



ONE DOT ONE TEAM

In the wake of constant wear and tear on roads in energy-producing counties, TxDOT crews from across the state are being deployed to support these communities and keep roads safe.

Message from the Executive Director

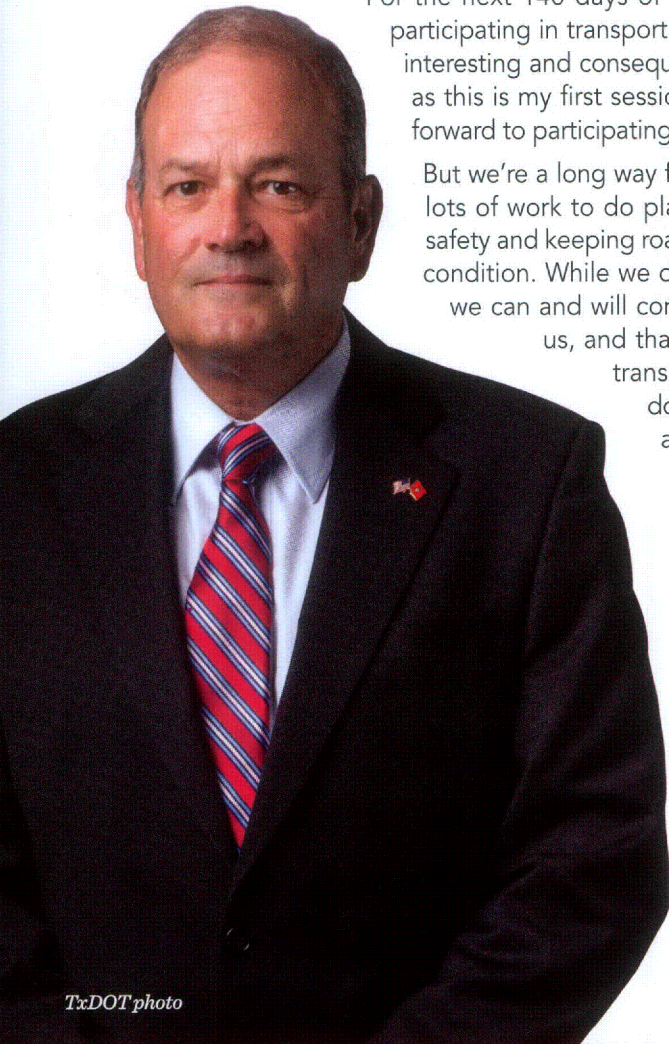
Happy New Year! I hope that you and your family had a happy and safe holidays and new year. With the holidays behind us, I'd like to take a look at the legislative session about to commence.

In just a few days, the 84th legislative session will begin in Austin, and for the next few months, TxDOT's leadership will be spending a lot of time at the Capitol, testifying at committee hearings and responding to questions about our operations. That's standard procedure when the Legislature is in town, but this time, we're going into the session following the passage of Proposition 1, which passed by nearly 80 percent of the vote last November. It will provide much-needed funding for our roads and bridges. Many transportation leaders around the state see the overwhelming vote in favor of Proposition 1 as a message from Texans to the legislature that investing in transportation should be a priority.

We've already laid much of the groundwork for transportation funding discussions. In our 2016-2017 Legislative Appropriations Request, we asked for more than \$5 billion annually for roads and bridges to address congestion and connectivity needs, maintain existing roads and bridges and address roads impacted by energy production. We've also listened to our stakeholders and included appropriation requests for marine highways, rail and emerging technologies. Texas has a vibrant and vast transportation system, and we must make sure that it serves our state's thriving economy and preserves and enhances the quality of life for all Texans, now and into the future.

For the next 140 days of the session, we'll be watching and participating in transportation policy discussions. They will be interesting and consequential to the future of our state. And as this is my first session as executive director, I'm looking forward to participating in the process.

But we're a long way from the final gavel, and we still have lots of work to do planning projects, maintaining worker safety and keeping roads and bridges in the safest and best condition. While we don't know how the session will end, we can and will continue the job that Texans expect of us, and that is to provide them with a first-rate transportation system. Thanks for all you do to make that possible, and here's to a great year! 🇺🇸



TxDOT photo

Semper Fi,

J. F. Weber
Executive Director



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on the cover

The energy boom has had a tremendous impact on Texas roads. The new One DOT initiative is bringing TxDOT teams from around the state to alleviate and support crews in areas where the workload has increased. Featured on the cover, San Antonio District's Transportation Maintenance Equipment Operator Brian Jasik, and above, General Transportation Technician Johnny Hernandez process and roll cement to fill one of several patches on SH 16, north of Jourdanon.

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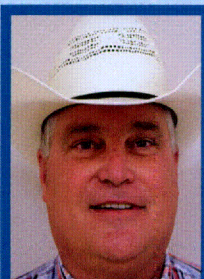
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TxDOT Family Members Chime In

What is your favorite thing to eat when it gets cold outside?



TxDOT photo

Rodney Karusek
Design Technician
Waco District

Chili – a friend's special recipe of beef and pork mixed with bell peppers, red onions, lima beans and four cans of beer... simmered all day. Wow!



TxDOT photo

Andrea Dailey
Hunt County Maintenance Office Manager
Paris District

I really enjoy brisket tacos when it's cold outside. The spice is warming and I love to chase it with a sweet tea and sopapillas.



TxDOT photo

Wanda Ealey
Traffic Safety Specialist
Tyler District

It may sound strange, but I love eating ice cream when it's cold outside. Not just any ice cream – it has to be Blue Bell Homemade Vanilla.

5 THINGS


FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

1 On Nov. 4, Texas voters passed Proposition 1, a constitutional amendment that requires the state to split oil and gas revenue between the Rainy Day Fund and State Highway Fund. In December, a Senate-House joint committee set a minimum balance of \$7 billion for the Rainy Day Fund, ensuring \$1.74 billion will be transferred into the highway fund this year.

2 David McMillan is the new director of the Human Resources Division. McMillan previously worked in a consultant role for two multi-state companies — STL Medical Supplies and D&S Community Services — where he provided business development and human resource leadership.

3 The Occupational Safety Division has expanded its computer-based defensive driving training, now making it available to TxDOT family members. The National Safety Council provides the training materials. To enroll and participate in the training, visit <http://www.safetyserve.com/txdot/>. For questions or more information, please contact Michelle Eastbrook of the OCC Division at (512) 416-3306.

4 Congratulations to the winners of the 2014 Statewide Truck Rodeo Driveoff held last November in Austin. First place champion is Justin Kalisek of the Bryan District's Robertson Maintenance Office. Runner-up is Jonathan Phillips of the San Angelo District's Leakey Maintenance Office.

5 At the November Texas Transportation Commission meeting, Commissioner Jeff Moseley presented state Rep. Garnet Coleman of Houston an award recognizing his legislative vision that led to the establishment of TxDOT's Green Ribbon Landscape Improvement Program. The program helps mitigate the effects of air pollution by planting indigenous trees and plants on the state highway system. 

SHARING WITH THE SUNSHINE STATE

TxDOT photo




TxDOT and Florida DOT officials conduct their first idea exchange in Tallahassee, Florida.

Last September, TxDOT and the Florida Department of Transportation began a state-to-state peer idea exchange, with the first meeting held in Tallahassee. Discussion topics included project prioritization processes, finance techniques such as public-private partnerships and tolling, performance measurement, freight planning, strategic planning and more. Both Texas and Florida have a large, diverse transportation program and dedicated staff. Participants said the exchange was a valuable, ongoing process that should lead to improvements for both states.

"There is tremendous value in collaborating with our peers. I believe that TxDOT staff gained a lot from the discussions with their counterparts with the Florida DOT, and we appreciate their hospitality in hosting us," said TxDOT Director of Planning Marc Williams, one of the exchange participants.

Six TxDOT leaders, including Williams, Transportation Programming and Planning Division Deputy Director Jack Foster, Strategic Projects Division Director Ed Pensock, Environmental Affairs Division Director Carlos Swonke, Freight Systems Branch Manager Caroline Mays and Innovative Finance/Debt Management Office Director Ben Asher traveled to Tallahassee for the first exchange.

Florida DOT officials who participated included Secretary Ananth Prasad, Assistant Secretary for Engineering and Operations Brian Blanchard, Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration Brian Peters and more than 20 other staff members. A team from the Florida DOT will travel to Texas in the near future to continue the exchange of ideas. 

GIVING BACK *to Texans*

Texas Department of Transportation Pharr District employees cleaned floors, painted doors, stained cabinets and removed debris to help families get one step closer to homeownership.

Eleven weekend warriors volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in San Juan in September.

"I'm very happy. There are so many people helping," said Angela Lopez, 33, the future owner of the house being worked on that morning.

Angela lost her left hand in an accident a few years ago but her condition was no hindrance when it came to working on her future home. "I am excited to see my home come together bit by bit," she said.

Heriberto Orta, contractor for Habitat for Humanity, said a home opens the doors to improved health and better performance in school for children.


"Many of these people live in the garages of family members and now they have an opportunity to transform their lives," he said.

But building homes is not the only way TxDOT employees are helping others. For over 14 years, TxDOT has participated in the State Employee Charitable Campaign sponsored by the United Way. Employees can choose to donate monthly via their paychecks or with a one-time cash or check donation. Each year, TxDOT hosts a charitable campaign fair, allowing employees to learn more about local charities. This year, over 20 charities packed the auditorium at the Riverside Campus in Austin, asking for TxDOT's support.

"Each fall we get the opportunity to learn about the charities in the SECC and choose which ones we want to help," said Angela Carrizales, TxDOT SECC state coordinator. "It's a great way to get involved and give back to our community."

While official amounts are not yet in, TxDOT has surpassed its donation total from the past five years, raising more than \$330,000 statewide so far.

In addition to making donations, many districts, divisions and offices sponsored bake sales, talent shows and silent auctions to raise money for their favorite charities.

"We owe a huge thanks to our SECC coordinators who worked tirelessly to make this a successful campaign. Each year, our employees show how incredibly giving they are. TxDOT's generosity has really shined this year," Carrizales said. 



Pharr District Transportation Engineer Supervisor Norma Garza (left) and Contract Specialist Yvonne Hernandez stain cabinet doors for a Habitat for Humanity house.



From left to right, Pharr District's Environmental Specialist Jorge Espinoza, Transportation Specialist Jesus Martinez, District Engineer Toribio Garza, Public Information Officer Octavio Saenz and Transportation Engineer Margil Maldonado take a break after spending an hour picking up heavy debris at a Habitat for Humanity site.


TOLL OPS DECORATION COMPETITION



TxDOT photo

This year, the winner of the group contest was made up of a team from Toll Operations and employees from companies co-located with the division. From left to right, Toll Operations Specialist Jacob Willis, Toll Operations Specialist Dena Rush and fellow building team participants show off their live nativity scene.

The Toll Operations Division in Austin hosted its first annual decoration competition to celebrate the holiday season. Employees were able to enter into three different contest categories: door, office/cubicle or group. Even though it was a competition, the joy of the season brought participants together to work as a team.

A special thanks to the judges: Media Relations Section Director Veronica Beyer, Social Media Coordinator Becky Ozuna and Director of Operations Tim Reilly with the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority. 

AROUND THE STATE


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

Border West Expressway Groundbreaking State, city and local officials held a groundbreaking on Nov. 12 for the new \$640 million Border West Expressway project in west El Paso. Border West Expressway, formerly called the Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension, is the final piece of Loop 375 needed to complete the loop around the city.

The expressway will stretch 7.4 miles beginning at Racetrack Drive in west El Paso to the existing César Chávez Border Highway at U.S. 54, and relieve traffic congestion on El Paso's main highway, I-10.

"This is a great day for El Paso," said Ted Houghton, chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission. "This has been a long time coming."

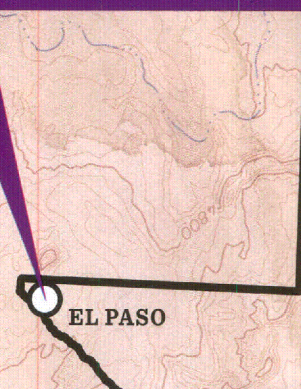
Upon completion, the highway will have a total of four lanes, two in each direction. The toll lanes will be about 5.6 miles long, beginning at Racetrack Drive and ending near Santa Fe Street.

Construction will begin in the spring and is expected to be completed in fall 2017. 

