that are adopted by groups are marked with special signage like the one above.

The Texas Trash-Off

In conjunction with the 30th anniversary of Adopt-a-Highway, supporters and volunteers of the program can participate in the Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off on April 11. The Trash-Off is rooted in the program's effort to reduce litter, and is based on research that shows people are less likely to litter when the roadside is clean. In partnership with Keep Texas Beautiful, it encourages Texans across the state to join forces and clear Texas roadsides of trash as part of the state's signature event for the Great American Cleanup, the nation's largest community improvement program. 

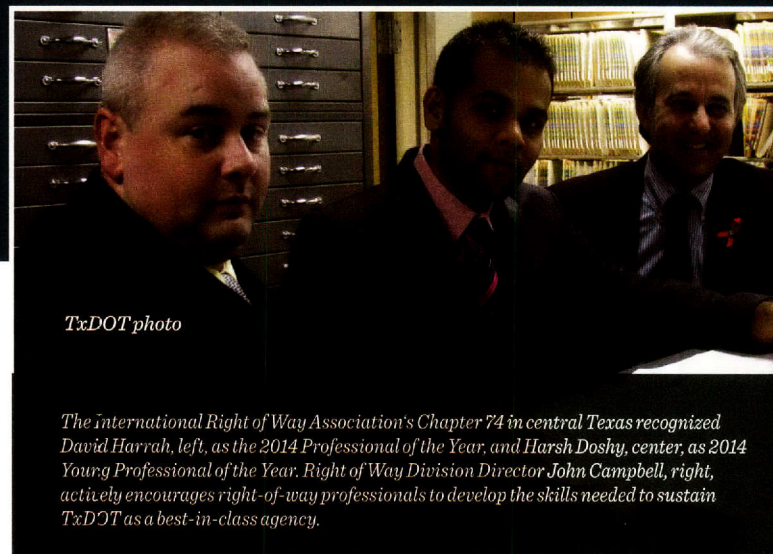


RIGHT OF WAY GETS RECOGNITION

The International Right of Way Association, through its Texas chapter, honored two members of TxDOT's Right of Way Division at the group's annual banquet in Austin last December.


The chapter selected David Harrah as its 2014 Professional of the Year. Harrah, a program lead specializing in the policy area of relocation, works in the Acquisition Section at the division's Austin headquarters. Harrah has been active in chapter activities and most recently has undertaken leadership roles with the association both regionally and nationally. Among his credentials, he has earned the senior right-of-way agent designation for his willingness to share his expertise with newcomers to the professional field.

Harsh Doshy was also selected as the chapter's 2014 Young Professional of the Year. Doshy was recognized for his ability to motivate people, as well as promote networking opportunities and professional development for right-of-way agents new to the association and profession. Recently becoming a professional engineer, Doshy works in the division's Map, Survey and Utilities Section in Austin.

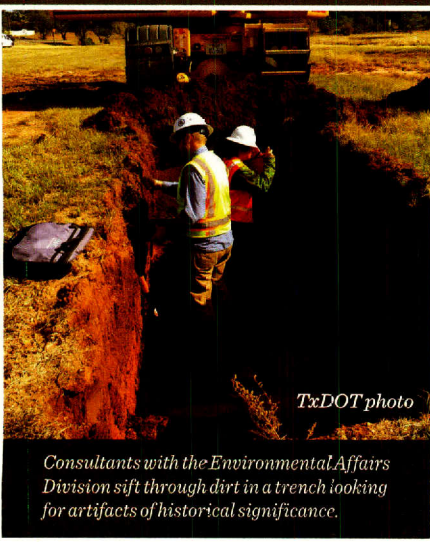


TxDOT photo

The International Right of Way Association's Chapter 74 in central Texas recognized David Harrah, left, as the 2014 Professional of the Year, and Harsh Doshy, center, as 2014 Young Professional of the Year. Right of Way Division Director John Campbell, right, actively encourages right-of-way professionals to develop the skills needed to sustain TxDOT as a best-in-class agency.

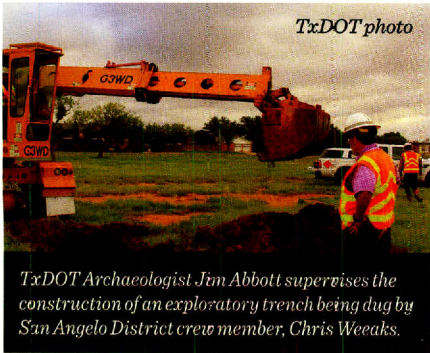
The Right of Way Division protects the rights of private-property owners in Texas while helping to provide the department's delivery of transportation solutions throughout the state. 

HIKE-AND-BIKE TRAIL PROJECT A FIRST FOR SAN ANGELO



TxDOT photo

Consultants with the Environmental Affairs Division sift through dirt in a trench looking for artifacts of historical significance.



TxDOT photo

TxDOT Archaeologist Jim Abbott supervises the construction of an exploratory trench being dug by San Angelo District crew member, Chris Weeaks.

Construction has begun on the Red Arroyo Trail, a nearly 4-mile paved hike-and-bike path connecting two of San Angelo's busiest thoroughfares, Sherwood Way and Knickerbocker Road. It is the first such path of its kind in San Angelo.

The \$4 million joint venture between the city of San Angelo and TxDOT will consist of a 14-foot-wide concrete path, three trailheads with seating, three parking areas and a restroom at Unidad Park, an existing city park along the path. Six working ponds and five bridges will also be built along the trail which meanders through grassy meadowland on the floodplain.

