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# TRANSPORTATION NEWS

February 2003

Volume 28 Number 5

NON-CIRCULATING  
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## The 78th Legislature page 8

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# Quality — it takes you to make it happen

by **Mike Behrens**  
Executive Director

This month, I want to talk about quality.

Notice anything about the last word in the previous sentence? It's misspelled. A vital "u" is missing.

It's the same in TxDOT. We need "you" — all of you — as we strive to achieve high quality in everything we do.

Quality is the second of the three Ts of TxDOT: accountability, quality and safety. In a previous issue, I talked about accountability; next month, I'll discuss safety.

TxDOT is taking the first steps to re-energize its program to help each of us meet standards for high quality in all that we do.

Recently, we instituted the TxDOT Quality Council, chaired by the department's deputy executive director, Steve Simmons. This group of senior TxDOT managers will plan, implement and monitor the department's quality process. You can expect to hear more from this council in the months ahead as it forges a planned strategy to ensure we will be able to produce quality work.

Whether some people call our program "continuous quality improvement," "CQI," "quality circles," "TQM," or "total quality management," the purpose is the same. We want to do better.

It doesn't much matter what we call our program, so long as we know quality when we see it — and so long as we strive to achieve that quality.

You are the person who will make this happen. It may be corny, but it's

also easy to remember — you are the "u" in quality.

This is not a new idea for the people of TxDOT. In fact, the quest for quality has been with the people of this department since its beginning nearly 90 years ago. I am encouraged every day by your efforts to see that we maintain our high-quality standards. And I am excited by knowing that we can achieve even higher standards of quality.

## ■ Legislative session

The 78th Texas Legislature is now in session. It's a good time to think about our rights as Texans and to remember our obligations as public servants.

Yes, state employees can let their legislators know how they feel about an issue. Nothing restricts employees, acting as private citizens, from contacting elected representatives.

However, doing it properly is critical. We all must be able to draw the line between departmental and personal interests.

For example, employees may write a letter of personal opinion on their own

stationery and send it on their own personal time. However, an employee may not write such a letter on TxDOT letterhead, nor fax it on TxDOT equipment, nor on TxDOT time.

Further, employees should not express personal opinions when representing TxDOT. When you identify yourself as a TxDOT employee, you are an official representative and your comments must be restricted to official TxDOT positions.

The department's Legislative Affairs Office (LAO) is best suited to respond to legislative requests. While responses to simple questions (project start dates, the dollar amount of an award, or basic department statistics) are normally best handled as promptly as possible, any responses to legislative inquiries must be reported to LAO.

The department's working relationships with legislators are very important. As this session unfolds, we will be providing the information they need to appropriate funds so we can continue to provide transportation systems that we all expect and deserve.

## Letter from the editor

To say these are challenging times is a Texas-sized understatement. The federal government warns us to make sure we have a sufficient supply of duct tape and plastic to cover our windows in the event of a chemical attack, and the Texas Legislature struggles with a revenue shortfall of \$10 billion and change.

We can't improve on the job the

mainstream news media are doing to keep us informed on the national situation, from fears of terrorism at home to the prospect of war abroad, but we can give you a good idea of what's going to be happening in Austin this spring. This is the 78th regular session of our law-making body since statehood, but one

■ See Letter, Page 4

**On the cover & page 8 —**

**These striking views of the Capitol at night were taken by J. Griffis Smith, Travel Division photographer.**



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# TxDOT workers witness aftermath of Columbia breakup

## District employees aid state and federal recovery crews

by Mike Cox  
Editor

David Collmorgen's first thought that morning was that the horses he raises had gotten in his yard and gone berserk outside his rural home northwest of Lufkin.

"My wife and I were just awake, about 8 a.m. when the windows and doors rattled and the walls shook," the Lufkin District assistant area engineer said. "It lasted about 30 seconds. It sounded like a roll of Blackcat fire-crackers somebody had lit all at once."

Jumping up to look out a window, he saw his six horses where they should be, in the roping pen near his barn.

"They were standing there frozen, with their ears up," he said. "They weren't looking to the heavens, but they were at attention, wondering what was happening."

Realizing his horses weren't up to anything, Collmorgen had another idea.

"It's an earthquake," he told his wife.

"No, it's a tornado," she said, grabbing their daughter and running with her into their hall.

"I told her that the sky was blue, it couldn't be a tornado," Collmorgen said.

All they knew was that something extraordinary had happened. It was a confusing beginning for what turned out to be a very long weekend for Collmorgen and more than a dozen TxDOT employees.

Not for more than half an hour did Collmorgen and others in East Texas understand that what they had heard was the Space Shuttle Columbia breaking up in the clear sky.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Johnson Space Center lost communication with the shuttle and its crew of seven at 7:59 a.m. Feb. 1. The 28-year-old space-



TxDOT photos by Buddy Allison and Hollis Caldwell

**Journalists gather in downtown Nacogdoches the day after Space Shuttle Columbia broke apart over East Texas. Insets, from left: Lufkin district public information officer Kathi White at one of many press conferences, Lufkin assistant area engineer David Collmorgen (in hat) attending situation briefing, and one of thousands of shuttle pieces found in that part of the state.**

craft, the oldest in NASA's fleet, was 16 minutes away from a Florida landing when it began breaking up as it streaked east across Texas at 18 times the speed of sound.

"It was 40 minutes until we saw on TV that it was the space shuttle," Collmorgen continued.

The same time lag held true for most people in the area, though with debris showering down on Nacogdoches and other points in East Texas, it was obvious that this was not going to be a normal Saturday.

In Nacogdoches, assistant maintenance foreman Hollis Caldwell also was just beginning his Saturday when the sonic booms started rolling across his part of Texas.

"I ran to one window and my wife ran to another one," Caldwell said. "I thought it was a tornado at first, but the sky was clear."

Caldwell quickly dressed and got in his TxDOT truck, looking for smoke.

"I thought maybe a plane had crashed or one of our plants had blown up," he said.

He saw no smoke, but shortly after 8:30 a.m. he drove up on the first tangible evidence of trouble.

"I found a big piece of what looked like angle iron with screws in it in the middle of Highway 7 just west of the airport," he said.

Caldwell photographed it with a digital camera, moved it off the roadway so it wouldn't damage any vehicles, and called Collmorgen.

Within an hour, the assistant area engineer was looking at Caldwell's images on his computer screen.

"I called Dennis Cooley (Lufkin's district engineer) about 9 o'clock, but he was out of town," Collmorgen said. (Cooley returned to Lufkin, and the following day was in the regional command post set up by the Department of Public Safety at the Lufkin Civic Center.)

■ See Shuttle, Page 15



# Transportation Digest

★ **HANG UP AND DRIVE:** The Harvard University Center for Risk Analysis reports that fatalities attributed to the use of hand-held cell phones while driving has doubled in the past two years in the United States. While deaths in 2002 jumped to 2,600, an estimated 570,000 injuries a year and 1.5 million crashes resulted in property damage due to cell phone use while driving. An earlier study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely to be involved in a crash. (San Antonio Express News)

★ **DEATH RATE DROPS:** A recently released federal study reports that the rate of alcohol-related traffic deaths in Texas dropped 63 percent in the last 20 years — from 2,801 in 1982 to 1,789 in 2001. Nationally the rate fell by 62 percent. During that time, state laws have toughened — Texas law bans open containers of alcohol within reach of a vehicle's occupants and the state lowered the blood-alcohol limit to .08 percent. "Increased public awareness of the problem is the main reason, we believe, alcohol-related fatalities have declined," said Bill Lewis of the Texas Office of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. (Associated Press)

★ **PRaise FOR BONDS:** "The Bond Buyer," a national trade publication for the bond market, has called a trio of planned toll roads for Central Texas one of the best revenue-bond deals in the nation. The publication included the Central Texas Turnpike project among the top five bond deals in the United States in 2002. The project is valued at \$2.9 billion. Financing of the project, the largest bond issue ever in Texas, includes \$2.2 billion in bonds, a federal loan, state highway funds and contributions from local governments. TxDOT earned the paper's "Southwest Deal of the Year" award for the financial package that is paying for the three roads. (Austin American-Statesman, Austin Business Journal)

★ **Interstates clogged:** The Road Information Program (TRIP), a non-profit group in Washington, D.C., reported in January that increased traffic on interstate highways is beginning to choke the system's capacity to move people and goods. Travel on the nation's 45,000 miles of interstate highway increased 37 percent between 1991 and 2001. During that time, according to TRIP, the number of highway miles added to the system has increased by only five percent. The report predicts a 42 percent increase of traffic on the interstate system. Truck traffic is expected to grow 54 percent. The five states with the busiest interstates are California, Maryland, Minnesota, Rhode Island and Washington. TRIP based its report on data from the Federal Highway Administration. (USA Today)

★ **ACCELERATED REVIEW:** Segments of Interstate 69 in Texas are slated to receive accelerated environmental review under President Bush's Sept. 18 executive order on environmental stewardship.

