

The background of the entire page is a dramatic image of a total solar eclipse. A bright sun is partially obscured by a dark, circular shadow, creating a glowing ring of light around the perimeter of the shadow. The sun's rays are visible as a bright, hazy glow. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blacks, dark blues, and bright oranges and yellows from the sun's light.

ECLIPSE OVER TEXAS

TxDOT prepares for a rare astronomical event with extensive traffic and safety measures to accommodate crowds from all over.

As Texas travelers look to the sky, TxDOT will be prepared on the ground

MARC WILLIAMS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TxDOT gets to be part of history this spring. On April 8, Texas will experience a Total Solar Eclipse when the moon completely blocks the sun. Texas hasn't seen this type of eclipse since 1878 — 10 years before the Texas State Capitol was built.

As visitors travel from all over to see this rare solar event, TxDOT will be ready to assist with traffic flow and other safety measures. This is truly an agency-wide effort. Our Maintenance Division has been leading the response preparations with support from the Communications, Travel, Traffic Safety, Fleet Operations, Support Services and Construction divisions, and all 25 districts.

We learned a lot from the annular eclipse back in October. Some of our affected districts moved additional staff into impacted areas. Fuel cubes were made available in case of fuel supply issues. TxDOT radio coordinators staged and worked with partner agencies in the Middle Rio Grande radio system to ensure the system stayed operational.

To further prepare for April, TxDOT districts have been meeting with local and state partners for more than a year to coordinate the needs of local governments.

The Communications and Travel divisions have developed a major public awareness campaign to get litter prevention messages out to the public. TxDOT is also urging the public to not park on the shoulder or right of way during the eclipse. This is being accomplished with billboards, media reports, and social media.

Our Construction and Maintenance divisions are looking at what projects may need to be temporarily halted to allow free flow of traffic. We're also in regular contact with other state partners like the Texas Division of Emergency Management and other DOTs



that have either experienced a total eclipse or will also be impacted by the April event.

You can read more about TxDOT's preparations for the Total Solar Eclipse in this issue's cover story on page 8.

Thanks to everyone helping with this momentous effort. Even if you're not directly involved with preparations, everyone can do their part to be safe during the Total Solar Eclipse. As travelers across Texas focus on the sky above, we'll be focused on preparedness and safety on the ground. ■



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SHINING STARS



Across the state, TxDOT employees go above and beyond.

Bolden jumps to the rescue

ATLANTA DISTRICT

Disaster can strike in an instant, and how one reacts in a crucial moment can reveal much about their character. Equipment Operator Elton Bolden with the Atlanta District demonstrated courage and selflessness when he immediately jumped into action to rescue a motorist from a burning vehicle last spring.

Bolden was sitting in his dump truck with a trailer attached to it on SH 77 in Morris County. He was parked on the shoulder, safely away from the travel lane, waiting on his crew to move some equipment. As he sat there watching the traffic, he noticed a car in his rear-view mirror veer onto the shoulder, as if it were going to pass the truck it was traveling behind. Bolden thought to himself that certainly the car's driver would move off the shoulder back into their travel lane. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

Suddenly, Bolden's truck shook violently. He said the impact of the car hitting the trailer attached to his dump truck sounded like a bomb exploding.

"I knew whoever was in the car had to be hurt," he said. "I was wearing my seat belt and was okay, but it shook me up."

The front portion of the car had burst into flames. Without hesitation, Bolden jumped out of his vehicle and ran to check on the driver, who was clearly in pain and in shock. Working together, Bolden and another motorist who had stopped to help called 911, used Bolden's fire extinguisher to temper the flames, and tried to calm the driver.

Bolden quickly realized the driver would have to be moved from the car. His fire extinguisher had not been enough to extinguish the flames. The fire and the smoke were growing stronger. Bolden and the other good Samaritan carefully moved the driver away from the burning car and waited for emergency responders to



Elton Bolden showed courage and selflessness when he rescued a motorist from a burning vehicle.



arrive. Bolden, along with others who arrived to assist, worked to keep the driver as calm and as still as possible as they waited for the arrival of a medical helicopter.

After the injured driver was airlifted, Bolden and his coworkers inspected the scene. The impact of the crash had bent the steel back plate on the dump truck and moved the vehicle forward several feet. No skid marks were found on the roadway.

"I am so proud of the way Mr. Bolden reacted to this very serious situation," said District Engineer Rebecca Wells. "He acted with courage and set a great example for others to follow."

The events of that day stay with Bolden, who is thankful that the driver survived the crash. He's also thankful that he works with crew members who are serious about safety. ■

Story contributed by Heather Deaton

Send information or any thank-you emails, letters or calls you or your colleagues receive to TxDOT@txdot.gov so we can recognize TxDOT employee achievements.

ENGINEERING ASSISTANTS GO TO WASHINGTON

In January, TxDOT sent 10 engineering assistants from across the state to the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. TxDOT employees joined thousands of transportation professionals from around the world to learn about the latest in transportation research at the meeting. The engineering assistants had the opportunity to meet with TxDOT leadership and U.S. Rep. Jake Ellzey. They even contributed to the event when Md Al Amin, engineering assistant with the Austin District, presented his doctoral research in a lectern series and poster session.

The Transportation Research Board, part of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, mobilizes expertise, experience and knowledge to solve transportation-related challenges. Its annual meeting draws tens of thousands of attendees to learn about the industry's cutting-edge developments.

The engineering assistants were selected from those working on research projects with the Research and Technology Implementation Division and those in the final stages of obtaining their professional engineer licenses.

"Our engineering assistants bring such energy and passion to our department," said Brandye Hendrickson, deputy executive director for planning and administration. "We really wanted to use the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting as an opportunity to expose some of our best and brightest to the research, sessions and networking that happens there."

Attendees said highlights from the trip were meeting with TxDOT leadership, including Executive Director Marc Williams, and a tour of the U.S. Capitol.

"Getting to network with engineering assistants from across the state was a great opportunity," said Ernesto Jaimes, engineering assistant with the Austin District.

Other attendees enjoyed the industry insights and educational opportunities at the annual meeting.

"During the conference, I saw the direction the pavement industry is taking for updating pavement designs and specifications," said Sarah De La O, engineering assistant



Engineering assistants from around TxDOT attended the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.: (l to r) Ernesto Jaimes, Jordan Baker, Dina Marin Martinez, Isaac Stilwell, Ana Saenz, Malachi Smith, Sarah De La O, Heidi Munoz, Md Al Amin and Miles Pearson. Photo by Michele Mulryan

with the El Paso District. "The lectures also deepened my understanding of pavement materials as a whole."

The 2024 annual meeting included more than 600 workshops and other sessions.

"I feel like we will see a huge return on our investment in terms of what our attendees will bring back and implement," Hendrickson said. "Also, I hope it demonstrates TxDOT's commitment to their learning and professional growth." ■

Story contributed by Shannon McIntire and Michele Mulryan

I AM A... FACILITIES COORDINATOR

CHILDRESS DISTRICT



“
The Childress
District is family and
TxDOT is family.

”
CORY TAYLOR



ory Taylor, facilities coordinator with the Childress District, grew up in the small town of Electra, Texas, outside of Wichita Falls. He moved to Childress during his sophomore year of high school. He was a summer hire in 1996 and has worked for TxDOT off and on for nearly 10 years. Before starting his current position in 2021, he had many roles with the agency, including design technician and traffic systems specialist.

Taylor has two daughters, Londen and Laila. He has a passion for the outdoors, especially the mountains. He frequently visits Colorado, a state with 58 peaks above 14,000 feet in elevation. Taylor has hiked eight of the “fourteener” peaks, with 50 more to go. He also enjoys camping, fishing, rafting and paddleboarding. He is a dog lover, with six of his own at home.

WHAT DOES A FACILITIES COORDINATOR DO?

Facilities coordinators manage the day-to-day functions of all the facilities in the district. This includes scheduling vendors to perform preventative maintenance on our generator, HVAC systems, overhead doors, plumbing and electrical. We also manage the system for tracking our district assets. We’re also involved with enhancement projects including new construction, renovations and demolition.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF YOUR POSITION?