As part of the project development, TxDOT archaeologists and consultants have visited the

area several times to look for artifacts which may have historical significance. With help from the San Angelo special jobs crew, the Austin-based archaeologists have already dug 28 trenches. The trenches are in the locations for the planned ponds and parking areas, and will help engineers plan the precise locations, depths and sizes of the ponds.

TxDOT is funding 80 percent of the project through Transportation Enhancement Funds. The remaining 20 percent is funded by the city of San Angelo. The project's goal is to provide increased recreational opportunities for walking, running and bicycling and to provide a greater sense of community by connecting several neighborhoods. **TN**

Reviving the Chisholm Trail

If you ever travel U.S. 281/I-69C in Edinburg, you'll likely see frozen images of cowboys and cattle on the retaining wall. It is a mural dedicated to two iconic symbols of Texas that tells a deeper, lesser-known story.

The story begins shortly after the American Civil War and with the expansion of the meatpacking industry in the northern part of the U.S. The demand for beef in the late 1860s was so great that a \$5 bovine in Texas could be sold in northern markets for as much as \$40 per head. The market demand made it profitable for Texas cattlemen to move their herd long distances north to the railhead of the Kansas Pacific Railway, where they were shipped eastward.

One of the main routes for driving cattle northward from Texas was known as the Chisholm Trail. The trail was first marked by Jesse Chisholm in 1864 and it stretched

from South Texas across the Red River to Abilene, Kansas.

The Pharr District Office is taking the lead in re-establishing a series of historical markers delineating the alignment of the Chisholm Trail in Texas. The alignment and installation of these markers was originally supported and approved by the Texas Highway Commission on May 19, 1930.

The markers were placed on state right-of-way areas. But with the expansion and growth of the highway system, only seven of the original markers still remain in place today. Spearheaded by TxDOT's Stephen Walker, Pharr District landscape architect, 37 markers are being created. Each will be cast to original specifications and made ready for distribution to seven district offices along the original route. Once installed, these markers will be absorbed into the inventory of the Texas Historical Commission. **TN**



TxDOT photo

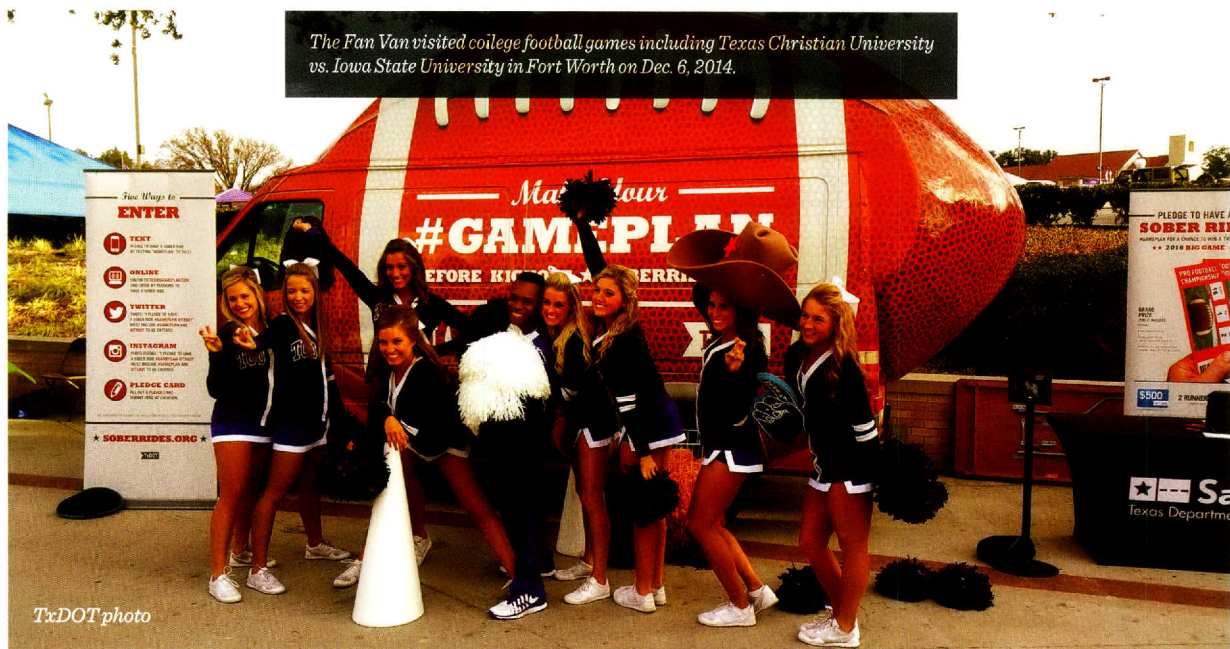


TxDOT photo

Images of Texas cattle drives along the Chisholm Trail are imprinted on the retaining wall of U.S. 281/Interstate 69C in Edinburg.

Sober Rides are the **GAME PLAN**

★★ **DURING FOOTBALL SEASON** ★★




We all know that football is part of the Texas culture. TxDOT's Football Season Impaired Driving Campaign encouraged fans to enjoy the big game, but include a sober ride in their game plans. The campaign kicked off in October with the Texas and Oklahoma University rivalry game in Dallas and ended after Super Bowl weekend. The goal of the program was to reduce the number of DUI-related traffic crashes occurring on football game days when a Texas college or professional team was playing.