"By expediting environmental reviews for these segments of I-69, we can help this country benefit more quickly from increased transportation efficiency in that important trade corridor," U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said.

"President Bush asked his cabinet to help states cut through federal bureaucratic inertia to help them complete sound transportation projects more quickly and at less cost," said Mineta. "This important initiative will help us do just that."

Mineta added, "We will not, however, sacrifice environmental standards in this effort."

The U.S. Department of Transportation has included the I-69 project as one of seven transportation projects around the country designated for accelerated environmental review under the president's executive order. (U.S. Department of Transportation news release) ☼

## Letter from the editor

continued from page 2

of the most important sessions to this agency — and all Texans — in a long time.

That's why the focus of this issue is the Legislature and the transportation-related matters to be considered this session. We also have taken a look at what's up in Congress, particularly the every-sixth-year reauthorization of federal transportation funding.

With work on these stories well under way, the space shuttle tragedy broke on Feb. 1. TxDOT played an important role in the recovery process in East Texas and continues to do so as we go to press. We wanted to give you some idea of what TxDOT employees experienced that Saturday morning, and what they did to help the federal government and other state agencies, so we held some stories we had planned to run in favor of including coverage of the shuttle disaster.

As fluid as conditions are these days, no telling what we'll be reporting in the next issue. But we're planning what we hope will be some interesting stories on other modes of transportation, particularly taking the bus or a train as well as a story on the moving of an historic bridge.

Finally, a piece of regrettable news: We mentioned in the November-December issue that we were no longer receiving notification of retiree deaths. We had hoped that would only be temporary. But the Employee Retirement System has determined that it must stop furnishing the information on the basis of Section 815.503 of the Government Code, which says that ERS records concerning retirees are confidential and exempt from disclosure under the state Public Information Act. We could go into deeper detail here, but the bottom line is that because of this law, we are not going to be able to tell you when a former coworker dies.

At least by March the bluebonnets will be blooming. ☼

— Mike Cox



# Smart signs warn of winter hazards

by **Tonya Detten**  
Amarillo District

**TRAFFIC ACCIDENT ... 7  
MILES AHEAD ... RIGHT LANE  
CLOSED ...**

With news of a mishap ahead, an overhead sign flashed its message to travelers on westbound Interstate 40 coming into Amarillo Dec. 4.

What was supposed to be “just a dusting” of snow turned into five inches of the white stuff toward the end of the day. Roads were snow packed and slick. Accidents and traffic tie-ups were common. It’s not unusual for the Amarillo District to get snow in December, but what made this storm different is the role played by the newly installed intelligent transportation system (ITS).

“This was the first test of our ITS system in winter weather,” said Robin Frisk, Traffic Management Center

operator. “The cameras had been up and running for about three weeks when the surprise storm hit.”

ITS applications typically manage traffic congestion in urban areas, but the Amarillo District – not subject to much traffic congestion — invested \$1.6 million in the ITS system specifically to address winter weather and the problems that accompany snowstorms.

“The saying goes that TxDOT doesn’t close roads,” said Mike Taylor, director of operations for the Amarillo District, “Mother Nature closes roads. And when that happens, Interstate 40 turns into a parking lot for trucks and travelers.”

Taylor says that warning drivers before they get through town may encourage them to stay overnight in Amarillo — instead of getting stuck in a snowdrift farther down the road. “The signs have already proven helpful in directing traffic around an incident. And the cameras allow us to see road

conditions in real time.”

Cameras have been installed at seven locations near Amarillo, and near Dumas, Vega and Adrian.

“It’s helpful to watch traffic in real time in the rural areas,” said Taylor. “You’re able to see if traffic is still moving or if problem areas need our attention.”

In one case, Frisk watched as two semi-tractor trailers got stuck going up a slick hill on Interstate 27. “The trucks were blocking traffic and I was able to put a message on the sign telling north-bound traffic to exit to the frontage road,” said Frisk. “I was amazed at how quickly traffic responded to the message.”

Frisk watched as two TxDOT snowplows showed up and spread bottom-ash onto the roadway, allowing the trucks to move on. “As soon as the roadway was clear,” Frisk said, “I changed the message and traffic got moving again. I am very pleased with the system and how it works.” ❄

## New TxDOT rules in effect for drug and alcohol program

TxDOT’s Substance Abuse Program Rules were revised effective Nov. 21 to reflect changes in federal and state law as well as department policy. Here’s a rundown on the changes.

The DUI/DWI Policy will now be known as the Alcohol- Or Drug-Related Driving Offense Policy. The broadened definition allows the department to take action on offenses previously excluded, such as reckless endangerment and deadly conduct. Any conviction resulting from a DUI/DWI arrest will be subject to this policy.

All employees authorized to drive for the department will be required to sign the revised Form 1835, Alcohol-Or Drug-Related Driving Offense and Driving Requirements Policy Statement of Notification, stating that they are aware of the revised policy.

Commercial drivers, safety-sensitive employees and vessel crewmembers

who voluntarily admit to a drug or alcohol problem are now subject to return-to-duty and follow-up testing in addition to a mandatory referral to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). If a commercial driver, safety-sensitive employee or vessel crewmember comes forward with a drug or alcohol problem prior to performing critical duties, they will not be subject to follow-up testing. Critical duties include driving, commercial driving, safety sensitive activities, vessel crewmember duties or operating motorized equipment.

Pre-employment drug testing waivers for employees transferring into a commercial driver, safety-sensitive or vessel crewmember position will be granted only if the employee has never been mandatorily referred to the EAP and the employee has been tested in the previous three years and all tests have been negative.

Supervisors can now be assisted by project leaders and lead workers in making substance abuse observations and recommendations.

TxDOT’s rules permit one referral to the EAP for substance abuse violations. Rehired employees are now treated as if there had not been a break in service when counting mandatory referrals due to substance abuse. This prevents employees who have previously violated the department’s substance abuse policy and have been mandatorily referred from receiving a second mandatory referral.

The revised rules are available online at the Human Resources Division Home Page (HRD-NET) on Crossroads. You may also obtain a copy by contacting your Substance Control Officer or Human Resources Officer.

—Human Resources Division







## PARIS HOSTS KINDERGARTENERS

More than 60 Paris District employees hosted 630 Lamar County Kindergarteners in November during an open house. The pupils toured the district sign shop where they learned how TxDOT makes highway signs. At the signal shop, they saw how TxDOT monitors traffic signals with video-imaging vehicle detectors. They also learned how to cross an intersection safely. TxDOT employees also demonstrated several types of heavy equipment and performed a traffic-safety skit featuring Vince and Larry, crash-test dummies. The finale featured a "Don't Mess with Texas" puppet show with TxDOT characters, Tex and Dot.

## DIVISION PRESENTS ITS LEAD AWARD

Karen Gardner, Tyler District permit coordinator, has received the Motor Carrier Division 2002 LEAD Award, which goes to a division employee or group displaying exemplary characteristics of leadership, enthusiasm, attitude, and determination (LEAD).



**Karen Gardner**

Gardner started her TxDOT career in 1993 as an office manager in the North Tyler Maintenance Section. In 1995, she moved to the district maintenance office as office manager and took on the duties of district permit coordinator.

