



TEN

May/June 2025

LIGHTS! CAMERA! SAFETY IN ACTION!

Safe Days of Summer
campaign premieres
in May.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COLUMN

Summer brings focus on safety



MARC WILLIAMS | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"We must continue to educate Texans about the dangers of distracted driving."

— Marc Williams

You can find some great pictures of the TxDOT family participating in #GoOrangeDay on Crossroads.

This month we are kicking off our annual "Safe Days of Summer" campaign. This year's theme is *Safety in Action!* and the Occupational Safety Division is encouraging you to make safety the focus of your daily routine. Each year between May and August, our Occupational Safety and Traffic Safety divisions renew the challenge to each TxDOT district and division to have a summer free of incident and injury. I am confident your dedication to safety will help us reach that goal this year.

While we focus on the safety of our road workers, we must continue to educate Texans about the dangers of distracted driving. No text or bite of food is worth the risk. Last year, distracted driving contributed to more than 370 deaths and 91,000 crashes on Texas roads. Our message to the public must continue to be simple: Slow down. Put your phone away. Keep an eye out for road crews. Don't tailgate. These are words to live by from TxDOT's "Be Safe. Drive Smart." campaign for navigating the more than 1,900 active work zones in Texas.

The increase in traffic fatalities in work zones over the past year is a tragic reminder of the importance of these types of safety campaigns. Last year, there were nearly 28,000 crashes in work zones — a 6% increase from the previous year. More of those crashes turned deadly, with traffic fatalities in work zones cutting short the lives of 215 Texans in 2024 — 23 more deaths than the year before.

Achieving zero injuries, zero incidents and zero fatalities will require tapping into the generous Texas spirit of courtesy and kindness and making those attributes a part of every action we take on the roadways. We must live those core values in our daily actions and show the rest of the world what it means to *Drive like a Texan*.

You can learn more about the ways TxDOT continues to promote Safe Days of Summer in the cover story on page 8. ▼

As summer travel heats up, so does our roadwork season. This time of year represents a critical time for us with safety and I ask every employee to do their part to be vigilant in the summer months to avoid incidents and injuries in our work zones.

During National Work Zone Awareness Week April 21 – 25, TxDOT reminded the public to drive safely in work zones where our vulnerable road workers are often just feet away from fast-moving vehicles. Many of you wore orange on April 23 to support work zone safety and honor the victims who have lost their lives in work zones, as well as their families.



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Sanford Belcher (far left), Casey Aaron and Duane Andrus saved a driver from drowning after his car was swept away by flood waters. Photo by Kristen Prater

CREW RESCUES MAN FROM DROWNING

It takes about 12 inches of water to float most vehicles, and a 2019 Ford Fiesta was no match for the rushing water across a frontage road in the Paris District in January.

While checking barricades on flooded I-30 frontage roads, Transportation Technician Casey Aaron noticed the Fiesta pass him and drive straight through the barrier.

The fast-moving current quickly picked up the sedan and pulled it towards East Caddo Creek. After witnessing the driver climb through a window and jump out of the car, Aaron alerted Maintenance Supervisor Duane Andrus and Maintenance Section Assistant Sanford Belcher — who were also checking barricades — and hustled to aid the motorist.

“The driver jumped out and I followed him when he floated under the two bridges and then caught him at the third bridge on the frontage road,” he said. “When I got there, all I could see was his hand and a little bit of his forearm. I grabbed what I could see. Everything else was underwater.”

As the man clung to the bridge, Aaron tried several times to pull him to safety, but the rushing water and slick conditions made the task impossible as the driver continued to battle strong currents and exhaustion. The TxDOT rescue operation got the additional lift it needed with the arrival of TxDOT’s Andrus and Belcher on the scene, aided by a truck driver who also stopped to help. It took all four of them to lift the man out of the raging water.

“These TxDOT employees had to act quickly while staying safe and coming together as a team to save this man’s life,” said Paris District Engineer Noel Paramanatham. “We are proud of the work they do to keep the public safe.”

The road crew stayed with the man until emergency medical responders arrived.

“This incident is a reminder of how deadly flash floods and high water can be,” said Director of Construction James Atkins. “Duane, Sanford and Casey showed strength, dedication and courage by rescuing a vulnerable citizen in a very dangerous situation.” ▼

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.

THIRD-GRADER'S ART BECOMES ROAD SIGN

You might think designing road signs is so easy a third grader can do it. And in this case, you'd be right.

TxDOT employees in the Waco area recently partnered with Gatesville ISD to hold a safety poster contest with the winner having their art turned into a road sign.

"TxDOT cannot promote traffic safety alone," Waco District Director of Operations Jacob Chau said. "This type of initiative invites future drivers and their families into our efforts to enhance the safety of the traveling public."

To encourage new ideas for traffic safety initiatives in the district, Chau formed the Traffic Safety Outreach Committee. During a brainstorming session, Steve Mathew, transportation specialist, suggested an art contest for schoolchildren to create a poster with a safety message with the winning entry featured on a sign on school grounds.

The Waco District ran with the idea. Geographic Information Systems Analyst Sarah Hejl crunched the numbers and found that Gatesville Independent School District had the most instances of distracted driving crashes in its boundaries.

When Waco District employees approached school district staff with the idea, they quickly agreed.

The Waco District received hundreds of art submissions. The Traffic Safety Outreach Committee narrowed them down to five finalists and then district employees voted for their favorite. Kamdyn R. created the winning artwork with the message "Less Phone More Road."

"I see a lot of people on their phone while driving," Kamdyn said. "I've also seen signs when driving in the car with my parents that say, 'Don't Text and Drive.' So that's what made me think to make my



Jaime Olvera (left) and Hayden Herring with Coryell County Maintenance installed the new sign near the school's pick-up and drop-off location.



Elementary school student Kamdyn R. designed a special sign for her school grounds. Photos by Clint Tichavsky

safety sign have a phone. I think it's important to have less phone and more road to keep people safe and keep them from having a wreck."

Using the winning design, a vendor created the sign and TxDOT personnel installed it. The district and Gatesville ISD held a special unveiling ceremony for Kamdyn with her parents and classmates.

"Traffic safety education is just as impactful to passengers as it is to drivers," said Waco District Engineer Stan Swiatek. "Less Phone More Road is a message these kids and their parents will never forget." ▼

Isabel Santelli

I AM A... HUMAN RESOURCES GENERALIST

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

Isabel Santelli is starting her second year as a human resources generalist in the Tyler District. She began her career in human resources as an intern at Texas A&M University while getting her bachelor's degree in business administration. She transitioned to a full-time role at the university upon graduation. She also worked in the health industry as a residency program coordinator before joining TxDOT. Originally from East Texas, she still lives in the area with her husband and two dogs. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her family, cooking, traveling and exploring new places.

Describe what you do on a day-to-day basis as a human resources generalist.

Every day is different! Overall, my day-to-day responsibilities focus on supporting the hiring process and onboarding our new employees. I also help employees navigate benefits, assist with training and provide guidance on policies and procedures. Each day is dynamic with no two being exactly alike.

What do you find most rewarding about being a human resources generalist?

I enjoy the opportunity to be a resource for our employees. I also love being the first point of contact for new employees during the onboarding process at TxDOT. It's great to make those initial connections and help them feel welcome and supported as they start their journey with the organization.

What skills and abilities are the most helpful in this role?

Strong organizational and communication skills are key to success. Being organized helps me manage multiple tasks and priorities effectively, ensuring we meet deadlines and provide accurate documentation. Effective communication is equally important to convey information clearly and collaborate with team members across departments.

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

It's difficult to predict what might come up. While I like the variety, it sometimes means quickly adapting to changing priorities or unexpected situations.

What do you like best about working out of the Tyler District?

I like the people I get to work with. Everyone is incredibly supportive, collaborative and dedicated to their work. It's easy to stay motivated and engaged when you're surrounded by such a positive and helpful team.