At the moment, the most challenging part is the shortage of material and the length of delivery dates. It can be very challenging keeping facilities in good condition when there are supply chain issues.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR POSITION?

I work with a great group of guys. We never get bored because there is always something or someone needing our expertise. Each person on the team has knowledge in several different fields that we can all draw from. I also like the fact that not every day is the same, and I get to work on something different most of the time.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE CHILDRESS DISTRICT?

The Childress District is family and TxDOT is family. There is always someone willing to help in the Childress District. We love our small town and our small district. ■

OVERSHADOWED:

How TxDOT prepared for back-to-back eclipses

On April 8, the moon will throw some serious shade. That marks the date of the first total solar eclipse over Texas since 1878, and the last total eclipse viewable from the U.S. until 2044. The moon will be in perfect position between the sun and the Earth to completely block the light of the sun. With 480 miles of Texas within the “path of totality” — stretching from Texas to Maine — TxDOT is bracing for a swarm of visitors to the state to witness this rare occurrence.

“Many Texans will be able to see a total solar eclipse from their backyards,” said Matthew Heinze, emergency management coordinator for the Maintenance Division. “And residents of neighboring states and other counties will travel here to see it,

resulting in additional vehicles on state roads. We expect more than a million people to travel to, through and within Texas to get to the path of totality to see the eclipse.”

In fact, some rural areas could potentially see a 200% increase in traffic during the eclipse.

“People will literally stop their cars on the shoulder, pull out a tent and camp in the grass the day before — or even just stop in the middle of the highway when it happens — to watch,” Heinze said. “We know, because it happened in other states during the 2017 eclipse. But the highway is not a place to park.”

To prepare for the eclipse, TxDOT staff have met with other Texas emergency partners and sought advice



On April 8, parts of Texas will experience the state's first total solar eclipse since 1878. The event is expected to bring lots of visitors and traffic.

from states recently in the path of total eclipses like Kentucky and Wyoming. All divisions and districts in, near, or on the way to the path of totality have planned for the event for months. Even the Aviation Division has readied for the increased air traffic from people visiting the state.

Some preparations include pausing roadway maintenance and construction that use temporary lane closures on major roads in the path of totality around the time of the eclipse, readying a portable radio trailer in case cellphone towers are affected, and using fuel cubes to supply TxDOT fleet vehicles to lessen demand on gas stations.

To help people plan for the eclipse, TxDOT's Communications Division has set up a "Texas Eclipse" webpage on TxDOT.gov.

"You can find travel information, driving tips and even weather forecasts that will be updated as the eclipse approaches," said Communications Division Director Diann Hodges. "We've even included a very Texas-themed animation at the top of the page featuring a cowboy lassoing the moon."

With more visitors to the Lone Star state, we can expect more trash. According to Heinze, traffic

and litter increased during the eclipse last October and it was only a partial eclipse, a more common occurrence. April will be a total eclipse, and its impact could be much greater.

"Litter was our second-biggest concern in October," Heinze said, "Which is why TxDOT had a lot of communications about it."

In fact, the Travel Information Division, which manages TxDOT's litter-prevention programs, has been preparing for both eclipses for two years.

"We've met with internal TxDOT folks and teams who handle tourism at the state level, including our partners at Travel Texas and Texas Parks and Wildlife, and with communities in the path of the eclipse," said Travel Information Division Director Joan Henderson. "It's been front-of-mind for us for a while."

Texas Highways has featured multiple articles on the eclipse in the magazine and on its website and social media. It also has a section on its online events calendar devoted to eclipse events around the state. Digital kiosks at Travel Information Centers will feature eclipse information and counselors have talking points prepared. Anti-littering messages will appear on billboards and at gas stations for several weeks before the eclipse. And DriveTexas.org team members will be on-call to assist districts and the Travel Information Centers.

TxDOT's Don't mess with Texas® campaign will sponsor a mobile, anti-litter tent in Waco, where the total eclipse will last for 4 minutes and 13 seconds. The tent will provide information, games and free giveaways to the public.

If you venture out to see this rare phenomenon, do it safely, be ready for traffic and protect your eyes. But also know that many districts and divisions of TxDOT stand ready to help.

Story contributed by Kelly E. Lindner

ECLIPSE TIPS



Use specialized eye protection to watch the event.



Check DriveTexas.org for current driving conditions.



Be patient. Many people will be visiting and traffic will be heavy in areas with the best viewing spots.



Don't park along or on highways, shoulders or in the grass.



Don't litter!

DURING SEVERE WEATHER

a little help goes a long way

PARIS DISTRICT

The Paris District is upping its game for responding to winter weather events thanks to a little help from some friends.

Last December, the Paris District held a training session for Texas A&M Forest Service personnel to familiarize them with TxDOT equipment used during winter weather events. TxDOT and the A&M Forest Service have a history of collaboration and, in 2022, the two agencies established a formal agreement to make it easier for them to aid each other in emergencies.

The agreement allows A&M Forest Service personnel to operate TxDOT-owned and rented equipment. In the Paris District, Director of Operations Tommy Henderson decided to arrange a training for Forest Service employees on the equipment they would be using before the winter season began.

“Here in the Paris District, I-30 is a crucial corridor that needs to be kept open,” said Tad Eudy, district maintenance administrator. “It’s caused challenges for us in past winter events. In our emergency response plan, we divided the corridor into 10 segments and identified some gaps in our personnel coverage. That’s when we contacted the A&M Forest Service to see if they could help us.”

The A&M Forest Service was glad to oblige so the district identified 10 positions their personnel could support.

“They don’t operate the same type of equipment we have,” Eudy said. “So, we trained about 15 employees before the winter season officially kicked off. It was also a good chance for them to meet our crew members.”

The equipment included herbicide units for spraying brine, dump trucks for spreading de-icing material and motor graders that plow snow.

“TxDOT has worked closely over the years with the Forest Service on wildfire response and storm clean up,” Eudy said. “This agreement is a continuation of that cooperation. It’s nice to know it’s there.”



James Smith (in orange) with the Paris District shows Cooper Criss with the Texas A&M Forest Service how to operate equipment used during winter weather events. Photo by Michael Murphy

In fact, not long after the training, the district activated its emergency plan for the hard freeze in mid-January that affected much of the state.

“They worked a shift with us,” Eudy said. “Luckily, it wasn’t a big event, but it was a good chance to get some real-world experience. Everything went very smoothly.”

In fact, some Forest Service employees asked if they could be assigned to the same offices again for future activations.

“Everyone at the Forest Service was very positive and wanted to come back,” Eudy said. “We try to be good hosts since they are definitely helping us out.”

The extra help can make a difference for both TxDOT employees and the traveling public.

“Wide-ranging emergency events that affect multiple districts can put a strain on our employees,” Eudy said. “We are a small district so it’s all-hands-on-deck with 12-hour shifts day and night. And employees are often dealing with the effects of the storm on their own homes and families. But we all understand the importance to the public of keeping our roads open and traffic flowing. Knowing we have some additional resources makes a huge difference.” ■

Story contributed by Shannon McIntire

TxDOT AMONG WINNERS OF Intersection Safety Challenge

TRAFFIC SAFETY DIVISION

The U.S. Department of Transportation has announced the winners of its Intersection Safety Challenge, awarding TxDOT for efforts to improve pedestrian safety at intersections.

“Pedestrians and bicyclists are always at a higher risk on the road, especially at busy intersections.”

MICHAEL CHACON
Traffic Safety Division Director

TxDOT and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute received a \$1.9 million federal grant earlier this year to develop a next-generation intersection that promises to improve safety for the most at-risk road users.

“Pedestrians and bicyclists are always at a higher risk on the road, especially at busy intersections,” said Traffic Safety Division Director Michael Chacon. “This new technology is proving to be a lifesaver, literally. Everyone involved in this project should be proud of the work they’ve accomplished.”

One in five fatal crashes in Texas involve a pedestrian and one in 50 involve a bicyclist. The Smarter Intersections Project utilizes advanced communications technology to alert pedestrians and bicyclists to buses making

turns. The project uses cellular signals transmitted from transit buses and emergency vehicles to hardware installed at intersections.