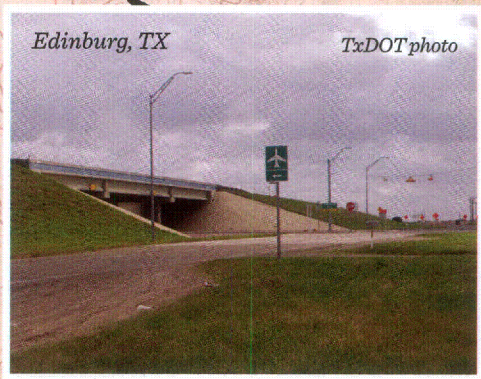


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From left to right, Chief Executive Officer Jon Abrams of J.D. Abrams, El Paso County Judge Veronica Escobar, El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser, Texas Transportation Commission Chairman Ted Houghton, Chief Planning and Project Officer Russell Zapalac, El Paso District Engineer Bob Bielek and Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority Chair Scott McLaughlin participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Border West Expressway project that will complete Loop 375.



EL PASO




Edinburg, TX

TxDOT photo

Two Safety Projects Enhance the Pharr District

In October, a 1.37-mile safety enhancement project was completed on U.S. 281 in Rachal, boosting safety at the intersection of FM 755 and I-69. The project widened the freeway facility and included the addition of drainage structures, traffic signals and pavement markings. The project also added main lanes, frontage roads and an overpass.

Another safety project nearing completion is the reconstruction of main lanes along 2.37 miles of U.S. 281 from FM 162 to FM 490. The upgrade consists of the reconstruction of the main lanes and the addition of frontage roads to increase vehicle capacity. The project also includes the construction of two bridges, the addition of a cable barrier system and improvement of signing and pavement markings. 



Rachal, TX

TxDOT photo




Joined by local officials and residents, U.S. Rep. John Carter cuts a ribbon to celebrate the opening of Segment 1 of SH 195 in Florence.

SH 195 Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony U.S. Rep. John Carter and Williamson County officials joined TxDOT as they hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Oct. 28 to mark the opening of two segments of SH 195.

The first 7.6-miles of the \$39.2 million project widened a two-lane road into a four-lane divided highway with median and shoulders, from near the Bell County line to about three miles south of SH 138 in Florence. The second 5-mile \$18.8 million segment extends from Ronald Reagan Boulevard to I-35.


SH 195 is used heavily by soldiers from Fort Hood in Killeen and is a vital link between I-35 and the nation's largest Army installation. Completion of these two segments puts TxDOT one step closer to widening more than 17 miles of roadway along this busy corridor.

Work on the final segment of SH 195 is to be completed in spring 2016. 

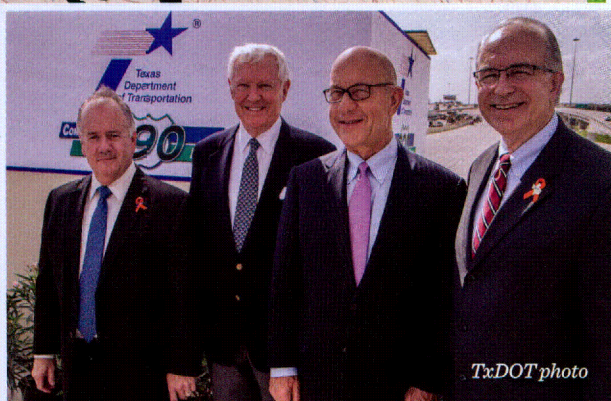
U.S. 290 Opens Ahead of Schedule

On Oct. 10, a ribbon-cutting took place for the newly built U.S. 290/I-610 North Loop connector ramps to the I-10/Katy Freeway in the Houston District. With 250,000 vehicles a day traveling through the interchange, the new connector improves mobility by providing direct access to I-10 east- and westbound without having to enter the southbound mainlane traffic on the I-610 West Loop.

The \$151 million project began in July 2011 and was completed by Williams Brothers Construction Co. four months ahead of schedule.

Texas Transportation Commissioner Jeff Moseley was joined by former Texas Transportation Commissioner Ned Holmes, state Sen. John Whitmire, state Reps. Dwayne Bohac, Allen Fletcher and Bill Callegari, city of Houston Council Member Brenda Stardig, Houston District Engineer Mike Alford, TxDOT staff and members of the consulting and contracting community to celebrate the opening of the new connectors. 

Houston District Engineer Mike Alford, former Texas Transportation Commissioner Ned Holmes, Sen. John Whitmire and Texas Transportation Commissioner Jeff Moseley celebrate the newly built U.S. 290/I-610 North Loop connector ramps in Houston.



TxDOT photo

ONE DOT TO

ONE DOT INITIATIVE BRINGS SUPPORT FOR LOCAL TxDOT TEAM

It's early on a Monday morning, Sept. 8. The lobby of a West Texas hotel is busy. Workers stream in and out. They are drivers, mechanics and roustabouts who have put down temporary roots in the city to follow the jobs — and the pay — that beckon from the region's booming energy sector. They are in the heart of the Permian Basin, a sprawling 250-mile swath of oil-rich land that produced 57 percent of the state's total crude oil in 2012.



But today, they're not the only ones who've left home to answer energy's call. Today, a few hearty souls from TxDOT are in the city to keep the roads passable and the prosperity flowing.

Douglas Roberts, Coke County maintenance section supervisor, made the 100-plus mile journey from the city of Robert Lee, where he works, to Midland. He is one of San Angelo District's liaisons for an all-volunteer visiting crew from the Lubbock and Childress districts who will spend the next three weeks repairing portions of RM 2401 in the San Angelo District.

In nearby Crockett County, Ozona Maintenance Section Supervisor Matthew Heinze is setting up shop with a group of employees who were deployed from the Houston, Fort Worth and Tyler districts. They too will be hard at work for the next three weeks repairing portions of U.S. 190 in Crockett County. RM 2469 in Irion County will also get some needed work with the help of employees from the Brownwood District and Fred Schmidt, San Angelo District's point man for the repairs. By the end of the month, more than 20 miles of district roads will be repaired and restored for traffic.

THE RESCUE

The One DOT Support Tyler District crew uses a laydown machine in a paving operation on U.S. 190 in Crockett County in the San Angelo District.



TxDOT photo

This cooperation among districts is a new initiative called One DOT Support and is a partial solution to the problem of roads damaged by energy production activity. The program deploys teams from outlying districts to energy-sector districts to provide extra manpower to make road repairs, similar to a response to statewide emergencies like hurricanes or storms, but instead of rain and snow, the culprits are potholes and ruts. The areas hardest hit are in the Permian Basin and Eagle Ford regions in west and South Texas, areas covered by the San Angelo, Odessa, San Antonio and Laredo districts and help to those districts was dispatched in three separate waves beginning last September.

With existing manpower stretched thin, employees from the Wichita Falls and Abilene districts were called in to tackle an 11-mile project on FM 652 in the Odessa District in October. Roadways in Wilson and Atascosa counties in the San Antonio District were given an extra boost of support from the Austin District also in October, and workers from Corpus Christi, Waco and Pharr districts helped repair portions of FM 1916 in the Laredo District in November.

Continued on next page



TxDOT photo

San Antonio District's Transportation Maintenance Equipment Operator Brian Jasik, Maintenance Section Supervisor Clint Rodriguez, General Engineering Technician Chad Hartmann and General Transportation Technician Johnny Hernandez work on a One DOT Support project to repair SH 16.



TxDOT photo

San Antonio District Transportation Maintenance Equipment Operator Brian Jasik spots for a driver while unloading cement treated black base for a patch on SH 16.



TxDOT photo

San Antonio crews balance material to finish a patch on SH 16 while managing traffic within a work zone.

ONE DOT TO THE RESCUE

Continued from previous page

The Support Services, Procurement and Fleet Operations divisions also lent a hand, finding temporary housing for visiting employees, purchasing materials and arranging equipment rentals.

"It was more cost effective to rent some equipment. Visiting districts didn't have to travel with equipment and it didn't drain their resources," said Dalton Pratt, Fleet Operations Division director. To keep TxDOT equipment in working order during the crews' sometimes 12- to 14-hour days, department mechanics traveled with employees to make sure equipment stayed in top condition.

"All of our divisions and districts did a great job pulling this together on short notice. From the time we began planning to the first employees arriving in San Angelo, it only took three weeks," Randy Hopmann, director of urban and rural district operations, said.

A testament, Hopmann said, to the one tenet that guided the entire operation: safety.

"Safety was first; production was second. The Occupational Safety Division assigned to each crew a dedicated safety officer who kept employees focused on protecting themselves and the traveling public. Nothing was more important than that," Hopmann said. The efforts paid off. Throughout the entire four-month operation, no injuries or recordable incidents were reported.


Mike Pettibon, who works in the Occupational Safety Division, was one of those safety officers. He was assigned to the Tyler and Fort Worth crews who were helping in the San Angelo District.

"Although they had never worked together before, they functioned as one harmonious crew. If I hadn't known better, I would have thought they were from the same district," he said.

"We all learned from that sense of cooperation and teamwork, but the thing I'm most proud of in San Angelo is that we didn't have any injuries and preventable vehicle incidents during our operation," said Tracy Cain, San Angelo district engineer.

For some Tyler District employees who helped in Crockett County, the job was also about the camaraderie across district lines and the shared knowledge that will serve the department in the future.

"I learned about some of the materials used in different areas of the state that we might never get to use in our district. That's going to be very useful to us," said Johnny Jennings, equipment operator in the Tyler District.

"The program confirmed several things for me. One, no matter what employees are asked to do, they're up to the challenge. And two, we proved that Safety: Mission Zero is possible," Hopmann said. 

Putting *Quality First* for Over 55 Years



Laid off from his first job at the Rockdale aluminum manufacturer Alcoa, Leonard Iselt, barely in his twenties, went to work on his family's farm in Thorndale. A year later, he decided farm work "just didn't get it" for him. It just so happened his brother worked for the Department of Public Safety in Austin and he encouraged Iselt to find a job in the capital city. Jobs were scarce, but TxDOT called him about an opening.

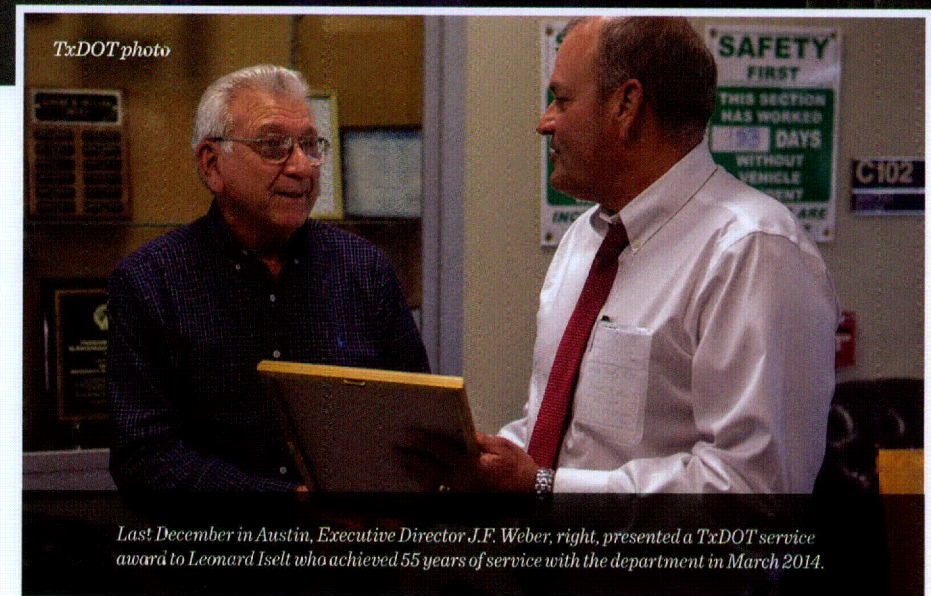
They told him at the interview if he passed the physical, the job was his. His blood pressure, boosted by nerves and excitement, almost dashed his chances of joining the Material and Tests Division's chemical laboratory at Camp Hubbard in Austin.

His first day was on March 16, 1959. Eisenhower was President. Dewitt C. Greer served as Texas State Highways Engineer. Price Daniel was governor.

Iselt, now 79, works for the Construction Division as a material/process inspector in Building 51 of the Cedar Park Campus in Austin.

"I guess I can feel pretty lucky landing where I landed," Iselt said.

The department has evolved during the past 55 years, although the nature of his work hasn't changed much. He tests all types of materials such as lime, geosynthetic products, traffic cones, de-icers, zinc coating on culverts and



Last December in Austin, Executive Director J.F. Weber, right, presented a TxDOT service award to Leonard Iselt who achieved 55 years of service with the department in March 2014.

bag liners for 55-gallon drums to ensure that they meet the department's strict specifications.