The Fan Van — a giant football on wheels — visited more than a dozen Texas cities and staffers collected pledges at college football tailgates and at NFL game watching parties from people including fans in Lubbock at the Jones AT&T Stadium during the Texas Tech University vs. University of Kansas football game on Oct. 18. Staff actively engaged with over 120 fans to deliver the campaign message and collected 93 sober ride pledges. The Fan Van also

visited Kyle Field in College Station during the Texas A&M vs. University of Missouri football game on Nov. 15. More than 80 people pledged to make a sober ride part of their game plan.

People who made a sober ride pledge by Feb. 1 had a chance to win a trip to next year's Super Bowl.

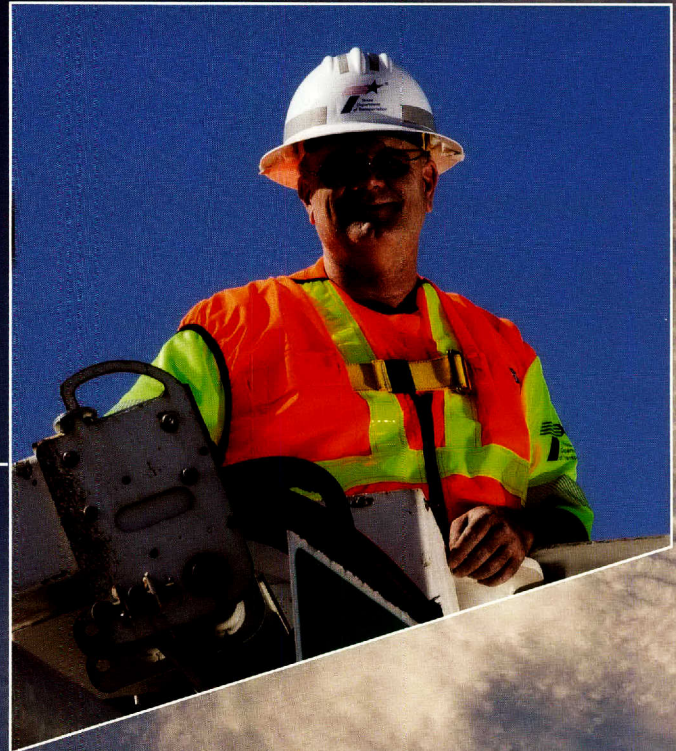
During last year's Super Bowl Sunday, 128 DUI alcohol-related traffic crashes occurred in Texas, resulting in eight fatalities and 12 serious injuries. Those crashes marked a 14 percent increase compared with 2013. 

National Work Zone Awareness Week will be March 23 to 27. Texas can have as many as 2,500 active highway construction or maintenance work zones. More than 100 fatalities occur each year in work zones. Speeding and inattentive driving are the top two causes of work zone crashes.

I AM A...

Traffic Systems Specialist

Doug Finnigan, a 22-year veteran of TxDOT, joined the department following his service in the U.S. Navy. He grew up in Brownwood and graduated from Brownwood High School. In his spare time, Finnigan officiates high school sports, including football, basketball and softball. He and his wife Lisa have been married for 27 years and have two daughters, Lacy and Alyson.



DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL DAY.

A typical day for me could be anything that includes traffic signals, school zone flashing lights, roadway lighting, routine maintenance contracts or high mast lighting. I manage all 66 traffic signals in the Brownwood District and am responsible for their timing and maintenance. I'm also responsible for the inspection of any new traffic signal construction in the district.

Recently, I had a day that included replacing a four-way traffic signal configuration in Cisco and construction of three roadside beacon signs for a routine maintenance contract. I also had call-in repair requests for a vandalized school zone sign in Lohn and a traffic signal that wasn't operating normally in Goldthwaite due to a bad pedestrian button. In addition, I received a request from a contractor to locate underground wiring for a traffic signal in DeLeon so that construction could proceed. Here in the district, I'm the sole contact for these areas so many days are busy.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I like the fact that my job is constantly challenging and surprising. I never know what I'm going to be doing each day or what new issues I might encounter. There's never a dull moment.


WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES?

Since I'm the only traffic systems specialist for the nine-county district, sometimes balancing all of the installations in the different areas can be a challenge. It requires coordination with the maintenance sections who are always willing to provide someone to help with whatever project I'm working on. Without them, I couldn't do what I do day-in and day-out. The Brownwood District is also the only district that handles all of the installation of traffic signals on state highways. We do this because we don't have any towns with populations higher than 50,000.



DOUG FINNIGAN

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO COME TO WORK?

TxDOT is the best place I've ever worked. Besides the great people, the challenges motivate me to come back every day. I can come in expecting to do some routine work in Lampasas County that day, then I get one phone call and it's off to Breckenridge to work on a knocked-down traffic signal. It can sometimes be hectic but I love the work I do. 

EMPLOYEE



Wynelle McDonald

Wynelle McDonald

*Tyler District, Administrative Technician
for the District Engineer*

Wynelle McDonald was born in Dallas and grew up in Athens, earning her bachelor's degree from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1982. Wynelle has spent her entire 31-year TxDOT career in the Tyler District. She started in February 1984 as an administrative technician in the District Maintenance Office. Wynelle is married and has a son, Blake Richardson, who is currently pursuing his doctorate. She enjoys working out, running, taking care of her pets and helping her husband James with his hobby, beekeeping.

What does an administrative technician for the district engineer in the Tyler District do?

Administrative technician or is it administrative magician? With so much going on at one time, I almost have to pull a rabbit out of my hat to keep things going smoothly!

I read lots of emails — and keep up with them — coordinate with officials on a local and statewide level, respond to public requests, and plan and coordinate travel and calendar meetings and events for the Tyler staff. There is never a dull moment. It's high energy and I'm right in the middle of it. It helps to have a sense of humor and a can-do attitude. That goes a long way!