What would you like people to know about the Human Resources Division?

I'd like people to know that the Human Resources Division is a great resource for everyone, even those within the division itself. Everyone is always willing to help each other out, which creates a positive work environment. We are constantly working to improve our processes and find better ways to support employees and the organization. ▼

"I enjoy the opportunity to be a resource for our employees. I also love being the first point of contact for new employees during the onboarding process."
— Isabel Santelli



OCCUPATIONAL
SAFETY DIVISION

Safe Days of Summer spotlights *Safety in Action!*



This summer, get ready to star in ... *Safety in Action!* Just like in a summer blockbuster, every decision you make is critical and the plot is clear: zero injuries, zero incidents and zero fatalities.

Running from May through August, the 2025 Safe Days of Summer *Safety in Action!* campaign reminds TxDOT employees that safety guides our choices, our intentions become actions, and every person plays a starring role. From heat hazards to operational risks, employees navigate challenges, make split-second decisions and rely on their supporting cast to ensure a safe and productive summer. Whether you're working in the field, at a desk or with heavy equipment, this campaign is about making safety the star of your daily routine.

A great action film isn't a heroic moment — it's about purpose, practice and people. Every blockbuster is supported by a driving force. For TxDOT, the purpose is a clear

understanding of why safety matters in every moment. Practice separates the best from the rest. Just like action heroes rehearse their scenes, workers must build consistent habits — wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), following procedures and conducting safety checks — until they become second nature. Finally, no one achieves safety alone and people looking out for one another makes a team stronger. When one person hesitates to speak up about a hazard, the whole crew is at risk. Collaboration and accountability keep everyone on set — and on the job — protected.

Safety in Action! kicked off May 1, setting the stage for a summer-long commitment to safety. The early weeks focus on planning, preparation and communication. Just like a film

**As summer
heats up
the stakes
get higher.**



**WEEK 1:
CAMPAIGN
KICK-OFF**



**WEEK 2:
HAVE A PLAN**



**WEEK 3:
FOLLOW
THROUGH**



**WEEK 4:
COMMUNICATION**



Robert Higgins (left) and Brent Bristow are ready for the Safe Days of Summer. Photo by Ginna Hughes

director maps out every scene, employees should anticipate risks, discuss safety measures with their teams and establish routines that prevent incidents and injuries.

As summer heats up, the stakes get higher. In June, *Safety in Action!* will train its focus on heat-related illnesses, hydration and the dangers of working under extreme conditions. Preventing dehydration, recognizing the warning signs of heat stress and keeping an eye on teammates who may be struggling are crucial actions to take.

July spotlights operational safety, with a focus on high-risk work environments. From heavy equipment to distracted driving, operational safety ensures that every worker is prepared to handle workplace hazards with precision and skill. Picture the intense moments of an action thriller — every movement must be deliberate and every decision calculated. Employees will be encouraged to practice vehicle safety, maintain a 360° awareness of their surroundings and

communicate effectively when working near heavy machinery. Whether it's mastering the art of backing and spotting vehicles or always buckling seatbelts, these habits make the difference between a close call and a serious incident.

As August arrives, the grand finale will unfold, reinforcing safety practices that will last far beyond the summer. While the campaign may end, safety is a long-term commitment. Employees should continue making smart choices from strategic parking to careful climbing with three points of contact to staying hydrated. This final act serves as a reminder that safety is more than a campaign — it's a culture.

Like any great sequel, the lessons learned during the Safe Days of Summer campaign will set the stage for continued vigilance and responsibility. Throughout the summer, employees can expect engaging safety challenges, team discussions and opportunities to be recognized for their commitment to safety at TxDOT. ▼



**WEEK 5:
SUMMER PPE**



**WEEK 6:
HYDRATION**



**WEEK 7:
HEAT ILLNESS**



**WEEK 8:
SITUATIONAL
AWARENESS**

TOP CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN PROJECTS HONORED WITH "WE BUILD TEXAS PROJECT AWARDS"

As TxDOT strives to honor exemplary projects, the agency recently announced the annual We Build Texas Project Awards, which recognize excellence in the discharge of duty and responsibility by TxDOT staff and contractors.

Out of 23 nominees, 10 construction projects and one design project took home the 2024 edition of the prestigious award. This year introduced new project size categories to highlight smaller projects. The agency presented the accolades at the 2025 Construction, Materials and Alternative Delivery Conference in April.

Congratulations to the 2024 winners!

CONSTRUCTION AWARD WINNERS: LARGE/TEX-SIZE PROJECTS

Dallas District – SL 12, Dallas County

Brenan Honey, director of Construction, **Dereje Tesemma**, assistant area engineer, and **Michael Bazie**, transportation engineer supervisor, Dallas District
Kevin Ghorbani, Webber LLC



Fort Worth District – U.S. 377, Hood County

Sarah Horner, area engineer, and **Noel Spaar**, assistant area engineer, Fort Worth District
Jacob Selby, **Jason Eiland** and **Justin Davis**, Zachry Construction Corporation



The Irving Interchange project offers a case study of collaboration, innovation and dedication between TxDOT and its construction partner, Webber LLC. Focusing on improvements to the highways around the former Texas Stadium site in Irving, the \$301 million project added multiple direct connectors between Loop 12, SH 183, SH 114 and Spur 483.

A railroad crossing adjacent to the SH 171 intersection hindered traffic flow on U.S. 377 in the city of Cresson for decades. Complicating matters was a railroad switching yard that caused numerous unscheduled disruptions for both roadways. The Cresson Bypass Project involved a 3-mile, 4-lane roadway that bridges SH 171 and the Fort Worth and Western Railroad. The project significantly improved safety and mobility for residents of Hood, Johnson and Tarrant counties.

Houston District – I-610, Harris County

Stephanie Rodriguez, transportation engineer, Houston District
Oswal Perez, Williams Brothers Construction

Solving the issues that made the I-69/I-610 interchange the most congested freeway in Texas took ingenuity from TxDOT and the state's largest highway construction company, Williams Brothers. This \$259 million project began

in early 2018. Due to its complexity, ten designers created four separate roadway plans that were combined into one large construction project. The project upgraded the vertical and horizontal clearances, added shoulders to the I-610 mainlanes, increased capacity on the four ramps from one to two lanes each, relocated two of four connectors away from the congested interchange, and moved two of the I-610 ramps so that they merge with I-69 more smoothly and safely.

Laredo District – I-35, Webb County

Jose Vargas, area engineer, Laredo District
Eloi Ferran Marques, Webber LLC



Eloi Ferran Marques and Jose Vargas

The I-35 at Shiloh project in Webb County consisted of a 3.7-mile work zone from Shiloh Drive to the I-35/I-69 interchange. At \$115 million, this project was the largest in the Laredo District at the time it was awarded. A key feature was building twin bridges above a Union Pacific Railroad overpass that was frequently hit by oversize loads.

San Antonio District – U.S. 281, Bexar County

Danny Gallegos, assistant area engineer, San Antonio District
Wes Hawkins, Zachry Construction Corporation



Wes Hawkins and Danny Gallegos

Segment 2 of the U.S. 281 Expansion delivered \$178.3 million of transportation investments to 4.8 miles of the U.S. 281 corridor in northern Bexar County. The project expanded the corridor from a two-way superstreet to an 8-lane highway. The effort spanned a demanding construction environment with complex geotechnical and excavation work.



Alberto Arias, Carlos Arocha, Sterling Copeland and Philip Newmons

Waco District – SH 6, McLennan County

Sterling Copeland, construction inspector, and **Philip Newmons**, technical project manager, Waco District
Alberto Arias and **Carlos Arocha**, Webber LLC

Expanding the SH 6 corridor from U.S. 84 to FM 3476 — known as the Mall-to-Mall Project — meant adding an extra mainlane and bridges over the railroad tracks to make the frontage roads continuous, providing local travelers with a route through the corridor without using the mainlanes. Other improvements were longer entrance and exit ramps and improved U-turns.