"More than anything, we are the quality control that makes sure the state gets its money's worth," he said.


Iselt's specialty is epoxies. He was part of the team that developed the formula for the adhesives that hold traffic buttons to the road surface as well as other applications including anchoring and spall repair. The department eventually delegated epoxy manufacturing to private companies, but Iselt, who has more than 40 years' worth of knowledge about adhesives, also trains other technicians.

Iselt retired on Sept. 31, 1993. Retirement did not suit him and December of the same year, he returned to TxDOT.

"I found out pretty quick that retirement was not for me. I've always been the type of guy who always has to be doing something. This was my best chance to go back to work."

Iselt and his wife have two children. Their daughter, Monica Merrill, is a contract specialist in the Maintenance Division. His son, Michael, is a private contractor in Georgetown. Iselt also has four grandchildren.

People frequently ask him if he has plans to retire. He doesn't.

"If I get useless, they'll let me know. I still feel like I have something to contribute," he said. Besides, he enjoys working with his colleagues, who get along really well. 

DISCOVERIES

AT DIMOND KNOLL

NEITHER WINTERY WEATHER NOR THE HEAT OF A HOUSTON SUMMER COULD CURB THE ENTHUSIASM AT A SITE THAT OTHERWISE LOOKED LIKE PILES OF DIRT DUMPED ONTO A FARM.

This was no ordinary site. Among the piles of soil waiting to be turned and sifted were ancient artifacts from cultures long forgotten. Leading the initiative was Dr. Jason Barrett, a Houston-based archeologist who works for TxDOT.

The soil was located along the route that would eventually become the newest segment of SH 99, the Grand Parkway, just west of Houston. The site known as Dimond Knoll was discovered in the early fall of 1996 by an archeological consulting firm which conducted the initial cultural resources survey on behalf of TxDOT.

Ten years later, another firm went to the location to conduct eligibility testing for the National Register of Historic Places. They determined that the site included items dating from 2500 B.C. through the early centuries A.D.

Fast forward to 2012 as construction of the Grand Parkway neared the Dimond Knoll site. As part of the permitting process, additional probing was required and Dr. Barrett and his colleagues began to undertake data-recovery excavations. They unexpectedly discovered artifacts dating to the late Paleo-Indian period — about 9000 or 8000 B.C.

With this finding, excavation operations were intensified and Dr. Barrett and his team went into action. The group meticulously excavated an area about 160 square meters during which the team found human remains linked to the Late Prehistoric and Archaic periods. The six or seven human burials identified were found in “pit features,” a common mortuary custom among the ancient peoples of the area. Given the sandy soils of the knoll, the bones were poorly preserved.


“The approximately 8,000-year period over which these few burials were interred leads us to believe that the site was never considered a formal burial ground,” Dr. Barrett said. “Each of the burials were preserved in place rather than excavated, so there is little we can say about age, sex, health, cause of death or potential genetic affiliation with specific Native American groups.”

With the help of forensic anthropologists from Texas State University trained in the identification of human remains, the team carefully removed the upper sandy sediments to expose the older, more deeply buried cultural deposits below. The soil removed from the site was then transported to an off-site location for further investigation by Dr. Barrett and members of the Houston Archeological Society.

“Dimond Knoll is an extraordinary site, producing the highest artifact density of any recorded site in the region. It’s one of just a few known sites in the Houston area that was visited continuously by prehistoric peoples over a period of more than 10,000 years,” Dr. Barrett said. “We hope that the abundance of data we were able to recover allows us to better understand what made such sites so unique and important.”

Armed with shovels, gloves and sifters, novice archeologists, students of all ages and many other volunteers were able to sift through the remaining soil under Dr. Barrett’s supervision. Their hard work yielded hundreds of additional artifacts that will help unravel the many mysteries surrounding the site, allowing researchers to better understand how prehistoric people in the Houston region lived.

The off-site screening began in February 2013 and wrapped up during one of the coldest times in the Houston area in January 2014.

“I’ll never again underestimate the passion Texans share for discovering the rich cultural heritage of this great state,” Dr. Barrett said. 

Artifacts found during soil screening.



Dr. Jason Barrett studies artifacts recently discovered during a soil screening.



The Dimond Knoll site is now secured, and Segment E of the Grand Parkway, from I-10 to U.S. 290, is built above it.



Dr. Barrett and his colleagues screen soil to search for artifacts.

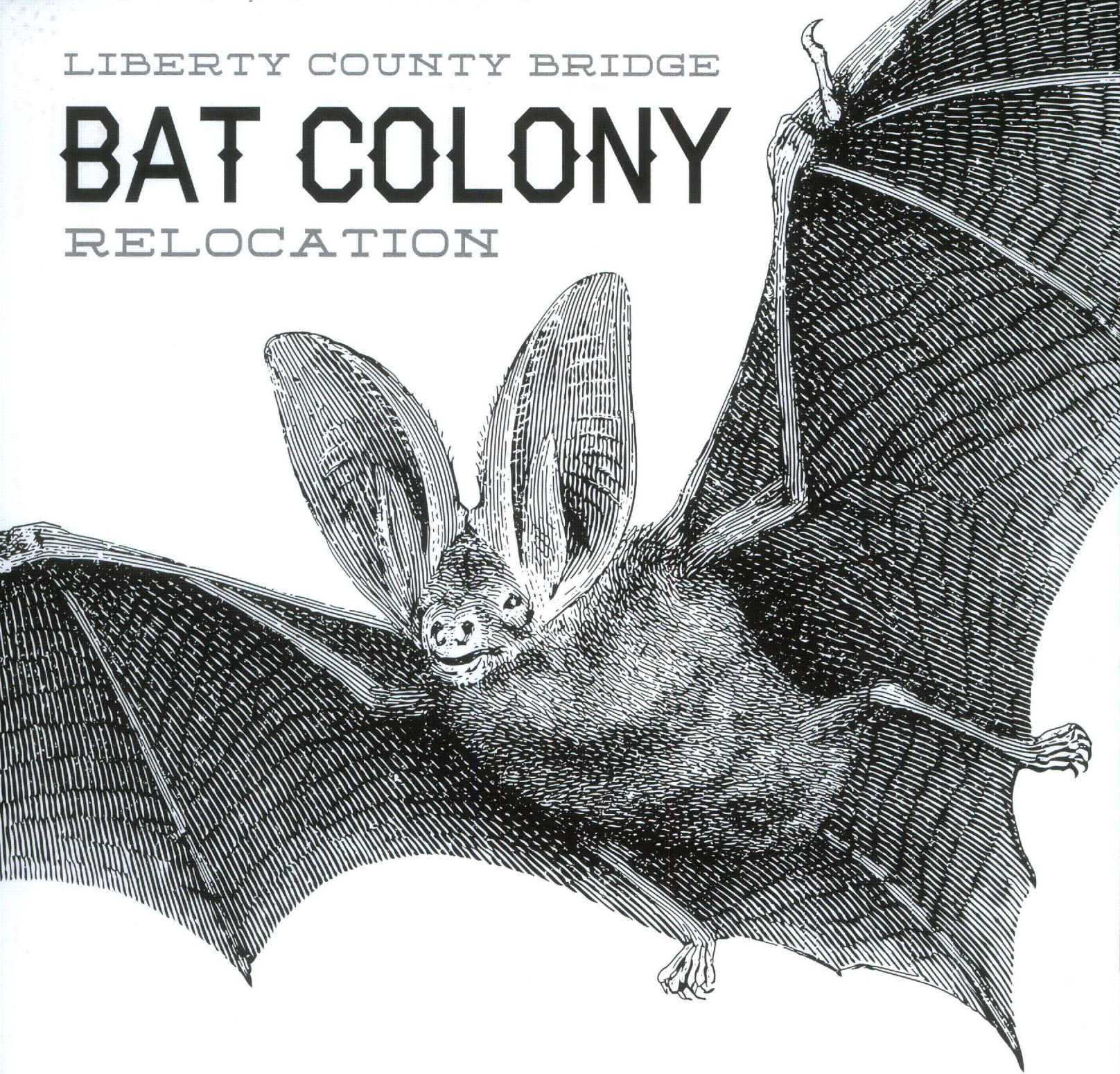


Dr. Barrett and his colleagues view a found artifact.

LIBERTY COUNTY BRIDGE

BAT COLONY

RELOCATION

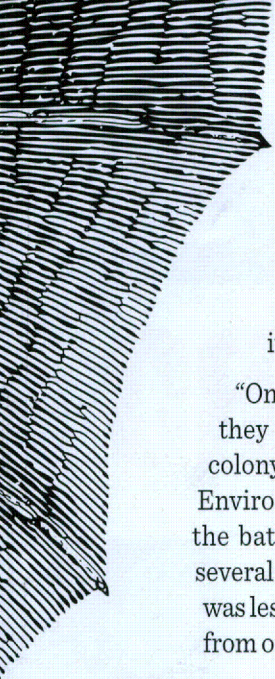


Texas is home to 33 species of bats, more than any other state in the country. They rank among the most ecologically important animals, consuming a staggering number of insects nightly, including a large proportion of agricultural pests. Protecting the state's natural resources is a priority for TxDOT, which has a long history of protecting bats on its projects.

The Beaumont District came across a colony of mostly Brazilian free-tailed bats during the planning phase of the FM 787 bridge reconstruction project more than two years ago. They made their home in the bridge located over the Tarkington Bayou in Liberty County. The Environmental

Affairs Division, the district and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked together to safely relocate and conserve the colony.

Being replaced in phases with a similar structure, the eastbound bridge was demolished in February 2014 and then rebuilt. Approximately 250 bats lived in the eastbound portion of the bridge, and they were relocated by hand to a nearby structure that contained an existing colony of Brazilian free-tailed bats. In September, around 300 to 400 bats were moved from the westbound bridge using a technique called exclusion, before it was also demolished.




The team first used a technique that involved using a curved wire to coax the bats out of the bridge. They were then carefully placed in a mesh bag, transferred into a large tub to keep them warm and transported to a nearby relief structure where they were placed by hand at its opening.

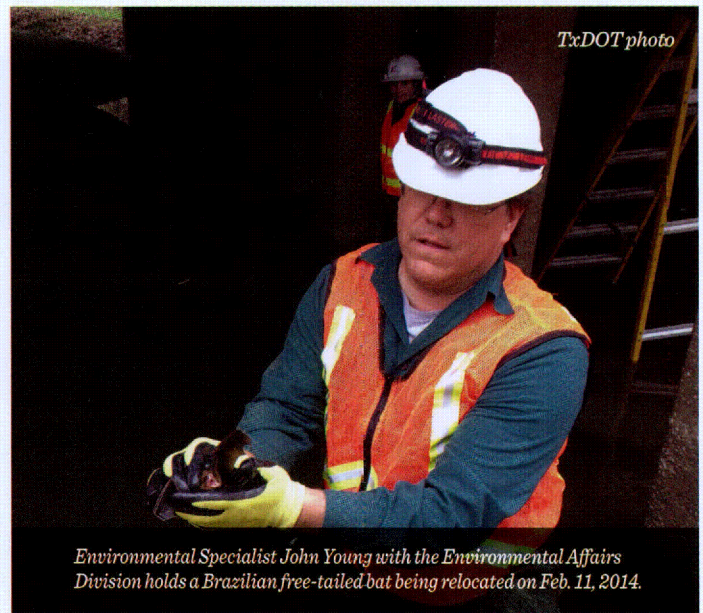
“Once the bats realized they were at the new crevice, they crawled up into it on their own and joined the colony already present there,” said Beaumont District Environmental Specialist Diana Griffith who oversaw the bat relocation project. “We went back and forth several times transporting the bats. The relief structure was less than a mile away, and we carried them in the tub from one to the other.”

Griffith learned about the exclusion method from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge. It involves the use of PVC pipes, sheet plastic and reinforced duct tape. Duct tape is used to seal off the crevices of the bridge deck so bats cannot go in. The sheet plastic is placed over an end of the PVC pipe to create a one-way valve. Bats can exit the tube, but cannot reenter it because the plastic is too flexible for them to grasp.