Co-workers, managers and district employees submit nominations. Gardner's supervisor, Michael Reagan, nominated her. He praised her for "approaching all her customers with a 'can-do' attitude and a smile."

## STAR AWARDS GIVEN

The Vehicle Titles and Registration Division has presented its 2002 Star

Award to two employees — Lubbock Regional Manager Bobby Meeks and Chief of Titles Becky Beck.

The award honors division employees who provide outstanding service to tax assessor-collectors and division customers. Award winners are chosen from nominations submitted by employees within the division and by employees in county tax offices.

Meeks assists county tax office personnel and the public in registration and title procedures. He has been the Lubbock regional manager for 20 years and says that the greatest thing about his job is the friendships that he has established with the county tax assessor-collectors and their deputies.

Beck has held her position since 1996. Throughout her 32-year career with the division, she has served in five sessions as a legislative analyst. She said her most gratifying experience as chief of titles is having daily contact with internal and external customers to resolve title problems.

## RECOGNITION FOR TEXAS HIGHWAYS

Texas Highways magazine was recognized in various categories at the 2002 International Regional Magazine Awards event at Pray, Montana:

■ "Spindletop: The Gusher That Changed the World" by Howard Peacock (January 2001) received the Award of Merit for historical feature.

■ "Stormy Weather," photographed by Warren Faidley, Wyman Meinzer, and Laurence Parent (June 2001) received the Award of Merit for feature photography.

■ "Lightnin' Hopkins: The Storyteller" by David Ritz (April 2001) received the Award of Merit for profiles.

■ "Herbs in Texas: Culinary Border Crossings" by Lucinda Hutson (June 2001) received the Bronze Award for reader-service article.

■ "Lightnin' Hopkins: The Storyteller," illustration by Christian Clayton (April 2001) received the Silver Award for illustration.

■ "Laura Wilson: Chronicler of People" (January 2001) received the Gold Award for photojournalism.

## CONDITIONAL GRANT DEADLINE

Applications for the TxDOT Conditional Grant Program are now being accepted for the fall semester 2003. Interested students must complete and submit the application by Mar. 1.

The program provides financial help to eligible minority and female students who are interested in working for the department and who seek a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, computer science, management information systems, or computer information systems.

A copy of the application may be downloaded through the Human Resources Division intranet site at [www.dot.state.tx.us](http://www.dot.state.tx.us). Applications also can be obtained by calling 1-866-554-4330 (toll-free call).

The program includes a maximum grant of \$3,000 per semester per student. Eligible expenses will include room and board but are not to exceed the grant maximum.

More information: TxDOT Employment Opportunities, 512-416-4979.

## FORT WORTH LOGS FEWER TRIPS

More than 100 employees in the Fort Worth District, participating in the district's Employee Trip-Reduction Program, last year made nearly 4,000 fewer trips by car and helped reduce ozone. With an eye to improving air quality in Fort Worth, the district has led the way with the program for 10 years, eliminating the need for more than 25,000 trips.

Tammy Townsend-Haehn won recognition as the top participant in last year's program for cutting out 126 trips through car-pooling. A November luncheon honored the more than 100 employees in the district taking part in the program.

■ See Roundup, Page 7





■ Paris District employees last November orchestrated a luncheon of stew and an auction to benefit **Cecil Anderson**, husband of **Nancy Anderson** who works in the district's accounting office. Mr. Anderson, employed until his health began to fail, had been diagnosed with cancer more than a year earlier. The event raised \$2,384. Organizers credit **Kenny Baker** and his crew in the district shop in bringing the event together.

"During the time I have worked at TxDOT, many times I have heard us referred to as the TxDOT Family. Now I know the true meaning of those words, and I am proud to be a member of that family," Mrs. Anderson said. After struggling to fight cancer, Mr. Anderson died on Christmas Eve.

■ **Christopher "Bubba" Speed**, a 26-year TxDOT veteran and transportation maintenance technician in the Ellis County in the Dallas District, was traveling on FM 813 in January when something told him to pull over at the bridge about two miles west of Palmer.

After stopping, he noticed a vehicle upside down on the east side of the bridge. He then radioed to the Ellis County Maintenance Office, advising them to notify Ellis County Sheriff's Office of the accident. According to the *Waxahachie Daily Light*, "the driver sustained serious injuries and was transported to Baylor Medical Center in Dallas." Police say if it had not been for Speed's speedy efforts, the accident victim may not have been found in time.

■ **Carl A. Peters** has been appointed Daingerfield Maintenance Section supervisor in the Atlanta District. He began his career with TxDOT in 1980 as a maintenance technician. Before his appointment, Peters had been interim maintenance supervisor for the Daingerfield Maintenance Section.

■ **Michael Gibson** and **Troy Savage** in the Hunt County Maintenance Office (Paris District) had begun their daily routine earlier this year and were checking along Interstate 30. As they approached a secluded section of highway, they noticed a car that appeared to be abandoned. As they approached, they found two people still inside.

A Quinlan couple, headed home from Texarkana and out of gas, decided to take their chances together in the car rather than walk several miles for help.

When emergency services arrived, the technicians said the couple was all right, but very cold from the freezing night air. Savage gave his new work coat to the man, along with some money for gas. Gibson gave up his camouflage coat for the lady, and the chilled couple went on their way.

■ **Scott Smith** has been appointed Texarkana Maintenance Section supervisor in the Atlanta District. He began his career with TxDOT as a summer employee in the Tyler District working for the Longview Maintenance Section and became a full-time employee in 1990. Smith had been serving as interim supervisor in the maintenance section.

■ **John M. Holt, P.E.**, Bridge Division, has been selected as the state bridge standards engineer and branch manager. He oversees development and implementation of statewide standards for bridge systems, bridge standard sections, culverts, retaining walls, bridge rails and various bridge components.

■ **Malcolm Arnold**, Bridge Division, recently passed his American Welding Society's exam and received the designation of certified welding inspector.

■ **Darin K. Kosmak** is the Traffic Operations Division's new Railroad Section Director. He began his career at the Railroad Section where he has

worked since 1985. Before his latest appointment, Kosmak served for nine years as manager of the Railroad Liaison Branch.

■ **Nabila M. Boutros, P.E.**, Bridge Division, recently received her Texas license as a professional engineer. Boutros also holds such licenses in New York and New Jersey.

■ **Michael M. Bahm** has been appointed maintenance supervisor for the Reagan and Irion counties maintenance section in the San Angelo District. A native of Houston, Bahm began working for the department as an engineering technician in the Houston District laboratory in 1982. ✪

## Roundup

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### CONTRACTORS RECOGNIZE TxDOT

The U.S. Hispanic Contractors Association recognized TxDOT for the department's participation at the Hispanic Contractors Association's seventh annual conference "Building Inclusion by Eliminating Exclusion."