What's the most challenging aspect of working in the Tyler District administration?

Remembering to embrace and welcome change. If you're not learning something new, you're not growing.

What was your favorite television show as a child? Why?

I Love Lucy. Zany as she was, she always had a plan. She used her wit, skill and friends to find a way to make things work, all with humor.

On your day off, what do you look forward to the most?

I don't get a day off very often. I help my spouse with his chiropractic clinic in my spare time. If I truly do get a day or two off, I like to go to Dallas and visit my son. I also like to run and workout, and a little target practice is a great stress reliever.

What major life events have had the greatest impact on you?

Preparing and rearing a child to help him get a good start in life and preparing a loved one for the end of life will bring you full circle. After my father died of cancer, we moved right into caring for my mom who soon died from Alzheimer's disease, then immediately after that, my oldest brother died from leukemia. I learned that tough times don't last, but tough people do. I'm still here. They taught me to just keep going; I can do way more than I think I can.

Why is your district the best in TxDOT?

We are a great group working on the same goal. Most of us have been here a long time and we depend on the support we receive from each other. We're sort of like Clint Eastwood — the good, the bad and the ugly. We've been through it all, together.

TxDOT photo



How do you ensure that safety is your top priority every day?

Safety is our culture. Everything we do starts with the thought process, "What's the best way to accomplish my work safely?" And, even if LtGen Weber is on the line, resist the urge to run to the phone.


What's an interesting fact about you that most people don't know?

I'm a twin. No, there are not two of me; you're safe. I have a twin brother.

Living in the Rose Capital of the World, are roses your favorite flower? If not, what is?

I like roses, but I prefer carnations. Peppermint carnations are my favorite.

What's your dream destination for a summer vacation?


My ultimate vacation would be an Alaskan cruise, but until then, Orange Beach, Alabama, with a big umbrella in the sand, and a little one in my glass suits me just fine. 

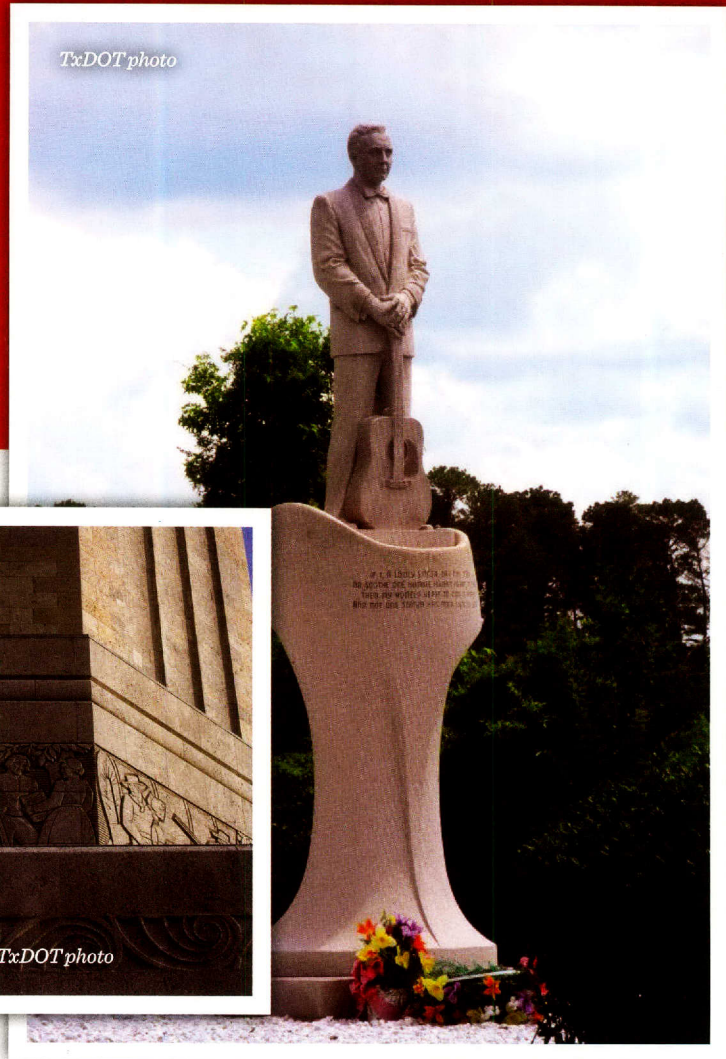
Where Am I?

Here is a photo depicting an identifiable landmark you may have seen in your travels around Texas. If you think you know what this is a photo of or know where it was taken, send an email to TNideas@txdot.gov. Deadline for submissions is March 31.

Identified:

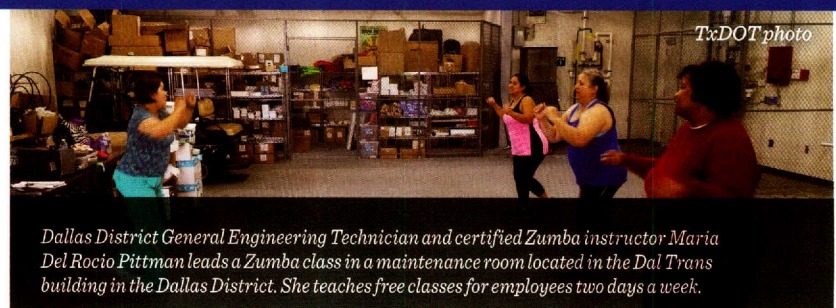
Congratulations to our first identifier: **Chris Cowen** from the Bryan District. The photo shows a close-up of the San Jacinto Monument, a 570-foot structure topped with a 34-foot star symbolizing the Lone Star Republic. Located on the Houston Ship Channel in Harris County near La Porte, it is dedicated to all the heroes of the Battle of San Jacinto who contributed to Texas' independence. The monument is the tallest stone column memorial in the world.