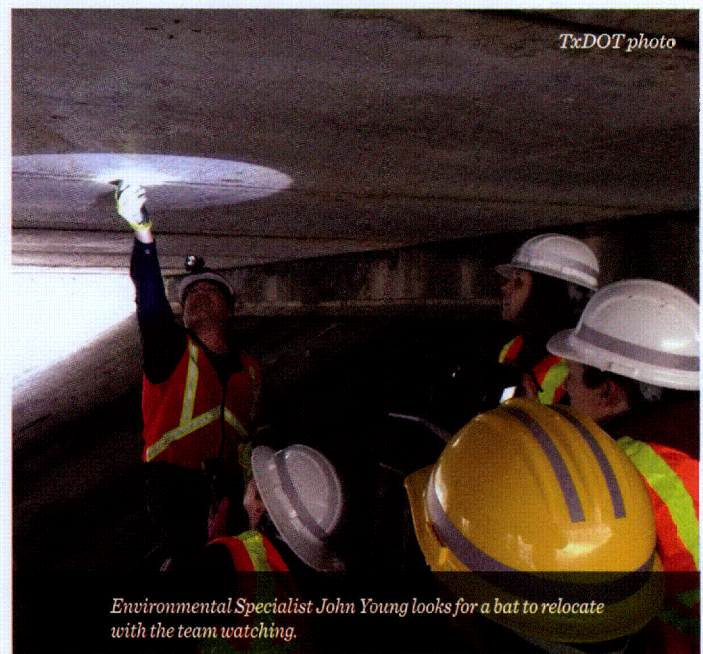
The bats took up residence in the new eastbound span as soon as construction was completed. They seemed to adapt easily to having only one span available for roosting during construction. The team was able to avoid permanently displacing the bat population, and the temporary loss of one span at a time during construction did not appear to affect the colony.

“We were very pleased how quickly the bats took up residence in the new structure. It is, after all, their home – regardless of whether it is a natural or man-made structure,” said Griffith. “We didn’t want to remove their established roosting site and place any more stress on the population than necessary.”

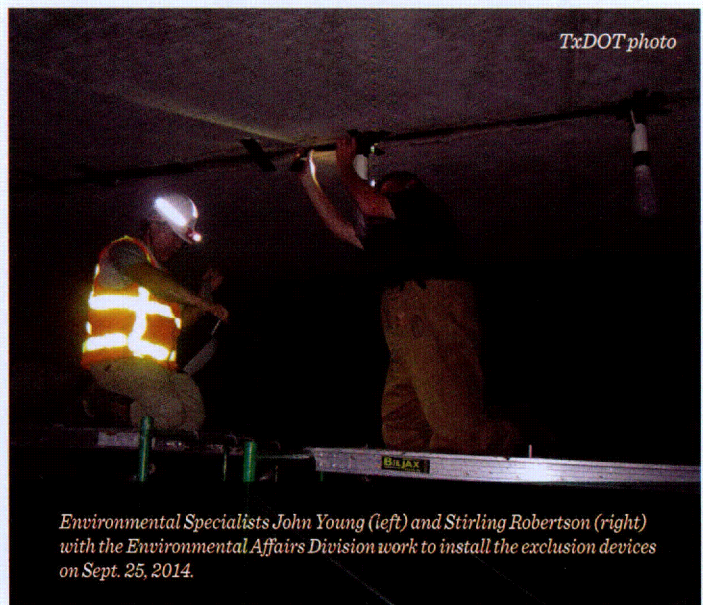
TxDOT’s longtime partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department also encourages the use of bat-friendly bridge designs. The westbound span is now under construction and is scheduled to be completed this spring. The Environmental Affairs Division plans to continue to use the exclusion method to safely relocate bats from bridges in the future. 



Environmental Specialist John Young with the Environmental Affairs Division holds a Brazilian free-tailed bat being relocated on Feb. 11, 2014.



Environmental Specialist John Young looks for a bat to relocate with the team watching.



Environmental Specialists John Young (left) and Stirling Robertson (right) with the Environmental Affairs Division work to install the exclusion devices on Sept. 25, 2014.



A Brazilian free-tailed bat looking down from a structure that will be demolished. The bat and its colony, shown in the background, will be relocated to another bridge structure.

I-35 UPDATE: SALADO TO HILLSBORO

With 66 miles of active construction projects, the Waco District's expansion of I-35 is the largest project TxDOT has tackled since its original construction in the 1950s and '60s. In the four and a half years since the \$1.9 billion reconstruction began, the northernmost project has been completed and all sections but the final one are underway.

"We're seeing the results of the Texas Transportation Commission's commitment to the expansion of I-35 to a minimum of six lanes with continuous frontage roads through Central Texas and the Waco District," said Waco District Engineer Bobby Littlefield. "We are currently at the peak of the corridor reconstruction effort. In approximately two years, we will be substantially complete on all but a few miles. I am looking forward to that day when I can proudly proclaim the successful completion of this massive undertaking."

A 5.5-mile stretch of expanded lanes from Abbott to Hillsboro was the first project to be completed in 2012. TxDOT also constructed two new safety rest areas in Hill County in early 2014. Designed to showcase the agricultural history of the area, they feature interior exhibits inspired by that history and the local Czech and country-western culture.


Farther south in Waco is the latest completed element. The Brazos River Bridges are the second and third extradosed bridges (a combination of girder and cable-stay construction) in the United States, and the first in Texas, designed to complement one of Waco's most well-known landmarks, the historic Waco Suspension Bridge. TxDOT and Waco celebrated the ribbon-cutting last July, after an accelerated construction schedule was completed in time for football season and the opening of Baylor University's brand-new McLane Stadium next to the bridges. The project is expected to be fully completed next year, including specialty lighting and landscaping.

Remaining to be finished are the Belton, West and Abbott projects, slated for completion by late this year. The Salado, Troy and Bruceville-Eddy segments are expected to be completed in 2016, and Lorena in 2017. Construction in Temple began early in 2014 and is estimated to be completed in mid-2018. Still unfunded is the last portion of the expansion, in the city of Waco itself.

The Waco District has pioneered communication techniques to make traveling along I-35 during the construction both easier and safer. Mobility coordinators assist with reporting closures planned by several different contractors. Customizable email closure notices and emergency alerts inform travelers along I-35. Portable message boards and daily tweets update travelers of lane closures, accidents and slow traffic. Through these channels, the district can communicate with drivers prior to and during times of heavy traffic and construction, contributing to a safer, less stressful travel experience.

A monthly newsletter provides district residents and travelers updates on construction, and includes articles about things of interest along the I-35 corridor in Central Texas. The public can also stay up-to-date with the project via the recently revamped My35.org website.

A first in safety in the I-35 construction is the End-of-Queue Warning System, a combination of rumble strips and warning signs that provides a multi-sensory warning to approaching drivers during overnight mainlane closures, alerting them to slowed or stopped traffic ahead. In more than 200 deployments, only about half a dozen crashes have been experienced, with no fatalities or serious injuries.

Finding new ways to function in a highly concentrated construction environment and reaching beyond what has been done before is a testament to TxDOT's continued leadership in innovative transportation solutions, and it is catching the attention of many outside agencies and private entities. The success of Waco's efforts in developing an intelligent transportation system with enhanced safety and communications for the expansion was recognized at the 2014 Short Course with the Gold Journey to Excellence Award. 



The two new safety rest areas on I-35 celebrate the agricultural history of Hill County.

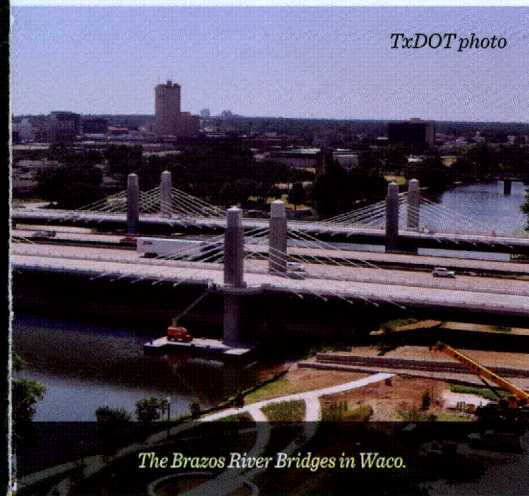


TxDOT photo



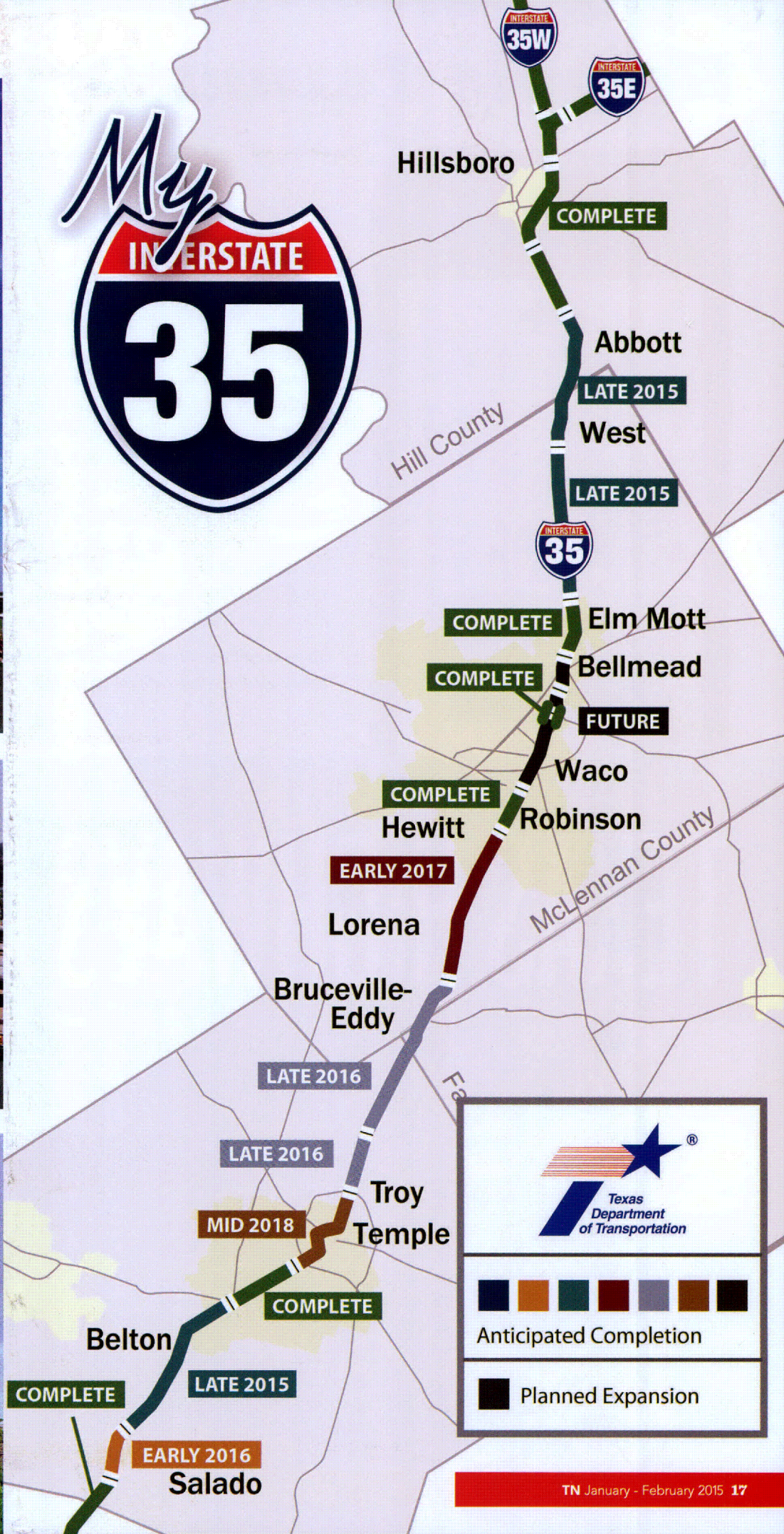
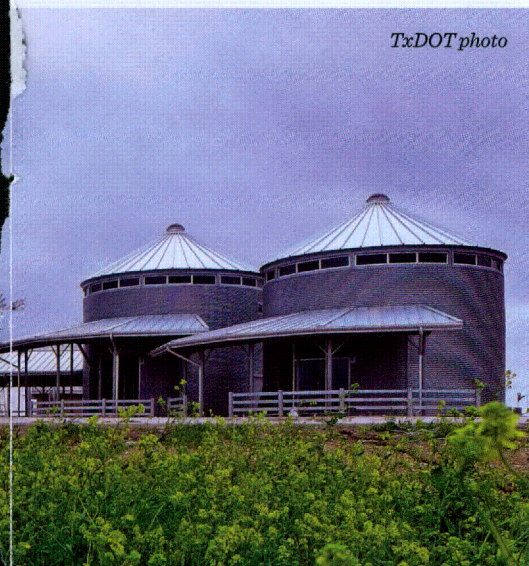
The new Belton flyover from northbound I-35 to westbound U.S. 190 is nearing completion.