CONSTRUCTION AWARD WINNERS: SMALL/MEDIUM PROJECTS



Jeremy Mikes and Jayme Holmes

Austin District – RM 620, Williamson County

Jeremy Mikes and **Jayme Holmes**, construction inspectors, Austin District
Ignacio Álvarez Muñiz and **Miguel Ángel Toranzo Ferreras**, Bridges and Roads LLC

A \$31.9 million project on RM 620 from Deep Wood Drive to I-35 in Williamson County constructed overpasses at Chisholm Trail/Union Pacific Railroad and Lake Creek Drive, a roundabout underneath the Chisholm Trail overpass and frontage roads. It also upgraded the railroad crossing and added pedestrian accommodations. Working within a railroad right of way required a comprehensive traffic control plan with clear signage, detours and dedicated traffic control personnel.

El Paso District – I-10, El Paso County

Rene Romero, area engineer, El Paso District
Jesse Grado, Dan Williams Company

The Fabens Bridge Project replaced an aging two-lane overpass and approaches at I-10 and Fabens. The new structure has four columns instead of two to assist with structural redundancy. The project increased vertical

clearance from 17 feet to 19 feet to allow oversize loads to pass underneath without issue. Improved safety features now include shoulders on both sides and concrete rail instead of metal. The bridge is the only access to I-10 for the small community of Fabens, so construction was accelerated to minimize its impact and the district conducted extensive public outreach. The project was completed in under three months.

Fort Worth District – I-35W, Johnson County

Billy Havard, construction inspector, and **Daniel Poole**, area engineer, Fort Worth District
Phillippe Falkner, Ed Bell Construction Company



Billy Havard, Phillippe Falkner and Daniel Poole

The I-35W realignment project involved the realignment and reconstruction of the northbound mainlanes, the removal of the existing mainlane bridge and the reconfiguration of ramps to enhance traffic management. The project also featured an innovative partnership with the University of Texas at Arlington to analyze the structural components of the existing mainlane bridge, requiring precise removal techniques to preserve the elements instead of a standard demolition.

Fort Worth District – FM 51, Parker County

John Ward, transportation specialist, Fort Worth District
Chris Compton, Sterling Delaware Holding Company



Chris Compton and John Ward

The intersection of FM 51 and SH 199 in the city of Springtown flooded frequently due to a bridge with low clearance over Walnut Creek. Parker County partnered with TxDOT to address the flooding issues and upgrade about a mile and a half of pavement from Pojo Road to SH 199. The finished project provides Springtown with a reliable highway system less prone to flooding.

DESIGN AWARD WINNER



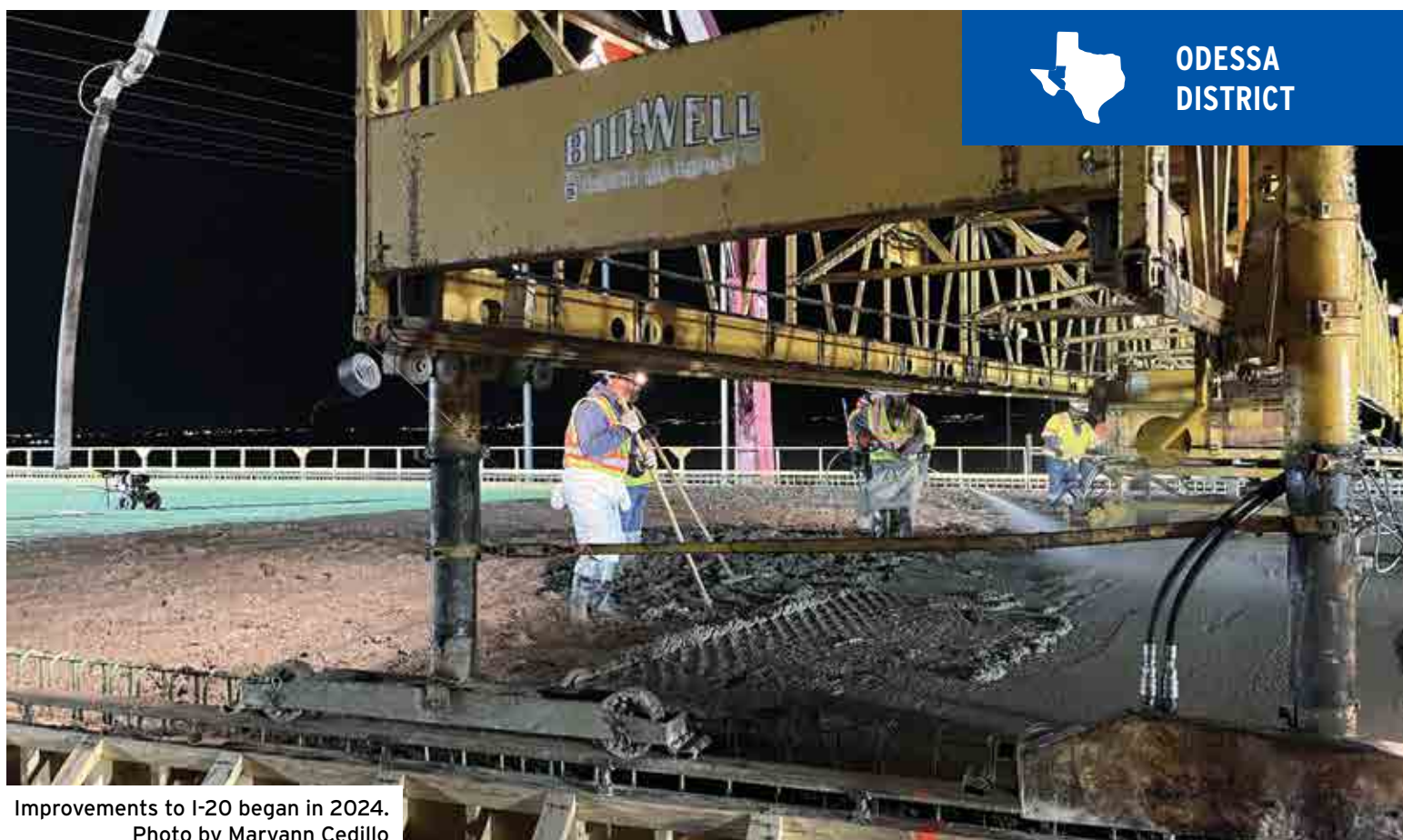
Pauline Morrel and Rostam Mahbod

Dallas District – SL 9, Dallas County

Pauline Morrel and **Rostam Mahbod**, transportation engineer supervisors, Dallas District

An engineering work of art, Loop 9 — first envisioned more than six decades ago as a major east-west route in then-rural areas of North Texas — has finally become reality in 2024. The Dallas District's design team crystallized the long-held vision into a project that was substantially complete in late summer 2024 and opened to traffic a few months later.

The Dallas District never gave up on the Loop 9 project first envisioned six decades ago.

ODESSA
DISTRICT

Improvements to I-20 began in 2024.
Photo by Maryann Cedillo

BILLIONS IN IMPROVEMENTS HEADED TO — **PERMIAN BASIN** —

In a rugged corner of West Texas, amid the hustle and bustle of roughnecks and wildcatters, TxDOT is making a massive investment to improve safety and relieve congestion. The funding will support a Texas energy sector that accounts for nearly 40% of the nation's oil production.

The agency will direct \$2.7 billion toward safety and maintenance projects to improve state highways in energy-producing regions of the state as part of the 2025 Unified Transportation Program (UTP). Of that funding, \$1.3 billion will go directly to the Permian Basin region.