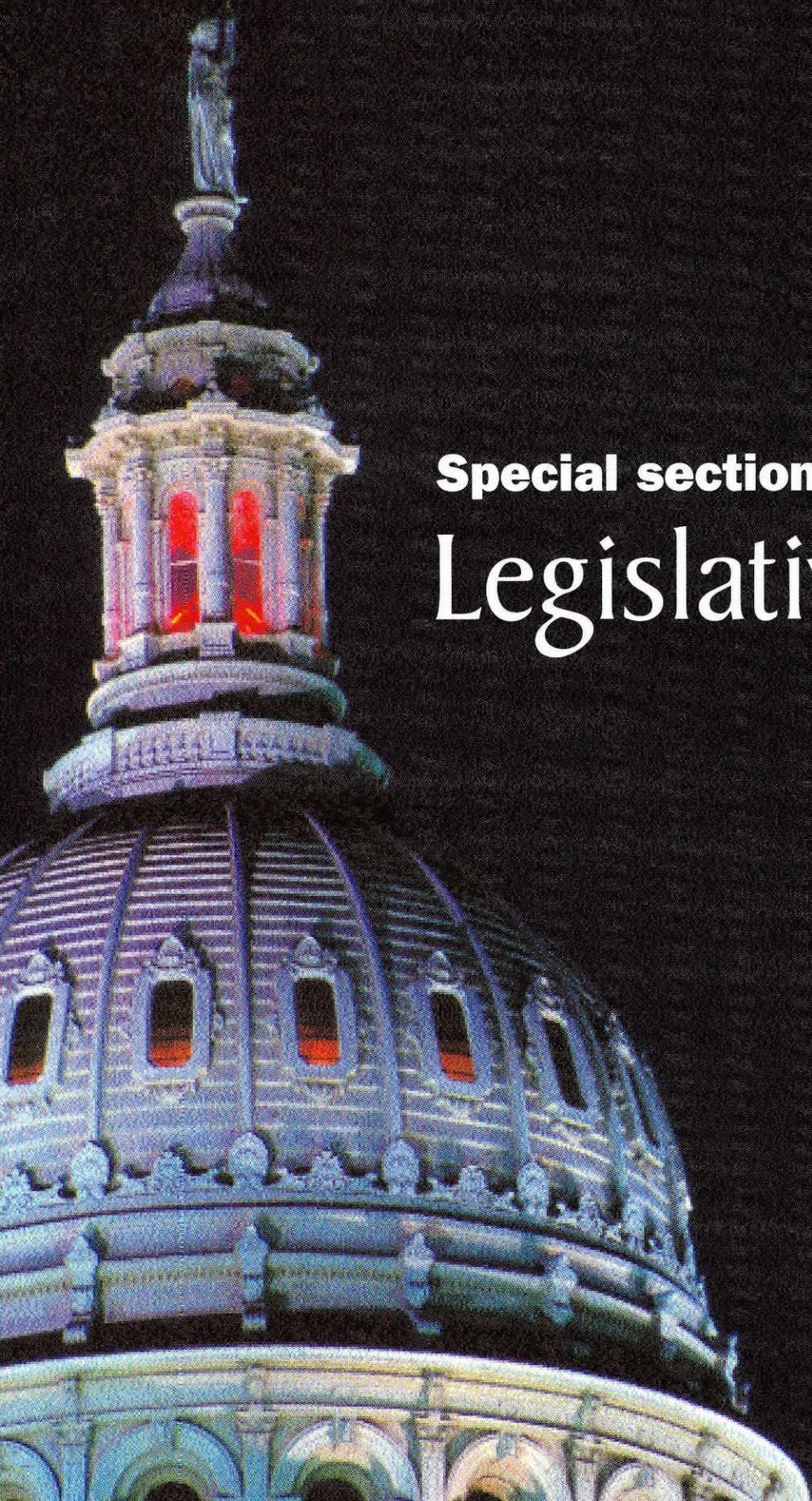
### THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW...

■ Texas Construction magazine has cited reconstruction of the Queen Isabella Causeway in late 2001 with the Judges' Award in its 2002 Best of Texas recognition program. Also recognized: the interchange at Interstate 10 and Interstate 410 in San Antonio, winner in the category for best infrastructure

■ In 2002, TxDOT implemented a clean-air campaign aimed at mobile-source pollution. "Drive Clean Across Texas" is the nation's first statewide public outreach and public-education campaign designed to improve air quality. The campaign recognizes that cars and trucks create most of the emissions that contribute to air pollution. The message is being promoted on TV, radio and billboards. ✪







**Special section:**

# Legislative affairs



# Budget work ahead

by **Judy Curtis**  
Managing Editor

State lawmakers face one primary task this session (and all sessions for that matter): passing a budget. Rarely, however, has the Texas Legislature had to grapple with such a large shortfall in revenue, estimated as high as \$9.9 billion over the biennium.

"That issue will dominate the session, no question about it," said Jefferson Grimes, manager of state legislative affairs for TxDOT. "The budget will serve as a backdrop for anything and everything that goes on in the Legislature, and you'll have fiscal implications of every bill scrutinized very carefully."

The Trans Texas Corridor, first envisioned by Gov. Rick Perry, has been touted as the most sensible and safest approach to today's transportation needs through its 4,000 mile network of corridors up to 1,200 feet wide with separate lanes for passenger vehicles, trucks, high-speed passenger rail, freight rail and a 200 foot wide utility zone. New laws to bring that vision into reality likely will receive legislative attention and action.

Reflecting Gov. Perry's directive, the Texas Transportation Commission has identified key transportation issues that facing the Legislature during its 140 day session. Many of those bills — yet to be filed — will help to bring about the Trans Texas Corridor.

Examples include amending the Transportation Code to ease acquisition procedures as TxDOT identifies right of way necessary to complete the project; expanding the department's ability to forge partnerships with private businesses and other entities seeking to accelerate and help pay for Corridor segments.

"Our goal is to present legislative priorities that reflect issues of the most pressing importance to Texas trans-

portation," said Coby Chase, Director of TxDOT's legislative affairs office.

Other key transportation issues that Texas lawmakers will see during the 78th session involve:

■ **Point of collection.** Currently, state motor fuel taxes are collected at the distributor level — with 2,300 possible sources to tap — rather than at terminals, which number 44 in Texas. The switch to terminal collection could generate millions of dollars more in revenue.

■ **Texas Mobility Fund.** In 2001, Texas voters approved the creation of this fund aimed at addressing the state's most pressing transportation needs. Legislators will look into the means to establish a permanent, predictable source of revenue for that fund.

■ **Regional Mobility Authorities (RMAs).** The RMAs will need the authority to issue bonds to finance, reconstruct and expand highways and other mobility projects.

■ **Overweight fees.** Commissioners have recommended that all state revenue derived from permit fees for oversized and overweight trucks go into the state highway fund, designated for highway improvement and repair.

■ **Short-term borrowing.** If TxDOT had the authority to enter into an overdraft agreement with the Comptroller of Public Accounts, the department could borrow funds on a short-term basis. This could provide a cushion for TxDOT should cash balances drop critically.

Additional topics include establishing dedicated truck lanes for added safety and ease of movement, and bringing Texas into compliance with federal motor carrier laws, which will assure that TxDOT does not lose federal highway funds related to commer-

## The Legislative Life

If Denise Pittard had to narrow down what it takes to do her job as an analyst in TxDOT's Legislative Affairs Office, she might list:

- Being in three places at once, an impossibility partially overcome by using cell phones and two-way pagers, not to mention some sprinting
- Enduring nights that turn into dawns without the benefit of having slept during the interim
- Decorating her home with non-demanding silk plants that seek nothing more than a biennial dusting

And then there are the requirements that are a tad bit more official: "The State policy analysts research issues of legislative interest; draft testimony and correspondence; handle thousands of constituent casework inquiries from legislative offices," states the LAO Crossroads (internal web) site; "analyze proposed legislation and concepts for potential policy and fiscal implications; participate in meetings, hearings, and events on behalf of the department; and work with elected officials and their staffs to promote a better understanding of the TxDOT mission and its employees."

Pittard is one of five analysts in Austin accustomed to the pace of life when the legislature is in town in odd-numbered years, a rhythm that ultimately affects just how effectively Texans' transportation needs will be addressed in the future. The other state policy analysts are Aaron Kocian, Patrick Marotta, Amy Medrano and Steven Polunsky.

These analysts do this by, among other things, divvying up a list of close to 1,500 bills that analysts must read, understand and remember, preparing for and attending sometimes three hearings in one day, all scheduled for the same time — and often running late into the night or early morning hours, and coordinating agency presentations at committee hearings (which can often mean that the analysts are cutting and pasting documents at 11:30 on Sunday night.)

—Judy Curtis





# Feds consider transportation funding

## Increases, spending flexibility versus tightening budgets

by **Judy Curtis**  
Managing Editor

Congress convened to a chorus of caveats similar to those heard by state legislators who themselves started a new session in Austin January 14: curb or cut spending.

Not surprisingly, one of the areas in Washington under consideration for cuts is transportation — down from last year's annual allocation of \$31.8 billion to a possible \$27.7 billion for 2003. Preventing that potential cut in federal highway funding ranks high on the agenda of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), of which TxDOT is a member.

AASHTO seeks increased transportation funding to the tune of \$45 billion a year for highways and \$11 billion annually for transit improvements. The group also seeks maximum flexibility in spending those transportation dollars that return to the states to address security, safety, congestion relief, freight, preservation and capacity needs.

