



TAKING THE IDLE OUT OF I-35

Congestion in Central Texas on I-35 is at the center of traffic and funding challenges.



JAMES BASS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

123 SAFE DAYS OF SUMMER

It's summer, and in Texas, that means two things: heat and more heat. Just as sure as the mercury will soar, our co-workers in maintenance and construction will be putting in a lot of duty over the next few months. And because summer is our busy season, we need to be diligent about keeping our road crews safe in the blistering Texas sun.

That's why the 123 Safe Days of Summer program was created. It's an answer to — and a prevention of — some of the common problems we see during the season when vehicle incidents and employee injuries increase. This year the campaign will run through Aug. 31.


The May issue of the Occupational Safety Briefing has some important tips to help employees spot — and treat — warm weather-related illnesses like heat exhaustion and heat stroke. But it all boils down to this: the best protection is prevention, so make sure you don't forget some basic rules of working outdoors:

- Drink lots of cool fluids, preferably water and drinks that contain electrolytes.
- Take regular breaks.
- Wear your personal protective equipment.

And watch out for your co-workers. If they start to exhibit signs of heat stress like lightheadedness or headaches, call for a time out. Nothing we do is worth the cost of a life.

And just as we're exercising more caution on the job, we need to extend that to our after-duty hours as well. Many of you will be hitting the road for a little rest and relaxation, so along with your suitcases and sunscreen, be sure to pack in some time before you head out to make sure your vehicle and your family are up for the trip. Check your tires, including the spare. Make sure they're properly inflated. Do a "walk around" your car, testing the lights, mirrors and wipers. And before you leave, make sure everybody in the car is buckled up. For those of you who drive a department vehicle, this is standard operating procedure. I'm just suggesting that we take those good habits on the road and use them at home as well.

We need you to be safe on and off the job.

Enjoy your summer, and thanks for the privilege to work with you. 



TN MAGAZINE

JULY–AUGUST 2016

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Unless otherwise noted

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

GDC Marketing & Ideation

PRINTED BY

TxDOT Print Services

Austin, TX

TN IS PUBLISHED BY THE

TEXAS DEPARTMENT

OF TRANSPORTATION

125 E. 11th St.

Austin, TX 78701-2483

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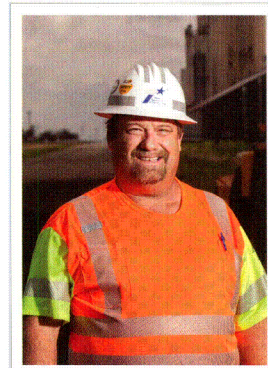
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5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

1 **McMonagle selected as chief administrative officer**

Rich McMonagle is TxDOT's new chief administrative officer. He will oversee the Contracting and Purchasing, Fleet Operations, Human Resources, and Support Services divisions. McMonagle was previously chief of staff, and his responsibilities included oversight of Human Resources. Prior to coming to TxDOT, he was the Infrastructure Division director at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, where his responsibilities included leading capital construction and fleet programs. Before that, he served for more than 25 years in the United States Marine Corps.

2

Green named district engineer for Atlanta District

Glenn H. Green was named district engineer for the Atlanta District in June. Green will oversee the planning, designing, building, operation and maintenance of the state transportation system for the 9-county Atlanta District. Green first joined TxDOT as a summer intern in 1984. He graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1986 and joined TxDOT as an engineering assistant in Mineola. He has served as the deputy district engineer for the Tyler District since 2001.

3

Volunteer stories to be highlighted during centennial

TxDOT will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2017. We are honored that the citizens of Texas have entrusted us with their transportation system for so many years and we are grateful for this opportunity to be of service. As part of TxDOT's Centennial Celebration, we are highlighting employees who also selflessly spend their personal time serving others. Do you volunteer in your community? Would you like to share your volunteer experiences with other TxDOT employees? If so, please email TxDOT100@txdot.gov to tell your volunteer story.


4

Rally Health Survey replaces Health Risk Assessment

United Healthcare recently replaced its Health Risk Assessment tool with Rally's Health Survey, a new portal. Employees who wish to receive eight hours of wellness leave should now complete the Rally Health Survey in conjunction with their physician's certification of a routine physical exam. Rally is an interactive, personalized health experience designed to help make exercise and healthy living fun. Visit myuhc.com/hs to take the Rally Health Survey. Employees will need to print the Rally confirmation e-mail and attach it to a completed TxDOT Form 2313 to receive eight hours of paid wellness leave after visiting their doctor.

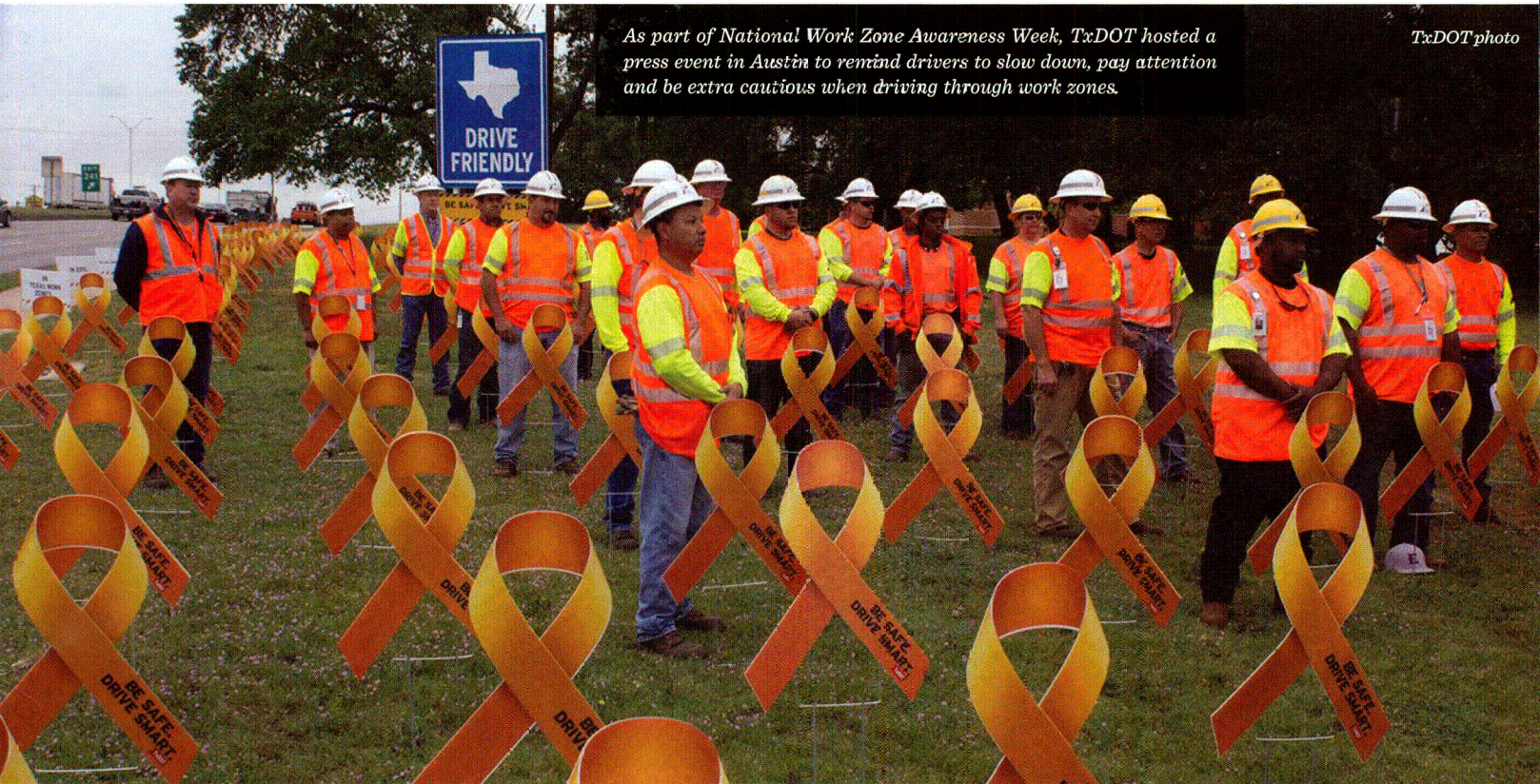
5

Open enrollment this summer

Active employees will have the opportunity to enroll in new benefit programs or change their current coverage during ERS Summer Enrollment in July and August. Each agency and higher education institution is assigned to a two-week phase during which employees can make enrollment changes. TxDOT's assigned two weeks are from July 31 to Aug. 12. Look for your summer enrollment packet in the mail. The changes will go into effect on Sept. 1. 

NATIONAL WORK ZONE AWARENESS WEEK

ENCOURAGES SAFE DRIVING TO PROTECT WORKERS



As part of National Work Zone Awareness Week, TxDOT hosted a press event in Austin to remind drivers to slow down, pay attention and be extra cautious when driving through work zones.

TxDOT photo

Two seconds. That's how long Rodney Matthews, former construction inspector for the Texas Department of Transportation, had to react after a driver drove through his work zone. Matthews was thrown 30 feet in the air and sustained a concussion and severe injuries, but was lucky to survive. Not everyone gets that second chance.

"Whether it was pure adrenaline or by the grace of God, I survived," said Matthews, who now works as a TxDOT project manager. "I was lucky. I'm sharing my story to remind everyone to pay extra attention when

driving through work zones because the consequences of not doing so can be deadly."

While these types of close calls are becoming too familiar to TxDOT workers, statistics show more motorists die in

work zones than workers. Work zone crashes increased by 13 percent in Texas last year and killed 138 people.

With the state's population continuing to boom, the price of progress can mean more

than 2,500 active TxDOT work zones at any given time. In 2015, there were 21,885 work zone crashes in Texas. The top two causes of these crashes were speeding and driver inattention.


"Whether it was pure adrenaline or by the grace of God, I survived."

**Rodney Matthews,
project manager**

As part of National Work Zone Awareness Week in April, TxDOT hosted events across the state and launched a social media campaign to encourage drivers to slow down, pay attention and be

extra cautious to save not only the lives of work zone workers, but their own lives as well.

By law, drivers are required to move over or slow down when approaching work crews, emergency vehicles or tow trucks that are stopped on the roadside or shoulder and that have flashing blue or amber lights.

During the week, TxDOT shared video testimonials on social media from workers who had close calls on their job sites, as well as photos and bios of TxDOT workers to introduce them on a more personal level. 

AROUND THE STATE

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


HOUSTON

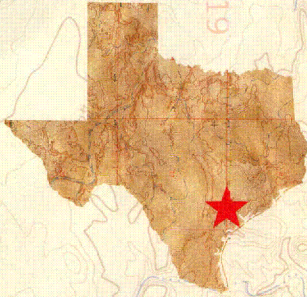
Work begins to replace Yale Street Bridge

To many in the city of Houston, the Yale Street Bridge has always been a means of getting between the Heights and Montrose areas — two of Houston’s oldest communities. To others, it was a historic structure that should be preserved.

However, the bridge — built in the 1930s — was in need of replacement and the Houston District worked diligently to do this in a way that would incorporate the historical attributes of the bridge while building a safer structure that meets the needs of today’s traffic volumes.

The \$2.8 million contract was awarded to Lone Star Road Construction. In early April crews started demolishing and reconstructing the new bridge. The project is anticipated to be completed in late 2017.

As part of the project, about 30 square yards of bricks, six light fixtures and two historical placards will be preserved and placed on the new bridge. 