"TxDOT has invested heavily in the Permian Basin, and that investment will benefit the entire state," said Odessa District Engineer Eric Lykins. "It is our job to make sure we deliver a world class transportation system that is safe and efficient and meets the growing needs of the Permian Basin."

The Permian Basin is a top-five producer in the world for oil and natural gas. More importantly, the region is vital for the Texas economy, supporting more than 200,000 jobs while generating over 10.8% of Texas' gross domestic product.

Planned upgrades to support the energy sector's infrastructure needs include a \$1.5 billion project to widen I-20 by adding mainlanes, constructing new interchanges, reconfiguring ramps and converting frontage roads from two-way traffic to one-way lanes.

"We are in the beginning stages of this project," Lykins said. "We will be starting additional segments in the coming years."

The improvements to I-20 began in 2024. The first project to break ground was on a 5-mile stretch east of JBS Parkway to east of CR 1300. The next segment extends into Midland towards CR 1250 and construction will begin later this summer. ▼

Wildlife Supporter FINDS BEAUTY AND LIFE IN THE BROWNWOOD DISTRICT

**BROWNWOOD
DISTRICT**

Alan Ogden shares his love of nature with coworkers in the Brownwood District. Photo by Lisa Tipton

Of the nearly 200 employees in the Brownwood District, General Engineering Technician Alan Ogden stands out for his love of nature. He is quite the outdoorsman and generously shares his interest with his colleagues. There aren't many animals that venture into the district complex that he doesn't notice.

"I love to read about critters, bugs and insects," said Ogden. He has been hunting and enjoying the outdoors since he was a child.

He isn't scared of much. Several years ago, a rat snake was living in the district lab. It would come out at night, so Ogden stayed late to catch and relocate the snake rather than killing it. Another time, he helped remove a snake from a steering column.

Once, Ogden discovered a fox napping in one of the trees in the small courtyard behind district headquarters. He never disturbed the fox but was kind enough to share the experience with his coworkers.

Last year, he noticed a beehive in a tree at the district. Knowing it could cause problems for staff allergic to bees, he helped arrange for a beekeeper to safely remove the hive. Another time, Ogden photographed a family of whistling ducks strolling across the district driveway, again, letting them cross without disturbing them.

“I love to read about critters, bugs, and insects.”

– Alan Ogden,
General Engineering Technician

Most recently, the outdoors enthusiast delighted his colleagues with his latest project, a Polyphemus moth he found last spring as a caterpillar. Ogden brought it inside to observe, keeping it in a cardboard box. Of course, he brought the caterpillar on a stick to the front offices for a little show and tell with staff. Curious coworkers were given a glimpse of the creature through a magnifying glass so that everyone could appreciate its detail — including its hairy body and the skull appearance of its face.

Ogden kept the caterpillar in his cubicle, watching as it eventually formed a cocoon and emerged as a moth in September. When it had broken free, Ogden again showed coworkers the transformation. The moth moved slowly, walking around on the lid of the box. Once its wings dried and it began attempting to fly, Ogden released it outside. Staff members were sad to learn of the moth's brief three-month lifecycle, especially after all the effort it had put into its transformation. Everyone appreciated Ogden giving them the opportunity to witness the beginning of its life and the remarkable changes it underwent.

These are just a few of the magical animal moments Ogden has shared with coworkers. He helps us see the beauty and life that occupies our gorgeous Brownwood District complex! ▼



Ogden kept a caterpillar in his cubicle until it emerged as a moth, offering periodic glimpses of the process to colleagues. Photo by Lisa Tipton



Ogden observed a fox napping in a tree behind district headquarters. Photo by Alan Ogden

Cory Henrickson estimates he will make up to 500 round trips to the Capitol during the regular session.



The Texas Legislature is always in session at TxDOT

Although state lawmakers typically gather for an action-packed five-month window at the start of odd-numbered years, for those on the bustling 7th floor of TxDOT's Greer Building across from the Capitol, work to support the agency's needs at the Texas Legislature is always in season.

"My session starts before the lawmakers get here because of preparations for [TxDOT's] legislative budget request," State Legislative Affairs (SLA) Assistant Director Laura Kolstad said.

While her work has included helping connect 35 newly-elected officials to their respective TxDOT district engineers this past February, her itinerary also includes liaising with the Governor's Office to keep them apprised of the agency's needs.

"That begins in February the year before," she said.

May is the final stretch. The clock is ticking until the last gavel falls at the end of the regular session on June 2. The SLA section of Government Affairs (GOV), in addition to the Administration

(ADM) and Financial Management (FIN) divisions are all in high gear as lawmakers look to agency staff for policy and budget perspectives on TxDOT's \$40.4 billion 2026-27 Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR).

"We'll go 10 times some days," said SLA Director Cory Henrickson, referring to the daily walks the team will make to the Capitol for committee hearings and other matters.

SLA is one-half of Government Affairs led by Director Trent Thomas, which interacts with the Office of the Texas Governor, lawmakers and state and federal agencies on behalf of TxDOT. The other wing, the Federal Affairs Section, works with Texas representatives in Washington, monitoring hearings, preparing material for legislative visits and responding to congressional requests.

"If there's a bill up that impacts TxDOT or they're discussing our budget, we will either be there as a resource witness or actively testifying," said Henrickson, referring to the agency's role at the Texas Capitol.

He estimates that he'll make up to 500 round trips before the regular session concludes at the end of May — the equivalent of walking 300 miles from Austin to TxDOT's Harlingen Travel Information Center in the Rio Grande Valley.

"I'm just constantly going back and forth," he said. "SLA has an advantage in the *Get Fit! Challenge* when it happens during legislative session."

The tough questions posed by the legislative season go well beyond the physical, however. Production of the LAR document — 586 pages this year — is nothing less than a year-long sprint spearheaded by the Financial Management Division, led by Director Amanda Landry. Their work of estimating available transportation revenue for the budget started two Januarys ago.

"What's hard is we've got 13,000

It's the things that they're doing every day in the districts, delivering the projects, the maintenance, everything. We're using those stories, those examples and those numbers to justify our budget."

**– Cory Henrickson,
State Legislative Affairs Director**

employees, 34 divisions and 25 districts who all have unique challenges, different responsibilities," said Henrickson, emphasizing the difficult task of distilling the agency's needs into a single document.

That input is approved by executive leadership. Transportation Commissioners then approve the LAR — typically in August the year prior — and send the document across the street, triggering the start of budget committee hearings and requests for TxDOT input.

The LAR is a summary of what's needed by TxDOT to keep up with the demands of a fast-growing state whose population expanded by nearly 4 million between 2010 and 2020 and is showing no signs of letting up.

Texas State Demographer Dr. Lloyd Potter told Transportation Commissioners during their monthly meeting in March that the state is now adding Texans at a daily rate of more than 1,500.

Texas now accounts for seven of the nation's 15 fastest-growing counties for numeric growth, according to Potter's presentation.

Lawmakers have responded accordingly to the needs of a growing

population, supporting a TxDOT budget that has — as of the 2024-2025 budget — grown by 76% since the 2014-2015 biennium.

The 2026-27 budget is more than an 8% increase from the last LAR, covering a broad spectrum of agency needs including project development and delivery, traffic safety and a request to expand the TxDOT family by 299 Full-Time Equivalents, or FTEs.

"This increase in FTEs will significantly enhance TxDOT's ability to manage its workload effectively, support the timely development and construction of new projects and ensure the continued maintenance of the highway system," Executive Director Marc Williams said.

Texans have also played a critical role in TxDOT's legacy of project delivery with their backing of a pair of funding measures — Propositions 1 and 7 — to support transportation infrastructure.

"We didn't get the revenue streams without the support of Texas voters," Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr. told attendees of the Texas Transportation Forum in January.

Henrickson and Kolstad said TxDOT's Progress Report — produced

by the Communications Division with input from the chairman — showcases to lawmakers the agency's commitment to safety and a legacy of delivering projects that improve the lives of Texans.