First tested at two intersections in Texas, the new technology collects pedestrian behavior data using LiDAR sensors. The software can reliably observe pedestrian behavior and help reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles at signalized intersections.

USDOT’s Challenge aims to transform roadway intersection safety by incentivizing new and emerging technologies that identify and address unsafe conditions involving vehicles, and vulnerable road users at intersections.

For the first stage of the Challenge, USDOT received 120 innovative concept papers and selected 15 for prize awards. ■

Story contributed by Ryan LaFontaine



WEAR BLUE DAY FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS

TxDOT employees around the state wore blue on Jan. 11 to show solidarity for victims of human trafficking and raise awareness. To see many more pictures, visit [Crossroads](#).



The Laredo District turns out in force.



The San Antonio Construction Office stands in support.



The Robertson County Maintenance Office joins the fight.



The Leadership Training group takes part.



The Tyler District headquarters shows their support.



The Harlingen Travel Information Center stands tall.

DOUBLE VISION: IDENTICAL TWINS

lead maintenance teams

ATLANTA DISTRICT

Sometimes, it takes two. Identical twins Michael and Robert Smith in the Atlanta District are best friends, coworkers and even have the same job title: maintenance supervisor. But they took separate paths to get there.

Robert reflects on the journey with amusement. In high school, they were both considered for the same summer-hire position at TxDOT. Robert got the job. He's still with TxDOT 28 years later, working in the Jefferson maintenance office.

"The supervisor who hired me often liked to joke that he hired the wrong brother," Robert said, chuckling. "But I'm still here."

As for Michael, he worked in the private sector but interviewed with TxDOT again 16 years ago. This time, he got the job. He is based in the Marshall maintenance office.

"In the private sector, I was working nights and missing my kids' activities," Michael said.

The two flash matching smiles and both enjoy hunting and golf. They have never cared to be too far from one another, currently living just two miles apart. Recounting the story of their births, Michael quips that he was born first.



The Atlanta District boasts identical twin maintenance supervisors Robert (left) and Michael Smith. Photo by Heather Deaton

"Our mom thought she was having a big girl," Michael said. "The nurse had to go get the doctor to come back in the room."

At work in the Atlanta District, distinguishing between the twins can be a challenge, setting the stage for amusing mix-ups. It's helpful to know that Robert usually wears a necklace, but they take cases of mistaken identity in stride.

"The other day in the district office, someone said they had just seen my brother and he was wearing the same hat. So, I switched hats," Michael said. "But even if they call us the wrong name, we still answer."

Because it's all old hat to them.

"We dealt with it during school, and we're still going through it today," Robert said. "We just go with it." ■

Story contributed by Heather Deaton

100 YEARS

maintaining Texas roads

MAINTENANCE DIVISION



Maintenance Division staff stand before TxDOT's Centennial Truck for their 100-year anniversary. This 1918 Liberty Truck was restored for TxDOT's Centennial in 2017. Photo by Jen Reel

The Maintenance Division celebrated 100 years of operations last December — a mile marker well worth celebrating since the division has seen many changes and challenges over the last century.

The Texas Highway Department, as TxDOT was called then, created the Maintenance Division in 1923 to take over the maintenance of Texas roads from county governments due to federal legislation. Today, the Maintenance Division has more than 100 employees who help support district maintenance employees around the state. Texas roads have also changed a great deal since the 1920s.

“In 1928, the division had 18,000 highway miles and 10,000 of those miles were just plain dirt,” said Maintenance Division Director James Stevenson.

“Today we maintain more than 200,000 lane miles of pavement.”

Outside of the roads themselves, the division has seen two big changes over the last century, according to Stevenson. One is equipment. While in the 1940s, you might’ve seen a man using a donkey-pulled tractor to cut down vegetation in the right of way, today the equipment is much more advanced and specific.

“Most of our equipment is purchased with certain functions in mind, so it is a lot more specialized than it was 100 years ago,” Stevenson said.

The other big change, said Stevenson, is making safety the top priority.

“It has become the biggest consideration for all our operations,” Stevenson said. “We perform our work activities with safety in mind from start to finish.”

BARNETT REFLECTS ON NEARLY 50 YEARS AT TxDOT

There's also been many challenges over the last 100 years that have made maintaining Texas roads difficult. In the war-time years of the 1940s, for example, there were labor and material shortages.

But for every challenge, the division had solutions: In the 1940s, the Maintenance Division increased road maintenance as army tanks training churned up the pavement on rural Texas roads. This continued throughout the war. In the 1960s, the division used temporary war-time bridges (able to handle heavy loads like tanks) to replace subpar bridges. TxDOT also acquired a large amount of road equipment from the Army, which gave TxDOT the ability to bolster its maintenance force.

This can-do attitude continues today. In the 21st century, the division has risen to the challenge of multiple disasters.

During Hurricane Harvey in 2017, the division closed flooded roadways, facilitated traffic flow on evacuation routes, assisted utility crews in clearing electrical lines, removed debris from roads, and repaired and replaced signs and traffic signals.

During the recent ice events, the division patrolled and treated roads (before, during and after freezing temperatures), and assisted emergency responders. This was an especially difficult task when the entire state was hit by snow and ice during Winter Storm Uri in 2021.

COVID-19 didn't slow the division down as then-Division Director Dan Stacks trailblazed new guidance to work under pandemic conditions.

And when the entire agency was impacted by a ransomware attack, the division, along with the other divisions and districts, quickly returned to all-paper letting as a temporary solution.

The biggest challenge, though, is adjusting to always changing conditions to keep Texas roads well-maintained.

"We rise to these challenges with items such as safety innovations, funding, equipment, additional personnel, training, and good policies and procedures," Stevenson said.

Despite all the challenges, the division had its highest recorded pavement scores ever in 2023.

Congratulations, Maintenance Division, on a successful 100 years! ■

Story contributed by Kelly E. Lindner



*Gary Barnett hired Paul James in 2001, but after Barnett's retirement and return to TxDOT, James is now his boss.
Photo by Heather Deaton*

During the Maintenance Division's Centennial Celebration in Austin last December, the crowd heard from TxDOT's fourth oldest employee, Gary "Bubba" Barnett, 81, who's spent almost a half-century at TxDOT.

Barnett started with TxDOT in the Atlanta District in 1971 — where he also works today as a traffic systems specialist. He started at \$2.65 an hour on an electric shop team of two, who worked on signals, telephones, two-way radios and anything else with wires.

"If it had wires running through it, we worked on it," he said. "There weren't too many traffic signals in rural East Texas at that point in time."

Barnett retired from TxDOT in 2004 but returned in 2005. Today, he works with six other employees in the signal shop handling signals, illumination and dynamic messaging signs and intelligent transportation systems.

Barnett has seen TxDOT advance in work practices, safety, communications and technology.

Barnett's current boss, Traffic Systems Specialist Paul James, 43, is actually the young "whippersnapper" Barnett hired in 2001.

"As I recall, he could barely read a multimeter," Barnett said. "Turned out this was one of my better choices in life. He continues to be an inspiration to me."

"The man built and trained me, and that guidance has made me successful and led me to the position I am in today," James said. ■

BROWNWOOD

District debuts hard hat stickers to reward safety

BROWNWOOD DISTRICT

The Brownwood District takes great pride in its strong safety culture. The district has a hallway lined with photos and plaques representing years of teamwork and looking out for each other. To continue the momentum, the district recently held a contest to design a sticker for hard hats to reward employees who met their safety goals.

“The intent is to create and celebrate a safety culture that is unique to Brownwood with a sense of pride and ownership,” said Brownwood District Engineer Greg Cedillo, who came up with the idea. “It was something I always wanted to do. There were several entries with some great artwork.”

Employees districtwide submitted great designs full of color and meaningful safety slogans. The winning sticker was selected by a panel of judges that included division directors and district engineers.

Unveiled at the Brownwood District Safety Awards Banquet last year, the winning sticker was designed by Alan Ogden, general engineering technician. It incorporates the Texas flag, the Mission Zero logo and the words “Mission Accomplished.”

The sticker was distributed at the Safety Banquet to employees who met all five safety goals. Going forward, all employees who meet these goals will be awarded a hard hat sticker each year.

In fiscal year 2023, the Brownwood District met two of its five safety goals, with no lost time injuries and no lost production days.