TxDOT photo



The Brazos River Bridges in Waco.

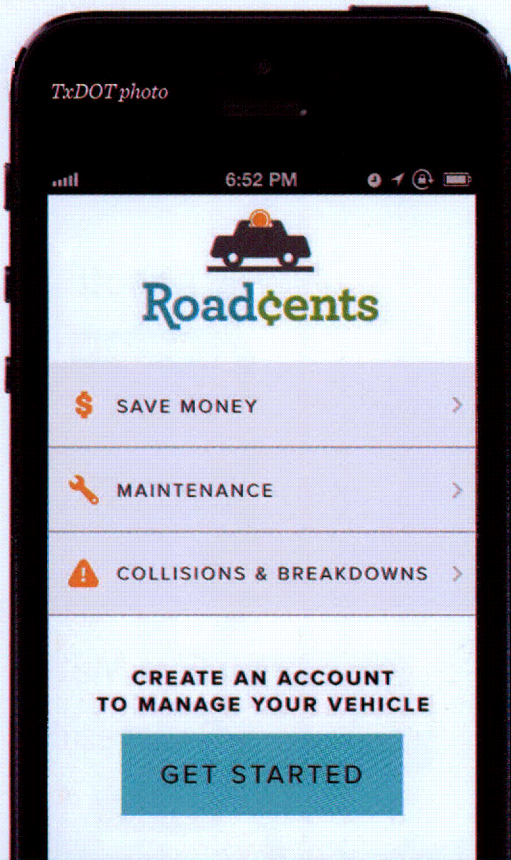
TxDOT photo



Anticipated Completion

Planned Expansion

Helping Texans Drive Clean



The Drive Clean Texas web application, Roadcents, has been going strong since its launch this past summer. To date, more than 2,300 Roadcents accounts have been created that provide users with practical tips for vehicle maintenance and driving habits right at their fingertips. The smartphone- and desktop-enabled web app helps drivers save money and reduce air pollution.

Roadcents allows users to customize the app to their vehicle make and model in order to maximize savings. It also allows users to keep track of routine car maintenance through email reminders based on manufacturer recommendations. The app also provides emergency reference tips for breakdowns and collisions, in addition to providing location services for gas stations, repair services and tow trucks.

This past fall, TxDOT teamed with the Dallas Cowboys to support the Drive Clean Texas campaign to give one lucky Texan a donated 2015 Ford Fusion SE Hybrid as part of the Drive Clean Texas Roadcents Sweepstakes. During the Dallas Cowboys and Indianapolis Colts game on Dec. 21, the sweepstakes grand prize winner was selected and announced.

To use the Roadcents app, visit www.roadcents.org, create an account and enter your vehicle information. 

TEXAS HIGHWAYS AWARDS




TxDOT photo

Texas Highways magazine recently won 10 awards from the International Regional Magazine Association. The awards are for issues produced in 2013 and recognize the outstanding work of the Texas Highways staff by readers and regional publishing experts around the world.

Texas Highways took home the Gold Award for Companion Website, an award praising the website as user-friendly, well-designed, engaging and complimentary of its print magazine counterpart. The magazine also brought in a Silver Award for Overall Art Direction for its smart design and photography.

Other magazine articles were cited by the association for award. Those awards and the publication dates for these articles are listed below.

- Cover – Silver – “Guadalupe Mountains National Park” by Tim Fitzharris, September 2013
- Arts and Culture Feature – Silver – “Georgia O’Keeffe: Canyon and Sky” by Kathryn Jones, November 2013
- Single Photo – Silver – The People, the Places & Wide-Open Spaces September 2013
- Illustration – Silver – “Travel Matters: Eye-Opening Journeys” by Michael Witte, September 2013
- Food Feature – Silver – “The Art, Spiritual Pursuit, & Culture of BBQ” by Robb Walsh, August 2013
- Department – Bronze – “Plates: Eat, Drink, Travel” September, November and December 2013
- Photo Series – Bronze – “Caddo’s Primordial Calling” by J. Griffis Smith, October 2013
- Special Focus – Award of Merit – “The Boo Issue” October 2013 



TxDOT photo



READERS RESOUND

TN MAGAZINE READER SURVEY RESULTS

Results from a recent reader survey bring new insight about TN Magazine. The input from our readership allows the Communications Division to plan and make informed decisions about the type of content featured in the agency's magazine. The survey results also help review how to best get TN Magazine to employees across the entire state.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. Employee feedback is crucial to improving TN Magazine and in making it accessible and relatable to more team members throughout the entire agency.

73%

of employees read TN

85%

feel they get the information they need about TxDOT from TN

WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OF:



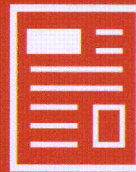
Photos

54%



Employee Updates

49%



Featured Articles

45%



Project Updates

36%



Administrative News

31%

BASED ON YOUR FEEDBACK:

- TN Magazine will continue to make improvements to online accessibility and readability.
- Broader coverage of district news and employee profiles will be included.
- Even more printed magazines will be available at all TxDOT offices and divisions.

HOW YOU PREFER TO READ TN:

OTHER

3%

.PDF FILE

5%

INTERNET

(TXDOT.GOV)

8%

CROSSROADS

(INTRANET)

34%

HARD COPY

48%

IDEAS AND INNOVATION FUEL THE TxDOT FLEET



There are approximately 300 herbicide trucks — plus another 150 or so smaller portable skid herbicide rigs that can be loaded into a dump truck when needed — in TxDOT's statewide fleet. And every one of these trucks was built and assembled from nothing more than a factory cab and chassis at the Fleet Operations Division's Camp Hubbard General Shops in Austin. If you've ever seen a TxDOT herbicide truck up close, you can understand what a complicated process this is. And it's not something that just anyone could do.


"Each of these trucks takes about 150 hours to fabricate and about three of our mechanics work on it before it's completed," said Clint LaFont, shop coordinator and design project coordinator.

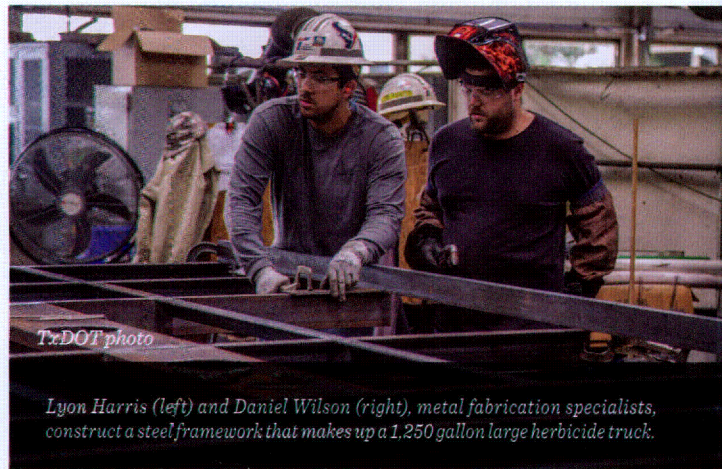
So why go through all the trouble? Why not just buy herbicide trucks or skids off the shelf? "Because they don't exist," said Dennis Markwardt, Maintenance Division field operations manager. "These trucks are better than anything we could purchase because they've been designed for the way we actually use them and can be improved anytime someone comes up with a better idea."

The herbicide trucks are just one of many items made at the General Shops. Who makes all the Don't mess with Texas litter barrels that show up in TxDOT anti-litter campaigns? Or the designed and fabricated safety platforms for state helicopters? Or how about the beautiful Truck Rodeo awards plaques? Who made the sawed-in-half old truck for display in the Greer Building's Historical Exhibit? Or the exhibit's wooden display cabinets? Or the dozens of coffins for ancient Native American remains found on a TxDOT job site? Camp Hubbard takes care of all of these items.

The crew also fabricates fixtures and testing samples for the state laboratory in Cedar Park. For example, they pre-machine all aluminum and steel coupons in preparation for the MTS tensile test, a test to verify that the materials are of the expected quality and safe. The test is performed on all sign and guardrail materials.

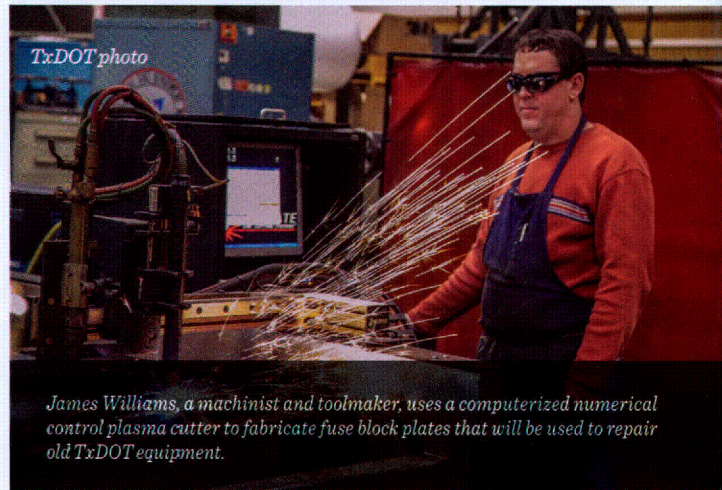
All of this is done by just 10 employees, including four welders, three machinists, one painter, one shop coordinator and designer, and one administrative technician. The tools and facilities they use include computerized numerical control milling machines, a complete welding fabrication shop, a drive-in sand blast booth and a drive-in paint booth, among others.

LaFont says the shop's mission is to produce needed equipment with innovative designs that can be improved on the fly to meet ongoing needs in the field. "That's where most of our ideas come from, frankly," he said. "Someone in the field will have an idea for making something more useful, and they'll come to us and ask for help. That's when our crew will go to work." 



TxDOT photo

Lyon Harris (left) and Daniel Wilson (right), metal fabrication specialists, construct a steel framework that makes up a 1,250 gallon large herbicide truck.



TxDOT photo

James Williams, a machinist and toolmaker, uses a computerized numerical control plasma cutter to fabricate fuse block plates that will be used to repair old TxDOT equipment.



TxDOT photo

Daniel Wilson, metal fabrication specialist, finishes up the welding and fabrication of an arrow board mount for a new large herbicide truck build.


TRAVEL INFORMATION DIVISION SHOWCASES NEW INITIATIVES

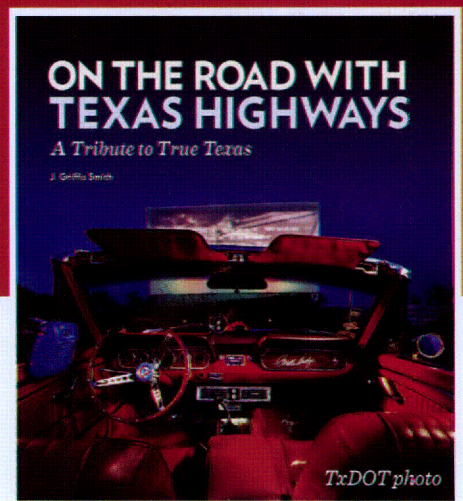
The Travel Information Division has launched three initiatives highlighting Texas travel, Don't mess with Texas and the natural splendor found throughout the state. These new opportunities include the purchase of discounted attraction tickets, Don't mess with Texas cowboy boots and a new book featuring iconic Texas photography.

Tickets to some of Texas' most exciting attractions are now available at 11 of the state's Travel Information Centers, located at various entry points into the state. In partnership with the Texas Travel Industry Association, TxDOT is offering Travel Information Center patrons the ability to purchase discounted tickets to top Texas attractions such as Schlitterbahn, SeaWorld and others. To locate a Travel Information Center in your area, visit TxDOT.gov and search "Travel Information Centers."

Don't mess with Texas is announcing the launch of its very own line of customized cowboy boots. In partnership with and proudly handcrafted by Justin Boots, the boots became available at Sheplers Western Wear retail locations or online at www.Sheplers.com in late November. The public can support the world-famous litter prevention campaign, and proudly display their Texas pride, by owning their own pair of unique Don't mess with Texas cowboy boots.


Also, travel enthusiasts can now purchase "On the Road with Texas Highways: A Tribute to True Texas" featuring photography from professional magazine photographer J. Griffis Smith. Smith's 30-year career at Texas Highways magazine has resulted in a collection of signature images from three decades of work, including memorable photos of Texas icons and people, as well as historical and cultural landscapes. This book features more than 294 color photos, and includes an introduction by Texas outdoor enthusiast E. Dan Klepper. The book is on sale at www.texashighways.com.