Other key federal transportation legislation centers around reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) before its Sept. 30, 2003 expiration date. TEA 21, enacted in 1998, represents the umbrella legislation under which highways, highway and motor carrier safety, transit, and transportation research receive their funding. Whether or how Congress acts on these major pieces of legislation will affect TxDOT's ability to respond to the transportation needs of Texas, including especially the development of the Trans Texas Corridor.

In addition, Congress will consider:

■ New costs incurred in response to federal concerns over non-attainment areas (Texas will gain 4 new non-attainment areas), international trade and NAFTA accommodation, and post September 11 security needs

■ The need for a more effective environmental review process to facilitate state and local efforts to provide needed transportation projects

■ Continuing and expanding such innovative financing techniques as the State Infrastructure Bank to provide greater options for meeting significant transportation needs

Funding is just one piece — albeit a huge one — of the overall federal agenda that TxDOT officials will be monitoring in the coming months in Washington. Issues brought forward in Washington by such groups as AASHTO mirror many of the topics that will define transportation in Texas over the next decade. One — donor state status — concerns the fact that Texas gets back only about 85 percent of the money that it sends to Washington each year. Some 20 donor states have united to form SHARE (States' Highway Alliance for Real Equity) to seek an increase to 95 percent. Such a hike would put nearly \$500 million more a year into the state's transportation coffers — increasing from \$2 to \$2.5 billion the amount of federal highway funds that return to Texas.

Another topic that will be on TxDOT's radar while Congress is in session involves increasing the amount of flexibility that state and local officials have within the various federal transportation program categories for addressing transportation needs. (Examples are bridges, surface transportation, transit).

"If you shift money out of some of these categories, it disqualifies you for money in other areas," said David Soileau, manager of Federal Legislative Affairs for TxDOT. "TxDOT will work with other states in Washington to encourage greater flexibility without restrictions on how we in Texas determine the best use of our available transportation funds." ☺

## Congressional watch: Steady, year-round pace

While Austin's State Legislative Affairs section faces an intense 140 day session every two years, the federal section — which operates out of both Austin and Washington, D. C. — deals with Congress year round, every year. Therein, says Joe Guzzo, TxDOT's Washington representative, lies the source of the difference in pace between LAO, federal and state.

"We are in more of a long distance race, where in Austin they sprint every two years with the Texas legislature," said Guzzo.

Nevertheless, this is a crucial year for the federal legislation that reauthorizes transportation funding, and Guzzo, LAO director Coby Chase, David Soileau manager of federal legislative affairs and Tonia Ramirez are clearly busy — as usual.

For example: Guzzo was meeting in Washington recently with highway officials and staffers for several U.S. senators. Back in Austin, Tonia Ramirez was preparing for a meeting with a Texas state senator who sought information on what reauthorization of TEA-21 will mean to Texas.

Meanwhile, Soileau was talking on the telephone to a Texas Congressman eager to learn how much money his district received last year in highway money — for a meeting the lawmaker scheduled with his constituents in a few days.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that the federal side of the LAO house faces is distilling the technical details of transportation issues into digestible bites for general consumption and understanding.

"Everything needs to be boiled down to a single page," said Soileau. "In transportation, that means dollars. The size of the federal transportation pie may be shrinking, not growing. That makes it even more difficult to bring a greater share of that pie home to Texas — and more important to get our state broader discretion in how those funds are used."

—Judy Curtis



# Don't take Capitol for granite — statehouse lore

by Mike Cox  
Editor

Every Texan — let's hope — and most visitors know the Capitol is that big pink building at the head of Congress Avenue in downtown Austin.

And, assuming you were awake during seventh grade Texas history class, you know that the then cash-poor, land-rich state traded three million acres of public land in the Texas Panhandle (valued at 50 cents per acre) to a Chicago-based syndicate to get the Capitol built.

You probably also know that plans for a new statehouse were speeded up after Nov. 9, 1881, when the structure usually referred to as the "Old Stone Capitol" was gutted by fire.

Finally, just about everyone has heard the Texas brag that our Capitol is seven feet taller than that other domed government building in Washington, D.C. (The national Capitol does have more square footage, however.)

Here then, are some things you may not know about Texas' largest construction project of the 19th century, the building where the 78th Legislature is currently in session:

■ The Capitol was TxDOT's first home. When the Legislature left after passing the bill creating a highway department in 1917, the infant agency set up shop in the House chamber until office space became available.

■ Original specifications called for the Capitol to be constructed with limestone quarried in Travis County. But the stone, though plentiful and close at hand, contained iron pyrites. A statehouse built with the same would look fine at first, but after a while, streaks of rust would ruin its white exterior. The contractor proposed a solution: Limestone, sans pyrite, from Indiana.

Gov. John Ireland, however, wanted Texas stone. When Burnet County rancher G. W. Lacy heard about the problem, he offered to donate as much granite off his place as the contractor needed. All that igneous rock on his property took up real estate he could be using to graze cattle. Ireland took the deal.

■ The blueprints also called for a brick dome, five feet

thick at its base. That worried Land Commissioner W.C. Walsh, who did a little figuring: he calculated the bricks would weigh too much and eventually bring the dome crashing down. New Gov. Sul Ross agreed, leaked the story to the press, and the dome ended up being constructed of metalwork, not bricks.

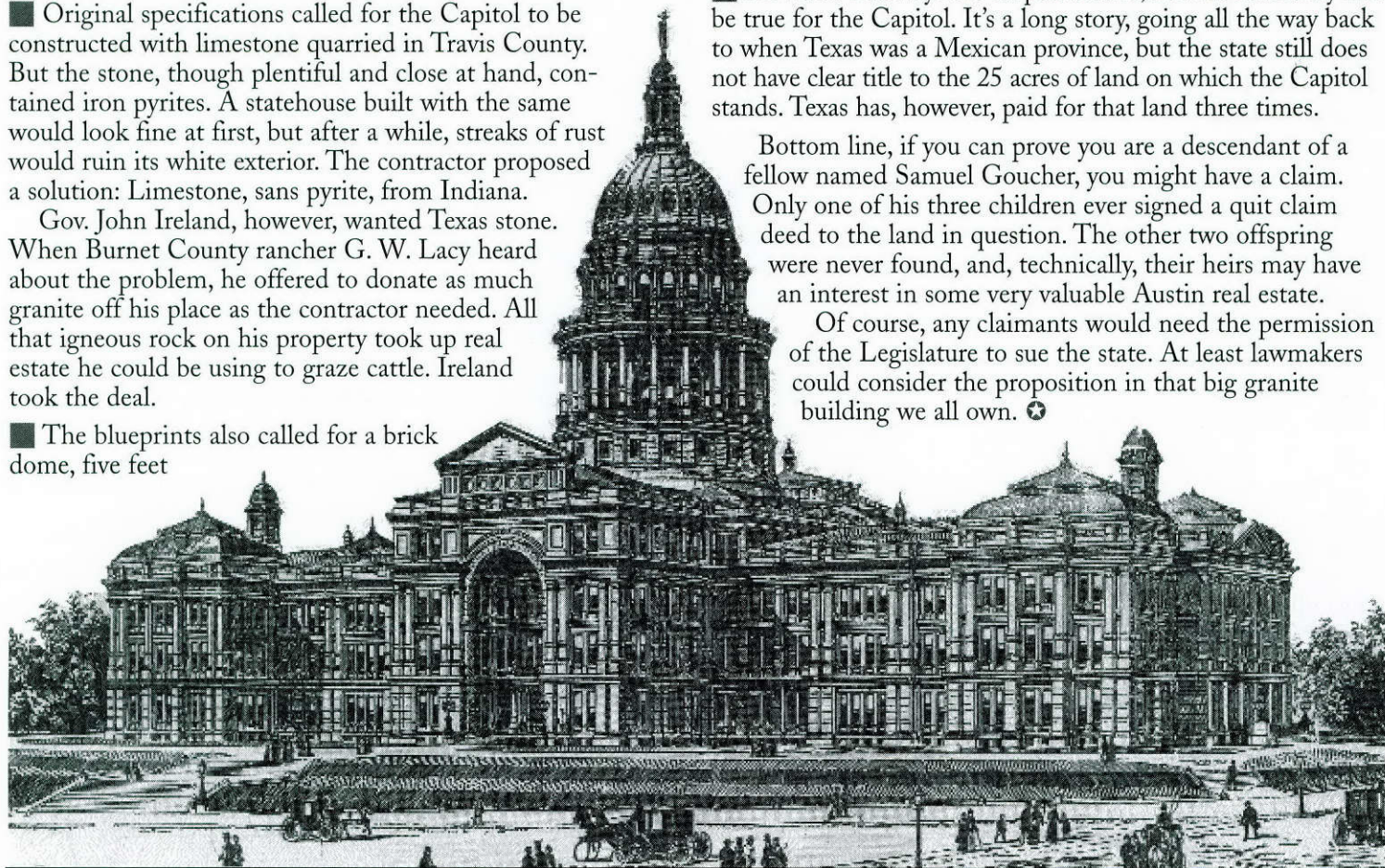
■ Once the dome was up, what should be placed on top of it came up for discussion. Tongue-in-jowl, someone suggested a pig should grace the magnificent new structure, not Lady Justice. The porcine proposition traced to an incident during the days of the Republic of Texas, when an irate Austin innkeeper killed a hog belonging to the French charges d'affaires. The resulting huff and puff blew Texas' prospect of a \$5 million loan from France. One historian later concluded the strings attached to the note would have given the European power a North American toehold that might have ended in Texas being a French colony. But Lady Justice got the gig.