Ogden explained that he came up with the design due to the inspiration of Mission Zero, and getting the mission accomplished. He said he wanted to bring in some color and that the Texas Flag did just that.

“I think it’s awesome to win and have this legacy at TxDOT,” Ogden said. “To know that it is going to be used even after I am gone is pretty cool! ■

Story submitted by Lisa Tipton



Alan Ogden designed the winning hard hat safety sticker for the Brownwood District’s safety program.

PHARR DISTRICT HONORED FOR environmental excellence



The Pharr District won first place at the Environmental Achievement Awards: (l to r) Doug Booher, Pete Alvarez, Nolan Nicolas, Dora Robles, Rex Costley and Marc Williams. Photo by Michael Amador

Safety for wildlife and travelers was front and center for the 2023 TxDOT Environmental Achievement Awards. Presented at Short Course in October, the award honors district teams for projects that go above and beyond to protect and enhance the natural and human environment.

This year's winner was the Pharr District with their FM 1847 Widening Project. The project installed wildlife corridors allowing the endangered ocelot and other wildlife to safely cross the road while also enhancing safety for the traveling public. In addition, the project was able to preserve 20 wetlands and their native vegetation and habitat.

The Pharr District has won a total of four awards — the most Environmental Achievement Awards for any district. The district has also earned three runners-up and three honorable mentions for their projects.

The Yoakum District placed second for the award. When an old swing bridge needed replacing on FM 457 in Sargent, the district proposed an environmentally-friendly way to cross the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway to a popular weekend spot along the Texas coast.

The new bridge had to be tall enough for barge traffic while still allowing uninterrupted travel for motorists and emergency responders. With the Gulf of Mexico on one side and the San Bernard National

Wildlife Refuge on the other, a special structure was needed to fit the space with minimal impacts to the environment. Yoakum designers proposed a corkscrew bridge with a curved shape and short width that decreased impacts to the surrounding areas.

Additional environmental considerations included directional lighting to keep skies dark for nesting sea turtles, the planting of Gulf smooth cordgrass to protect tidal fringe wetlands from waterway traffic and biological monitors during construction to protect wildlife.

The San Antonio District received an honorable mention for the final segment of SH 211 in west Bexar County.

The segment crossed protected habitat for endangered cave dwelling species. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the district preserved more than 40 acres of habitat for the survival and recovery of the species. In addition, the road design directs stormwater and potential contaminants away from critical habitats and into clay-lined drainage ditches.

The project also included a pedestrian corridor to keep neighborhood residents safe and connected.

Congratulations to the Pharr, Yoakum and San Antonio districts for their commitment to our environment while achieving our mission of “Connecting You With Texas.” ■

Story contributed by Kat Goldsmith

TxDOT CREWS BLAZE A TRAIL during a January freeze



Pretreating roads was part of the preparation for January's arctic blast in the Tyler District. Photo by Jeff Williford

It's not every day in Texas that most of the state hits freezing temperatures. But when it does happen, TxDOT crews go above and beyond to keep the roads clear and safe during winter weather.

TxDOT crews across the state are always ready for the next winter storm, and they proved that with the cold snap over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend in January.

More than 3,000 employees worked to pretreat and monitor roads amid snow, ice, sleet and extreme cold over several days. It got as cold as 1 degree Fahrenheit in Amarillo, not factoring in wind chills.

Crews applied more than 754,000 gallons of brine – a water and salt solution that helps prevent ice and snow from bonding to surfaces – to roads across the state both before and during the weather events.

“Our exceptional employees worked in some incredibly cold temperatures, leaving the warmth of their homes to keep the traveling public safe,” said Matthew Heinze, emergency management coordinator with the Maintenance Division. “Many people worked the night shifts to keep everything up and running overnight. Everyone involved worked more than their normal schedule and worked through the holiday.”

And while the roads were prepped with brine, other employees took steps to make sure drivers were prepped, too. More than 200 dynamic message signs along Texas highways displayed safety messages warning drivers to be aware of winter driving conditions.

On social media, TxDOT kept local areas up to date with current conditions, reminding everyone to check DriveTexas.org and take precautions before driving. Because of the frigid temperatures and winter weather, TxDOT urged drivers to stay home if they could during the storm.

While the winter weather didn't quite reach every corner of the state, TxDOT's response did. Crews and equipment from areas that had warmer temperatures moved to help other districts and counties that needed a larger response. TxDOT also helped other state agencies and local governments.

“These types of major events are not worked by one individual,” Heinze said. “It takes a team.”

Their efforts didn't go unnoticed, either. Hundreds of Texans responded on social media, thanking TxDOT crews for their hard work.

“So grateful for all the work they do for us to get to work and home each day,” said one commenter. “Thank you to all of you.” ■

Story contributed by Laura Butterbrodt

NEARLY 100-YEAR-OLD pavement runs through historic Texas

WACO DISTRICT

A quiet stretch of roadway running through Limestone County has served as an important corridor for a historic Texas town for nearly a century. And it's only been paved once.



Texas Loop 442 in the Waco District still has its original pavement from 1929. Photos by Jake Smith

State Loop 442 in Tehuacana in the Waco District is one of the oldest state roads in Texas that still has its original pavement. In 1929, TxDOT paved a section of roadway from Elm creek to Mexia, and 94 years later that same pavement lies there today.

After recently analyzing a core sample of Texas Loop 442, engineers determined that the road is in great condition for its age, exhibiting very little distress.

“We haven’t done any major work to Loop 442, just minor patching,” said Roger Brooks, TxDOT Limestone County maintenance supervisor. “Loop 442 has been a good road in my time at TxDOT.”

Texas Loop 442 sees approximately 150 to 350 vehicles a day on average. The adjacent SH 171 sees more than 2,000 vehicles a day in the same area. Although relatively few people drive the loop today, the rich history of Tehuacana can still be discovered by those who travel along the roadway.

Established in 1840, Tehuacana is named after the first known inhabitants of the area, the Tawakoni Native American tribe. In the early 1900s, the town

experienced an economic boom, with a small-business district that included a lumber yard, grocery store, hotel and oil facility.

In 1921, the Mexia oil boom resulted in a population explosion in both Mexia and Tehuacana. Tehuacana’s population jumped to 615 in the 1920s, around the time Loop 442 was paved.

However, the Great Depression would wreak havoc on the economic success of the town.

Another blow to Tehuacana came during World War II. The town lost its rail service between Hubbard and Mexia when a track was abandoned.

While Tehuacana and its economic vitality ebbed and flowed like most small towns, one thing remained the town’s bedrock: its people.

“This town used to run on an all credit basis,” said Doug East, current resident and former mayor of Tehuacana. “You’d go to the grocery store, and everybody would have their ticket and pay it every month. Credit cards ain’t nothing new to Tehuacana.”



A cross section of a concrete sample from Loop 442.

Current Mayor Janis Johnson perhaps said it best.

“It’s a small town, where it’s family. You had a lot of aunts and uncles who raised the community,” she said.

Tehuacana today has a city hall, postal service, two churches and a volunteer fire department. While Texas Loop 442 may be rarely traveled by the out-of-towner, the old pavement still connects the people of Tehuacana. ■

Story contributed by Jake Smith

NEW LACTATION SUPPORT BENEFIT FOR PARENTS

Having a newborn can be challenging, especially when working at the same time. That's why TxDOT added a new benefit for new parents called pumppotting.

Pumppotting is a digital platform for breastfeeding and baby feeding support. The mobile app connects new parents to a community of people on the same journey to help them achieve their feeding goals for their baby. Pumppotting strives to make breastfeeding, nursing, pumping and baby feeding less isolating and more supportive at every stage.

Returning to the workplace often impedes an employee's ability to maintain a breastfeeding routine. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 80% of new mothers in the U.S. begin breastfeeding. By the time a child is six months old, only 25% of those mothers will be exclusively breastfeeding due to the challenges involved.

Employers play a pivotal role in fostering a supportive environment by implementing family-friendly policies to ensure a smoother transition for new parents. This new benefit is a complement to TxDOT's existing nursing policies.