These initiatives enhance travelers' true Texas experiences and are another way to show your Texas pride. To learn more about these initiatives, visit Texas Highways at www.texashighways.com and Don't mess with Texas at www.dontmesswithtexas.org. 



TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

CINDY JEANES

Cindy Jeanes of the Tyler District's Tyler Area Office was honored as the 2014 Level 1A Technician of the Year at the Texas Asphalt Pavement Association Conference. Jeanes, a 21-year TxDOT veteran, was nominated by five contractors for the award that recognizes the commitment to the quality of hot mix asphalts. Jeanes began her TxDOT career in 1993 as the office manager in Jacksonville. She quickly became an inspector in the area office lab. A graduate of the University of Texas at Tyler with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, Jeanes received her Level 1B certification in 1995 and her Level 1A certification in 1996. Of all her duties in the laboratory, Jeanes said she enjoys working with hot mix the most. 



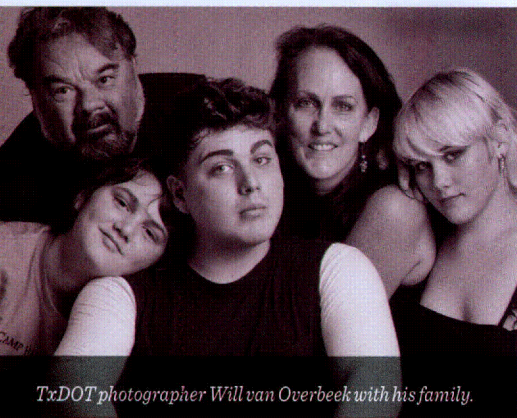
Construction Division Director John Obr presents the 2014 Level 1A Technician of the Year Award to Cindy Jeanes, while Texas Asphalt Pavement Association President Jeff Greene looks on.

TxDOT photo

The Perfect Photo Op



Selected for Best of 30 Years National Geographic Traveler, van Overbeek's photo, entitled Nashville in Neon, shows a scene in Lower Broadway in Nashville, Tennessee.



TxDOT photographer Will van Overbeek with his family.

A couple, an iconic Nashville street and Will van Overbeek's ability to capture a mood in a photo recently earned him a place in the Best of 30 Years National Geographic Traveler. The photo was taken in 2010 and is of Lower Broadway in Nashville, Tennessee. The two-block strip offers free shows to the public and a taste of fame to up-and-coming musicians. He saw the couple and thought they would make an interesting photo.

"The scene on the street is as neat as the scene in the clubs," said van Overbeek.

He joined TxDOT's Communications Division in 2012 following a freelancing career that spanned 33 years and the globe.


"Things got slow in the magazine business," said van Overbeek. "TxDOT keeps me busy taking pictures, which is what I want to do."

Now he travels the state for Texas Highways magazine and other Travel Division publications. He also takes the department's official portraits and fulfills other assignments

as needed. Recently, van Overbeek photographed the Texas Camel Corps in Waco, which changed his perceptions about the animal. To his amazement, he got a shot of a person hugging one of the camels. The article describes camels as "enormous hay-eating puppies."

Van Overbeek's work has been featured in Texas Monthly, the Smithsonian magazine, Esquire and National Geographic Traveler. Even with all the awards for his work, not all assignments go as planned, but that's the nature of the work.

"You just have to keep working at it and make something happen," he said. "Serendipity enters into it, but you only get lucky if you keep trying."

In his free time, van Overbeek still travels the globe on assignment or for fun with his children. He visited Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea. He also traveled to Rome, Italy with his 12-year-old son. 


TxDOT HOSTS IMPAIRED DRIVING SUMMIT

On Nov. 4, nearly 300 stakeholders from every corner of the state and TxDOT came together in San Antonio to brainstorm solutions to a persistent traffic safety problem for Texas and the U.S. — impaired driving. The daylong Texas Impaired Driving Summit was based on the theme: "No single organization can solve the dangers of impaired driving on its own. It is a complex and challenging problem that requires collaboration, networking and bridging boundaries."

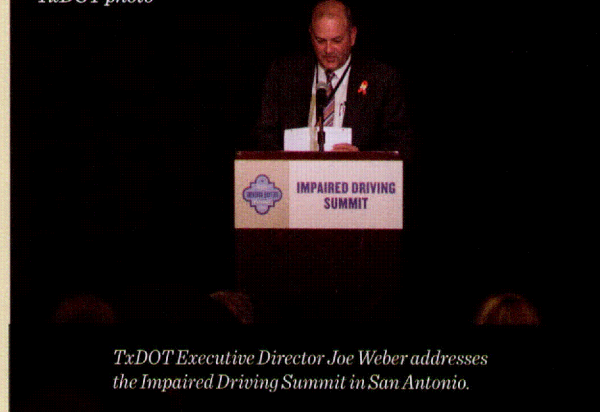
The event was sponsored and hosted by TxDOT and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Law enforcement representatives from around the state, as well as local and state officials attended. Representatives of many nonprofit organizations dedicated to educating the public about the issue also attended.

Nationally, about 30,000 fatalities each year are attributed to drivers who are impaired. For Texas, about one of every three traffic fatalities is due to impaired drivers. A crash occurs somewhere in the state about every 20 minutes because of impaired driving.

When it comes to reducing the number of alcohol-related crashes in Texas, the crusade has been a struggle, said TxDOT Executive Director Joe Weber.

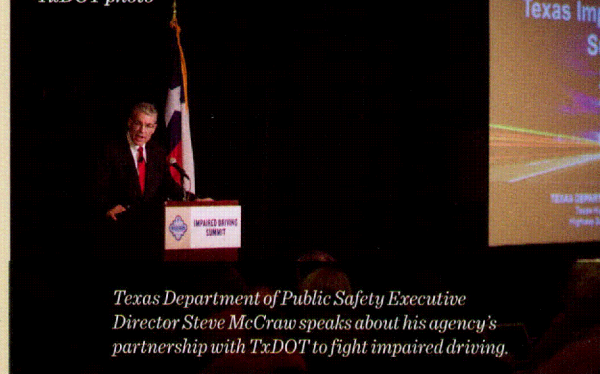
"We can't get discouraged or give up. We have to work together to develop approaches that motivate motorists not to get behind the wheel if they've been drinking, and to make driving under the influence so socially unacceptable or so financially and legally painful that no one will even consider doing it," Weber said. "You have my commitment that TxDOT will continue to fund innovative programs and law enforcement activities to do all we can to stop impaired driving." 

TxDOT photo



TxDOT Executive Director Joe Weber addresses the Impaired Driving Summit in San Antonio.

TxDOT photo



Texas Department of Public Safety Executive Director Steve McCraw speaks about his agency's partnership with TxDOT to fight impaired driving.

Don't mess with Texas[®] IN 2015

Don't mess with Texas is moving full steam ahead on its litter prevention programs with a touch of Texas pride. From education to cleanups and cans, the campaign that keeps Texas litter-free is busy with its scholarship, art and trash can slogan contests, annual Trash-Off event and the 30th anniversary of Adopt-a-Highway.

Don't mess with Texas' education programs allow students of all ages to participate in litter prevention. From elementary school through high school, there are lots of ways to get involved and even earn money for college. Currently, the 2015 Don't mess with Texas scholarship gives Texas high school seniors the opportunity to win money for college by showcasing their dedication to anti-littering efforts and the Don't mess with Texas message. Seniors planning to attend an accredited Texas college or university can submit an application by April 4, 2015 to win \$6,000, or one of two \$2,000 awards.

In addition, January marks the launch of the Don't mess with Texas elementary school art contest conducted in partnership with Keep Texas Beautiful, and the middle school trash can personality-slogan contest. The elementary school art contest encourages students to create artwork illustrating litter prevention and their ideas to keep Texas beautiful. The top 12 winning designs will be featured in the 2016 Don't mess with Texas calendar, and each student will receive a tablet computer donated by H-E-B. Texas middle school students will also have the opportunity to create their own litter prevention personality slogan messages for litter trash cans. Students can submit slogans that support a litter-free Texas. The winning slogans will be printed on a Don't mess with Texas trash can that will be placed at each student's school. Each slogan will also be highlighted on the school website and social media pages.

On April 11, Texans can participate in the largest cleanup day in the state and contribute to the Texas event for the Great American Cleanup, the Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off. This year celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Adopt-a-Highway program, the origin of the Texas Trash-Off. Be on the lookout for future program announcements and celebrations recognizing the impact of the Adopt-a-Highway program.

Lastly, keep an eye out for the Don't mess with Texas trash barrels. They have been on the move, scoring front-row access to several of the most anticipated events in the state, including the Austin City Limits Music Festival, Texas State Fair and Circuit of The Americas FanFest!

Please note that immediate family members or persons living in the same household of TxDOT employees are ineligible for contests. However, TxDOT employees are encouraged to share this news with other school-age children to promote participation.



TxDOT photo

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ART CONTEST
FEBRUARY 20 - APRIL 18, 2014



TxDOT photo

I AM A...

Metal Fabrication Specialist

A welder by trade since 1976, Chuck Pate, a metal fabrication specialist for the Yoakum District, jumped at the chance to join TxDOT. He owned his own welding and fabrication business for almost 20 years, sold it and joined the Gonzales Maintenance Office in September 2001. He then transferred to the district office where he currently works. Pate considered becoming a carpenter and a construction contractor, just like his father, but one high school welding class sparked a new career path. Pate, a Yoakum native, has been married for 36 years and enjoys hunting and fishing in his free time.

CHUCK PATE

TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOB. WHAT DO YOU DO AND WHAT IS YOUR TYPICAL DAY LIKE?

The shop coordinator schedules the work. We do lots of welding and repairs. I basically handle everything and anything that comes through the welding shop. This means performing routine maintenance and fixing breakdowns on heavy equipment.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR WORK?


When I was self-employed, I did everything from fixing a firing pin in a shotgun to building a 10,000-square-foot building. I fell in love with welding the first time I put two pieces of metal together. It's just a good feeling to me to put things together and to do good work. I like a challenge. I like it when people tell me "This can't be fixed." I like proving them wrong.



WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR WORK?

I have a lot of stuff thrown at me, but 98 percent of the time, I know what I am going to do before I even get started. Last summer, I worked on a project to add 6,000 pounds to the truck-mounted attenuators after it was discovered they were underweighted based on the amount of impact they need to take. The attenuators provide a barrier and protect the guys in the work zone. So, after many roundtables with lots of people, we built a box and filled it with cement, I had to figure out how to attach it to the trucks so that it wouldn't become a missile itself if an 18-wheeler hit the truck at 55 miles an hour. It took me a week or so to figure out the first one, but then I could do two a week.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO WAS THINKING ABOUT BECOMING A METAL FABRICATION SPECIALIST?

Ninety-five percent of welders are extremely passionate about what they do. It's not just about welding; you have to know how to fabricate metal too. If it's metal, there's a chance it's going to break or breakdown. 

Q & A

Ana Duncan

Ana Duncan

Laredo District, Transportation Engineer

A Laredo native, Ana Duncan has 15 years of TxDOT service. She started her career as a summer employee with TxDOT and eventually graduated from Texas A&M University in 1999. Ana is married, has a soon-to-be two-year-old daughter, Katie, and two older stepsons, Kenny Jr. and Ryan. She enjoys cooking, crafting and Aggie football. She currently works as a project manager for local government projects in the Laredo District and serves on the technical committee for the Laredo Urban Transportation Study MPO.

What does a project manager for local government projects in the Laredo District do?

I am responsible for overseeing the projects that are being designed or let by a local government. I ensure projects are being developed according to local, state and federal requirements. I follow projects from the planning and procurement stages all the way through letting and award.

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

I have a picture of my daughter by my desk that reminds me that everything I do is for her and my family. With that, I know I need to be safe and be sure to make it home every day.

What's the most challenging aspect of being a project manager?

The most challenging aspect is working with so many different local government offices at once. Each one is different from how the offices are staffed to the day-to-day procedures they follow.

Are you a regifter? Tell the truth.

Not usually. I have wondered if I've ever been on the receiving end though.

What crafting project are you the most proud of?