TxDOT photo

Work began in April on construction of a new Yale Street Bridge in Houston that will incorporate the historical attributes of the old bridge, built in the 1930s.


LAREDO

Equipment shop opens in Del Rio

The Fleet Operations Division hosted a ribbon-cutting in May to celebrate the reopening of an equipment shop in the Del Rio Area Office of the Laredo District.

The newly-opened shop provides easier access to services for the southern portion of the San Angelo District and the northwestern part of the Laredo District. Having a shop that is closer to these counties will save hours of time that was previously spent taking equipment to and from the main district shops.

The success of two other satellite shops prompted the Fleet Division to reopen the Del Rio facility. One satellite shop in Alpine services a remote area in the El Paso and Odessa districts. The other in Sugar Land eases the demand on Houston’s busy main shop.

Known for its innovation and productivity, the Del Rio shop was closed in 2008 as part of a larger effort to consolidate some operations statewide. But the old shop is humming again with three new employees: Shop Coordinator Juan Enriquez and Mechanics Erik Lozano and Adolfo Narvaez. 



TxDOT photo


The Fleet Operations Division hosted a ribbon-cutting in May to celebrate the reopening of an equipment shop in the Del Rio Area Office of the Laredo District: (from left) Mechanics Adolfo Narvaez and Erik Lozano, Shop Coordinator Juan Enriquez, Fleet Operations Division Director Dalton Pratt, Laredo Equipment Supervisor J.J. Villareal, Laredo District Engineer Pedro “Pete” Aivarez, Mechanics Daniel Cisneros and Ricardo Lopez, Laredo Director of Maintenance David Salazar and San Angelo Director of Operations Tom Johnston.

Groundbreaking for SH 365 in the Valley

One of the projects aimed at preparing the Rio Grande Valley for commercial trade is well on its way. In February, a groundbreaking ceremony commemorated the commencement of the first phase of the SH 365 project, a \$2 billion project that is intended to create a smooth flow of commercial traffic passing through the Rio Grande Valley from Mexico.

Special guests at the ceremony included Texas State Sens. Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa and Eddie Lucio Jr.

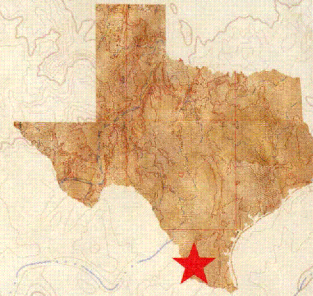
The area has seen \$200 billion in trade with Mexico, a key component of the economic vibrancy in the area and for the entire state of Texas. The proposed SH 365 project will initially be developed as a four-lane toll facility with rights of way reserved for future widening.

The beginning phase involves building a 2-mile overpass at the intersection of Military Highway and San Juan Road. The contract for the overpass was awarded last December to Foremost Paving Inc. The first phase of the project is slated to be completed in 18 months. 



In February, a groundbreaking ceremony commemorated the beginning of the first phase of the SH 365 project, a \$2 billion project that is intended to create a smooth flow of commercial traffic passing through the Rio Grande Valley from Mexico. Pictured: Texas Sens. Eddie Lucio Jr. (in white) and Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa (giving thumbs up sign). Photo is courtesy of the Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority.


PHARR



China Spring Highway upgrade begins

A long-awaited project to upgrade a portion of Farm to Market 1637 in McLennan County, northwest of Waco, is finally taking shape. Plans to widen FM 1637, also known as China Spring Highway, have been on the books for more than 20 years, but escalating costs and dwindling state road funds delayed it year after year.

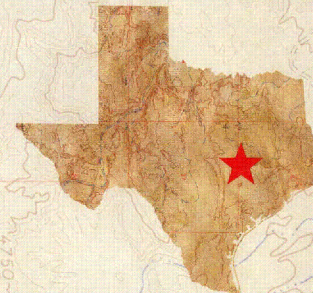
Last year, the Texas Transportation Commission awarded a \$27.8 million bid to local contractor Kniʼe River Construction to upgrade a portion of the road from Steinbeck Bend Road to just past Wortham Bend Road. The 4.3-mile project, designed to increase safety and efficiency, began in April and will widen the two-lane facility to a four-lane roadway with raised median.

FM 1637 is one of the most crowded roads in McLennan County, serving a fast-growing suburban residential area. 



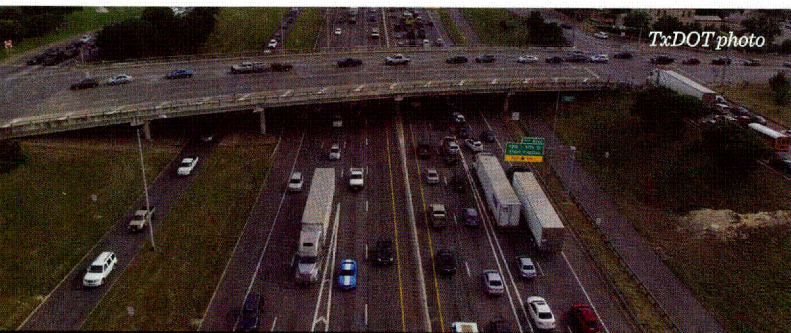
Work began in April to upgrade a portion of China Spring Highway in McLennan County in the Waco District.

WACO



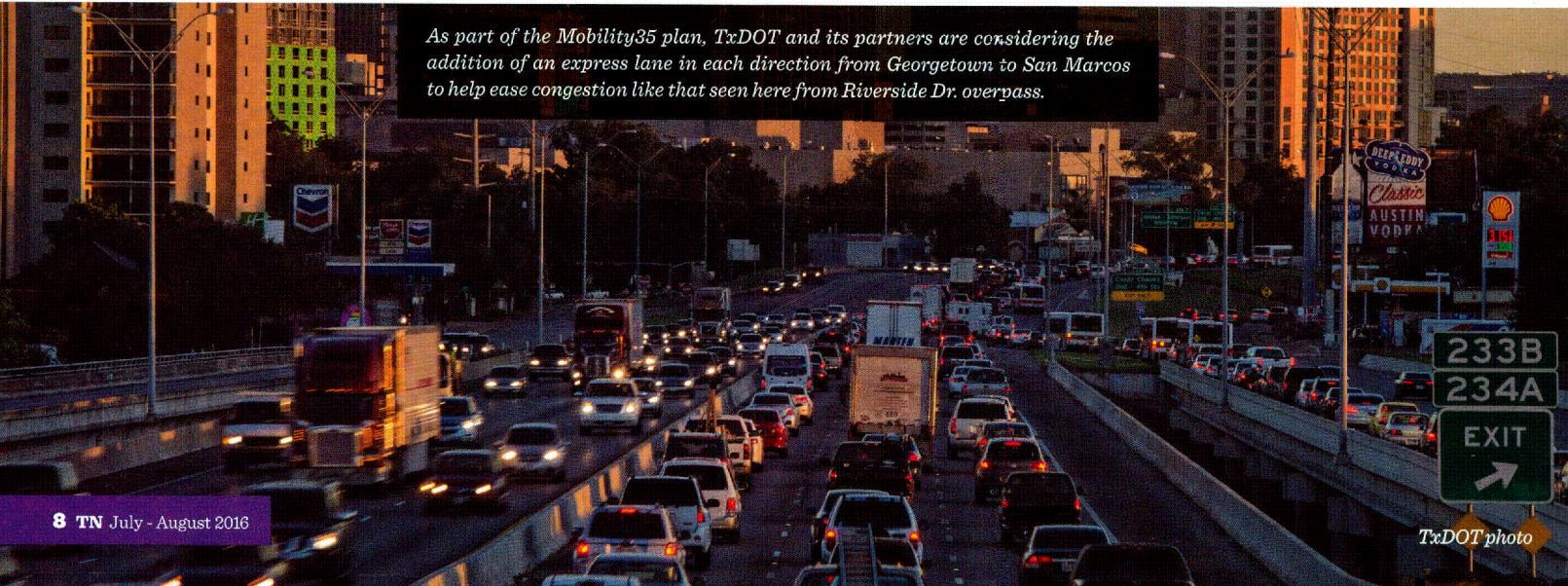
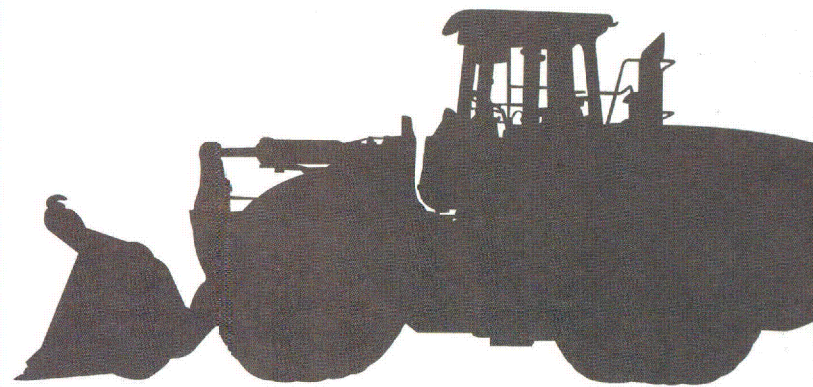
TxDOT photo

IMPROVING I-35 IN AUSTIN



TxDOT photo

The MLK Blvd. overpass on I-35 in Austin as it is today.



As part of the Mobility35 plan, TxDOT and its partners are considering the addition of an express lane in each direction from Georgetown to San Marcos to help ease congestion like that seen here from Riverside Dr. overpass.

When the nearly 2-mile segment of I-35 in downtown Austin was completed in 1962, then-Transportation Commission Chairman Herbert Petry heralded the six-lane expressway as a “double-barreled economic improvement.”

Built at a cost of \$2.4 million, the interstate was constructed with built-in traffic counters to determine if it would live up to its 30,000-a-day predicted traffic count.

Not only was it one of the last sections of I-35 to be built between Round Rock and San Antonio, it was also expected, as described in the June 1962 issue of *Texas Highways* magazine, to “bring traffic quickly and safely into the Austin urban area.”

Fast forward 50 years.

I-35 through Austin is still a ribbon of commerce, as evidenced by the trucks that use it daily to carry products of every variety to waiting consumers. But the part about it providing quick traffic into and through Austin? Not so much.

Today, traffic on I-35 in Central Texas is a combination of long lines and interminable delays. In its 2015 Urban Mobility Scorecard, the Texas Transportation Institute rated Austin as the 12th most congested city in the country in the large urban area category, a title it shares with the Portland region. According to TTI, Austin area drivers log an extra 52 hours a year because of gridlock. No doubt a lot of those bottlenecks occur on I-35 where traffic counts can top 200,000 vehicles a day in some sections.

I-35 is a problem in want of a solution.

In 2011, the city of Austin set out to address the interstate’s challenges, focusing on short- to mid-range strategies. But as most everyone knows, congestion on I-35 isn’t just an Austin issue. So in 2013, TxDOT and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization joined the city to expand the scope of the study from Georgetown to San Marcos.

Enter the Mobility35 plan. It’s a multi-pronged approach to squeeze more capacity out of and improve safety on the I-35 pipeline in Williamson, Travis and Hays counties. It focuses on transforming the outdated interstate into a smart and efficient highway system by providing more reliable routes for cars and transit users, using innovative designs, providing up-to-date travel information and enhancing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

If you’ve ever been on I-35, especially near downtown Austin on the lower deck, you know that a drive there can be a series of bob and weave maneuvers. The existing short entrance ramps often get backed up as traffic on the frontage roads tries to merge onto the mainlanes.