The pumppotting app includes:

- Interactive support groups and online sessions with feeding experts.
- A community of parent peers.
- Certified lactation consultants to answer questions.
- Feeding goals tracker.
- A places-to-pump map and locator.

The app is available to any TxDOT employee and their spouse or partner. TxDOT is committed to helping growing families achieve their feeding goals. Whether breastfeeding, pumping, formula feeding or using a combination of methods, employees can access pumppotting and all its features.

we're proud to help you
feed both your *family*
and your career.



Anyone interested can download the pumppotting app for either Apple or Android users. Use the code: TxDOTpumps (case sensitive) to gain access.

Offering pumppotting reflects the agency's support of new parents and signifies a step towards fostering a workplace culture that recognizes the challenges faced by growing families.

Contact the Wellness Team at wellness@txdot.gov for more information. ■



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

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 April 26.



Identified:



Congratulations to our first identifier David Young (SAT).

Last edition's photo featured the Empty Saddle Monument in Dalhart, designed by Western artist Bobby Dycke and dedicated in 1940.

Others identifying the photo were Lyndol Irby (TRV), Glynda Chu (CMD), Victoria Villarreal (ELP), Joseph Hagler (LFK), Chris Cowen (SJT), Peggy Miller (TRV) and Kim Deal (LFK).

UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

March 28
**TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION MEETING**
(Austin)

March 29
GOOD FRIDAY
(Optional holiday)

April 25
**TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION MEETING**
(Austin)

TRAFFIC SAFETY EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION for safety efforts

TRAFFIC SAFETY DIVISION

The Traffic Safety Division has received multiple national awards for its driver outreach campaigns and operational improvements.

Two 2023 National Association of Government Communicators' Blue Pencil & Gold Screen Awards were awarded to the division for its distracted driving public service announcement campaign. NAGC Blue Pencil & Gold Screen Awards are an annual international awards program that recognizes superior government communication products in more than 40 categories.



Traffic Safety's distracted driver education campaign won a Blue Pencil & Gold Screen Award for its "Spaghetti" PSA that uses humor to warn to about the dangers of texting while driving.

The public service announcement "Spaghetti" won first place in the Public Service Announcement – Short category. The PSA "Grocery List" received the Award of Excellence in the same category.

These PSAs use humor to convey a serious message: Texting while driving, even about simple things like dinner, can distract and cause crashes.

In addition, the National Operations Center of Excellence presented the Traffic Safety Division's Transportation Systems Management and Operations Program (TSMO) with the top award in the Agency Improvement category for the TxDOT TSMO Program – From Planning to Implementation. TxDOT is one of four category winners chosen from cities, counties, metropolitan planning organizations, regional and state agencies, and private sector organizations throughout the country.

TSMO focuses on operational improvements that can maintain and restore the performance of the existing transportation system. TxDOT leadership, divisions, districts, partner agencies and consultants have identified strategies, strengths, weaknesses and focus areas.

The TSMO program incorporates aspects of Traffic Management Systems throughout the project lifecycle. TMS includes over-height vehicle detection and warning; wrong-way driver detection and warning; connected work zones; statewide video sharing; Highway Emergency Linked Platform Alerts; connected traffic signals and truck parking availability systems.

Congratulations to the Traffic Safety Division for an outstanding year! ■

Story contributed by Ann Hatchitt

Sheetal Patel

EL PASO DISTRICT

Sheetal Patel

TRANSPORTATION ENGINEER SUPERVISOR

Sheetal Patel, transportation engineer supervisor with the El Paso District, joined TxDOT in 2015. In her time with the agency, she's been a transportation engineer for the district's design section and a pavement engineer for the district's lab. She became a lead transportation engineer in 2019 and was promoted to her current position last year. She received her bachelor's in civil engineering from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in India, and her master's in environmental engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, cooking, baking and spending time with her husband, her daughter and her dog, a maltipoo.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

Austria, because of its beautiful scenery.

Where should folks eat in El Paso if they visit?

Julio's Mexican Food and Elemei Restaurant.

What do you love most about your position?

I love challenges and learning new things, and that is exactly what this position gives me. Having my supervisor and district engineer put their faith in me by giving me responsibility for major projects is the biggest compliment I could ever receive.

What are you most proud of?

In 2023, my husband and I designed our dreamhouse. It's a 100% custom home. The major focal point of the design is a wooden carved swing that we imported from India that hung in my grandparents' house for 50 years.

What makes your grandparents' swing special to you?

I spent my summer breaks on that swing as a kid. My grandfather was one of my favorite people. On that swing he told me something I never forgot: "If you equip yourself with knowledge and education, you will never need anything else to help you shine." The swing in my living room is a symbol of his wisdom.



Baking or cooking?

Both! I love to try new recipes, and my husband and daughter love to taste-test.

Do you cook for your coworkers?

Whenever there's a work event, I bring desserts and they go fast. I always try to bring something new, but I enjoy making cr me br l e and tiramisu.

What is a maltipoo?

It's a cross between a maltese and a poodle. We surprised our daughter with one on her birthday.

What makes your dog special?

Her name is Buttercup, and she is a diva. She loves attention and is super spoiled. She has her own dog condo that has a floor-to ceiling-window, a bed and portraits of her on the wall.

What do you like to read?

I love books by female chief executive officers. I enjoyed *My Life in Full* by Indra Nooyi, former CEO and chair of PepsiCo. *Good Power* by Ginni Rometty, former IBM CEO, is another good one.

What is your favorite TV show?

My favorite show is *Friends*, but I haven't been able to watch it since Matthew Perry died. His character, Chandler, was my favorite. ■

All Across TxDOT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

HOUSTON DISTRICT

ConnectSmart wins Francis B. Francois Award for Innovation

The Houston District's ConnectSmart mobility program and app won the 2023 Francis B. Francois Award for Innovation from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

This national award for transportation agencies recognizes technological approaches to solving transportation problems and improving mobility. The award, presented last fall, includes a \$10,000 graduate fellowship to be granted to a state university.

By combining mobility data and regional resources into one unified platform, ConnectSmart delivers a better experience to travelers while helping to achieve TxDOT's goals of improving regional mobility, enhancing safety, reducing traffic congestion, addressing equity and minimizing construction impacts. ConnectSmart's app captures rich, real-world commute data on activity hubs, traveler behavior and more.

The data generated by ConnectSmart users provides new insights to TxDOT engineers and informs critical planning decisions. The cyclical nature of the data integrations allows the app, transportation services and agency operations to work together to improve commuters' travel experience.

ConnectSmart boasts local features not found in any competing navigation or transportation app, like alerts warning users of crashes or flooding on their route and a trip planner that can combine different modes of travel into one trip.

Download the app from Google Play or Apple App Store. ■



The Houston District's ConnectSmart mobility app took home an AASHTO award last fall: (l to r) Catherine McCreight and Brenda Bustillos accept the award from Jim Tymon with AASHTO.

SAN ANGELO DISTRICT

Fischer honored for commitment to safety education

Mona Lisa Fischer, transportation funding specialist with the San Angelo District, was recently recognized with the H-E-B Because People Matter Community Service Award for her work with motorcycle safety and child passenger safety seats.

"Mona Lisa does a lot around the community of San Angelo," said Tasha Wade, H-E-B store general manager. "She makes safety in our community a top priority in many ways."

Fischer started with TxDOT in 2012 and has worked for H-E-B in San Angelo as a part-time customer service associate since 2018. Committed to spreading the word about safety, she partners with the grocer on TxDOT traffic safety outreach events, including one in 2021 on motorcycle safety.

"Mona Lisa focuses on safety and wellness in the area we service," Wade said. "She does traffic safety classes on motorcycle safety and awareness. She also has car seat safety checks in the parking lot to help families ensure their children are as safe as possible while they are driving around town. Our town is safer and better because we have partners like Mona Lisa living here." ■



Mona Lisa Fischer recently received the H-E-B Because People Matter Community Service Award. Photo by Karen Threlkeld

ALL DISTRICTS AND DIVISIONS

Making holiday wishes come true

Children around Texas had a merrier Christmas last year thanks to the generosity of TxDOT employees. TxDOT partnered with the Governor's Commission for Women and the State Agency Council to participate in Holiday Wishes, a program that creates wonderful memories for children connected to Child Protective Services of Central Texas.