"When we go back across the street and we ask for the \$40 billion, they are asking how many contracts did we let, how are we overseeing them, what did we do with all of these programs?" said Henrickson.

Kolstad said the Progress Report is especially handy in conveying TxDOT's accomplishments and vision when called upon to talk with lawmakers. "When we're running around with our heads cut off, it's good to have an anchor as a narrative and have that information gathered already."

While the SLA section and the GOV, FIN and ADM divisions work tirelessly to highlight TxDOT's achievements, it is the work of the more than 13,000 TxDOT employees that provides the strongest testimony of the agency's stewardship of taxpayer resources.

"It's the things that they're doing every day in the districts, delivering the projects, the maintenance, everything," said Henrickson. "We're using those stories, those examples and those numbers to justify our budget." ▼



The Government Affairs Division is bustling during the Texas Legislative Session: (l to r) Corey Theurer, Madeleine Pelton, Emily Knaub, Cory Henrickson, Wesley Starnes, Kiefer Odell, Amanda O'Brien, Austin Valentine, Laura Atlas Kravitz and Laura Kolstad. Photos by Paul Stinson

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
AND INNOVATION DIVISION

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF DATA: TxDOT CONFERENCE SPOTLIGHTS DATA INNOVATION

Data isn't just a tool — it's the foundation for planning, operating and innovating. This past spring, the 2025 TxDOT Data Conference in Austin brought together industry leaders, researchers and technology experts to explore the ever-evolving role of data in transportation.

"The power of data lies in how we use it," said Strategic Initiatives and Innovation Division (STR) Director Erika Kemp. "This conference is about bringing together the best minds in the field to not only discuss challenges but to create real, actionable solutions that move the industry forward."

The conference opened with Executive Director Marc Williams delivering an inspiring address on the future of transportation and safety.

Following his address, Google's Head of Transportation Strategy and Partnerships Kristin White spoke about resiliency and dedication in transportation, reinforcing that safety and public well-being remain top priorities for the future. Both speeches set the stage for meaningful discussions on how data integration, analytics and innovation can drive transportation improvements.

As data plays a critical role in moving people and goods, so do the expectations for how data is collected, analyzed and applied. With an increasing demand for real-time insights, the transportation industry must evolve to ensure safer, more efficient and forward-thinking systems.

The conference explored these challenges and opportunities, offering attendees a chance to engage with cutting-edge technologies, case studies and expert discussions. The event also offered a

comprehensive focus on the entire data lifecycle — from acquisition to application in real-world scenarios. Topics highlighted included:

- **Data acquisition and management** — Understanding enterprise data platform capabilities and ensuring data accuracy.
- **Data analysis, modeling and visualization** — Harnessing artificial intelligence and machine learning to transform raw data into actionable insights.
- **Planning and operations** — Using data to improve safety analysis, asset management and incident detection.
- **Emerging technologies** — Exploring the latest innovations, including drones, photogrammetry, LiDAR, digital twins and connected vehicle data.

Beyond the technical discussions, the TxDOT Data Conference also created meaningful connections. Attendees networked with peers and industry experts, fostering relationships that drive innovation and collaboration across the transportation sector.

Looking ahead, STR is already planning next year's conference, which promises to be even better. Whether you're a data analyst, engineer, policymaker or industry leader, this conference offers unparalleled insights and opportunities to be a part of the transformation. ▼



Google's Kristin White spoke about resiliency in transportation at the 2025 TxDOT Data Conference. Photo by Brenda Flores-Dollar

MATERIALS AND TESTS DIVISION

POLLARD AWARD HONORS EMPLOYEE ACHIEVEMENTS

TxDOT is bringing back an annual accolade recognizing the contributions of current and former members of the Material and Tests (MTD) Division after a five-year pause. To recognize the achievements of employees during that time, the agency in March announced awards for the years 2020 through 2024 at MTD's Annual Safety Banquet in March.



The Materials and Tests Division recently honored past and present employees with the Pollard Award: (l to r) Ryan Barborak, Rogelio Estrada Jr., Brad Willemin, Miles Garrison, Amy Melton, Allen Bradford and Enad Mahmoud. Photo by Cynthia Vaquera

The winners are:

- Allen Bradford, construction inspector
- Rogelio Estrada Jr., materials/process inspector IV
- Miles Garrison, retired Materials and Testing Division director
- Amy Melton, Quality Assurance Section director
- Brad Willemin, construction inspector V

Established in 1991, the Albert H. Pollard Award recognizes individuals who have made specific contributions in research, design, construction, analysis, testing or administration in connection with materials. These contributions are not limited to technical efforts but any matter pertaining to the education and welfare of personnel of MTD.

Congratulations to all the recipients! ▼

NEW AUTOMATED ASPHALT TESTING *AMAZES*

Hot asphalt, large masonry saws, cracking pavement and toxic chemicals are just some of the safety concerns laboratory workers can face when testing asphalt. That's why TxDOT's Research and Technology Implementation Division (RTI) turned to researchers at Texas A&M Transportation Institute to develop an innovative and automated way to conduct tests, resulting in the Asphalt Mixture Automated Testing System with Zero Intervention or "AMAZE."

TxDOT previously addressed cracking and rutting problems with a manual method that produced durable mixes, but it required specialized training and direct employee contact with the materials.

"With the manual process, technicians need to handle the specimens, load them into the water

bath, put them under pressure for testing and clean up the mess after the testing," said Martin Dassi, research project manager with RTI. "Automation of certain processes is critical for safety."

The new AMAZE process includes five components:

- A robot arm.
- A specimen storage unit.
- Two temperature conditioning units, one for the cracking test at room temperature and the other for the rutting test at high temperature.
- A material testing loading unit with automated dumping component.
- An air-voids measurement unit.

The AMAZE process can automatically perform four asphalt mixture tests and the results are similar to those produced by laboratory technicians but with better repeatability

and consistency. The result is also a win for the traveling public.

"By assessing the rutting and cracking resistance of asphalt, the AMAZE ensures that only the most durable materials are used," Dassi said. "This leads to longer-lasting roads with fewer repairs needed."

The laboratory at the Stassney Campus in Austin installed an AMAZE unit in March 2024. ▼



The AMAZE can automatically perform four asphalt mixture tests. Photo by Martin Dassi

RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION DIVISION



FROM SETBACK TO COMEBACK: A REAL APPEAL TRANSFORMATION

Real
Appeal

When Cynthia Vaquera, an information specialist in the Communications Division, was injured in a car crash by a hit-and-run driver, she couldn't have imagined the difficult path ahead — or how a HealthSelect benefit would help her reclaim her life.

"It was the most devastating event of my life," Vaquera said of the crash that left her with chronic pain and limited mobility. For nearly two years, she searched for a correct diagnosis while unable to walk properly. The resulting physical limitations led to significant weight gain by 2022 — a stark contrast to her previous life as a dancer, runner and fitness enthusiast.

"I went from running, dancing and hiking to barely getting out of bed. My life felt gray and lifeless, no matter how sunny the day was," Vaquera said.

The weight gain compounded her

struggles. "I couldn't do the activities I used to love, and I lost my sense of identity," she said. "I didn't want to go out, look in the mirror or even dress up — something I always enjoyed."

Vaquera's turning point came unexpectedly while browsing Crossroads at TxDOT. There, she discovered Real Appeal, the online weight management program available through HealthSelect health plans.

"Since it was free, I figured I had nothing to lose," she said. "I had no idea it would become such a transformative part of my weight-loss journey and help me change my lifestyle."

What made Real Appeal particularly effective for Vaquera was its comprehensive approach to wellness.

"Real Appeal taught me to have a healthy relationship with food and to understand how my emotions impact my eating habits," she said. "It also

helped me set goals, hold myself accountable and manage my emotions."

Perhaps most valuable was the community support.