One solution is the addition of extended entrance and exit lanes in several locations. The lanes allow drivers to merge with cars on the mainlanes without disrupting existing traffic.

This is being proposed for the upper deck of I-35, essentially providing a third travel lane in each direction.

Intersection bypass lanes are another improvement being used in the corridor. These are one-way roads built between frontage roads and main lanes that allow motorists to bypass traffic signals at intersections. They’re already in place at multiple locations in Austin, including southbound I-35 at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and northbound I-35 at Parmer Lane.

Another I-35 improvement that has been deployed in Round Rock is a new \$6.6 million diverging diamond intersection at the juncture of the interstate and RM 1431. The second of its kind in the state, it allows more traffic to clear the intersection without lengthy stops at traffic signals. Over the past four years, traffic volumes at the intersection have increased 45 percent. Despite the increase in traffic, with the new intersection, traffic times have dropped 13 percent during morning rush hours, and 44 to 58 percent during afternoon drive times.

“Even though more cars are traveling through the area, they’re getting through much quicker than before,” Kelli Reyna, Austin District public information officer, said. (More information about the diverging

diamond intersection is available in the March/April edition of TN.)

TxDOT and its partners are also considering the addition of an express lane in each direction from Georgetown to San Marcos. Another possibility that’s being considered is lowering the mainlanes of the interstate through downtown Austin.


But nothing, Reyna said, has been decided yet.

And then, of course, there’s the ever-present question of how these improvements will be paid for. Currently, there are more than 40 projects being considered as part of the plan, and they total nearly \$5 billion.

Some local and state leaders have floated various ideas to pay for the improvements. The suggestions include the city and TxDOT partnering on the needed funding, and using capital from other sources.

So far, the plan has received partial funding from various sources, such as the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, local partners and the Transportation Commission’s congestion initiative.

“Paying for this large-scale vision is not easy. We continue to work on improving I-35 as funding is identified,” Reyna said.

To follow the progress on I-35, visit the Mobility35 website at my35.org/capital/default.htm 

One solution is the addition of extended entrance and exit lanes in several locations.



Information Specialist Karen Blizzard of the Bridge Division decided to stop driving to work at TxDOT's Riverside Campus in Austin with the help of the MetroBus and the Austin B-cycle bike-share program. Photo by Hill Abell, owner of Bicycle Sport Shop.



TxDOT photo

The Austin B-cycle bike-share program has 50 bike stations located throughout Central Austin, each with 10 to 18 bikes. A monthly membership fee of \$11 or an annual fee of \$80 provides unlimited rides of up to 30 minutes each.

URBAN ADVENTURE:

BUS-TO-B-CYCLE COMMUTING

Sometimes it takes a wake-up call to snap us out of a well-worn routine. Such was the case when the Bridge Division's Karen Blizzard, information specialist, decided to stop driving to work at TxDOT's Riverside Campus in Austin. In her case, the catalyst was an auto accident on April 1. Unfortunately, it was no April Fools' joke. A car sped through an intersection without stopping and slammed into Karen's vehicle, totaling her car and leaving her uninjured but shaken.

"It was pretty traumatic, and for a few weeks I didn't want to be in or around cars," she recalls. "It was an opportunity to try something different, and I was curious about the red bikes I'd seen people riding around town."


What Karen had noticed was the growing fleet of bikes available through the Austin B-cycle bike-share

program. According to the company, the program provides a fun, healthy way to get to work and to run errands during lunch breaks and after work. There are 50 bike stations located throughout Central Austin, each with 10 to 18 bikes. Many of the stations are located near Capital Metro bus and rail stations so that commuters can quickly and easily close the gap between a transit stop and the office. For TxDOT employees who commute to Riverside Campus or the Greer Building, there are stations near both office locations.

After exploring the options, Karen settled into a bus-to-bike daily commute that works well with her active lifestyle. She takes the #3 MetroBus from her South Austin home to a stop near the B-cycle station at Riverside and Lamar. From there, she bikes to the Threadgill's station and walks the remaining two blocks to work.

A monthly membership fee of \$11 or an annual fee of \$80 provides unlimited rides of up to 30 minutes each. The B-cycle mobile phone map allows members to find a station quickly and get real-time information to make sure there are bikes or open docks available.

TxDOT employees who take the bus, bike or walk to work can also earn points and leave time through the Clean Air Plan program from now through Sept. 30. The purpose of the plan is to reduce vehicle emissions to help improve air quality across the state. You can enroll and start logging your hours today on Crossroads.

"Commuting on the bus and biking is not only saving me gas money but has also improved my quality of life," says Karen. "I have time to read on the bus now, and biking that final mile to work is a great way to start the day!" 



TxDOT's Communications Division needs you to help test a new smartphone app that amplifies TxDOT messages on social media networks.


By simply downloading the Amplify TxDOT app to their smartphones, TxDOT employees can become advocates for the agency on social media. With just one tap, users can quickly share TxDOT's social media messages directly to their own Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn pages.

"I am so glad that I was one of the first people to sign up for Amplify TxDOT!" said Kim Pigg of the TxDOT Childress District. "It's been fun and easy to share information about TxDOT with my family and friends."

Amplify TxDOT users share social media posts about safety campaigns, road closures and TxDOT's Don't mess with Texas® program.

An ideal Amplify TxDOT participant should:

- Have a smartphone
- Have a Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn account (or all three)
- Want to support TxDOT publicly by engaging friends and family

There are still a few openings available for the limited pilot phase of Amplify TxDOT. If you would like to sign up for the pilot program, contact becky.ozuna@txdot.gov 

LEE INDUCTED INTO ENGINEERING ACADEMY



TxDOT photo

Robert E. Lee (left) of the Construction Division was inducted into Texas Tech University's Civil, Environmental, and Construction Engineering Academy this spring. David Ernst, interim chair of the College of Civil Engineering, presented Lee with his plaque at the ceremony.


Robert E. Lee, flexible pavements branch director for the Construction Division, was inducted into Texas Tech University's Civil, Environmental, and Construction Engineering Academy this spring. Each year, the Academy recognizes alumni who have earned distinction and excellence through professional accomplishments. Inductees serve as a resource for the program and its graduates.

Lee graduated from Texas Tech in 1986 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Shortly after graduation, he began his career with TxDOT as a field engineer in the Construction Division, and developed a method to determine asphalt content using the ignition oven, eliminating the need for dangerous solvent extractions.

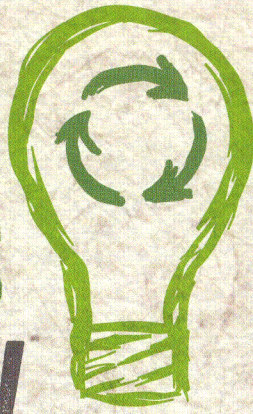
In 1999, Lee left TxDOT for the private sector, working first for Koch Materials Inc., where he contributed to the development of paving systems, and later for Pavetex Engineering Inc., where he provided consultant services and technical support.

In 2007, he returned to TxDOT as a senior materials engineer in the Construction Division's Flexible Pavements Branch. He provided field support, ran forensic investigations of failed pavements, conducted in-house research for the branch and developed test procedures and specifications for bituminous materials.

Lee became director of the Flexible Pavements Section in 2014. He also stays active in the professional service arena at the national, regional and state levels.

"I am honored to be included in this group of distinguished engineers and look forward to participating in the Academy," Lee said. "I think it's important in our profession to be able to give back, not only to the engineering community but Texas Tech University as well." 

EL PASO RECYCLES WITH NEW THINKING AND TEAMWORK




Wherever possible, the TxDOT Green Program seeks to recycle in the office without paying service fees. We accomplish this by contracting with buyers of recyclables who are willing to waive service fees for large volumes of materials — paper, cardboard, and aluminum cans. When needed, TxDOT back-hauls recyclables to regional distribution centers to consolidate the materials so that the buyer will get enough volume in one trip to waive the service fee. This kind of operation takes a coordinated effort from TxDOT staff.

The El Paso District headquarters is an example of such an effort. Prior to 2016, office recycling at the district headquarters was stalled because the city of El Paso's recycling program would not service the location which is outside the city limits.

Diana Diaz, the district's recycling team leader, sought a solution that would include high-volume paper recycling without fees. Working with TxDOT Green, janitorial services, building maintenance and the district warehouse, she found a solution. In mid-January, the headquarters began shipping all office recyclables — including paper — to the regional distribution center in Post.

Diaz worked with fellow employees to sort out the logistics. She had support from El Paso District Engineer Bob Bielek and many others, including Transportation Specialist Lorena Soriano, who researched and refined solutions in the new recycling program.

Building Maintenance Supervisor Juan Ortega and his staff took responsibility for recycling bin maintenance. Tony Cereceres, business services coordinator, and his warehouse staff stepped up to handle the shipment of the materials to Post where Charles Wallace, warehouse coordinator, provided further support.

Sometimes it takes strong on-site participation and serious determination to wrangle a no-cost recycling solution. TxDOT Green recognizes the remarkable dedication to recycling demonstrated by staffs in both El Paso and Post. 

TxDOT photo

Dalton Pratt


FLEET DIRECTOR RECEIVES EXCELLENCE AWARD

Fleet Operations Division Director Dalton Pratt received a Fleet Excellence Award in Public Fleet Safety from the National Association of Fleet Administrators. Pratt was recognized at NAFA's annual Institute and Expo held in Austin in April.

The award reflects the efforts of the entire Fleet Operations Division team, according to Pratt.

"I appreciate the hard work of our fleet employees to support TxDOT operations every day," he said. "Our team has put in many hours and miles to install new equipment to make our vehicles safer, and they work together to overcome challenges and find better ways to serve our customers."

Pratt has led several comprehensive fleet safety improvements. Under Pratt's supervision, the division installed backup cameras on 3,000 pieces of TxDOT equipment within a four-month time frame in 2015. Another effort included installing new warning lights on more than 300 motor graders before the most recent winter storm season.

Pratt was also instrumental in establishing a division safety committee and an online library for job safety analysis documents. 

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

MONARCH WAY STATIONS COMING TO WACO DISTRICT SAFETY REST AREAS

Plans are under way to attract millions of visitors from Mexico and Canada to TxDOT's four safety rest areas in Hill and Bell counties in the Waco District. But don't worry; the visitors won't add to the congestion issues on I-35. They are monarch butterflies making a fascinating and fragile migration that happens twice a year.

TxDOT is supporting the Native Plant Society of Texas, along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, by providing opportunities to create a much-needed habitat vital to the survival of migrating populations of monarch butterflies. The monarch way stations will become a place where the butterflies dine on nectar and lay their eggs, and human visitors can learn about them and their travels from informative signs the Society will create and install as part of the way stations.

"Female butterflies lay their eggs only on milkweed plants and the larvae feed on the leaves," said Kay Jenkins, head of the Society's Monarch Way Station Project. "We'll plant milkweeds and nectar-producing plants in about 6,000 square feet of the gardens around the safety rest areas. We want to help the monarchs survive and reproduce along their migration route in Texas."

Each spring, the eastern monarchs leave their wintering areas in southern Mexico on a 3,000-mile journey toward Canada. Because these early pioneers only live between two and six weeks, the females need

milkweeds to lay their eggs so the next generation can continue the journey. It takes about a month from the time an egg is laid until the new butterfly emerges from its chrysalis, and it takes up to five generations of butterflies to complete the migration north. The last generation lives up to eight months to migrate south on a route that roughly follows the path of the I-35 corridor.