Others correctly identifying the photo were: Nancy Russell (PAR), Patrick Trube (HOU), Elizabeth Longoria (FIN), Cathy O'Reilly (ODA), George Sassano (BRY), Brian Brymer (TPP), Bill Eisman (BRY), Lynette Phillips (BMT), Steve Linhart (TPP), David Ham (SSD), Steve Sell (BMT), Walter Barfield (AUS), Lyndol Irby II (TRV), Bradley Peikert (BRY), Maurice Maness (BRY), Carol Davis (HOU), Bill Baker (HOU), Charles Ditmore (PMO), John Floyd (HOU), Sandra Chipley (ENV), Maureen Wakeland (PPD), James Normant (BRY), Steven Simpson (SAT), Mike Hyde (retiree), Jan Robbins (retiree), Otto Maresh (retiree) and Philip Vahalik (CST). 



TXDOT EMPLOYEES GET FIT DURING GET FIT CHALLENGE

Get Fit TxDOT!



Dallas District General Engineering Technician and certified Zumba instructor Maria Del Rocio Pittman leads a Zumba class in a maintenance room located in the Dal Trans building in the Dallas District. She teaches free classes for employees two days a week.


Last fall, about 3,500 employees statewide participated in the first-ever Get Fit TxDOT Challenge. The 10-week program encouraged employees to engage in physical activity for at least 150 minutes a week. Waco earned the title of Fittest District for logging 224,716 minutes of physical activity. The Austin and Atlanta districts rounded out the top three.

"The Waco District has truly embraced a strong health and wellness program for our employees," said District Engineer Bobby Littlefield Jr. "I firmly believe that our employees understand the value and benefit of making healthy lifestyle choices. Exercise and fitness rolled into a competition can be a real motivator."

According to a survey of program participants, 70 percent said they felt more

productive at work and 95 percent said they would continue their exercise routine after the challenge. Participants also reported they felt better, slept better and lost between 5 and 26 pounds.

"The Get Fit Challenge was a great success and exceeded our expectations. As someone who works with employees, I have seen the benefits of wellness programs for the employee and the organization," said David McMillan, TxDOT's Human Resources director.

"Wellness programs increase productivity, energy levels and engagement in work. They also encourage healthy choices. Overall, they change a person in a positive way. It's a win-win for TxDOT and our employees." 

MILESTONES

January 2015 Service Awards



Districts:

Abilene

- 20 Darrell L. Meissner
Bruce W. Wheeler
- 15 Jesse A. Gonzales
Laramie A. Letz
Andrew Vargas Jr.
- 10 Lisa M. Collins
Charlie C. Kimmel

Amarillo

- 25 Tommy D. Davis
Terry A. Nix
Leon D. Vogler

Atlanta

- 25 Sedric M. Gaston
- 15 Elizabeth D. Simmons
- 10 James E. Moore II
- 5 Charles R. Parker

Austin

- 25 Michael A. Miller
- 15 Clifton Bailey
Angela M. Gil

Beaumont

- 20 George W. Bush

Brownwood

- 15 Dan A. Hohmann
- 5 Nicholas T. Partin

Bryan

- 20 Melvin L. Mims

Corpus Christi

- 30 Roberto Cantu Jr.
Jimmy G. Rutkowski
- 15 Duane C. Halleman
- 10 Randy R. Mora

Dallas

- 30 H. S. Hall
James J. Monroe
- 20 Felicia R. Cortez
- 15 Ryan W. Blue
William J. Fisher
Hossein Jahanshahi
- 10 Deborah D. Allen
- 5 Amanda N. Moser

El Paso

- 15 Ernesto Valdez
- 10 Jaime C. Duran
Ernecilio B. Gonzalez

Fort Worth

- 35 Belinda J. Smith
- 20 Carlos E. Molina
- 15 William C. Febinger IV
- 10 Richard L. Morrow
Jose J. Torres

Houston

- 25 Elie J. Alkhoury
Todd D. Hebert
Peggy S. Goff
Ronald M. Mueller
Edward L. Waguespack
- 20 Thomas W. Moss
- 15 Francisco Garcia
David L. Hempy
Ricky Morroe
Cindy C. Rohacek
Michael W. Wawarofsky
- 10 Brandi D. Davis
Alexander Der

Laredo

- 25 Roberto Perez
- 15 Crispin Razo
- 10 David A. Aguilar

Lubbock

- 25 Ronald W. Baker
Richard C. Walbrick
- 15 Carlos E. Adkins
Mario Ayala
Jose A. Moreno
- 10 Billy W. McClellan
Simon Resendez Jr.