"The community was everything," she said. "It gave me a sense of belonging without judgment. We all shared our struggles and celebrated each other's successes. Knowing I wasn't alone in my journey made all the difference."

With guidance from her chiropractor alongside the online weight management program, Vaquera incorporated strength training into her routine. The results were remarkable — she lost 68 pounds while part of the Real Appeal community.

Today, Vaquera's transformation extends beyond the physical.

"Friends and family say they see the 'old Cynthia' again, and I feel it, too," she said. "I've even revamped my closet and can't wait to update it again soon."

Vaquera's journey illustrates the power of resilience, community and using benefits like Real Appeal. The program is available to employees, retirees and dependents enrolled in HealthSelect plans (excluding Medicare-primary participants) who are 18 or older with a body mass index, or BMI, of 23 or higher.

As her story shows, sometimes the path to wellness begins with that first, brave step toward change — and the right support system can make all the difference.

Learn more about Real Appeal and other weight management programs by visiting the HealthSelect website. ▼

Contact wellness@txdot.gov with any questions or for more information and guidance.



Hiking with her dog was part of Cynthia Vaquera's weight-loss journey along with the Real Appeal app. Photo provided by Cynthia Vaquera



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 May 28.



Identified:



Congratulations to our first identifier Meredith Worthen (ENV).

Last edition's photo featured topiaries at Chisolm Trail Memorial Park in Yoakum. These topiary statues were later replaced with bronze versions during a 2013 renovation.

Others identifying the photo were Joseph Greive (BRY), Kim Deal (LFK), Arilyn Carter (FTW), Chris Cowen (SJT), Joseph Hagler (LFK), Tanner Prestien (PAR), Bill Eisman (retired), Tiffany Shurtleff (TRV), Charles Boyer (FTW), Victoria Rodriguez (ENV), Mike Miller (TRV) and Cindy York (TRV).

UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

May 21
Transportation
Commission Meeting
(Austin)

May 26
Memorial Day
(All agencies closed)

June 19
Emancipation Day
(Minimal staff required)

June 20
Transportation
Commission Meeting
(Austin)

ENVIRONMENTAL
AFFAIRS DIVISION

CAN YOU DIG IT?

TxDOT unearths prehistoric animal site



Environmental Affairs Division staff at the Lubbock megafauna site. Photos by Michael Amador

Stunning discoveries sometimes lie just below the surface. A recent archeological excavation in the Lubbock District unearthed some colossal creatures. And the discoveries are just beginning.

“During the environmental review for Loop 88, the Lubbock District contracted an archeological survey,” said Chris Ringstaff, project planner with the Environmental Affairs Division (ENV). “They found the bones of some large, prehistoric animals called megafauna, which is not unusual in the region.”

However, the Panhandle area is also home to many playas — remnants of lakes from the Ice Age. In prehistoric times, animals and humans used playas as water sources and these sites can sometimes contain evidence of human activity.

“If the site involves humans, we have to address road construction impacts under state and federal law,” Ringstaff said. “If the site has no artifacts and dates to a time well before humans, TxDOT will recommend no further work, and the project can proceed to construction.”

Given that Texas has other sites that show human activity with megafauna, ENV staff decided to take

a closer look at the Loop 88 location. They opted for a process called staged mitigation that involves archeological excavation to look for human artifacts like chipped stone or spear points.

“Excavation is one of many steps TxDOT can take prior to road construction to ensure that Texas history is preserved,” said Cultural Resources Section Director Rebekah Dobrasko.

Earlier this year, TxDOT staff and consulting archeologists excavated bones and took geologic samples and sediment samples for fine screening. TxDOT is also collaborating with the Museum of Texas Tech University for assistance with preparation, identification and housing of the bones.

“We know we’ve found giant ground sloth by its distinctive tooth,” Ringstaff said. “Whether all the bones are giant ground sloth or there are different animals such as mammoth or mastodon, we’re not sure. Paleontologists will give us positive identification.”

Staff are examining the dirt collected around the bones for micro-artifacts and using geologic dating techniques to get a better idea of the chronology of the objects.

Should the site reveal human activity with megafauna from the Pleistocene epoch, it would be first of its kind for a TxDOT project.

Fortunately, even if further excavation is needed, the work is still well ahead of any project construction. ENV gets design plans far in advance to ensure reviews don’t affect a project’s timeline.

“We’re here to get the road built,” Ringstaff said. “But who doesn’t love digging up big ol’ animals?” ▼

Crews put bones in plaster jackets at the excavation site.



CAILYN BOLICK

Transport Engineer Technician



ATLANTA
DISTRICT

Cailyn Bolick is a transport engineer technician who started with the Atlanta District almost two years ago. She works in the district's Design Branch and is one of the drone pilots covering the nine-county area serving northeast Texas. Originally from the city of Jefferson, she is a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Monticello, earning a bachelor's degree in natural resource management. Bolick also earned her master's degree in geospatial systems engineering from Texas A&M – Corpus Christi.



Do you consider yourself a lemon or a lime? Why?

Lime, because lemons are too sunny and optimistic. I like to keep it real.

What's your favorite state park?

Caddo Lake State Park. I grew up going there as a kid.

Coffee or tea?

Diet Coke.

What breed of dog do you prefer?

I love all dogs, but I'm partial to golden retrievers.

Would you rather get free plane tickets or free accommodations for the rest of your life?

Free accommodations because I enjoy taking road trips. Driving gives me an opportunity to stop and visit places along the way.

Are you a morning person or a night owl?

Night owl for sure.

Did you have a dream job as a kid?

I wanted to be a veterinarian until I learned how many years of school that entailed. Turns out I loved college and I'm looking for any reason to go back!

What's the toughest part about flying a drone?

Working around the unpredictable Texas weather.

What is your favorite pizza topping?

Ranch dressing.

What are the five words that best describe you?

Introverted, funny (at least I think so), independent, curious and analytical.

What song brings back childhood memories?

"Coconut" by Harry Nilsson.

What do you like best about spring?

The warmer weather and working in the garden.

What is something your coworkers would be surprised to know about you?

I grew up playing softball and played in college.

What would you like everyone at TxDOT to know about the Atlanta District?

We have the prettiest campus in the state! ▼



ALL ACROSS TxDOT

What You Need to Know



Russell Chapman with the Abilene District models the NextGen hard hat. Photo by Ginna Hughes

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY DIVISION NextGen standard hard hat is here

The Occupational Safety Division (OCC), in coordination with the Procurement and Support Services divisions, recently announced the release of TxDOT's next generation standard hard hat.

The Type 1, Class E hard hats are available in yellow or white, full brim and cap-style. Enhanced features to the suspension, outer shell, reflective tape and style make this an optimal choice for today's TxDOT worker. The sleek design reveals clips in the front and back, as well as slots on the sides for coordinating accessories, making it a complementary and comprehensive system to meet the needs of most TxDOT operations.

As existing hard hats need to be replaced, the NextGen Standard hard hats are available to purchase from the Athens, Post and Seguin regional distribution centers. Visit OCC's Headwear Safety Catalog on Crossroads for more information. ▼

Changes to TxDOT telework policy

After receiving guidance of the expectation that state agency employees work in state offices full-time, TxDOT has revised the agency's telework policy. TxDOT employees increased their in-office work to full-time on March 31. For questions, reach out to your direct supervisor or visit the Increased In-Office Work Q and A on Crossroads. ▼

Spike in texting scams targets TxTag customers

TxDOT is aware of continued scams targeting TxTag customers regarding outstanding toll charges. As a reminder, TxTag does not send emails or text messages to customers regarding balances due.