According to MonarchWatch.org, milkweed habitat loss and the overuse of herbicides are the biggest threats to monarch survival. The site calls the monarch migrations "one of the world's greatest natural wonders."

"We're extremely pleased to be able to cooperate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in supporting the Native Plant Society of Texas as they do this beneficial work for the monarchs," said TxDOT Public Information Officer Jodi Wheatley. "Not only will the way stations help ensure successful monarch migrations, they will also help to educate rest area visitors about this remarkable insect and how individuals can help the monarchs."


Monarch caterpillars not only provide a food source for birds, but the butterflies are also great plant pollinators.

"Losing the migrating population of monarch butterflies would affect the animal species that feed on them and the plant species that depend on them

for pollination,” Jenkins said. “The way stations will feature nectar-producing native plants that will benefit all butterflies, native bees and even hummingbirds.”

The project is in the design phase. Volunteers will plant milkweed and nectar-producing plants to create the monarch way stations in the safety rest areas during Texas Native Plant Week in October.

The first monarch visitors to the I-35 safety rest areas could arrive this fall.

For more information about the Native Plant Society of Texas and the effort to preserve the monarch populations, go to their website at npsot.org. 



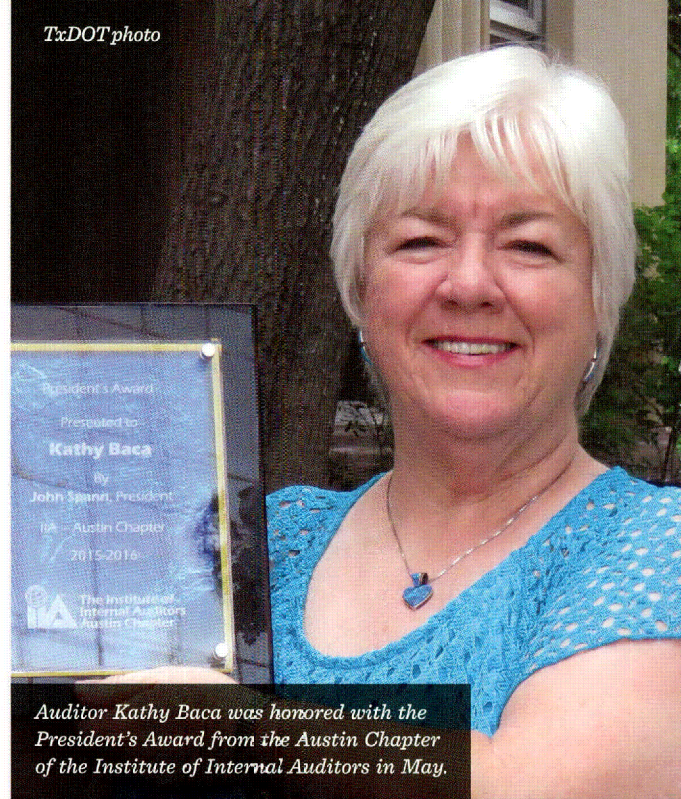
BACA RECEIVES PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The Austin Chapter of the Institute of Internal Auditors presented TxDOT's own Kathy Baca, auditor, with the 2015-2016 Chapter President's Award in May.

The President's Award honors the volunteer who helped the chapter the most during the fiscal year. It is given to those who demonstrate character, integrity, professionalism and allegiance to the audit profession.

Baca is the co-chair for the 2017 Southern Regional Conference, which will be held in Austin in September. This position requires a minimum of 800 volunteer hours in a two-year period.

"Kathy has balanced her professional and personal schedules to allow her to volunteer a lot of time to the Institute, making it better for all of us," said Craig Otto, director of the Internal Audit Division. 



Auditor Kathy Baca was honored with the President's Award from the Austin Chapter of the Institute of Internal Auditors in May.

#EndTheStreakTX

PUBLIC SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENT GETS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Congratulations to TxDOT's Communications Division! The team's #EndTheStreakTX public safety service announcement was selected among thousands of videos as one of the best in the nation in a recent public relations competition.

The #EndTheStreakTX announcement won an honorable mention in Ragan's PR Daily Video Awards in the safety video category. TxDOT's Communications team competed against professional marketing agencies and private-sector businesses representing numerous different industries.


The entire video — from script to production and actors — was created in-house with no budget and was part of the overall #EndTheStreakTX social media campaign which has become the most successful TxDOT social media campaign to date. The campaign brought attention to the fact that Texas has had at least one fatality every day on state roadways since Nov. 7, 2000, in hopes of ending this deadly 15-year streak.

Members of the Media Relations, Video Production, Employee and Executive Communications, Web Services and Creative Services sections worked together to write, shoot and edit the video.

Special recognition goes to:

- Dave Glessner
- Andrew Minnick
- Chris Lewis
- Becky Ozuna
- Rose Walker
- Phyllis Chandler-Gordon
- Joshua Hunter
- Ryan Sponsler
- Marcia Gibbs
- Don Barrett
- Michael Sledge
- Veronica Beyer

A special recognition is also in order for the TxDOT district public information officers who helped implement the campaign within their local communities.

As a leading expert in organizational communications, recognition by Ragan Communications shows TxDOT's creative team is leading the way in innovative communications practices. 

SURGE PROTECTION

FOR HURRICANE SEASON

Hurricane season runs through Nov. 30. As always, TxDOT is ready to respond in the event of storms and flooding. However, one district has an interesting extra tool in its response arsenal.

If a hurricane threatens the Coastal Bend area, the Corpus Christi District has a unique responsibility: the installation of a storm surge wall on SH 361 in Aransas Pass.

Aransas Pass in the Corpus Christi District is the first city you encounter on the mainland as you drive east across the bay from Port Aransas on SH 361. As a coastal city, Aransas Pass has a levee system to protect it from rising water during a hurricane.

SH 361, however, travels through an opening in the levee system. That opening is designed to be closed with a surge wall in the event of a storm.

The 80-foot-wide by 10-foot-tall wall spans five lanes and sidewalks, closing that opening in the levee. Twenty-foot-long aluminum panels are held in place by steel beams bolted into the pavement.




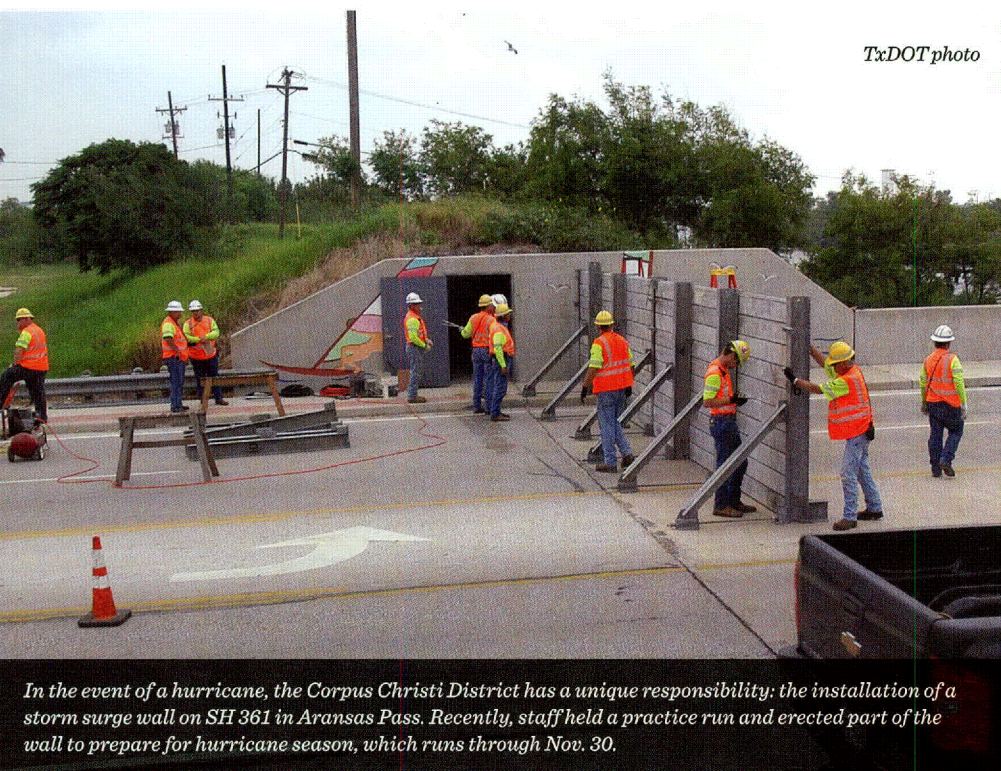
TxDOT photo

The Rockport Maintenance Section is responsible for the maintenance and installation of the surge wall. Installation takes approximately four hours.

Rockport maintenance recently carried out a practice run, erecting half of the wall. The drill ensures all parts of the wall are operational and trains new employees. TxDOT personnel from the Beeville and Goliad maintenance sections also took part, familiarizing themselves with the operation in the event they are needed.

The wall would be put in place only when an evacuation of the area is called and the Aransas Pass and Port Aransas areas are free of inhabitants, the Port Aransas ferries ceased operation and TxDOT ferry personnel are evacuated.

TxDCT encourages all employees, especially those near the coast, to be prepared for hurricane season. 



In the event of a hurricane, the Corpus Christi District has a unique responsibility: the installation of a storm surge wall on SH 361 in Aransas Pass. Recently, staff held a practice run and erected part of the wall to prepare for hurricane season, which runs through Nov. 30.



SUPPORTING OUR SUPPORT SYSTEMS

With the recent influx of new funding from federal and state programs, the budget for the projects and programs TxDOT will be working on for the next 10 years is projected to almost double from about \$30 billion to more than \$60 billion. These projects and programs are listed in TxDOT's Unified Transportation Program, the agency's mid-range planning document. The UTP is a crucial roadmap for the entire agency but much of the technology used to support it is aging. Project Planning and Development is currently working to review the processes for managing the UTP and to develop a more robust, transparent technology solution to support it.

"The existing IT tools we have to manage this program are probably 30 years old," said Lauren Garduño, director of Project Planning and Development. "Not only that, but many of the applications were built by TxDOT employees and are unique to the agency. When we needed a technology solution, our employees would develop it themselves. Now many of those employees have retired or left, and we have complex legacy systems we need to bring into one platform."

Legacy applications are one of the most difficult issues to face in IT. Efforts have been made in the past to move away from these old systems, but the significant increase in projects that will result from new funding revenue has made the migration even more critical.

"It's like trying to change a tire while the car's still moving," said Garduño. "But we'll make it work."

TxDOT has hired a third-party vendor to review the system and develop its replacement. The first step, which has been in progress since last year, is to review the processes involved in developing the UTP to ensure they are as efficient as possible.


"We're making sure our business processes are where we need them to be," said Garduño. "We are working with our subject matter experts and getting their feedback to standardize best practices."

As the business processes are finalized this summer, the vendor will begin developing the new IT platform with input from employees over the next 18 months.