In the program, generous Texans buy gifts on children's wish lists that are delivered to families in need.

"The children get to experience the warmth of the holidays and the kindness of their community," said Jessica Morris, accounting specialist with the Financial Management Division, which organized the operation.

TxDOT employees collected gifts for 334 children and more than 1,200 individual presents. Thirty districts and divisions participated in the program. One team from the Laredo District drove all the way from Laredo to Austin to drop off their presents. Gifts included bikes, gaming chairs, strollers and more.

Financial Management Division staff helped with the donation drop off, packaging and final pick up.

"The mailroom received between 80 and 90 packages that we processed, re-tagged and shipped out," said Abel Davilla, logistics supervisor with the Support Services Division.

Barbara Frische, campus coordinator with the Support Services Division, managed the shipping and gift drop off.

Thank you to all TxDOT employees for your kind contributions and making this a happy holiday for so many Texas children! ■



TxDOT employees made wishes come true last Christmas: (l to r) Aguzntin "Gus" Benzon, Jessica Morris, Melinda Gildart and Trenton Montgomery helped coordinate the agency's 2023 Holiday Wishes program.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Building the road ahead with smart infrastructure

Technology and transportation go hand in hand at TxDOT. The Cooperative and Automated Transportation program, known as CAT, is an innovative effort to integrate cutting-edge technologies into the state's transportation system, ushering in an era of intelligent traffic management systems and advanced communication networks. One of the key pillars of CAT's mission is to promote safety through emerging technologies.

The CAT Strategic Plan and the CAT Program Plan serve as a blueprint for success outlining TxDOT's vision, mission and objectives for the program. With 35 strategies across eight focus areas, these plans serve as a roadmap to a safer, smarter transportation system. ■



LEADERSHIP ONE

keeps up with the times

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

TxDOT's long-running Leadership One training program is getting a makeover for 2024 with a new schedule, new format, new content and a new follow-up program for graduates.

Leadership One is a six-month program designed to develop leadership skills and the role of leadership within the organization. Participants gain skills, competencies and values necessary to lead employees effectively and promote a meaningful culture within TxDOT.

"The Leadership One program has been around since the 2000s in the same format with the pretty much the same content," said Sabrina Bateman, lead training specialist with the Human Resources Division and co-program administrator for the Leadership Development Program. "As we were developing the Leadership Development Pathways program a few years ago, we started looking at revamping Leadership One."



in-person networking but liked the flexibility of virtual because travel can be difficult. The revamped program now has six sessions with two in Austin and four virtual."

Updates to the curriculum include discussions on stressors in a hybrid environment, personality and conflict resolution, and personality assessment.

"It was important for us to bring the program into the present," said Dean Carpenter Turner, training specialist and co-program administrator with Bateman. "Leadership theory is always evolving and so much has changed since the pandemic. We wanted to bring in concepts that weren't included in the old program."

In addition, graduates of Leadership One will have a chance to continue their learning with the new Leadership Elevate program launching late in 2024. This program will be an opportunity for graduates of Leadership One to come back together to cover additional topics.

"Attendees always ask, 'What's next?' Leadership Elevate is now the answer," Bateman said.

Past Leadership One graduates also have the option to retake the new course or audit parts of it.

The revamped Leadership One program launches in May. Employees interested in participating must have approval from their supervisor, complete five prerequisite training courses and submit the program application by April 26. Class size is limited to 15 to 20 attendees.

Visit the Leadership One page on SharePoint for more information. ■

Story contributed by Shannon McIntire

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Attendees missed in-person networking but liked the flexibility of virtual.

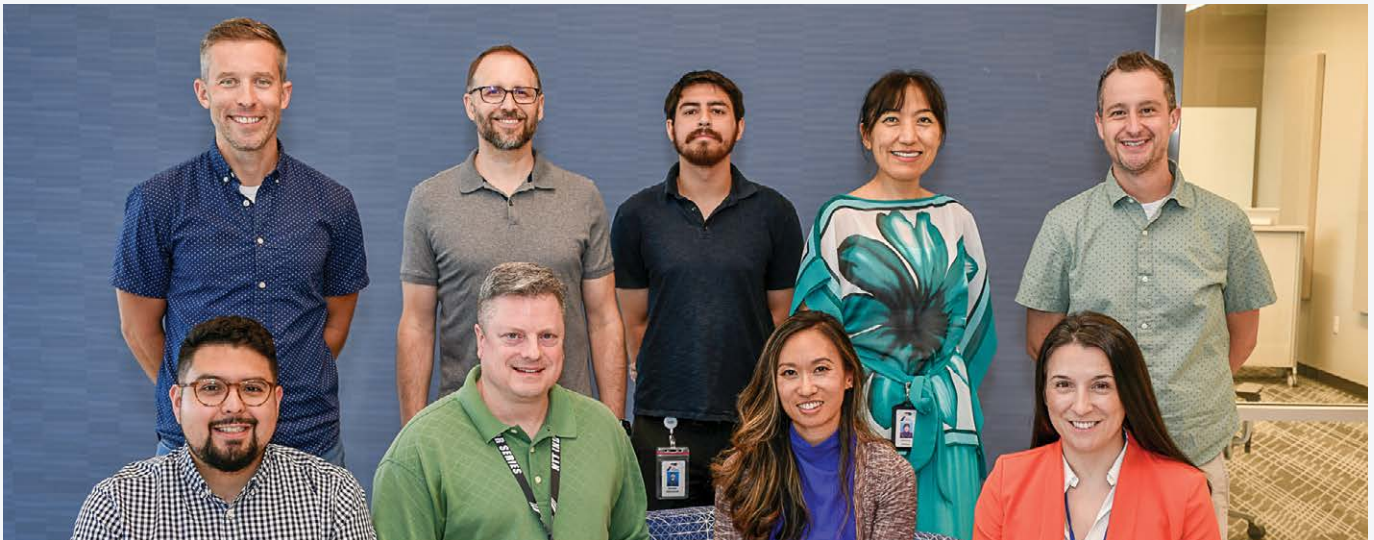
SABRINA BATEMAN
Lead Training Specialist

”

In particular, the new curriculum needed to address remote working and hybrid environments that have become much more prominent in recent years. Indeed, the schedule and format of the program were themselves modified to a hybrid model to allow greater flexibility.

"In the past, the program had four sessions over six months in Austin," Bateman said. "When travel was restricted in 2020 because of the pandemic, we switched to virtual sessions. Attendees told us they missed the

TABLEAU COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TURNS FIVE



The Tableau Community of Practice promotes using data visualization across TxDOT: (l to r) First row: Joe Alanis, Kevin Rhinevault, Erica Chan and Elizabeth Osgood. Second row: Mathew Weber, Russ Chidester, Daniel Escobar, Crystal Zhang and Jim Padilla. Photo by Kelly E. Lindner

In 2016, TxDOT's Information Technology Division rolled out Tableau, a premier data reporting and visualization application. To encourage people to use it, the Strategic Initiatives and Innovation and the Information Technology divisions created a community of practice for those who make data-driven decisions across TxDOT.

"I think the publishing of the Engineering Operations Dashboard and Administration Dashboard in 2017 were important proofs of concept for the use of Tableau at TxDOT," said Jim Padilla, lead for the division's Business Intelligence and Performance Management team. "Those dashboards helped spur interest in interactive data visualization. To encourage broader adoption, we wanted to create a community for data enthusiasts to share knowledge and help one another."

As a result, the Strategic Initiatives and Innovation and the Information Technology divisions established the Tableau Community of Practice in 2018. Erica Chan, strategic data analyst, was brought on in 2019 to lead the community and has grown it into a robust program that includes educational events, a Microsoft Teams site and "Tableau Doctors" volunteers for one-on-one help.

"It's been such a privilege to grow this community and help connect data analysts across the agency with each other," Chan said. "Often, analysts work alone or in small groups, so it's incredibly beneficial when they can gain knowledge and get help from others outside of their team."

"The Tableau Community of Practice and Tableau Doctors team have been invaluable resources in creating Tableau products and getting help whenever I hit a roadblock," said Nate Schlagel, a Geographic Information Systems analyst with the Bryan District. "And I've had the opportunity to help other analysts as well. It's truly a collaborative community."