Lufkin

- 15 Tammy J. Neal
- 10 Stephen W. Childress

Odessa

- 20 Orlando Padilla
- 15 Jose C. Leyva
- 10 David T. Dingle
Maria L. Flores

Paris

- 20 Robert C. Graves III
- 15 Christopher G. Harrison

Pharr

- 25 Eduardo Blanco
- 20 Evan M. Roberts
- 15 Rosendo Garcia III
Jeffery A. Hollenhead
David R. Nieto

San Angelo

- 10 Antonio S. Ruiz

San Antonio

- 30 Brien A. Hocher
 - 25 Joe A. Yanas
 - 20 Jesse R. Tamayo
 - 15 Bodie J. Browning
Gerald W. Vrana
Travis O. Young
 - 10 Jamie L. Johnson
- #### Tyler
- 30 Michael T. Schneider
 - 20 Randy G. Lemmon
John E. Loflin
Brandy B. McDaniel

Waco

- 20 Johnny M. Rodriguez
- 10 Lyndon C. Love
Clifford J. Neumann
Jody L. Valero
Heath A. Zucha

Wichita Falls

- 30 Charles E. Stanley
- 15 Dennis A. Ramsey
- 10 Brian T. Moore

Yoakum

- 30 Glenn R. Jaeger
- 10 Darren W. Mrkwa

Divisions/ Offices:

Audit

- 15 Timothy R. Owen
- 10 Letta B. Hinton

Aviation

- 25 Ed Oshinski

Bridge

- 20 Estanislado Ybarra
- 10 Dina V. Dewane
Jamie L. Griffin
Ronald C. Reeves

Communications

- 10 Paul F. Braun

Construction

- 30 George H. Vogt Jr
- 15 Gunalini Rajkumar

Design

- 30 William G. Orr IV

Finance

- 30 Mary C. Velez
- 20 Alison L. McMillan
- 15 Guadalupe S. Hernandez

Fleet Operations

- 20 Virginia E. Davenport
- 10 Gerald S. Dent
Michael J. Osborne
James G. Stouard

Human Resources

- 15 David J. Houston

IT Operations

- 20 Diana J. Birdwell

Maintenance

- 10 Sandra D. Kaderka

Occupational Safety

- 10 Nicole R. Al-Sayed

Office of Civil Rights

- 10 Paula A. Pitifer

Office of General Counsel

- 5 Karen E. Moore

Procurement

- 25 Lisa D. Hayden

Professional

Procurement

- 15 Miki C. Cumby

Public

Transportation

- 15 Anthony I. Cochran

Research and

Technology

Implementation

- 30 Susan C. Tutt

Right of Way

- 10 Manuel Hernandez

Strategic Projects

- 20 Daniel H. Peden

Support Services

- 10 Norman L. Coddington
Jesse Gomez
Sharon I. Williams

Transportation

Planning and

Programming

- 35 Peter M. Carrizales

- 25 Joe P. Clark

- 15 Richard R. Barrientos
Cynthia M. Mueller

Travel

- 20 Sandra Torres

February 2015 Service Awards



Districts:

Abilene

20 Jesse Mendoza III

Amarillo

30 Kathleen Z. Chavez

20 Johnny J. Cordova

15 Russell K. Wade

10 Blake E. Tate

Atlanta

40 Gary G. Barnett

25 Rea D. Jones

15 Charles M. Cooper

10 Michael L. McAfee

Austin

30 Charles E. Collins

25 Clint J. Dube

20 Pernell L. Coats
Bobby A. Ramthun

15 David C. Bauer
Darren W. Everett
Demissie M. Sema

10 Mary A. Kempf
Rodney S. Jones

Beaumont

10 Tomie L. Young

Brownwood

35 Robert K. Pearce Jr.

15 Steven W. Hamrick

Bryan

35 Ricky G. Wills

20 Marvin R. Craig

5 Theresa L. Bush

Corpus Christi

30 Oscar L. Zambrano

15 Joel Garcia
Anna Gonzalez

Dallas

25 Lynn E. McKinney

15 Jimmy E. Davis
Joseph D. Slack
David P. Stauder

10 Vincent C. Ayala
Carlett B. Jordan
Jason T. Palmer

5 Quincy L. Armstead

El Paso

20 Martha A. Boyd
Luis F. Mendez
Coby Nichol

10 Ruben E. Martinez

Fort Worth

15 Cathie J. Carroll
Michael D. Chandler
James G. Hand

10 Anthony R. Munoz

Houston

30 Rosminda B. Bautista
John A. Elam

25 Stephen M. Zapata

20 Reza Mosaffa

15 Samuel E. Dennis III
Servando Rodriguez

10 Terri L. Dedhia
Sedgwick Haynes

Lubbock

25 Ronald K. Gandy

20 Tommy J. Miller

10 Ryan B. Brown

5 Ricky C. Luera

Lufkin

20 Charles D. Malone

15 Joe L. San Miguel

Odessa

25 James L. Crain

10 Richard G. Baum

Paris

30 Jeffery B. Dorner

25 Michael S. Gibson
David W. Morrison

15 Amy C. Edwards
Eric S. Morris

5 Cody L. Weaver

Pharr

25 Ernesto O. Alvarado

San Angelo

25 Douglas F. Roberts

San Antonio

30 Roberto Garcia

15 Henry J. Fojtik
William P. Howard
Crystal J. King

10 George A. Davis
Christen D. Longoria
Anne F. Strick

Tyler

15 Shannon D. Bell
Jeremy D. Taylor

10 Joseph B. Warmke

Waco

25 Larry D. Kruger

10 Charles P. Wright

Wichita Falls

10 Michael C. Hostas

Yoakum

35 Gus J. Pilcik Jr.

30 Darren B. Florus

25 Larry D. Howren

15 John A. Cochran Jr.
Robert G. Herman
Rodney P. Svec

10 Kenneth J. Brown
Blair C. Goebel
Amy D. Thibodeaux
Cecil R. Trichel

Divisions/

Offices:

Administration

5 Cassandra R. Mata

Bridge

30 Roger N. Porter

Communications

5 Mary E. Navarrete-
Rodriguez

Construction

40 Lloyd S. Eveland

35 Brian L. Hohle

20 Dar Hao Chen

Federal Affairs

5 Andrea A. Lofye

Finance

15 Jacki L. Hendrickson

Fleet Operations

15 Beth A. Risley
Larry D. Rushing

Government Affairs

5 Oliver J. Bond

Master's Student Program

20 Victoria E. McCammon

Professional Procurement

25 Rhonda R. Poole

Right of Way

25 Judith B. Brown
Kelly B. Price
Sonya E. Roston

10 Craig D. Blend
Michael J. Toman

Strategic Projects

25 William C. Hall II

20 Maryann Jarutowicz

Support Services

15 Leticia Maldonado
Laura A. Mullins

10 Dennis R. Imel

Traffic Operations

15 Tracie Mendez

10 Adam S. Chodkiewicz

Transportation Planning and Programming

35 Jeffrey C. Reding

25 James W. Burnett
Alan M. Grohman
David L. Plutowski

20 Cary C. Karnstadt

10 Jessica A. Butler

Travel

5 Dolores L. Gomez

November 2014 Retiree Report



Districts:

Abilene

29 Edward L. Hart

Austin

17 Rose E. Morris

Beaumont

25 Michael A. McCray

Corpus Christi

27 Jose M. Garcia

14 Edward M. Guerrero

Dallas

30 Kojo A. Mensah

29 Oscar O. Ruiz

27 Judy A. Kyser

23 Horace Pierce Jr.

18 Nancy J. Kidd

17 Ken E. Roberts

El Paso

11 Federico G. Munoz

Houston

15 David P. Rabius

Lubbock

31 Jesus Meza

20 Judy W. Gilmore

Odessa

27 Lenora W. Fisher

Paris

12 Juan S. Diaz

San Antonio

30 John E. Svab III

Tyler

30 James B. Hodges

26 Lesia S. Main

Divisions/

Offices:

Human Resources

28 Mary D. Zaruba

14 Yolanda Arriaga

Procurement

32 Rodney W. Saunders

Professional Procurement

18 Maria A. Faria Wade

Traffic Operations

16 Clay E. McCullough III

December 2014 Retiree Report



Districts:

Abilene

30 James R. Carlin

17 Michael T. Walker

Amarillo

25 Robin M. Frisk

Atlanta

29 David A. Dalrymple

Austin

31 Karl R. Wilke

25 Stacey H. Benningfield

Beaumont

25 Willie Celestine Sr.

Brownwood

28 Johnny L. Williams

27 Margie B. Poe

21 Jimmy D. Adame

Bryan

30 Raymond L. Kroll

21 Roger D. Montgomery

Corpus Christi

30 Janet D. Gholson

28 Rodolfo Landa

Dallas

28 John R. Johnson

26 Gordon J. Moodie

16 Michael J. Barham
John R. Robinson

El Paso

32 Hector R. Granado

Houston

30 Vince G. Cannon
Denise K. Schott

25 Harry B. Tull

11 Leroy Wright

Lufkin

30 Thomas G. Hunter III
Robert W. Mosby

Odessa

25 Ricardo A. Garcia

Paris

19 Kenneth R. Sparks

San Antonio

37 Harold L. Dillashaw III

32 David L. Sutherland

31 Thomas J. Wilkinson Jr.

30 Allen J. Schneider

Tyler

28 Lonnie S. Kincaid

12 John N. Curtis

Waco

19 Dennis R. Weiss

Wichita Falls

21 Gary L. Croucher

Yoakum

28 Terrel W. Maertz

Divisions/Offices:

Bridge

28 Mickey M. Estlack

Design

31 Aurora Meza

Finance

21 Rose Ann Juarez

Fleet Operations

18 Pamela J. Helms

Human Resources

20 Jeanette B. Herndon

15 Alma L. Fermin

Right of Way

27 Charles D. Jackson

Support Services

11 Robert Joe Simer

10 Norman J. Mattson

Traffic Operations

24 Gary D. Counts

22 Susan E. Clark

In Memoriam

Districts:

Houston

Petro Czczinski

Traffic Systems Technician II

Years of Service: 10 yrs

DOD: 1/13/15

Yoakum

Edward J. Caka

Years of Service: 38 yrs

Retired: 09/30/93

DOD: 01/26/15

Frank C. Josey, Jr.

Years of Service: 22 yrs

Retired: 10/31/88

DOD: 02/3/15

Harold Hunger

Engineering Technician IV

Years of Service: 30 yrs

DOD: 12/15/14

Divisions/Offices:

Environmental Affairs

James C. Crisp

Planner V

Years of Service: 13 yrs

DOD: 1/20/15

Construction

Sawyer B. Flache

Engineering Technician

Years of Service: 1 yr

DOD: 2/8/15

TxDOT Family Members Chime In

What is your favorite springtime activity?



TxDOT photo

Jan Nolte
Office Manager
Bowie Maintenance
Wichita Falls District

"Looking for those roadsides and fields blanketed in blue! Texas has some amazing sunrises and sunsets, but there's nothing more spectacular than fields blanketed with bluebonnets."



TxDOT photo

Traci Graham
Administrative Assistant
to District Engineer
Abilene District

"Springtime ushers in lots of running events – 5K, 10K, half and full marathons. I love running in and volunteering for our local events. It's a way to maintain my personal wellness and contribute time to my community."