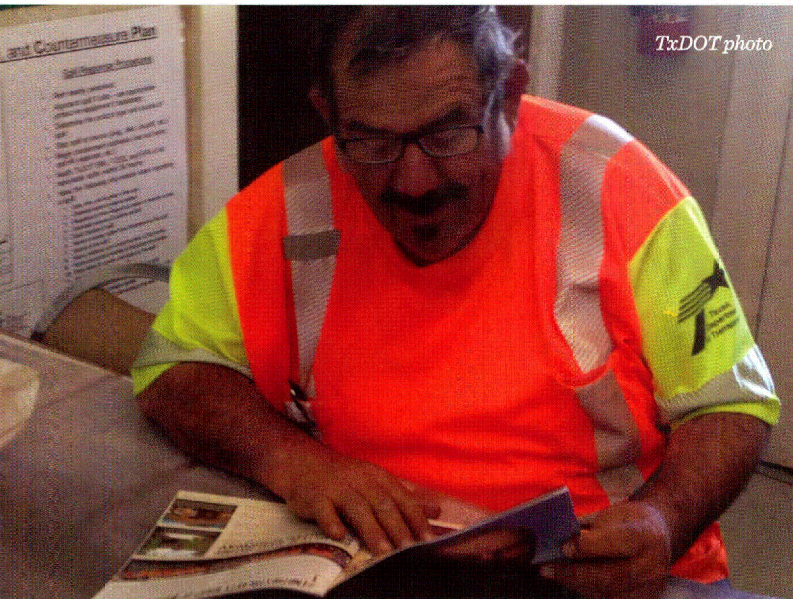
"We'll give key employees a chance to use the new system as we are developing it," said Garduño. "We want this migration to be as painless as possible and make sure we are meeting their needs."

The goal of the new system is to support how we forecast, plan, resource and budget to deliver the UTP and provide greater accessibility and visibility. It will be consistent and transparent for all users and provide easy access to performance metrics to ensure the agency is meeting its goals.

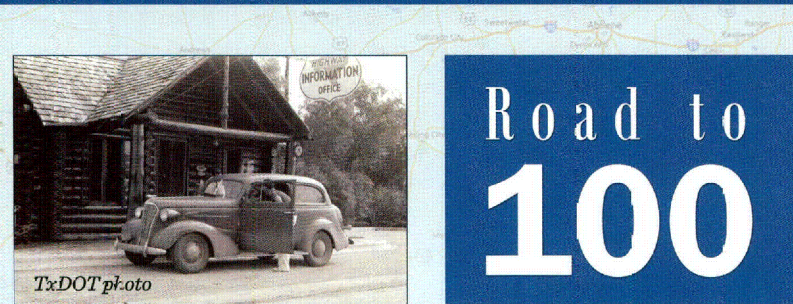
"We want to design a system that will remove as many barriers as we can to make employees' jobs easier," said Garduño. "The system should increase usability and be more intuitive than our current system. We have consulted with people who use the system every day to get their input."

The new platform should be in place by the end of next year. 

WHERE DO YOU READ




Sam Dominguez of the Fort Stockton Maintenance Section in the Odessa District enjoys a few moments with TN Magazine. Send us a photo of where you like to read your TN. TNideas@txdot.gov 



Road to 100

TxDOT celebrates its centennial in 2017 and such an important milestone cannot be celebrated on just one day. TN will present the Road to 100 starting in this issue as we prepare for the celebration.

Here we see a car stopped at the Orange Trave. Information Center in 1938 in the Beaumont District. Travel Information Centers create a positive impression of Texas by greeting visitors to the state. 

HUDSON NAMED OUTSTANDING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR



The Texas Transit Association named Transportation Funding Specialist Sonya Hudson as Outstanding Public Transportation Coordinator for 2016 at its annual conference in April.


The Texas Transit Association named Transportation Funding Specialist Sonya Hudson as Outstanding Public Transportation Coordinator for 2016 at its annual conference in April. Hudson is now a two-time winner of this award, having won in 2012 also.

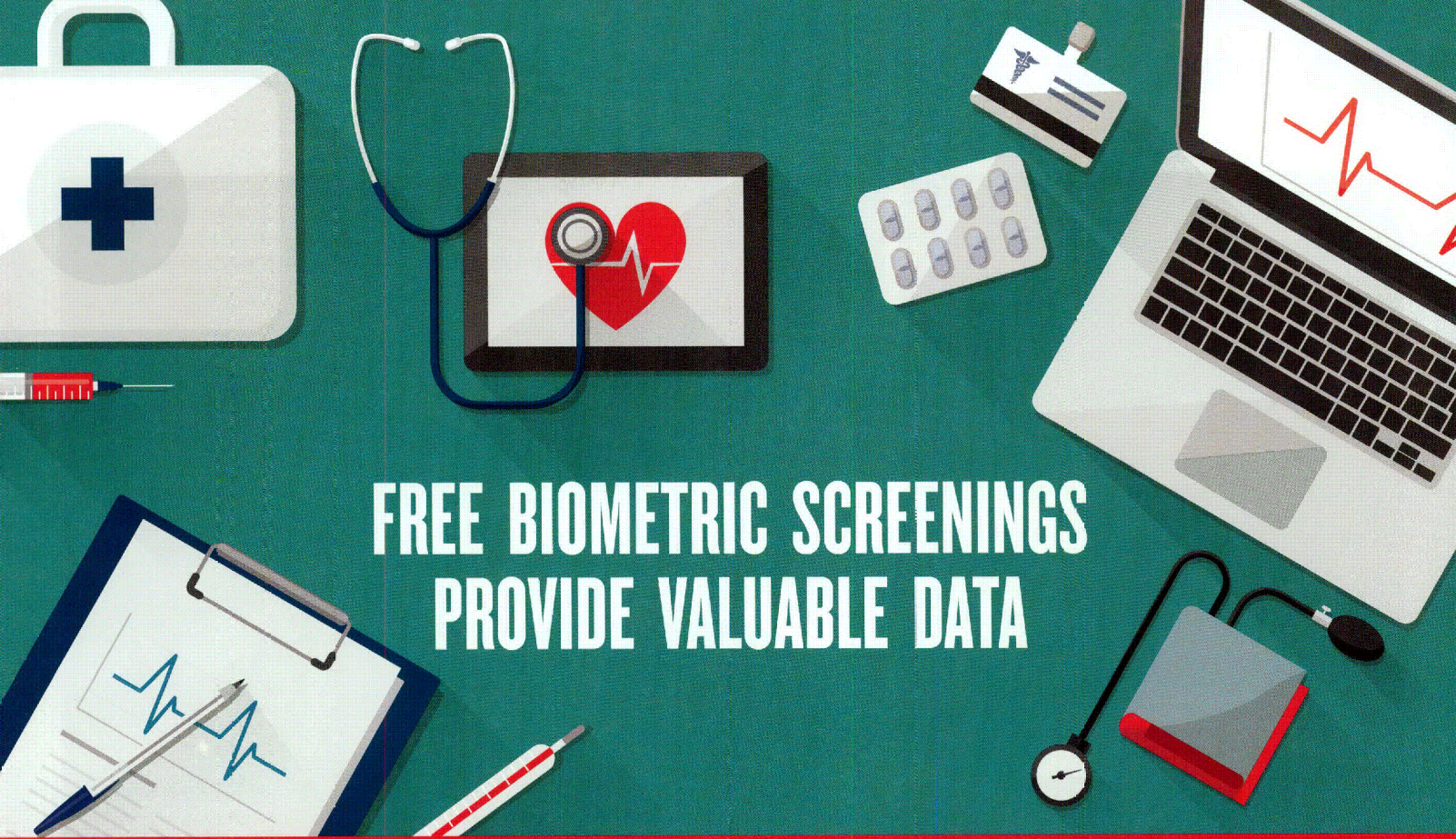
The award honors a public transportation coordinator who has made outstanding contributions to the industry.

Hudson joined TxDOT in 1989. She worked in the Atlanta District warehouse and then as administrative assistant to the district planning engineer before becoming the district's public transportation coordinator in 1995. Like the rest of TxDOT's 24 coordinators, Hudson works in a district office but is part of the Public Transportation Division.

TxDOT's public transit coordinators help transit providers with funding opportunities, grant applications, audits, program implementation, compliance issues and procurement. They meet with local and state officials and the public on transit issues. To ensure the integrity of the grant funding process, they monitor payments and conduct annual compliance monitoring and quarterly financial audits.

"I really enjoy being a small part of improving the quality of life for Texans who depend on public transportation," Hudson said. "The transit agencies I work with are very passionate about the service they provide, like rides to the grocery store, medical appointments, work and other important destinations."

The Texas Transit Association actively supports public transportation in Texas. 



FREE BIOMETRIC SCREENINGS PROVIDE VALUABLE DATA

Earlier this year, the Human Resources and Occupational Safety divisions provided free, on-site biometric screenings for employees. The voluntary program was intended to alert employees to potential medical conditions which could affect their work operations and their safety. It also potentially saved lives. According to data provided by Onsite Health Diagnostics, the company that conducted the screenings over a four-month period, more than 100 people were alerted to critically high blood pressure, blood glucose or prostate-specific antigen.

There were 4,272 screenings conducted at 125 sites statewide. All screenings were confidential and TxDOT received only aggregated data, meaning no identifying information such as names were included. About 37 percent of all TxDOT employees participated, with maintenance offices having a rate of 52 percent.


Employees were screened for:

- Total cholesterol
- Blood pressure
- Glucose
- Measurement of body mass index (BMI)
- Prostate-specific antigen for men over age 40

About 37 percent of all TxDOT employees participated, with maintenance offices having a rate of 52 percent.

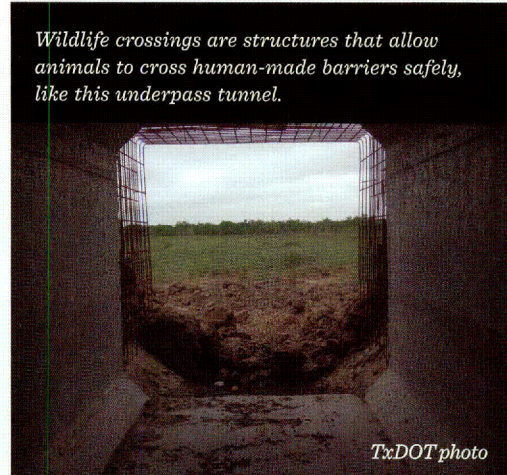
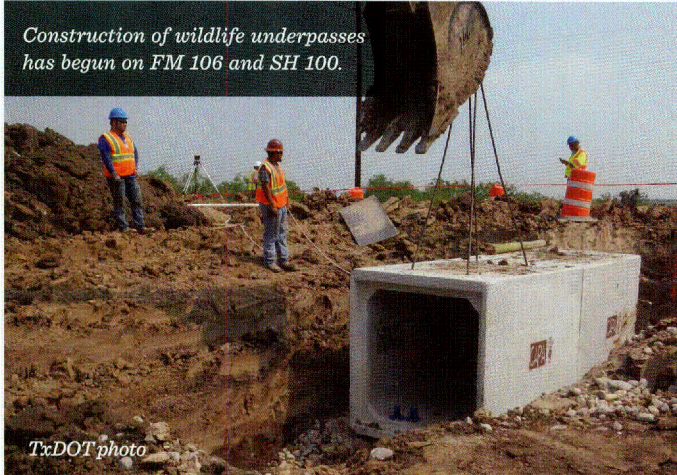
Better health can reduce the risk of vehicle and equipment incidents and injuries caused by employees' personal health. Encouraging employees to stay healthy with programs like Stretch and Flex and biometric screenings reduces the risk of injury or unexpected illnesses.

TxDOT's Wellness Program offers ongoing educational and activity-based programs to engage employees about the importance of good health. This includes fitness classes, Stretch and Flex, annual wellness and safety fairs, wellness time and the Get Fit TxDOT challenge.

For employees who are looking to reduce their risk for high blood pressure, high blood sugar or cholesterol, the Real Appeal Program from Health Select is enrolling participants. The free, online program offers fitness and nutrition coaching for a year. 