The development of the community has become even more of a team effort since Strategic Data Analysts Joe Alanis became deputy lead last March and Chan created the Tableau Champions group last May.

"As a Tableau Champion, I'm proud to be among a group of talented members who have all volunteered to help make this community even better," said John Santana, lead data analyst with the Fleet Operations Division.

Tableau's popularity is shown by the large number of dashboards now in existence. This highlighted the need to establish standards and guidelines, which led to the Strategic Initiatives and Innovation Division forming the Tableau Dashboard Governance Workgroup last year.

At five, the Community of Practice continues to dynamically evolve, grow and influence TxDOT's data-driven journey.

For more information, visit the Tableau Community of Practice SharePoint page. ■

Story contributed by Erica Chan

MILESTONES

JANUARY SERVICE AWARDS

ABILENE

20 Chad Carter

ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY

10 Matt McCarter

AMARILLO

20 James Mann

Zeferino Villarreal

15 Matthew Lamberson

10 Zachary Bridgman

Michael Morrison

5 James Beavers

Michael Richardson

AUSTIN

25 Jason Cavness

20 Becky Mills

15 Jason Copenhaver

Jamie Cordell

5 Solomon Bekele

Jacob Harrington

BEAUMONT

10 Gordon Barlow

James Bridwell

Kevin Frederick

Daniel Gibson

Mark Harris

Robert Josey

Adrian Luckett

John McBeath

Horace McDaniel

John Ravare Jr.

Curtis Simon

5 Allen Fontenet

LaDerrick Hill

Dustin Streed

Melanie Williams

BRIDGE

25 Robert Owens

15 Andrea Johnson

10 Shawn Nava

5 Ahmed Al-Basha

Alexis Barron

BRYAN

30 Chad Bohne

Chad Clossin

15 Paul Ray

CHILDRESS

10 Michael Torrez

CIVIL RIGHTS

10 Joe Sanchez Jr.

5 Kim Hunziker

COMMUNICATIONS

25 Adele Lewis-Brauer

15 Anthony Hartzel

5 Cindy McGee

CORPUS CHRISTI

30 Carlos Carrillo

25 Jacob Longoria

10 Krystal Cruz

Leonicio Garibay Jr.

5 Yasir Abdulmajeed

Justin Feeney

Hugo Garcia

DeAna Hughes

5 Baldemar Mendoza

Manuel Muniz

Robert Quintanilla

James Ward

DALLAS

20 Brenan Honey

15 Corrine Chandler

Morgan Neill

10 Tracey Zapletal

5 Johnny Hall

Michael Johnson

Joshua Krahl

Margaret Morris

Alberto Ortiz

Eduardo Ramirez

EL PASO

25 Donald Deitch

20 Wesley Snyder

15 Nazario Martinez

10 Martin Espino

5 Sergio Marquez

Benito Trevino

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

10 Anita Bradley

5 Sarah Matthews

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

10 Heather Delahoussaye

Amanda Landry

Yuka Sakakiyama

Sheila Salinas-Fantauzzi

Elizabeth Smolik

5 Andrew Liu

FLEET OPERATIONS

30 Jason Henson

25 David Mitchell

20 Joshua Morton

Robert Smith

10 Angela Berry

Monica Colunga

Raymond Hernandez

Michelle McCallum

Daniel Wilson

5 Malcomb O'Daniel

FORT WORTH

25 Thomas Hickey

Robert Hill

Mickey Meacham

Theresa Poer

15 James Surginer

5 Anthony Bruce

Ethan Caballero

Jennifer Giovando

Bryan Kitchens

Jennifer Luera

Horace Robinson

Sadia Zaman

HOUSTON

45 Dock Gee

25 Jayantha Lorensuhewa

20 Johnnie Dabera

15 Gregory Platt

10 Ross Lienau

10 Nitta Phillips

Cody Whittington

5 Ervin Edwards

Timothy Grant

Elia Lugo

Ginger Lux

Randy Robles-Smith

Matthew Russo

Gopan Sujith

Traci Wiener

HUMAN RESOURCES

5 Jennifer Levine

Stephanie Torres

LAREDO

35 Heriberto Rodriguez

25 Lydia Segovia

10 Lauriano Martinez Jr.

5 Misael Aguilar

Matthew Garcia

Martin Rodriguez

Oswaldo Villarreal

LUBBOCK

25 Tony John

Anselmo Ramos

15 Manuel De La Cruz

10 Sharla Hamblin

Melanie Scott

5 Robert Browning

David Caudill

Matthew Luna

John Saavedra

Eliseo Tovar

LUFKIN

20 Jerrod Byley

10 Roshal Mooney

5 Randy Cox

Brandon Lee

MAINTENANCE

15 Cody Tanner

MATERIALS AND TESTS

5 Sylvia Johnson

Coby Nemec

Bruce Norvell Jr.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

30 Robert Godina

ODESSA

35 Javier Molinar

Manuel Muniz Jr.

10 Alejandro Guillen

Francisco Mora

5 Paul Hagood

PARIS

10 William Edson

PHARR

30 Raul Lopez

25 Elsa Morfin-Ibarra

20 Gabriel Garcia

15 Hector Ramos Jr.

Jesus Urbina

5 David Cano

PROCUREMENT

20 Nina Araujo

10 Gustavo Taborga

PEPS

10 Daniel Fleischman

Idelice Haack

Haiqing Zhang

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

10 Lisa Johnson

Jessica Pena

5 Noah Heath

RAIL

25 Jerry Loges

RIGHT OF WAY

10 Eduardo Garcia IV

SAN ANGELO

30 Murphy D'Spain

5 Corey Childress

Jonathan Schulze

SAN ANTONIO

25 Joseph Meneley

15 Martha Gandara

5 Scott Algueseva

John Aponte

Francisco Flores

Alberto Rosas

SUPPORT SERVICES

5 Kenneth Jarvis

TRAFFIC SAFETY

10 Dennis Green

Jacqueline Taylor

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

15 Travis Scruggs

Daniel Smith

10 Laura Dablain

Jason Ferrell

Yvette Flores

5 Kathryn Olson

TRAVEL

10 Joan Henderson

TYLER

35 James Wicks II

25 Jeremy Reid

15 Dustin Morgan

10 Thomas Newton

WACO

30 Oscar Valdez

10 Trinity Shed

5 Ronald Jordan

Randy McLaughlin

WICHITA FALLS

20 Roger Krahl

15 Andrew Garcia

5 Adam Sturgeon

YOAKUM

10 Ryan Sweeney

5 Ronald Hall



FEBRUARY SERVICE AWARDS

ABILENE

- 25 Kenny Powell
- 15 Roy Gomez
- 10 Chris Ford
Gary Young

AMARILLO

- 25 David Miller
- 10 Eliseo Camargo
Jeffrey Holtkamp
- 5 LaDenia Jewitt
Ricky Meraz

ATLANTA

- 15 Todd Peevy

AUSTIN

- 30 Edward Till
- 25 Christopher Caddell
- 15 Levi Robison
Michael Self
- 10 Shanna Pasemann
- 5 Caitlin McGunigle
Evan Russell
Ghazal Sokhansefat

AVIATION

- 15 James Harlin

BEAUMONT

- 15 Darrelton Richardson Jr.