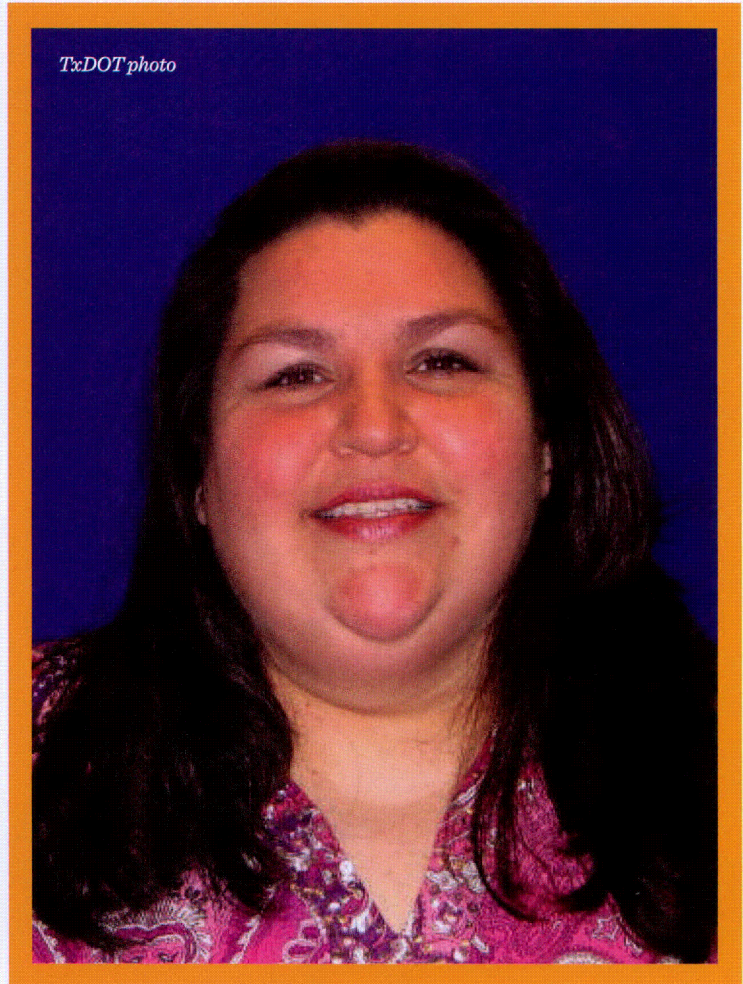
I'm most proud of two dresses that I somehow managed to sew for my daughter last year. Considering I Googled "infant dress patterns," I think they turned out pretty nice.

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

My days off are spent at home caring for and playing with my daughter. My true days off are when my husband is working and my daughter is at preschool. That's when I go out shopping or spend time at home working on different projects.

What one life experience prepared you the most for the work you do today?


I can't say there's been just one. It's actually my diverse work history. I have worked now in Transportation Planning and Development for nine years. Before that I was in the Engineering Rotation Program and worked in lots of different areas. I think having worked in all these areas has given me a better understanding of what TxDOT is all about and has prepared me for the work I do today.



Why is your district the best in TxDOT?

Our district is more than just a work place. It's a family. Many of us have been here for quite some time and have seen each other go through life's big events. We all look out for each other and are always ready to lend a hand.

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


I didn't get my driver's license until I was 20. I rode the bus to and from high school. I didn't have a car in college because I lived in on-campus housing. Just before I finally did get my license, I took a driver's education class only to find out that my instructor and I were the same age! 

Where Am I?

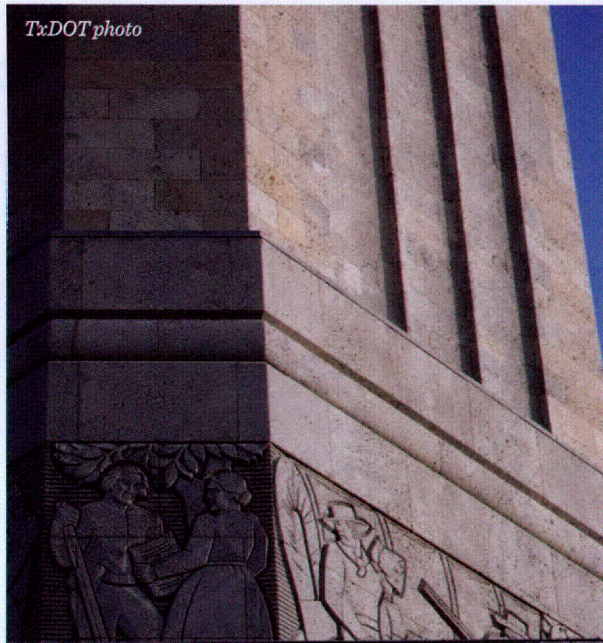
Here is a photo depicting an identifiable landmark you may have seen in your travels around Texas. If you think you know what this is a photo of or know where it was taken, send an email to TNideas@txdot.gov. Deadline for submissions is Jan. 30.

Identified:

Congratulations to our first identifier (second time in a row): **Jesus Cervantes** from the Houston District. Named "The Day the Wall Came Down," the life-sized bronze monument shows five horses, running through the rubble of the collapsed Berlin Wall. It is permanently displayed in the central courtyard of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, adjacent to the campus of Texas A&M University. Thank you to Bradley Peikert (BRY) for providing the photo idea.

Others correctly identifying the photo were: Chris Cowen (BRY), Blake Axen (SPD), Eddie Smith (AMA), Mark Cincar (TYL), Bill Eisman (BRY), Maurice Maness (BRY), Melissa Hatton (BRY), Monica Perez (PHR), Nancy Russell (PAR), Philip Vahalik (CST), Richard Christie (retiree), Stephen Kasberg (BRY), Tracy Sult (TRV), Red Perez (SJT), Jan Robbins (retiree), Seth Cole (DES), Richard Polansky (WAC), Kyle Madsen (ROW) and Walter Barfield (AUS). 

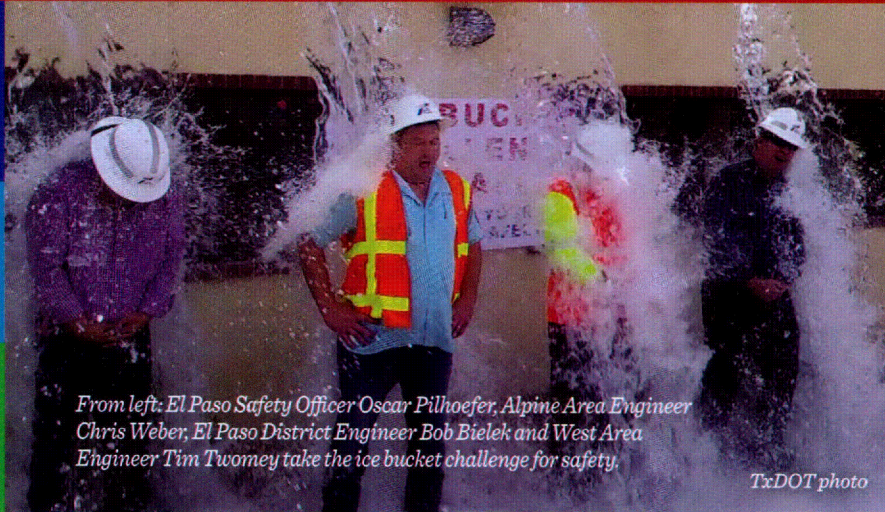
TxDOT photo



TxDOT photo



EL PASO ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE



From left: El Paso Safety Officer Oscar Pilhoefer, Alpine Area Engineer Chris Weber, El Paso District Engineer Bob Bielek and West Area Engineer Tim Twomey take the ice bucket challenge for safety.

TxDOT photo

El Paso District employees recently took chilling to a whole new level.

The district's slogan, "Take your time, chill and work safely," coined by East Area Engineer Ricardo Romero, inspired employees to take the ice bucket challenge for safety at the district's safety banquet last October.


The banquet rewards employees who have had no injuries or incidents while conducting their day-to-day business.

Modeled after the wildly popular ice bucket challenge for Lou Gehrig's disease, employees showed their support for safety by having 25 pounds of ice and 40 gallons of water dumped over their heads. Lou Gehrig's disease, also called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, attacks motor neurons, cells that control the muscles.

"The water was about five times colder than you'd imagine, but was a nice break from the desert heat," said Chris Weber, Alpine area engineer.

"I would hope employees see this demonstration as a reminder that we all need to do whatever it takes so we can all go home safely at the end of each day. I also think it is a great reminder that their leaders are willing to do whatever it takes to show them that safety is the highest priority at TxDOT. Besides, who wouldn't want to dump a 55-gallon drum of ice water on their boss?" Weber said.

District Engineer Bob Bielek joined the challenge because he thought it should garner the support of district executive management. He also issued a challenge to all district engineers statewide.

"My colleagues and I discuss safety at every opportunity, but a show of our support to the rank and file is important to underscore how important we believe safety is," Bielek said. 

MILESTONES

November 2014 Service Awards



Districts:

Abilene

20 Jesus D. Martinez Jr.

Amarillo

30 Donnie C. Osbourne
15 Melvin J. Hammer
Ofelia Garbalena

Atlanta

30 Michael C. Anderson

Austin

30 Manuel G. Vela
Brian D. Burk
20 Will O. Weidenfeller
Houman Hemati
15 Thomas J. Krawitz
10 Mary B. Lundgren

Brownwood

20 Celeste T. Johnson
Robert L. Sitton

Bryan

30 Raymond L. Kroll
Lamar G. Ondrasek
25 Terry A. Paholek
Lori T. Boer
15 Bradley N. Peikert
10 Christopher A. Soles
James A. Norment

Childress

10 Steven C. Christopher
5 Steven C. Ferguson

Corpus Christi

30 Felix C. Trevino II
25 Mary Alice P. Hernandez
20 Terry J. Castaneda
15 Danny C. Cox Jr.
Roy A. Payne
Steve T. Orchard
10 Julie R. Brueberg
Michael J. Alvarez
Budd E. Edwards

Dallas

30 David A. Hall
Rhonda A. Simmelink
25 Wandra A. James
20 Pamela S. Rogers
Mustafa A. Yafai

15 Sammy R. Moser
Boon K. Thian
10 Sean M. Palmer
Mike L. Moen
Amber M. Finley

Fort Worth

30 Gregory S. Lane
25 Alan J. Easterling
10 Gregory C. Paige

Houston

50 Mark G. Anthony
35 Matthew R. Adams
30 Tommy L. Spain
Brian D. Vogler
George L. Torres
Gerald G. Foster
Stanley F. Yin
25 Kenneth R. Walker
20 Henry W. Ellis III
15 Nicholas W. Horiszny
Cherry C. Brown
10 Allison Gillen
Juan S. Saldana
Feng-Pin An
Juan R. Fuentes
5 James A. Siegfried

Laredo

15 Reynaldo Lopez
10 Humberto Ramirez Jr.

Lubbock

20 Judy W. Gilmore
Jana J. Field
10 Gerald J. Batenhorst

Odessa

25 Donald S. McNatt
20 Oscar Martinez
15 Jaime E. Benavides
Miguel B. Matta

Paris

20 Cliff J. Watts
15 Jason D. Brown
10 David S. Escobedo
Billy D. Murphy
Brent R. Stinson
Donald G. Hatch

Pharr

10 Stephen A. Schaus

San Angelo

25 Terri A. Meacham
20 Joe A. Lara
Samuel Saiz
15 Ben D. Shackelford

San Antonio

30 Allen J. Schneider
David A. Vrana
25 Rudolph H. Manka Jr.
Jennifer F. Goodall
10 Jennifer M. Johnson
Isaac Castoreno
Lizette J. Colbert
David J. Zamora

Tyler

25 Billy W. Terry Jr.
20 Michael Q. Parker

Waco

35 Billy S. Pigg
20 Ernest F. Kutscherousky
15 Tommy R. Seals
David A. Matthews
10 Michael D. Cook

Wichita Falls

10 Kevin S. Stone
Bobbi R. Gulley
Danny R. Tatum

Yoakum

30 Richard A. Steffek
20 Randy J. Haas
15 Jason J. Ulrich

Divisions/ Offices:

Bridge

45 Larry J. Wood

Construction

20 Melissa A. Daniels
Hisham S. Makkouk
10 Antonio Compean

Environmental Affairs

25 Barbara J. Hickman

Finance

25 Pamela J. Crumley
Herlinda A. Hickman
15 Shyrel D. Callis
5 Michelle A. Cravotta

Fleet Operations

25 Kevin W. Wright
15 Roberto F. Cortez
Jeff A. Taylor
10 Dowane C. Alonzo
Roel C. Gutierrez
Joel J. Villarreal
Jimmy P. Booth
Stephen W. Wehring
5 Troy A. Simmons