The ocelot, which once roamed from the Texas Gulf Coast up into Louisiana and Arkansas, is on the brink of disappearing from Texas. Vehicles are one of the many challenges facing the dwindling population.

HELPING OUT OUR OCCELOTS



TxDOT is installing wildlife underpasses to keep the big cats from disappearing from South Texas.

Ocelots are twice as big as your average house cat but size is not the only difference. These sleek felines with dappled coats enjoy the water and relish being in it. Another unfortunate difference is that the ocelot, which once roamed from the Texas Gulf Coast up into Louisiana and Arkansas, is on the brink of disappearing from the Texas terrain.

The ocelots' natural habitat is thorn scrub. It is a dense mixture of native subtropical plants that allow these creatures to hide, but just like the ocelots, their original habitat is succumbing to development and land clearing for agriculture. The available scrub thorn has been reduced to the areas known as the Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge and several pockets in Willacy and Kenedy counties in the Pharr District. However, ocelots in these areas are separated by development and cannot interact with each other. This forced isolation makes it difficult for the population to thrive.

Unfortunately, highways and cars are another danger for the ocelots. Since last June, seven ocelots — six males and a female — have been hit and killed by vehicles in Willacy, Cameron and Kenedy counties, as well as in Arroyo City.

The number may seem small, but given the estimated population for wild ocelots in South Texas is under 100, it is a significant loss.

HIGHWAYS AND CARS ARE ANOTHER DANGER FOR THE OCELOTS.

TxDOT has been working to protect the ocelot and limit their exposure to vehicles in their habitat. The primary effort aims to keep the ocelot — and other wildlife — off the road through the use of wildlife underpasses.

Construction of wildlife underpasses has begun on FM 106, also known as General Brant Road, which borders and runs through the refuge and is currently being upgraded.

In addition, two current projects will add 13 wildlife crossings along SH 100, on the way to Port Isabel, and FM 106, the road that leads to the wildlife refuge. Aside from the normal construction delays, drivers will not notice any difference after the crossings are completed.

Also on SH 100, perforations were made along the concrete barrier that separates the two directions of traffic. Chain-link fencing hinders the path where an ocelot could encounter a vehicle and funnels the animals into the designed crossings.

TxDOT is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue to balance the needs for safety with the needs for conservation to meet the mandate of each entity and to protect a natural Texas treasure.

Both entities would like to remind drivers to take caution when driving through areas that have dense brush on either side of the road. They urge anyone who sees an ocelot either dead or alive to report it immediately. A brochure with more information is available on txdot.gov on the Pharr District's page. **TN**

I am a...

Construction Inspector

Shane Albus is a construction inspector for the Littlefield Area Office in the Lubbock District. He started with TxDOT in 1999 in the Littlefield Maintenance Section. Before joining TxDOT, Albus served in the U.S. Navy and did mechanic work at a car dealership. His father also worked in the Littlefield Area Office for 38 years and encouraged him to apply for a job at TxDOT. He and his wife of 31 years, Denise, have one son, Brandon.

Tell us what a construction inspector does and what kind of projects you work on?

I help train the other inspectors and assist them when they are having problems on their projects. I check testing in Sitemanager on all of the projects in our area and send them to the assistant area engineer to be authorized. I help with paperwork from the other inspectors on their projects. During busy times, I make sure all the projects are covered.

If an inspector needs help, I assign someone to help. I have to take care of my project and be aware of what is happening on all the other projects as well as my other duties. The projects that I work on cover a lot of different areas: cement, fly ash and lime treat, hot mix, double and triple course, roadway illumination, bridges and other stuff. Since we are a small office, an inspector takes care of a project from start to finish. We get experience in a lot of areas of construction.

Share an instance where your work made a significant impact on the traveling public.

About three years ago, I completed a project on U.S. 84 in Muleshoe with a lot of new driveways and sidewalks in town. I had to work with businesses on their placement and work around utilities. The roadway itself was cracking and rutting.

When the project was completed, people from the town commented on how much they liked the new pavement and that they liked the sidewalk on both sides of the road. Before, people didn't walk on U.S. 84 much. Since we completed the project, I have noticed that more people are walking and riding bikes on the sidewalk. I still get nice comments on the project when I visit Muleshoe.

What is the most rewarding part about being a construction inspector?


Seeing how bad a road is before we start construction and how much we improved it upon completion. It's rewarding to get the best project I can with the money allotted. I try to be a good steward of taxpayer money and I enjoy meeting and working with a variety of people from contractors to city and county officials.

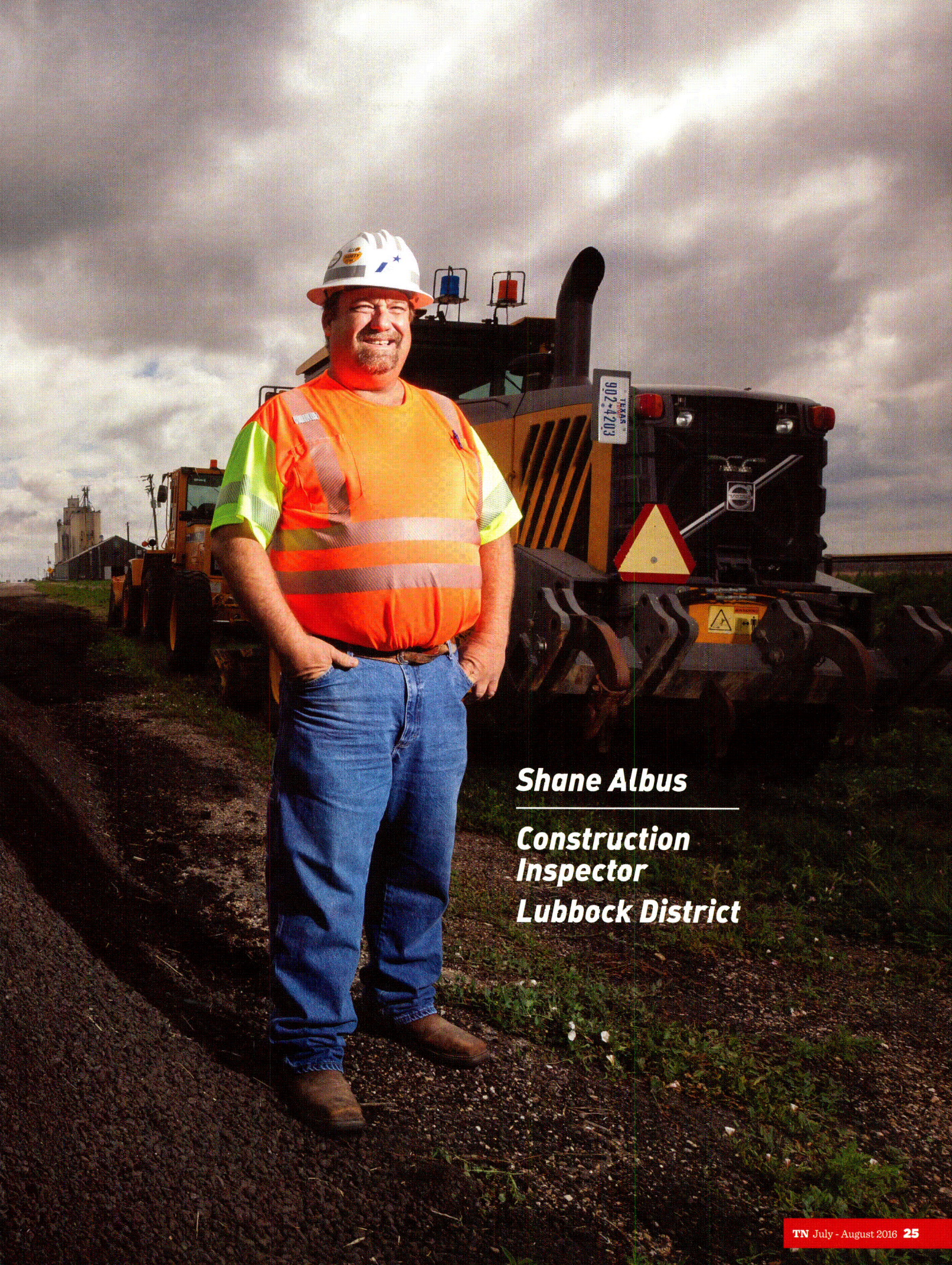
What do you like most about working in the Lubbock District?

All the people I work with in the whole district. It takes a lot of people to have a successful project, from designers to lab personnel to district officials. They have a lot to do with my success with projects.

What are some of the more challenging aspects of your job and how do you handle them?

Sometimes what looks good on paper doesn't look that good in the field. There are always problems that we have to work through to get the project completed. As a construction inspector, I evaluate the problem and work with the contractor to solve it. I have to consider how a change will affect other aspects of the project and the cost.

I like to solve problems out on the road with contractors. Fortunately, my supervisors trust me to make the right decisions. They know that if I'm in over my head, I'll ask for help. 



Shane Albus

**Construction
Inspector
Lubbock District**



Kelli Speer

Maintenance Section Assistant • Atlanta District

Kelli Speer is the maintenance section assistant for the Texarkana Maintenance Section in the Atlanta District. She began her career with TxDOT in 1996 as a summer hire for the Texarkana Maintenance Section and since then has held many titles from heavy equipment operator to Atlanta District safety officer. Although she is mostly responsible for scheduling work to be performed in her section, she occasionally climbs on a Gradall and cleans a ditch, or jumps in an asphalt distributor to get back to her roots.

Kelli enjoys spending time with her family and friends, fishing, working in the yard and spoiling her two dogs: Lilly and Possum.

Kelli Speer

What would you sing at karaoke night?

“Me and Bobby McGee” by Janis Joplin.

List two pet peeves.

Laziness and dishonesty.

If you could live anywhere, where would it be?

On the beach, by the ocean, in a village where there is minimal rainfall and the temperature never gets below 70 degrees.

If you could choose to do anything for one day, what would it be?

Volunteer to work at Villalobos Pit Bull Rescue in New Orleans.

What is a typical day on the job like for you?

Similar to putting a fire out with an icepick.

If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?

My mom’s chicken and dumplings.

Who is your hero? Why?

My mom. She has so many good qualities and values. Her love, strength, guidance, support, honesty, wisdom, kindness, free spirit and strong work ethic provided me with a positive example of how to achieve happiness and success in both work and life.

What is the best gift you have been given?

Common sense and good health.

What’s the most daring thing you’ve ever done?