■ When the Capitol was renovated a decade ago, architects discovered something didn't add up — its measurements. Nothing in the 18-acre building is totally plumb. Some column spacing is off as much as six inches. While the building's dimensions may be complicated, the reason is simple enough: 1880s craftsmen measured by hand.

■ All Texas roadways are on public land, but the same may not be true for the Capitol. It's a long story, going all the way back to when Texas was a Mexican province, but the state still does not have clear title to the 25 acres of land on which the Capitol stands. Texas has, however, paid for that land three times.

Bottom line, if you can prove you are a descendant of a fellow named Samuel Goucher, you might have a claim. Only one of his three children ever signed a quit claim deed to the land in question. The other two offspring were never found, and, technically, their heirs may have an interest in some very valuable Austin real estate.

Of course, any claimants would need the permission of the Legislature to sue the state. At least lawmakers could consider the proposition in that big granite building we all own. ★





# Planning a conference?

## It can be an intimidating task.

### It's easy to be overwhelmed by all the details.

**Breaking the tasks into manageable steps can help you stay calm and organized throughout the process.**

**by Darah Waldrip**

Travel Division

**Below are some general tips for conference planners.**

■ **Establish your goals.** Before planning your event, you'll need to answer some basic questions.

- Who will attend?
- What are the participants' interests?
- How can your conference benefit your participants?
- What is your theme or focus for the conference?

■ **Assign tasks and committees.** Even if you have a lot of time set aside to plan your conference, you'll need the help and expertise of others. Whether you select your committee members or they are assigned to you, everyone should have a clear understanding of the project goals and their duties. Develop a timeline of tasks and establish regular meeting dates from the outset.

At this point, you should set up a system for keeping track of all notes and other paperwork that will be generated throughout the planning process. For paper files, a large binder with category tabs works well. You'll also need to set up files on your computer to organize your electronic documents, and you should create an e-mail file for your conference correspondence.

■ **Set the date and location.**

Determining a suitable date for your conference can be tricky. The best

advice is to start planning early — at least a year in advance for a large conference. You'll need to avoid other major meetings that might involve your attendees, as well as state holidays. After you've set your preferred meeting date, select a few alternate dates.

This is also the time to pick your meeting site. Your budget and conference size will determine many of the choices available to you. If you are able to host the conference on-site at your own facility, reserve your meeting space as far in advance as possible. If your conference will take place off-site, you will need to find a location with appropriate meeting space, ample parking and adequate hotel rooms for out-of-town attendees.

■ **Obtain bids and finalize contracts.** When selecting an off-site location, you should familiarize yourself with the bid process. In most cases, the Texas Building and Procurement Commission will assist you.

After you submit these forms, the TBPC staff will take care of the bidding process and return the results for your selection. You will probably need

to make several site visits to help you make a final decision.

Once you choose your meeting site and contact the selected property, you will receive contracts stipulating the conditions and expectations for both parties. Review all contracts carefully before signing them, and negotiate conditions that are unacceptable. Keep copies of all documents and forward copies to the TBPC.

Stay in touch with your property representative throughout the planning process, and make site visits as necessary. Don't hesitate to ask questions, and don't assume anything. It is a good idea to keep a written record of conversations and follow up phone calls and meetings with e-mails.

Next issue: Part 2 — registration and publicity.

*Editor's note: Darah Waldrip was one of many committee members who planned the annual meeting of the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials hosted by TxDOT last July in San Antonio. This is the first of three articles detailing ideas for planning effective conferences.*

■ Helpful information may be found at:  
<http://www.gsc.state.tx.us/travel/grpmtgplan.html>.

■ You may download requisition forms at:  
<http://www.gsc.state.tx.us/travel/grpmtgforms.html>.



**To: TxDOT, Amarillo District**  
**From: Bob Stubbs, McLean, TX**

I was on my way home from Amarillo to Alanreed. A TxDOT truck (driven by John Britten) was pulled off the highway (Interstate 40) between Groom and Alanreed. I was in the right lane going east. A metal loading ramp (I assume it fell off an 18-wheeler) was on the highway. A car was in front of me and swerved to miss it. I could not avoid hitting the metal ramp. When I hit the ramp, it caused a blowout on my right front tire. Shook up, I managed to pull off the highway.

Mr. Britten removed the hazard. Then he drove to where I had pulled off the highway. He stopped to see if I was OK. He told me he was pulled off the highway to remove the ramp when he saw what had happened to me. Mr. Britten wanted to make sure I was OK. Then he asked me if he could help. He did not hesitate to change the tire on my pickup to help me get back on the road home.

It is reassuring to meet a person with the highway department with such an exceptional attitude. He was very cheerful and kind in helping a person in need in the middle of nowhere.

*(Editor's note: John Britten is a contract inspector with the Amarillo District.)*

**To: TxDOT, Houston District**  
**From: Kurt E. Fortenbach, Friendswood, TX**

Thank you so much for your prompt reply and such a favorable response to my letter. It restores my faith that not all government offices are simple tax-guzzling bureaucracies. Yours is obviously one that serves the people and cares about the "little guy." Throughout this process of inquiry and reply (regarding the need for protected turn lanes), I have been directed to the correct contact people to state my concern. Janelle Gbur notified Stuart Corder, who wrote that the issue would be looked into. You have shown the greatest attributes of professionalism and pride in the service you offer the driving public. My thanks to you all. At no time did I feel I was being put off or pushed to the back of someone's "to do" list. I appreciate that the intersection my entire family uses each day in Friendswood will be safer due to the efforts of your staff and department.

*(Editor's note: This letter was sent to Doug Vanover, Houston District signals supervisor. Janelle Gbur is a public information officer in the Houston District. Stuart Corder is a traffic-engineering supervisor in the Houston District.)*

**To: TxDOT, Lubbock District**  
**From: Joyce Russell, Portales, NM**

I'm writing to let you know how much I appreciate your employees.

We were entering Post and had a blowout at the stop light where they were working. They were right there to help us. You can only imagine how three senior ladies (I being 95) felt. It was such a blessing to see them. They were so nice and polite.

You are truly blessed to have such nice men working for you. I didn't get the two men's names, but please let them know how much I appreciated their help.

*(Editor's note: Pete Aguilar and Larry Valdez are maintenance technicians at Post in Garza County, Lubbock District.)*

**To: TxDOT**  
**From: Sandy, Fort Worth, TX**

I wanted to let you know how impressed I was when traveling on Highway 287 between Quanah and Chillicothe in early December. The safety rest area was great. The play area was very smart and I appreciated the well-lit area as well as the restrooms. The gentleman who was working that night was very nice and helpful. Traveling with me were my spouse, two children, and two dogs. I felt very safe taking my daughter to the restroom by myself. Job well done!