Human Resources

15 Charlene R. Shirley

Occupational Safety

10 Monica M. Spiller
5 David J. Bowman
Michael T. Pettibon

Procurement

15 Adolph Hernandez
Ray S. Javadi

Project Management

10 Christopher C. Henry

Right of Way

35 Deborah S. Menefee
20 Vivian S. Bagwell
15 Jon M. Ripley
10 Elizabeth Naumann

Strategic Projects

25 Kerry K. Fulton

Support Services

15 Bradley T. Luckie
10 James O. Tate

Transportation Planning and Programming

30 John R. Ibarra

December 2014 Service Awards



Districts:

Abilene

- 30 James R. Carlin
- 25 Thomas F. Rowe III
- 10 Kenneth W. Bullard

Amarillo

- 30 Darrell W. Caldwell
- 10 Patrick P. Brinkman

Atlanta

- 15 Billy E. Nutt II
- Gavin M. Hendrix

Austin

- 20 Timothy J. McDonald
- 15 James C. Langley
- Carol A. Harrison
- Gregory S. Watson
- 10 John C. Gordon

Beaumont

- 25 Willie Celestine Sr.
- 20 Michael T. Tywater
- Benjamin O. Springs

Brownwood

- 15 Aaron G. McCleery
- 10 Jerry E. Poling

Bryan

- 20 Bradley C. Wehmeyer
- Kendall L. Gore
- Robert W. Haensly

Childress

- 20 Jimmy L. Bridges
- 15 Lonnie G. Guerrero
- 10 Eric L. Jernigan

Corpus Christi

- 20 Alicia Garcia
- 15 Joe R. Rangel
- 10 Jose A. Aguillon
- Will Boles
- Reynaldo L. Ramirez
- Jeannie G. Salazar

Dallas

- 30 Jonathan Cox
- 20 David W. Harlin
- Keith E. Long
- 15 Ervin Green
- Victor R. Songer
- Charles R. Tarver
- Kevin J. Wiles
- David D. Griggs
- Kevin L. Mathis
- 10 Richard W. Patterson
- Darwin R. Bell
- Brent C. Owens
- Danny R. Reynolds
- Ray M. Hejke

- Victor L. Douglas
- Armando M. Vasquez
- Sidney D. Rubles
- Michael P. Skahan
- Douglas S. Hicks
- Michael S. Bingham
- Adam E. Clements
- Marcus D. Pipkins
- Kristopher G. Johnson
- Paul C. Antony
- David B. Loggans

El Paso

- 15 Omar Madrid
- 10 William K. Fierro
- Salvador Medina Jr.

Fort Worth

- 30 Steven W. Baker
- 15 Paula J. Meyer
- 10 Julio Alva
- Larry G. Schraeder
- 5 Stephanie A. Berlan
- Donald R. Clark

Houston

- 30 Vince G. Cannon
- Claude P. Henry
- 20 Wendy G. Chappell
- Bharat I. Patel
- 15 Reginald Delgado
- Arthur F. Salako
- 10 George E. Faulk
- Carl J. Hobizal
- Mona K. Kozman
- Timothy J. Meier
- Christen N. Specht
- Richard E. Williams

Laredo

- 20 Ramiro Gonzalez

Lubbock

- 35 Norman T. Moore
- 15 Alan S. Albus
- Curt Masters
- Richard Perez
- 10 David L. Bolton
- Jaime E. Cortez
- Jerel J. Hoff

Lufkin

- 15 Danny R. Luna
- Billy V. Waller
- Elton C. Williams Jr.

Odessa

- 25 Kelli R. Williams
- 20 William L. Hartwig
- 10 Manuel Carrillo Jr.
- 5 Saul J. Romero

Paris

- 25 Gary D. Rater
- 10 Zachary C. Smith
- Michael S. Underwood

Pharr

- 20 Epigmenio Gonzalez
- 15 Roberto F. Leal
- Pedro V. Lopez
- Roel Rodriguez
- 10 Arturo Martinez

San Angelo

- 15 Ronald G. Waggoner
- 10 Benjamin W. Kent
- Jose L. Rodriguez

San Antonio

- 35 Jesse A. Torres
- 30 Hoyt B. Adami
- Mark A. Narendorf
- 20 Gregg A. Granato
- Anna M. Sanchez
- 15 Joel A. Guerrero
- Ahmed A. Kadi
- 10 Christopher J. Delazerda
- Aaron C. Dziuk
- Dalia S. Garcia
- Brett T. Haggerty
- Andy C. Schramm

Tyler

- 25 Kyle W. Collins
- Hardie L. Ervin
- 15 John P. Wiggins
- 10 Benjamin L. Terry

Waco

- 15 Kay R. Pigg
- 10 Carlos D. Alvarado
- Brenton R. Lane
- James Malinak

Wichita Falls

- 10 Venancio A. Centeno
- James P. Martin
- Mason G. McClain

Yoakum

- 30 Sherry L. Hutchinson
- 20 Fidel Bernal Jr.
- 15 Holly R. Fishbeck

Divisions/ Offices:

Administration

- 30 Randy C. Hopmann

Bridge

- 25 Mark A. Bewley
- 10 Patrick M. Bachman
- Nicholas R. Nemecek

Construction

- 10 Alan W. Hagler

Environmental Affairs

- 15 Mario L. Sanchez
- 10 Scott M. Pletka

Finance

- 30 Adrian Valencia
- 10 Evelina P. Jones
- 5 Sarah E. Bohuslav

Fleet Operations

- 20 W.B. Barrett
- 10 Terry B. Nailling

Human Resources

- 25 Mary S. Abright

Office of General Counsel

- 10 Rebecca Blewett

Professional Procurement

- 25 Keith W. Craig
- 20 Paula J. Gordon
- 10 Deron M. Meehan
- Flecianno R. Montgomery

Public Transportation

- 15 Edward A. Gensweider
- 10 Kris S. Dudley
- Vanessa Y. Owens

Right of Way

- 25 Robert E. Harwood
- 10 Jana B. Johnson
- 5 Carol D. Baisy

Strategic Projects

- 10 Benton B. Axen

Support Services

- 20 Paul S. Alvis
- Wesley B. Tinney
- 15 Sandra M. Diaz
- 10 Norman J. Mattson
- Denise A. Wilson

Traffic Operations

- 10 Michael H. Weaver

Retiree Report September 2014



Districts:

Amarillo

- 33 John L. Williams
- 21 Daniel C. McFaul
- 16 Berry R. Brooks

Austin

- 21 Gwen C. Stockbridge

Childress

- 26 Kenneth J. Warren

Corpus Christi

- 28 James A. Woods
- 26 James M. Guerrero

Dallas

- 24 Renee G. Walker
- 22 Ralph D. Hall

Fort Worth

- 20 Jake A. Roydson
- 18 Randal G. Threadgill

Houston

- 31 Deborah H. Chapa

Laredo

- 27 Mauro Galvan Jr.

Lubbock

- 20 Raul O. Cristan

Paris

- 19 Tommy J. Langford

Tyler

- 21 Edward L. Jimenez
- 6 Freddie R. Morris Jr.

Wichita Falls

- 29 Paul E. Wenzel

Yoakum

- 26 Travis D. Mixon Jr.

Divisions/ Offices:

Right of Way

- 24 Darrell W. Kolwes
- 15 Wanda Stafford-Carter

Support Services

- 23 Prudencio Joseph Espitia

Toll Operations

- 25 Sondra C. Lelle

Retiree Report October 2014



Districts:

Atlanta

- 17 David C. Old

Austin

- 27 William W. Benningfield
- 15 Alicia D. Carlile

Bryan

- 11 Ricky L. Willson

Childress

- 21 Presliano G. Rocha

Dallas

- 25 Jose A. Navarrette
- 15 Larry L. Butler

El Paso

- 26 Edmundo Valencia Jr.

Houston

- 30 Robert T. Corbin

Lubbock

- 22 Michael H. James

Odessa

- 32 Douglas E. Paup

Paris

- 27 Tammy B. Sims

San Angelo

- 33 Rosalio G. Longoria Jr.

Wichita Falls

- 22 Eliazar G. Salinas

Yoakum

- 30 Ronald W. Chernosky

Divisions/ Offices:

Aviation

- 26 Edie M. Stimach

Human Resources

- 16 Lewis L. Seales

Civil Rights

- 13 Gloria B. Brown

Right of Way

- 10 Diana L. Gonzalez

Travel Information

- 41 Melissa H. Wilson

In Memoriam

Districts:

Brownwood District

Lizette Chambers Vavrina
Drafting Technician and
Records Keeper
Years of Service: 28
DOD: 11/5/13

Houston District

Christian Fexer
General Transportation
Technician
Years of Service: 10
DOD: 11/22/14

Waco District

Michael W. Lewis
General Transportation
Technician
Years of Service: 3
DOD: 10/20/14

Divisions/ Offices:

Human Resources Division

Ben Abattam
Open Records Coordinator
Years of Service: 32
DOD: 10/30/14

Bright Lights

“It was just the right thing to do...”
– Daniel Mendez



General Transportation Technician Daniel Mendez, of the Austin District Travis Central Maintenance, stands next to Armando Gonzalez and his wife, Diana, at an Austin hospital.

Treat others as you would like to be treated. For one Austin District Travis Central Maintenance employee, Daniel Mendez, this is a motto he takes to heart.

The morning of Sept. 22 started out like any normal day for Mendez. He was making maintenance rounds when he was asked to respond to a guardrail repair request on Loop 360 after a traffic crash in the area. Mendez learned that the driver of the vehicle struck the guardrail, rolled his vehicle multiple times into a nearby ditch and was rushed to the hospital by ambulance.


While making the guardrail repairs, Mendez found the crash victim's cell phone laying near the damaged rail. Knowing how important cell phones are these days, after work, he met the family at the hospital where the crash victim, Armando Gonzalez, was being treated, and gave his family the phone.

Later that week, Mendez went back to the crash site to re-inspect the area for additional guardrail damage. While performing additional checks, he found Gonzalez's wallet. Once again, after work, he arranged a time to drop off the wallet.

When asked why he made such an effort to return these personal items to the crash victim and his family, Mendez responded, "It was just the right thing to do to return these items. It was part of my job to go out to the area and inspect the site, so when I found these items, I knew I had to find a way to get them back to their rightful owner. If it were me, I'd want someone to contact me, so I'm happy to do it for others."

Fortunately, Gonzalez survived the crash and is currently in rehabilitation to treat his injuries. The family shared their gratitude to Mendez through a letter to him which reads, in part, "[We] are forever grateful to you for your kindness."

Daniel Mendez exemplifies public service. He lives by the motto to treat others as you would like to be treated. He sets a great example for all of us with his compassion and dedication, not only to his job, but to the citizens of Texas.

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

UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

Jan. 1

New Year's Day
(All agencies closed)

Jan. 14-16

Tenth Annual Texas
Transportation Forum
(Austin)

Jan. 19

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
(All agencies closed)

Jan. 29

Texas Transportation
Commission Meeting
(Austin)

Feb. 16

Presidents Day
(All agencies closed)

Feb. 26

Texas Transportation
Commission Meeting
(Austin)



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Austin, Texas 78701

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<http://crossroads/>

MAKING TIME MAKES BIG CHANGES

A former high school athlete, Penny Sansom, a planner for Transportation Planning and Development in the Paris District, had lost the motivation to exercise. When her daughter started college, Sansom had the time and drive to exercise and change her diet. She not only feels better, she's lost 55 pounds. This is her Journey to Wellness.

Even though I played sports all through high school, once I got married and had a family, it seemed I never had the time or the "want" to exercise. As my daughter got older I had more time, so I played soccer in a women's league. But I was still overweight because I hadn't changed my diet.

When my daughter started college, I had even more free time. In June 2011, I started walking several miles a day at the local track. I felt better and enjoyed the distraction. It was better than sitting home watching TV. By August, I was still walking but had only lost five pounds because I had not changed my diet.

Several co-workers had started participating in a "Biggest Loser" competition. I didn't officially join the competition, but I did start watching what I ate and using the My Fitness Pal app. The weight started coming off. Another co-worker and I joined Jazzercise and I have loved it! Thanks to our wellness program, I am able to go three times a week for the noon classes and several of us carpool.

I'm down 55 pounds. I'm still a work in progress, but I have made some lifelong friends at Jazzercise and my daughter and I have completed several 5K races. Granted, I haven't been able to run the entire course — that's my next goal — but I've been able to finish them, something I could never have done several years ago!

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



TxDOT photo

Penny Sansom (left) and her daughter before her weight loss.



TxDOT photo

Sansom (left) shows off some of her weight loss.

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