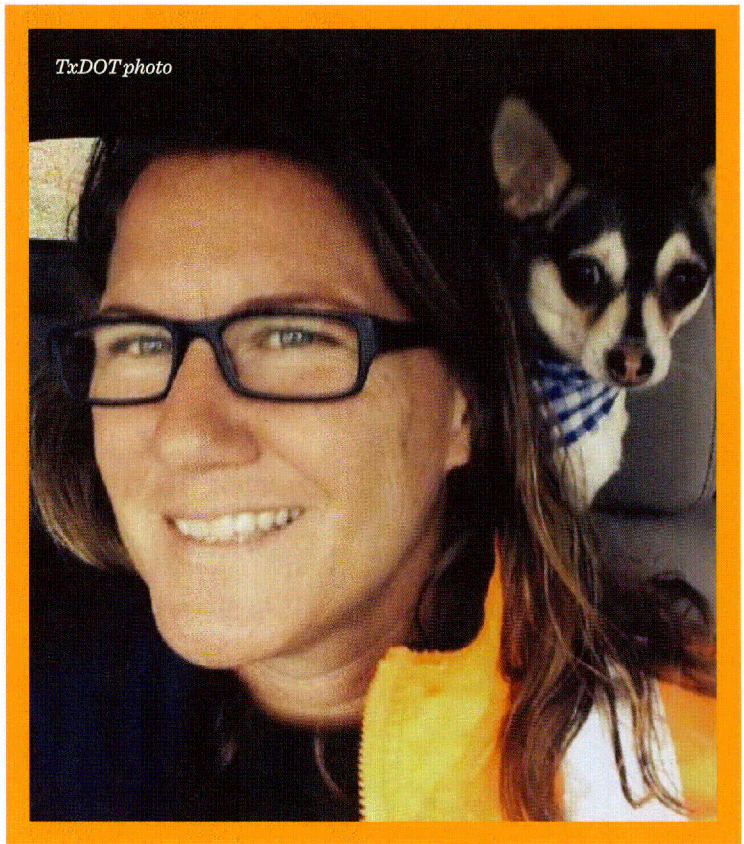
I plead the Fifth...

What song would you say best sums you up?

“Cast No Stones” by Cody Jinks.

What motivates you to work hard?

I am very results driven. Doing a good job and achieving the desired result is my primary motivation. I am particularly motivated by the buzz of working on a team. It’s rewarding working closely with others who share a common goal.



TxDOT photo

What makes you laugh the most?

My close friends, family and co-workers. We are always finding ways to make each other laugh.

What did you want to be when you were small?

A veterinarian.

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

Most people don’t know that I am shy and timid. Ha!!

If you had a warning label, what would yours say?

Warning: HIGH VOLTAGE! ⚡

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 August 10.

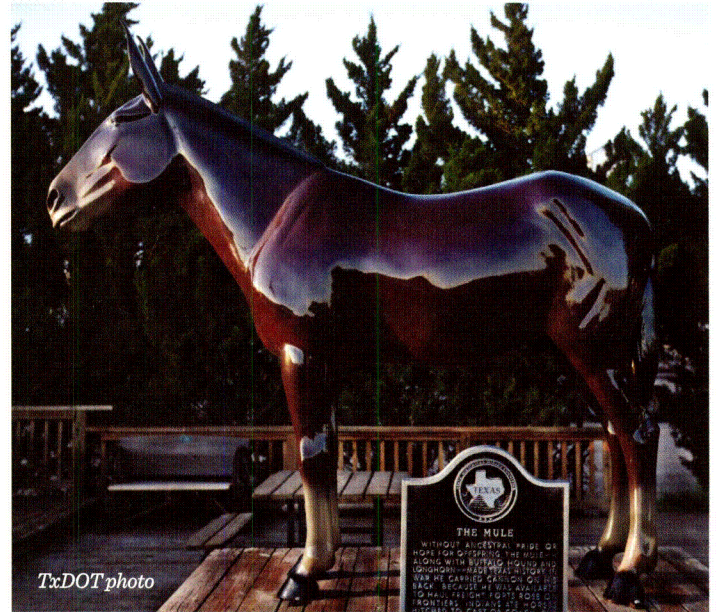


Identified:

Congratulations to our first identifier, James Norment (BRY).

Last edition's photo featured the National Mule Memorial at Muleshoe. The memorial was dedicated in July 1965. It centers on a representation of Old Pete. At the time of his reproduction in sculpture, Old Pete was 18 years old.

Others correctly identifying the photo were Karen Bradshaw (LBB), Josephine Wise (LFK), T.P. Holt (WAC), Chris Cowen (BRY), Don Safar (ITD), Darla Walton (PTN), Miranda Unruh (CST), Danny Williams (BWD), Shane Albus (LBB), Laura Goldman (TRV), Joel Mallard (FTW), Toby Brito (LBB), Wanda Johnson (HOU), Rick Walbrick (LBB), Ruben Juarez (CMP), Szende Smith (CMP), Richard Sliva (Retiree), Lance Burnett (WFS), Colt Smith (CHS), Charles Parker (ATL), Michael Granado (LRD) and E. Joe Johnson (HOU). 



UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

July 4

Independence Day
(All Agencies Closed)

July 28

Texas Transportation
Commission Meeting
(Austin)

August 25

Texas Transportation
Commission Meeting
(Austin)

August 27

LBJ's Birthday
(Sunday)

MILESTONES

MAY SERVICE AWARDS

DISTRICTS

ABILENE

- 35 Daniel P. Leonhard
- 10 Wesley D. Hillburn
Dennis J. Holland

AMARILLO

- 30 Kelli S. Navarrette
- 5 Kevin S. Baldrige
Mark J. Hubert

ATLANTA

- 10 Thomas C. Bruce
Brenda S. Otwell

AUSTIN

- 30 Thien T. Nguyen
- 15 Keith D. Kyle
- 10 Susana Ceballos

BEAUMONT

- 30 Cecil D. Raiford
- 20 Scott J. Ayres
- 15 Steve T. Melton
- 10 Deborah A. Lauzon

BRYAN

- 35 Sandra D. Perry
- 20 Joseph S. Tomek
- 20 Pablo J. Vargas Jr
- 15 James R. Collins
Lorena A. Patranella

BROWNWOOD

- 15 Gonzalo Flores
- 10 Gerald Ragland
- 5 Michael W. Rogers

CHILDRESS

- 15 Amanda N. Cabler

CORPUS CHRISTI

- 20 Jose L. Hernandez III
- 15 Michael A. Cervantez
- 10 Michael P. Gross
- 5 Jeffrey K. Heimann
Jesus P. Morataya

DALLAS

- 35 Connielynn M. Seals
- 30 Brenda J. Callaway
Bernard Fears Jr
James K. Selman
Mykol C. Woodruff
- 25 James M. Palmgren
- 15 Timothy P. Wright
Jeremy D. Woods
- 10 Jennifer R. Carpenter
Perry L. Day
- 5 Jamie R. Pruett

EL PASO

- 20 Antonio I. Barron
Sergio R. Garcia
Jose Mendez

FORT WORTH

- 15 Velma S. Harris
- 10 Sherrie B. Fowler
Brenda L. Richards
- 5 Steven W. Gayle
John J. Wakefield

HOUSTON

- 30 Charles W. Dawson Jr
Jorge A. Garcia Duran
Jeffery D. Thomson
- 25 Richard C. Knoblock
- 20 Shianne M. Blease-Staine
Cinnamon L. Dorsey
Donald A. Marquise
- 15 William D. Burch
Matthew J. Gardner
Robert E. Henry
Elizabeth A. Martin
Henry I. Nazareno
David J. Weisz
- 10 Joey V. Duncan
Mark L. Johnson
Anthony W. Kariuki
Benjamin F. Krpec
Catherine K. McCreight
Mark A. Morris
Dorothy K. Murphy
Lisa A. Parks
- 5 Calvin Aubry
Joshua M. Lerma
Mariano B. Manon-Og

LUBBOCK

- 20 William M. Barnett
Ronnie V. Long
- 15 Jimmy M. Grado
Shelley C. Harris
Russell W. Ray
Jesse A. Trejo
- 5 Orlando Lira
Manuel Marmolejo
Kyle D. Owen
Kelley D. Tooley

LUFKIN

- 20 Bridget D. Roberts
- 15 Tracy L. Walker
- 5 James R. Dunn

ODESSA

- 35 Tommy D. Rejino
- 20 Eric J. Lopez
- 5 Rufino C. Guebara

PARIS

- 30 Kevin W. Wilson
- 20 Michael P. Murphy
- 15 Crystal J. Cook

- 15 Colby D. Shelton

- 10 Jesse D. Herrera

PHARR

- 30 Omar Soto
- 20 Atidio Garza
- 10 Daniel Garcia

SAN ANTONIO

- 30 Mark R. Mosley
- 25 Darcie A. Schipull
- 15 Daryl W. Rechenthin
- 10 Carlos L. Herrera
Michael G. Jarzombek
Samuel Santos
Ishmael D. White
- 5 Juan L. Rodriguez

SAN ANGELO

- 10 Jonathan W. Phillips

TYLER

- 25 Bradley M. Tiemann
- 20 Jimmy K. Baker
- 10 Geoffrey S. Cunningham
Dan L. Hernandez III

WACO

- 30 Norman D. Hammons
Sondra D. Shaeffer
- 20 Robert P. White
Brent T. Zarosky
- 10 Brian L. Ayers
Jason C. Duncan
Christopher J. Johnson

WICHITA FALLS

- 30 Christopher C. Ulbig
- 25 Charles R. Slaggle
- 20 Kade A. Kimbrew
- 5 Jason L. Alvey

YOAKUM

- 15 John P. Clark
- 10 Lariet W. Girndt

DIVISIONS

ADMINISTRATION

- 35 Mark A. Marek
- 20 Amanda M. Martinez

AUDIT

- 5 Albert T. Bourque

BRIDGE

- 10 Taya Retterer

CIVIL RIGHTS

- 15 Martha R. Arnold
- 10 Jessica D. Mueller

CONTRACTING AND PURCHASING

- 30 Scott D. Koczman
Blanche A. Stuard

CONSTRUCTION

- 25 Alma C. Piper

FINANCE

- 10 Paul N. Campbell
- 5 Casey M. Rowe

FLEET OPERATIONS

- 35 Mat R. Foster
- 20 David L. Merritt
Stephanie M. Milligan
- 15 Juan A. Martinez
- 10 Dalton B. Pratt
- 5 Anna L. Leal

GENERAL COUNSEL

- 20 John J. Ingram Jr

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 20 Billie F. Long
- 5 Eugene A. Chapa

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- 10 Aileen A. Wade

MAINTENANCE

- 20 John A. Roberts
- 15 Alfred E. Chandler

PROFESSIONAL PROCUREMENT

- 15 Julia K. Custer
Lisa A. Merwin

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 10 Rebecca P. Black
Linda C. Hernandez

RIGHT OF WAY

- 15 Jean L. Mark

RAIL

- 10 Travis C. Milner

SUPPORT SERVICES

- 15 Kevin C. Rucker
- 10 Arturo G. Hernandez
Roland S. Ramon

TOLL OPERATIONS

- 10 Roland G. Silva

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

- 20 William E. Knowles
- 15 John C. Jameson

TRAFFIC

- 30 Carol T. Rawson
- 10 Lydia Bryan Valdez

TRAVEL

- 5 Jeremy Primozich

JUNE SERVICE AWARDS



DISTRICTS

ABILENE

10 Blake Hammond

AMARILLO

10 Douglas A. Wagner
5 Donald W. Hibbs
Kevin D. Hill
Steven H. Wynia

ATLANTA

10 Jose A. Romero
5 Brandon K. Durmon

AUSTIN

35 Timmy J. Stacy
30 Joseph G. Carrizales
20 David L. Martinez
Gilbert Porras
10 David A. Herbrich
Brandon A. Marshall

BEAUMONT

25 Eugene Haynes Jr
20 Debra A. Hurst

BRYAN

35 Shelton S. Webb
5 Richard M. Gustavus
Donald R. House II
Matt W. Moore

BROWNWOOD

5 Glenn R. Herring

CHILDRESS

30 Michael W. Ritchie
20 Paul E. Henslee
5 Lewis F. Allen
Oscar G. Garcia De Santiago

CORPUS CHRISTI

30 David C. Chapa
Martin C. Horst
15 Howard J. Gillespie
5 David A. Franco
Ruben Garcia
Van L. Henrichson
Lance M. Jaimes
Barron G. Morris
Ruben M. Ortiz
Johnnie W. Smith Jr