If you received a suspicious message, do not click on any links and do not call TxTag's customer service phone number. Please report it to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center. ▼

ABILENE DISTRICT

Dearing to lead Abilene District

Effective at the start of March, Jeremy Dearing is the new district engineer for the Abilene District. After beginning his TxDOT career as a summer hire in 1999, Dearing joined the agency in 2001 as an engineering assistant with the Plainview Area Office. He later became a traffic engineer after a 2010 move to the Lubbock District, where he worked to improve the operability of their traffic systems. While in the Lubbock District, he held several positions, including maintenance engineer and area engineer. In 2019, he became director of Traffic Operations. He is a graduate of Texas Tech University and earned his professional engineering license in 2006. He and his wife, Jessica, enjoy traveling and hiking. ▼

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

Young named director of Human Resources

Chris Young is the new director of the Human Resources Division as of March. He ascended to the post after serving as director of the division's Workforce Development Section for the last 10 years. Previously, he served in the U.S. Army and as a diplomat for the U.S. State Department. His career also includes time in the private sector as a consultant for implementing training programs in the intelligence community. Young graduated from the University of Texas and has a Master of Business Administration from the University of Colorado and a PhD from Grand Canyon University. He and his wife live in Austin with their three children. ▼



The old bridge over Wright Patman Lake on SH 8 was demolished in March. Photo by Michael Amador

ATLANTA DISTRICT

Bridge demolition makes a splash

It takes a long time to build a bridge. But just a few seconds to take one down.

The old bridge over Wright Patman Lake on SH 8 near Maud — 18 miles southwest of Texarkana — was demolished in March with the push of a button. When the dust settled, only the new bridge span — completed last year — was left standing.

Construction crews replaced two bridges crossing over the Sulfur River between Bowie and Cass County with one long bridge. The new bridge will increase water flow and improve safety for drivers.

“The old bridges, which were built in the late 1950s, have been replaced by one long structure,” said Rebecca Wells, Atlanta District engineer.

“We’re so proud of this new bridge that is longer, taller and wider than the former bridges.”

The new bridge is 44-feet wide, including two 12-foot travel lanes with 10-foot shoulders on each side. The old bridges were 26-feet wide.

A video on [TxDOT.gov](https://www.txdot.gov) of the demolition captures the dramatic moment the structure came down. The footage was taken from pre-staged locations and was unstaffed for safety reasons. ▼

WICHITA FALLS DISTRICT

Rohmer takes the reins in Wichita Falls District

David Rohmer is the new district engineer for TxDOT’s Wichita Falls area spanning nine counties in North Texas. Previously the district’s director of Maintenance, Rohmer began his TxDOT career as a summer hire in the Fort Worth District before joining the Wichita Falls District as an engineering assistant. In 2006, he became the district’s traffic engineer, where he helped create their first serious injury and fatal crash review team. During his time as maintenance director, he also helped rebuild in-house teams to perform bridge repairs and restart the in-house seal coat program. He is a graduate of Texas A&M University. He and his wife, Karissa, enjoy spending time with family, traveling and outdoor activities. ▼

TxDOT takes the title of Fittest State Agency

The *Get Fit Texas!* Challenge results are in and TxDOT has earned the title of Fittest State Agency for 2025. Congratulations! ▼

TxDOT had a 61.7% completion rate while DPS finished with a 59.5% completion rate. The Department of State Health Services finished in third with 13.6% completion.

TxDOT continued to soar to new heights, setting another internal agency record for most employees participating (8,894 employees) and most minutes logged (29,058,642 minutes).

TxDOT employees continue to raise the bar for excellence. Here are the results for the internal competition:

Districts

- Small: Childress District
- Medium: Atlanta District
- Large: Tyler District
- Extra Large: Pharr District
- Extra-Extra Large: San Antonio District

Divisions

- Extra Small: Maritime Division
- Small: Compliance Division
- Medium: Transportation Programs

Division

- Large: Right of Way Division
- Extra Large: Financial Management Division

Congratulations to our winning districts and divisions with the highest percentage of challenge completion by size category. In addition, the Transportation Programs Division and the Corpus Christi District took home the Spirit Awards. ▼


**HOUSTON
DISTRICT**

KEEPING BOATS, CREW AND SOCIAL MEDIA MOVING



Karen Suits brings the ferry experience to life on social media. Photo by Tyra Yanas

Amongst the calls of seagulls and ferry boat horns, lies the bustling Galveston Ferry office, home to Houston District Ferry Office Administrative Assistant Karen Suits, one of the most dedicated staffers you'll ever find.

Originally starting as a ferry dispatcher 13 years ago maintaining communication between boats and emergency responders, Suits also monitored security cameras and responded during emergency situations. She eventually moved to scheduling, which meant she had to make sure crews and boats operated on a 24-hour/seven-days-a-week schedule.

"The whole goal is to keep the ferry service running and moving the traveling public between Galveston Island and the Bolivar Peninsula," she said.

Suits will be the first to say the Galveston Ferry is a unique place to work.

"We carry thousands of cars and passengers every day and it's either quiet and calm or busy and chaotic,"

she said. "We are a tourist information center as well as an emergency services point of contact, coordinating transport for someone who might need lifesaving medical attention."

In addition, Suits handles payroll for about 50 employees, collecting time reports, emails and notes about time and enters everything into the payroll system.

"I have learned many aspects about ferry operations over the years," she said.

Another duty that Suits enjoys is collaborating with the Houston District Public Information Office on the Galveston Ferry social media accounts. While the PIO office handles urgent and emergency-related messaging on Instagram and X, she enhances the ferry's social media accounts with her eloquent way of capturing the essence and spirit of the ferry system and its wonderful crew including deckhands, captains and support staff.

Her creative posts and stunning photos have helped grow the ferry's social media presence —

TxDOTGalvestonFerry on Instagram and @GalvestonFerry on X — to more than 25,000 followers combined.

"By posting information to X and Instagram, we can cut back on the thousands of calls we receive," Suits said.

Suits has also been able to bring to life the elements that make the ferry so enjoyable.

"It allows me to share photos of some great sunrises and sunsets and even jumping dolphins and other wildlife," she said. "I can post pictures from the current moment and show the weather or a storm that might be coming through. I really enjoy adding beautiful pictures to our social media platforms. It's an excellent way to promote some positive public relations."

While Suits has days she's taking care of payroll, managing social media and handling other assignments, she loves and appreciates her roles.

"I enjoy coming to work each day to see my co-workers and share comradery with them." ▼

NEW POLICY OUTLINES VISION FOR

COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION



txdot.gov



The Communications Division (CMD) is setting forth a new vision for TxDOT.gov with a recently unveiled enterprise level policy.

Known as the Public-Facing Website Governance Policy, the directive has two goals: to establish the TxDOT.gov website as the official repository for public information and to cement the processes for its maintenance and oversight. The approach of centralizing information on TxDOT.gov offers the benefit of giving the agency ownership of information presented to the public while also ensuring compliance with accessibility, branding and privacy standards. As a result, users can easily identify information from TxDOT and trust it.

To streamline updates, the policy provides an official designation for web coordinators, who oversee relevant sections of the website. The approach

gives editing access to divisions and districts and ensures the public is getting the information they need, when they need it.

The new policy not only helps standardize TxDOT's external digital presence, but it also serves as part of CMD's new vision for TxDOT.gov, which is already an award-winning website.