*(Editor's note: This e-mail was received at the Don't Mess with Texas website. The author did not provide her last name.)*





## Service Awards

### Abilene District

**30 years**  
Guadalupe R. Garcia  
Dewey L. Nichols  
**25 years**  
Lloyd R. Walker  
**10 years**  
Ronnie W. Balliew  
**5 years**  
Karen J. Holland  
Susan I. Lassiter  
Vallerie K. Wende

### Amarillo District

**35 years**  
Larry G. Miller  
**20 years**  
David B. Stribling Jr.  
**15 years**  
Christian G. Chambers  
Frankie E. Watts  
**10 years**  
Danny E. Walker  
**5 years**  
Mark J. Roberson

### Atlanta District

**30 years**  
Donald M. Hill  
**20 years**  
Joe D. Gage  
**15 years**  
David K. Neshyba  
Fred E. Pattison  
Charles W. Russell  
**5 years**  
Tony C. Overhuitz

### Austin District

**25 years**  
Terry J. Brusse!  
Carlos H. Strand  
**15 years**  
Harold G. Bunch  
Gary W. Walthall  
**5 years**  
Hugh M. Coston Jr.

### Baumont District

**15 years**  
Lori J. Morgan  
**10 years**  
Damon L. Jones  
**5 years**  
Jerry D. Bevil  
Barbara G. Davis  
Anita D. Dickens  
Patrick K. Letulle

### Brownwood District

**25 years**  
Donnie B. Gifford  
**15 years**  
Larry G. Smith  
**5 years**  
Eric L. Lykins

### Bryan District

**30 years**  
James D. Richter  
Robert Vanvolkenburg  
**10 years**  
Jonathan R. Dubcak

### Childress District

**25 years**  
Emmit E. Skelton  
**20 years**  
Gary J. Mizer  
**10 years**  
Randy E. Martin  
**5 years**  
Marty J. Durham  
Charles B. Steed

### Corpus Christi District

**20 years**  
Ricky L. Littleton  
**10 years**  
Nolan W. Holik

### Dallas District

**40 years**  
Carroll W. Collier  
**35 years**  
Fred T. Callaway  
**20 years**  
Douglas R. Brock  
Mark H. Wiley  
**15 years**  
Richard J. Gehring  
Mark S. Harlan  
**10 years**  
William S. Christian  
Sunil N. Patel  
**5 years**  
Tony Carrillo  
Charles W. Hedrick Jr.  
Francis G. Matthews  
Joseph C. McBee  
Roger J. Reynolds  
Frances J. Sargeant

### El Paso District

**25 years**  
Jose L. Almanza  
**20 years**  
David W. Head  
**10 years**  
Jack B. Applegate  
Leticia Delira  
Rodolfo G. Sanchez

### Houston District

**20 years**  
Sandra K. Beard  
David R. Elster  
Ferdinand A. Hildebrand  
Shivinderp S. Randhawa  
Thomas W. Zahn  
**15 years**  
Gabriel E. Flores  
Deborah A. Jones  
Gary D. Lyke  
John P. Vogel  
**10 years**  
Glen E. Cardiff  
Rudy R. Damian  
Philip W. Eakin  
Arvie L. Marler  
David D. Nitsch  
Gerald L. Roberson

### Houston District (continued)

**5 years**  
Nghia H. Doan  
Wilbur L. Hensley  
William A. Lockett  
Dawn M. McGee

### Laredo District

**5 years**  
Juan Galvan  
Olivia Garza Gongora  
Cynthia D. Sanchez

### Lubbock District

**35 years**  
Johnnie W. Howard  
**30 years**  
David A. Parker  
**25 years**  
Doyle W. Driver  
Fidencio Moreno  
**20 years**  
Rickey D. Hill  
**10 years**  
Tommy J. Alexander  
James R. Edwards  
Ricky C. Lawrence  
**5 years**  
Ron J. Wolfers

### Lufkin District

**10 years**  
Mark E. Payne  
Carolyn B. Wilson  
**5 years**  
Beverly J. Hanks  
Stephen D. Stovall

### Odessa District

**20 years**  
Elpidio S. Baeza  
Brenda K. Pierce  
**10 years**  
Salvador R. Garza, Jr.  
Raul M. Tijerina  
**5 years**  
Sue Byrne

### Paris District

**25 years**  
Gary L. Baird  
Gerald E. Jackson  
Odeas J. McPeak  
**10 years**  
Jeff F. Roberts  
**5 years**  
Jimmy E. Herrera  
Pamela G. Stout

### Pharr District

**25 years**  
John L. Solis III  
**15 years**  
Jody R. Ellington  
**10 years**  
Elroy X. Cavazos  
Richard Zamora  
**5 years**  
Linda M. Ost

### San Angelo District

**35 years**  
Jose H. Rendon  
**5 years**  
Gregory A. Baldwin  
Tomas Briones Jr.  
Dale S. Hughes  
Jesus I. Ortegon  
Patsy Rainwater-Maddux

### San Antonio District

**30 years**  
Roger D. Armstrong  
Rodney R. Roberts  
**25 years**  
David R. Balli  
**20 years**  
Scott L. Hunt  
**15 years**  
William L. Capeheart  
David A. Mata  
David S. Sauer  
Sharon S. Woodall  
**5 years**  
Daryl M. Mahula  
Lisa L. Wilson

### Tyler District

**20 years**  
Laurence A. Crow  
Larry G. White  
Bobby J. Williams  
**15 years**  
Penny H. Tiner  
**5 years**  
Dwayne C. Boyd  
Cindy H. Millichamp  
David S. Thompson

### Waco District

**20 years**  
Billy J. Watson  
**10 years**  
Paul F. Cepak  
David D. Deleon  
Anton A. Lopour Jr.  
**5 years**  
Kenneth R. Mynarcik  
David C. Pollard

### Wichita Falls District

**10 years**  
Rodolfo Leal Jr.  
**5 years**  
Donald D. Lucas  
Ricky D. Shook

### Yoakum District

**30 years**  
Robert J. Mozisek  
**25 years**  
Reinhold W. Gerbert  
**20 years**  
Donald L. Jirkovsky  
**15 years**  
Martin D. Ryman  
**10 years**  
Tana B. Brewer  
Robert J. Pustka  
**5 years**  
William E. Richter  
Pedro P. Rocha

### Bridge Division

**40 years**  
Ralph K. Banks  
**20 years**  
Daniel Ortegon  
**5 years**  
Jaime Aparicio

### Construction Division

**25 years**  
William E. Kohutek Jr.  
**20 years**  
Byron K. Kneifel  
**15 years**  
Gervase J. Szalwinski Jr.  
Mary Wells  
**10 years**  
Suzanne R. Blaschke  
David Gallegos  
Thomas D. Thornton

### General Services Division

**25 years**  
Sharon R. McCallum  
**10 years**  
Mark A. Morales  
**5 years**  
Sherman E. Baker

### Human Resources Division

**5 years**  
La Tonja M. Jackson

### Information Systems Division

**35 years**  
Roy L. Mills Jr.  
**25 years**  
Frank R. Bushong  
**20 years**  
Keith R. Layton

### Maintenance Division

**5 years**  
William E. Von Rosenberg

### Motor Carrier Division

**5 years**  
Claudette M. Otis

### Right of Way Division

**15 years**  
Jesse R. Cooper

### Vehicle Titles and Registration Division

**30 years**  
Kenneth W. Carey  
Shirley H. Pavolich  
**20 years**  
Linda D. Kirksey  
**15 years**  
Tammy F. Briggs  
Marva P. Gillespie  
Michael A. Van Straten  
**10 years**  
Roger A. Polson  
Patricia A. Smethers  
Larry D. Vaughn  
**5 years**  
Adriana N. Delgado