DALLAS

35 Lanny R. Surratt
30 Debbie L. Adams
Larry L. Ferguson
Walter R. Fisher III
Jan M. Heady
25 Matthew R. Morrow

15 Kareem Doucette
David R. Gentle
Jason L. Mashell
Mary Lou Reinhardt
10 Randel M. Lee
Michael B. Smithey
Brandon S. Sparkman
5 Natasha M. Tabatabaai

EL PASO

15 Timothy R. Caswell

FORT WORTH

15 Paul D. Hoffman
Christian J. Houghton
10 Joseph M. Mims
Eddy G. Watson
5 Johnny D. Blakeney
Leslie C. Davenport
Justin E. Derden
Jeremy R. Meador

HOUSTON

30 Steve J. Calles
Cheryl F. Koslosky
Robert L. Schlafer
William L. Stone Jr
20 Michael Awa
Funso A. Ekibolaji
Enrique Sanchez
15 Bart B. Brenk
Rafael Cortes
Trent W. Kubena
Stephen A. Stakemiller
Jahangir Yaghmaeian
10 Nestor E. Dizon
Gloria Garcia
Samuel M. Guerrero
Ramanie R. Rajapakse
Christopher A. Sell

LUBBOCK

30 Jerry W. Cash
Ben Kautz
10 Hector M. Osuna

LUFKIN

10 Krista B. Cloonan
5 Randal S. Cooper

ODESSA

10 John R. Carrasco
Samuel R. Dominguez
Francisco P. Perez
Ramon Sotelo

PARIS

10 Frances C. Fletcher
5 Benjamin B. Garrett
Daniel W. Hart

PHARR

30 Homero Bazan Jr
15 David R. Vera

SAN ANTONIO

30 Ronald W. Lemmons
25 Russell A. Beck
15 Donald W. Deaton Jr
Edmundo Gonzalez
Lorenzo Morales
David O. Valdez
10 Jose Antu III
Jerry W. Bailey
5 Ethan L. Garza

SAN ANGELO

15 William L. Knight
10 Curtis D. Storey

TYLER

10 Troy H. Gilbreath
5 Bob P. Hardy Jr
Clarence R. Ohnheiser Jr
Terrence N. Tresner

WACO

25 Willie R. Degrade
20 Jaime A. Olvera
15 Deborah J. Hall
10 Chris J. Mashek
Mark A. Sedillo
5 David S. Hollers

WICHITA FALLS

20 Mitchell E. Nava
15 Martha R. Lambert

YOAKUM

5 Gerard E. Jalufka

DIVISIONS

AVIATION

10 Terry J. Lesak
Natalie DeFrees

BRIDGE

30 Timothy E. Bradberry

COMMUNICATIONS

15 William B. Dollar

CONTRACTING AND PURCHASING

15 John A. Landa

CONSTRUCTION

15 Melissa R. Adamcik
10 Jessica K. Ganucheau
Christina Gutierrez

ENVIRONMENTAL

5 Mark A. Fisher

FINANCE

25 Rafael Delgado Jr
20 Lucia Elizondo
5 Amber N. Kirkland

FLEET OPERATIONS

20 Timothy W. Kresta

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

10 Patsy L. Asmo

HUMAN RESOURCES

25 Latashia M. Miller
15 Avelina J. Armendariz

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

25 Cheryl C. Grant
15 Alexander G. Power
Ann M. Zeeck

MAINTENANCE

10 Yaxiong Huang

PROFESSIONAL PROCUREMENT

20 Brian K. Williams
10 Caleb M. Bryant

RIGHT OF WAY

30 Jeneane L. Dyer
20 Deana M. McHorse
15 Crystal D. Damron

RAIL

5 Jody S. Wall

RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

35 Sylvia R. Medina

STRATEGIC CONTENT MANAGEMENT

5 Scott J. Spradlin

SUPPORT SERVICES

25 Victor Cabello
15 Martin G. Boehringer
Sean M. Goltz
5 Joseph A. Wilson

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

30 Richard C. Peters
15 Gabriel Contreras
10 Alicia Taliaferro

TRAVEL

30 Lucia B. Cordova
Donna J. Watson

MILESTONES 2016

MARCH RETIREE REPORT

DISTRICTS

AMARILLO

20 Santiago Tercero

ATLANTA

37 Robert Ratcliff
32 Ira Wisinger
29 Angela McCasland
22 Ellen Ball

AUSTIN

21 Houman Hemati
Robert Kempf

BROWNWOOD

23 Glenn Turner

CORPUS CHRISTI

27 Abelardo Solis Jr.
19 Rey Espinoza

EL PASO

23 Robbie Burns

FORT WORTH

32 Robert Shaw
29 Sammy Brazeau
12 Mason Miller

HOUSTON

34 Eliseo Flores
29 Martin Kalinowski Jr.
27 Alexander Burgos
Shady Parsa
19 Josiah Yuen
15 Romany Tony
10 Jerry Bear

LUBBOCK

28 Linda Parker

LUFKIN

30 William Dhone
23 Mark Payne

LAREDO

27 Martin Abelardo Galvan

ODESSA

22 Hector Salmon

SAN ANTONIO

28 Brent Rainosek

WACO

27 Charles Hamilton

YOAKUM

22 Adolph Novosad

DIVISIONS

FINANCE

21 Sherry Phelps

HUMAN RESOURCES

12 Maria De Los
Angeles Hernandez

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

27 Tricia Ramirez
20 Gary Harris

PROFESSIONAL PROCUREMENT

21 Paula Gordon

STRATEGIC CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT

30 Lisa Rainosek

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

34 Brian Brymer
31 John Ibarra

APRIL RETIREE REPORT

DISTRICTS

AMARILLO

32 Nick Durfey

AUSTIN

33 Wayne Rehnberg
22 Mark Liesmann

BEAUMONT

22 Gregory Christopher

BROWNWOOD

31 Russell Slone

CORPUS CHRISTI

32 Paula Cantu

DALLAS

29 Ramon Barreiro

FORT WORTH

16 Joel Carrizales

LUBBOCK

26 Brian Pope

WACO

26 Brenda Franklin
12 Michael Mazoch

DIVISIONS

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

22 David Messineo

IN MEMORIAM

DISTRICTS

DALLAS

James Brand
Engineering Technician
Date of Death: 5/21/2016
Years of Service: 18

FORT WORTH

Vernon Wells
Maintenance Support Tech
Date of Death: 4/11/2016
Years of Service: 10

DIVISIONS

BRIDGE

Michael F. Gesch
Engineering Technician
Date Of Death: 3/30/16
Years of Service: 25

Larry D. Smith

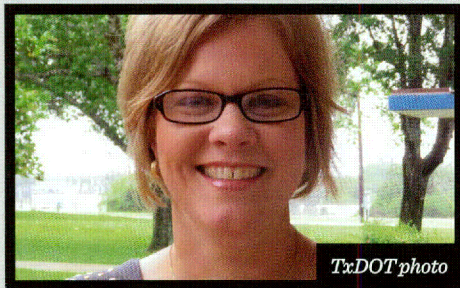
Engineering Specialist
Date of Death: 05/08/2016
Retired: July 2000
Years of Service: 34

HUMAN RESOURCES

Steven Harmon
Management Analyst
Date of Death: 6/4/16
Years of Service: 2

TxDOT Family Members Chime In

What is your favorite amusement park — in Texas? —



TxDOT photo

KENDRA SHOWS

CONTRACT SPECIALIST
YOAKUM DISTRICT

“Six Flags Fiesta Texas. We took the kids last summer and had a great family vacation.”

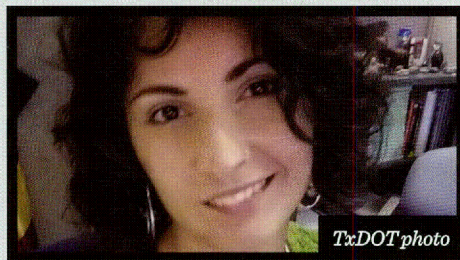


TxDOT photo

JAY CASTLEBERRY

GENERAL TRANSPORTATION TECHNICIAN
BEAUMONT DISTRICT


“Six Flags Fiesta Texas! I like the food! It’s just a great atmosphere.”



TxDOT photo

SOPHIA BRADFORD

GIS ANALYST, AVIATION DIVISION

“Schlitterbahn! There’s no better way to beat the heat, bask in a beautiful scenic river and celebrate some of the state’s rich cultural heritage than spending a day at Schlitterbahn.” 

Bright Lights

TxDOT EMPLOYEE SERVES STATE AND COUNTRY

TxDOT photo



Javier Cordova, transportation specialist for the El Paso District, on military deployment in Central Africa.


Javier Cordova is a transportation specialist in the El Paso District’s Project Development and Design Section. He has been a TxDOT employee for more than 22 years. But not only is he serving Texas through his employment at TxDOT, he is also serving his country.

Cordova is on a military deployment that will last through September in a Special Operations group in central Africa.

Although he is not allowed to go into much detail about the operation, he did say, “It’s a very good thing we are here.”

Cordova was able to report that he is working on a ramp project to assist the local government with the movement of traffic between a French base and the local airport. His work is in support of the mission Special Operations Africa.

“Other than the 115-degree days, I am doing okay,” said Cordova.

Read more about the good work employees are doing 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. 



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Austin, Texas 78701

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<http://crossroads/>

Taking control

to gain a whole new life.

Zach Hopson, 26, is a transportation technician with Nacogdoches Maintenance who became determined enough to lose nearly 100 pounds when he realized the kind of health problems he could be facing. He refused to go through weight-loss surgery the way his dad did and started to change his life through diet and exercise. This is his journey to wellness:

It was eye-opening when I got on the scales and almost tipped 300 pounds. Several of my family members have diabetes and I just didn't want to go down that same road. I watched my dad go through gastric sleeve surgery to reduce his weight.

I wanted to lose the weight without surgery, and I was also going through a divorce, which made me more determined to change. I wanted to build my self-confidence.

So I started walking and then running.

I eat a high-protein diet that includes no fatty carbs and I drink one gallon of water each day. I cook enough two nights a week to bring something for lunch each day. I weigh all the portions and kind of munch through the day so I'm not starving at lunch and tempted to overeat.

My lunches are 7 ounces of chicken or tuna and a sweet potato. I have two whole eggs and three

egg whites, all scrambled, for breakfast. I drink alcohol only on the weekends and in moderation.

I track all of my calories using the MyFitnessPal app, with a goal of staying under 2,400 calories each day and never eating more than the suggested serving size. The key to losing weight is counting the calories. This website tells me how many calories I should have each day based on my height and current weight and activity level. The pounds starting falling off, and when I weighed in at 206, I knew I had made it.


I'm in the gym at 5 a.m. six days a week, before work. I also get eight hours of sleep each night and I still have time to enjoy golf, softball and raising cattle on the family farm. My waist has shrunk from 42-inches to 34-inches, and my shirt size has gone



Exercise and tracking calories helped Zach Hopson, a transportation technician with the Lufkin District, lose weight without surgery.

from a 2X to a large.

You have to make a lifestyle change to be successful at this. Never give up, even when you hit a wall and don't lose any weight for a week or so. Stay motivated and set your goals — the weight will come off.

I was embarrassed to go places before I lost the weight. I feel so much better about myself now and my social life has really improved. 

Contact your local Wellness Program Coordinator to learn about the wellness program and start your journey today!



Putting people first. Making connections that count.