BRIDGE

- 10 Seth Cole
- 5 Worku Mergia

BROWNWOOD

- 30 Rojelio Bonilla

BRYAN

- 25 William Connor
- 15 Francisco Torres-Oviedo
- 10 Kenneth Gaertner
- 5 Kaylee Wiley

CHILDRESS

- 25 Ronald Gilbert Jr.
- 10 Jim Covey
Chance Cozart
Matthew Orr
Joey Torrez
- 5 Benjamin Adams II
Tammie Lizama
Clint Newbrough

CIVIL RIGHTS

- 25 Judy Borjas Sanchez
- 5 Andrea Acosta

CORPUS CHRISTI

- 25 Dennis Myers
- 15 Jesus Garza Jr.
- 5 Bianca Buitron
Jordan Guerra
Roberto Ibanez Jr.
Deirdre Keese

DALLAS

- 35 Bernard Fears Jr.
- 25 Christopher McDaniel
- 10 Amanda McKittrick

5 Brian Adams

- Amy Childress
- Ashleigh Cross
- Chuck Taylor
- Janarthanan Velupillai
- Cody Yearout

EL PASO

- 30 Antonio Loya
- 25 Jorge Oregel
- 15 Rogelio Alvarez
- 10 Miguel Soto

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 25 John Bryant

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 10 Jose Ruiz Jr.
- 5 Eddie Nanez

FLEET OPERATIONS

- 10 Frank Connor
Kevin Fareri
- 5 Caleb Scrimpsner

FORT WORTH

- 20 David Peugh
- 15 Billy Havard
- 10 Brit Campbell
- 5 Paul Conley
Jody Smith
Bobby Sullivan
Maria Talamantez

GENERAL COUNSEL

- 10 James Bateman

HOUSTON

- 20 Phillip Garlin
Hugo Rivas
- 15 Ashraf Hafez
- 10 Tyler Cassens
Zena Hailu
John Leopard
Alicia Louis
- 5 Helen Bu
Thanh Bui
Gregory Comeaux
Nguyen Le
Mark Lima
Daniela Rico
Troy Ross
Lloyd Smith
Gregorio Sosa
Tranise Stevens

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 10 Latrisha Graves-Spencer

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 30 Mark Evans
- 10 Neal Petersen

LAREDO

- 25 Juan Ortega
- 10 Azalea Rosas Perez
- 5 Fabian Canales
Santos Lorenzo Jr.
Angel Martinez

LUBBOCK

- 30 Lester Fennell
- 15 Ricardo Gonzales
- 5 Justin Egbert
Terry Fincher
Miguel Pena
Surafel Sintayehu
Tracy Taylor
Dereck Williams

LUFKIN

- 15 Kelly Morris

MAINTENANCE

- 5 Pan Gil Choi

MARITIME

- 10 Matthew Mahoney

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

- 5 LeAnn Lee

ODESSA

- 15 Carlos Flores Jr.
- 5 Nehal Atlam
Jason Ramey

PARIS

- 30 Tausha Davis
- 25 Charles Murphy
- 20 Elecia Moore
- 10 Carlee Brazeal
Douglas Egnew

PHARR

- 15 Gustavo Marez Jr.
- 10 Francisco Cantu
- 5 Michael Cano Jr.

PROCUREMENT

- 10 Courtney Skains
- 5 Perla Hernandez

PROJECT FINANCE, DEBT, AND STRATEGIC CONTRACTS

- 5 Kimberly Henry

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 10 Kari Banta

RAIL

- 10 Margaret Delong
- 5 Sterling Teague

RIGHT OF WAY

- 5 Richard Cagle

SAN ANGELO

- 5 Enriqueta Carrizales
Teresa Rodriguez

SAN ANTONIO

- 25 Gina Salazar-Dounson
- 20 Gilbert Davila III
- 10 Jorge Ramos
Matthew Robinette
- 5 Jonathan Hinshaw

SUPPORT SERVICES

- 20 Frank Bos
- 15 Jerry Espinosa
- 5 Gregory Sumers

TRAFFIC SAFETY

- 20 Donna Plummer

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

- 5 Laura Rodgers

TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

- 10 Julie Kelly

TYLER

- 20 Mark Hall
- 10 Travis Singleton
- 5 Matthew Sims

WACO

- 15 Billy Kirksey Jr.
- 5 Grady Rodriguez
Aaron Tippit

YOAKUM

- 30 Donna Steffek
- 25 Glenn Kalina
- 20 Edward Fuchs
Chris Garcia
- 15 Laurie Jaeger
- 10 Michael Brzozowski
- 5 Roque Longoria
Brent Schulz

Correction: The Service Awards for November 2023 in the January/February TN listed Debbie Dunaway with the San Angelo District as marking 10 years. Sadly, she passed away on Sept. 30 (see In Memoriam). We apologize for the error.

MILESTONES

NOVEMBER RETIREE AWARDS

ABILENE

17 Ricky Donell Sims

ATLANTA

25 Kelly R. Medders

BEAUMONT

29 Donald C. Wilkerson Jr.

DALLAS

24 Sammy Ray Moser

17 Rhonda R. Maddox

DESIGN

28 Lucinda E. Soto

EL PASO

21 Jaime A. Gurrola

19 Oscar Pilhoefer Jr.

FLEET OPERATIONS

23 Jeff Fischer

FORT WORTH

31 Samuel S. Jones

LUBBOCK

18 Dan Long

ODESSA

19 Richard G. Baum

DECEMBER RETIREE AWARDS

AUSTIN

27 Robert G. Guldosh

BROWNWOOD

29 Elsa Laing

CORPUS CHRISTI

19 Budd Ellsworth Edwards

7 Dennis Babb

DALLAS

23 Ines Molina

21 David P. Honza

DESIGN

35 Peter B. Krause

26 Marisabel Ramthun

22 Max Lowry Proctor Jr.

13 Sandra K. Chipley

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

10 David P. Morley

HOUSTON

24 Michael W. Wawarofsky

HUMAN RESOURCES

25 Juan P. Pinales

LUBBOCK

20 Michael R. Langston

ODESSA

16 Henry L. Wilkerson

SAN ANTONIO

30 Kiley N. Seaton

SUPPORT SERVICES

37 Johnny Burke

WACO

26 David R. Lemons

20 Allen L. Lassetter

IN MEMORIAM

AUSTIN DISTRICT

Philip Ferguson

Transportation Maintenance

Crew Chief

Date of Death: 01/11/2024

Years of Service: 6

CORPUS CHRISTI DISTRICT

John Jacobs

Maintenance Section Supervisor

Date of Death: 01/16/2024

Years of Service: 48

DALLAS DISTRICT

Carlton Womack

Pavement Engineering Technician

Date of Death: 1/20/2024

Years of Service: 12

Retired: 2011

Venetia Scott

Maintenance Support Technician

Date of Death: 1/21/2024

Years of Service: 30

Retired: 2003

HOUSTON DISTRICT

Cedric Franco

Plan Reviewer

Date of Death: 12/10/2023

Years of Service: 25

SAN ANGELO DISTRICT

Debbie Dunaway

Administrative Assistant

Date of Death: 9/30/2023

Years of Service: 10

WACO DISTRICT

Heath Jackson

Traffic Systems Specialist

Date of Death: 01/28/2024

Years of Service: 5

CELEBRATING TxDOT WOMEN IN MARCH

Search for the CTW Women's History Month events page on SharePoint to learn more about the events scheduled in March (all times are Central Time):



- Women Engineers Panel – 2:30-4 p.m. Thursday, March 7
- TxDOT Women Directors Panel – 10-11 a.m. Thursday, March 21
- CTW bimonthly meeting – 10-11:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 26

March is Women's History Month, a time to pay tribute to all women in a variety of fields.

March is Women's History Month, a time to pay tribute to all women in a variety of fields. Women comprise 25% of TxDOT's workforce, from engineers to program managers, archeologists and more.

The Connecting Texas Women (CTW) Employee Resource Group has planned several events and activities throughout the month of March to allow all TxDOT employees to connect with the women of TxDOT.

CTW has also set up a social engagement site where TxDOT employees can share and connect throughout the month of March. On the page, you can share photos, images and/or stories of TxDOT women at work in the office, in the field or at TxDOT events. You can also share career advice for women and highlight your favorite women leaders throughout history and why.

Photos submitted to the social engagement site will be featured in a special Women's History Month video. ■

YOUR TURN

What are you looking forward to most this year?

AMARILLO DISTRICT



STEPHANIE WIGGINS
CONTRACT SPECIALIST

"In 2024, I would like to travel and experience more places around the country!" ■

AUSTIN DISTRICT



TOMMY ABREGO
MOBILITY35 PROGRAM MANAGER

"I'm looking forward to my son's basketball season and to I-35 Capital Express Central going into construction." ■

PHARR DISTRICT



HECTOR E. SILLER
AREA ENGINEER

"Personally, I'm looking forward to traveling with my family and completing multiple marathons." ■



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