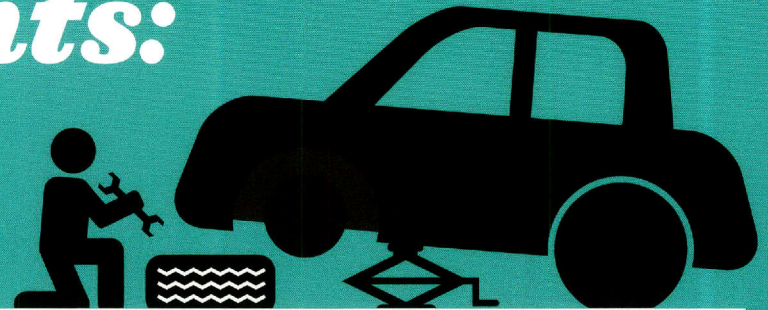
TxDOT photo

Russell Luther
Maintenance Manager
Amarillo District

"Spring is a very busy time for our district, but when I do get time off, I ride the fences on my farm and get the place ready for summer. I also like to sneak away and hunt or fish with my buddies when I can."

Bright Lights:

GOING THE EXTRA MILE



"I would like to take the time to bring to your attention an outstanding employee that works at one of the TxDOT locations here in Wichita Falls. His name is **Moses Gonzales**, a transportation maintenance equipment operator with the Wichita Falls Maintenance Office in the Wichita Falls District. My car blew a tire this morning and he stopped in the cold and damp weather to remove the bad tire and put the spare tire on. He was such a blessing!"

Randy Griffith, Collingsworth County Maintenance supervisor in the Childress District, provided a tire jack to a stranded motorist and helped the traveler change his tire. Mr. Gomez sent a thank-you letter saying "I wish we had more public servants such as Mr. Griffith."

Even the Texas Department of Public Safety needs help sometimes. **Robert Guy** and **William Bainbridge**, general transportation technicians, who work in the Beaumont District's Hardin County Maintenance Office, were making their maintenance inspection rounds on a rainy day and spotted a DPS officer pulled over on the

side of the road with a flat. They stopped and changed the tire. DPS officials sent a letter saying "We would like to thank you for going above and beyond in assisting with the changing of our tire."

Melisa Garcia was going to Odessa for work. She had a blow out about 10 miles past Big Spring heading west. She was there only a short time when Abilene District Sign Technician **Ramon Ortega** pulled up. He removed her spare, which was flat, and then took her to town to have air put in it. The flat was not useable so Ortega took her to a tire shop to replace the spare and then he fixed the flat. Ms. Garcia's note summed up her appreciation: "Thanks for the extra time and caring. Truly appreciate it."

Read more compliments like these in *Bright Lights on Crossroads*: <http://crossroads/brightlights/>. Send information on any thank you emails, letters or calls you or your co-workers receive to AskTxDOT so we can continue to shine Bright Lights on TxDOT employee achievements.

UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

March 2

Texas Independence Day
(Skeleton Crew Day)

March 26

Texas Transportation Commission Meeting
(Austin)

March 31

Cesar Chavez Day
(Optional Holiday)

April 3

Good Friday
(Skeleton Crew Day)

April 21

San Jacinto Day
(Skeleton Crew Day)

April 30

Texas Transportation Commission Meeting
(Austin)



125 E. 11th St.
Austin, Texas 78701

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<http://crossroads/>

GETTING FIT KEEPS HIM GOING

When he was 15 years old, Javier Torres' mother, who lived in Puerto Rico, gave him a gym membership. A year later, his weight dropped from 265 to 180 pounds, and he became extremely fit. That's when his best friend became his girlfriend, and then later, his wife. In 2009 Torres, a materials and process inspector for the Construction Division's Structural Group, and his wife learned they were expecting a child. That's when he returned to old habits. This is his journey to wellness.

"During my wife's pregnancy, I ate a McDonald's sundae every day. In February 2010, I was up to 220 pounds. I wasn't going to the gym and I was always feeling tired. A few years later, I couldn't even tie my tennis shoes. I was wearing 42- to 44-inch waist pants, XXL shirts and feeling depressed, even though I did not show it. The only things that made me happy were my daughter, who sees me as a strong super hero, and my wife.

In August 2014, my wife and I went to Jackson, Mississippi for my niece's graduation. During the four-day trip we went to McDonald's for breakfast, ate fast food dinners and candy. When I got home, I felt bad and kind of dizzy. I told my wife that I needed to exercise.

The next day I tried to walk a mile, and after the first 10 minutes, my body shook. I had to return home. My wife was worried. At this point, I weighed 275 pounds. That month, I started my own program and I walked five miles every day. In September, I cut the walking to four to five days a week and lifted weights once or twice a week. In October, the Get Fit program began, so I tried to jog one mile on the weekends.

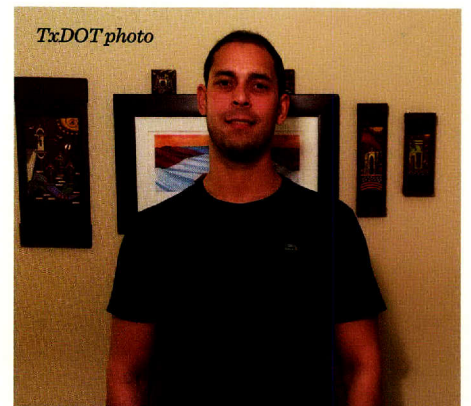
In November, I started heavy lifting three days a week. I also started to jog 3 to 4 miles, four to five days a week. As of today, I have lost 53 pounds, 20 of which were lost using the Get Fit program. I wear a 34-inch waist now, and I feel great. My wife is proud, and my daughter wants to come with me to the gym to see her strong super hero.

For more information about the TxDOT Wellness Program, visit Crossroads.TN



TxDOT photo

Javier Torres (before) 275 lbs



TxDOT photo

Javier Torres (after) 53 lbs less

Contact your local WorkLife Balance Coordinator to learn about the wellness program and start your journey today!