**JUNE 2002****Bridge Division**

Clyde R. Collier  
Information Systems Analyst  
21 Years

**NOVEMBER 2002****Corpus Christi District**

Eddie G. Eubanks  
Engineering Specialist  
33 Years

**San Antonio District**

Elaine B. England  
Administration Technician  
2 Years

**Waco District**

John H. Martindale  
Maintenance Support  
Technician  
32 Years

**Yoakum District**

Victor E. Chumchal  
Engineer Technician  
34 Years

Kenneth C. Hale  
Transportation Maintenance  
Specialist  
27 Years

**DECEMBER 2002****Amarillo District**

Ron Matthews  
Engineering Technician  
31 Years

James Robert Garis  
Engineering Technician  
21 Years

**Beaumont District**

Tommie L. Segrest  
Engineering Technician  
15 Years

**Brownwood District**

Duwain Hendley  
Sign Technician  
34 Years

**Bryan District**

Leo E. Maresh  
Engineering Technician  
33 Years

**Childress District**

Larry N. Carrick  
Engineering Technician  
34 Years

Gene P. Whitener  
Maintenance Supervisor  
29 Years

Clyde M. Martin  
Transportation Maintenance  
Specialist  
25 Years

**Dallas District**

Elijah L. Baptist  
Engineering Technician  
34 Years

Benny G. Sevier  
Engineering Technician  
23 Years

Aileen S. Brown  
Administrative Technician  
17 Years

**El Paso District**

Teodoro Arellano  
Engineering Technician  
33 Years

**Fort Worth District**

James E. Perkins  
Engineering Technician  
37 Years

Richard Alford  
Engineering Technician  
34 Years

Delbert L. Latham  
Engineering Aide  
22 Years

**Houston District**

Elizabeth R. Sechelski  
Program Specialist  
41 Years

Beatrice P. Ott  
Accountant  
36 Years

Hardy L. Christmas  
Engineering Technician  
31 Years

**Lufkin District**

Billy E. Roberts  
Engineering Specialist  
36 Years

**San Antonio District**

Guadalupe Rodriguez  
Transportation Maintenance  
Specialist  
38 Years

Watkins A. Rohmer, Jr.  
Engineering Specialist  
30 Years

Bobby J. Pantermuehl  
Engineering Technician  
29 Years

Lazaro J. Placencia  
Engineering Technician  
22 Years

**Waco District**

Julius W. Habel  
Maintenance Section  
Assistant  
36 Years

**Yoakum District**

James L. Skrovan  
Engineering Technician  
30 Years

**General Services Division**

Uvaldo Cantu  
Printing Services Technician  
19 Years

**Information Systems Division**

Patrick L. Richardson  
System Analyst  
17 Years

**Vehicle Titles and Registration Division**

Deborah H. Smith  
Administrative Technician  
30 Years

## Shuttle: TxDOT helps

Continued from Page 2

As telephones in local law enforcement agencies began ringing that Saturday morning, the gravity of the situation in Texas became apparent.

By day's end, numerous TxDOT employees had joined the response and recovery effort. The following morning, 13 TxDOT employees were involved with recovery efforts in Nacogdoches County, with additional employees in many of the other 39 Texas counties where shuttle debris reportedly landed.

The day after the disaster, two district PIOs, Lufkin's Kathi White and Marc Shepherd from Beaumont, found a piece of shuttle wreckage in a cemetery near Hemphill in Shelby County. The largest concentration of debris, however, was in Nacogdoches, San Augustine and Sabine counties.

Throughout the debris recovery period, TxDOT maintenance workers

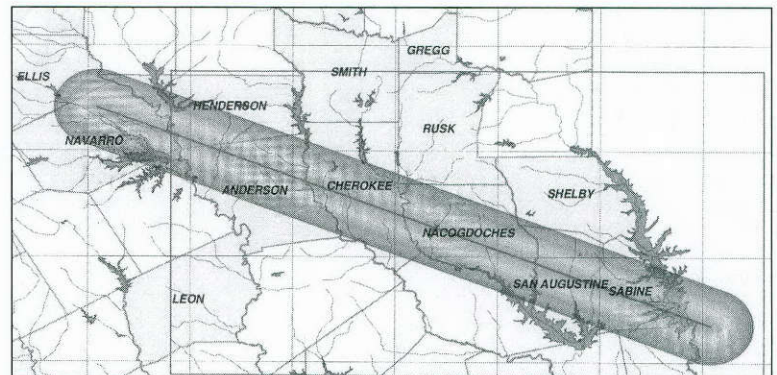
— pulling 12-hour shifts — helped lead recovery crews not familiar with local areas to debris sites. In addition, TxDOT employees assisted in providing fuel for DPS troopers and other state emergency personnel. A third TxDOT role was providing traffic control assistance in areas where debris fell.

From Austin, two department public information officers traveled to Nacogdoches Saturday to assist TxDOT employees and other agencies in dealing with the scores of news media that soon converged on East Texas.

As of Feb. 6, TxDOT had 22 employees involved in recovery efforts,

from maintenance workers to district and Austin public information officers. In terms of hardware, the department was furnishing four global positioning units and three fuel trailers.

More than 700 state employees and 800 soldiers of the Texas Army National Guard took part in the recovery operation at its peak. Hundreds of city, county and federal employees also were involved. ★



**A map prepared by the Forest Resources Institute and HUES GIS Lab of Stephen F. Austin State University shows the primary areas where shuttle parts have been located.**



# backtracks

## Calendar



### 2003

#### FEBRUARY

27 Commission Meeting, Austin

#### MARCH

6-7 2003 Construction Conference, Waco, CST

19-21 Texas Aviation Conference, Austin, AVN

27 Commission Meeting, Austin

31 Cesar Chavez Day (optional holiday)

#### APRIL

3 Safety Rest Area Grand Opening, I-40 mm129, TRV

18 Good Friday (optional holiday)

21 San Jacinto Day (optional holiday)

23-24 Statewide Maintenance Conference, Waco, MNT

24 Commission Meeting, Austin

#### MAY

6-7 Bid Letting, Austin, CST

26 Memorial Day (holiday)

27-30 Transportation Planning Conference, Irving, TPP

29 Commission Meeting, Austin

#### JUNE

2-6 Audit Conference, Austin, AUD

3-4 Bid Letting, Austin, CST

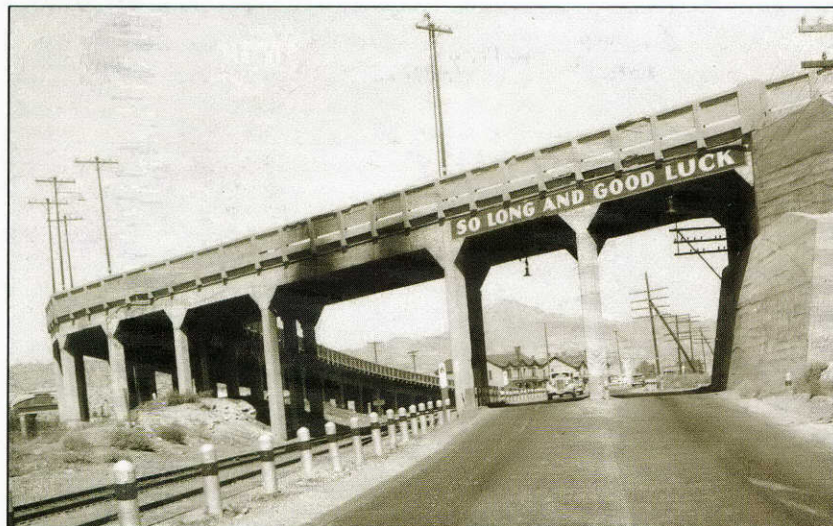
9-12 Research Management Committee Meeting, San Antonio, RTI

19 Emancipation Day (holiday, minimum staffing)

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



Texas Department of Transportation



**TxDOT employee Steven Tschatschula of Victoria, and his father, TxDOT 1998 retiree Owen Tschatschula, identified the last backtracks photo as a stretch of State Highway 35 between Port Lavaca and Tivoli. According to the Tschatschulas, the scene hasn't changed much over the years except for more trees on the right side of the roadway.**

**If you know where this photo was taken please call Quevarra Moten at (512) 463-6397 or e-mail [qmoten@dot.state.tx.us](mailto:qmoten@dot.state.tx.us). One clue: that's a mountain in the background.**



125 E. 11th  
Austin, Texas 78701

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