Given the scale of TxDOT's work, it's no surprise that the agency's public-facing website averages more than 5 million unique visitors annually, making it TxDOT's largest communication platform. While many view the site as purely informational, the core purpose is much more. The vision for TxDOT.gov is simple:

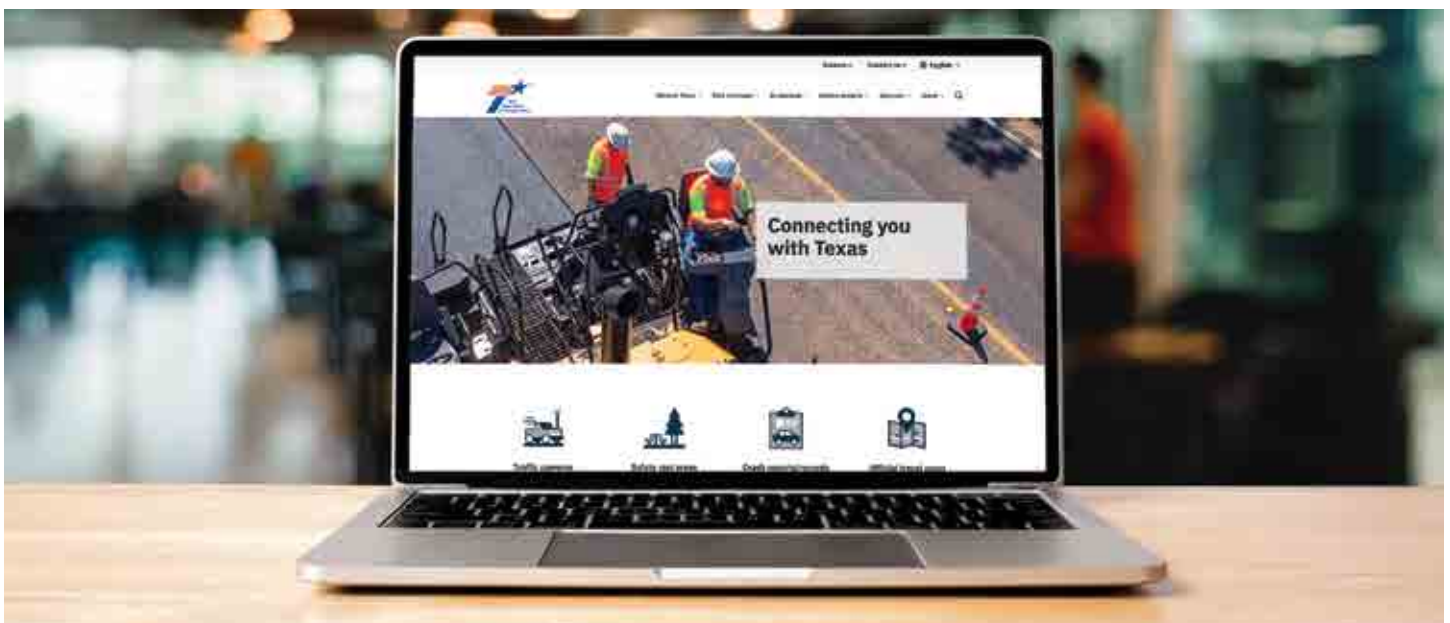
- Communicate pertinent and up-to-date information to the public about TxDOT's work.
- Work collaboratively across the

agency to improve and sustain TxDOT's digital presence.

- Create a branded, digital presence that is unified by one voice.
- Increase transparency and trust for the agency with the public.

These pieces come together in a holistic approach to the development, improvement and maintenance of the site. The focus encompasses user experience research and design, resource development for best practices, governance for use, accessibility scoring and telling stories with data. Using this approach, CMD will work for the next several years to realize this vision and help the agency meet its priorities.

"The remarkable thing about TxDOT.gov is that it is a true embodiment of cross-functional and agency-wide collaboration. The site wouldn't have the impact and usefulness that it does without the help and efforts from every corner of the agency," said Communications Division Director Diann Hodges. ▼



MILESTONES

MARCH SERVICE AWARDS

ABILENE

- 30 Matthew S. Rogers
- 20 James C. Melton
- 5 Bryan C. Etheredge
Zachary Hall
Brandon Meltz
Lindley A. Moore
Isaac P. Stilwell

ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY

- 20 Daniel D. Worden
- 10 Karen Burkhard

AMARILLO

- 10 Bryan Leeper
- 5 Crystal Bridwell
Christy Plagge

ATLANTA

- 30 Heron Garcia
- 15 Bradley Weems
Jeremy C. Williams
- 10 Floyd K. Heldt
Tammie J. Hudson
Preston L. Johnston
- 5 Norman E. Mahoney
Henry E. Phelps
Jeffrey G. Williams

AUSTIN

- 10 Maria D. Cantu
- 5 Sammy Cook
Denisson Cruz
Charles Hawkins
Brandon Mazza
Loren Morgan
Sarah Tahmoressi

BEAUMONT

- 5 Jeremy Nash

BRIDGE

- 20 Victoria E. McCammon
- 5 Robert Pearson

BROWNWOOD

- 25 Paul N. Norman
- 5 Michael F. Shellhammer

CHILDRESS

- 5 Branson Riley

CIVIL RIGHTS

- 5 Tovia H. Evans

COMMUNICATIONS

- 10 Sylvia Marroquin
- 5 Jacob Smith

COMPLIANCE

- 5 Michael F. Boehme

CONSTRUCTION

- 5 Jennifer L. Hodgins

CORPUS CHRISTI

- 10 Oscar Arredondo
James Norton
George Vana

DALLAS

- 30 Donald Lanoue
- 25 Jimmy E. Davis
Mujtaba A. Yafai
- 20 Ceason G. Clemens
- 15 Quincy L. Armstead
- 10 Leonard Chapman
Phillip L. Hancock Jr
Joshua R. Hughes
Javier Trevino
- 5 Timothy Dye
Milton Flores

DESIGN

- 15 James R. Dalton
- 10 Xiaopei Xu

EL PASO

- 20 Pete Moreno

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 10 Stacy L. Hargrove
- 5 Jennifer L. Carpenter

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 5 Hugo Cienfuegos
Trenton M. Montgomery
Kristina Siner

FLEET OPERATIONS

- 20 Edwin G. Gonzalez
Jose A. Sanchez

FORT WORTH

- 10 Ronald L. Howell Jr
Matthew M. Pate
- 5 Matthew Berrones
Kyle Cunningham
James Marlett
Ivan Velazquez

GENERAL COUNSEL

- 5 Stacie Deal

HOUSTON

- 25 Juan P. Pinales
Bassam A. Talafha
- 20 Terri L. Dedhia
- 15 Larry R. Hensarling
- 10 Zachary R. Alford
Giuly Caceres
Daniel Nigussie
- 5 Rodney Aust
Charles D. Byrd
Anil Chaudhary
Derek Fregia
Md Hafizur Rahman
Dustin Lovell
Kevin McDowell
Mohammadreza Molaei
Jessie Rodriguez

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 5 Evan Morton
Marysabel Sepulveda

LAREDO

- 25 Jesus Saavedra
- 20 Maria D. Rogers
- 10 Ricardo Giron

LUBBOCK

- 35 George Deleon
- 20 Ryan B. Brown
- 15 Richard C. Luera
- 10 Ronald Torres
Maurice Villanueva
- 5 Angelo Sandoval

LUFKIN

- 40 Dianne L. Pyle
- 25 Joe L. San Miguel Jr.
- 10 Peter D. Weeks
- 5 Diego Lopez

MATERIALS AND TESTS

- 10 Brian A. Biggs
Jeff D. Sexton

ODESSA

- 10 Jennifer Chavarria

PARIS

- 10 Christopher K. Mashburn
Isaac Roach
- 5 Austin Cox
David Price
Cord Stringer

PHARR

- 10 Dora E. Marin Robles
- 5 Darron E. Heckard

PROJECT FINANCE AND TOLL OPERATIONS

- 5 Amanda Miksch

RAIL

- 10 Patti D. Warnasch

RIGHT OF WAY

- 20 Michael J. Toman
- 15 Gustavo A. Segura
- 5 Debra Gnuse

SAN ANGELO

- 5 Matthew S. McCarver
Jorge Sanchez

SAN ANTONIO

- 35 Eileen Heye
- 25 Ricardo S. Flores
Henry J. Fojtik
John E. Jackel
- 20 Juan Alcazar
- 10 Hunter Burkett
Richard Hilbig
- 5 Ricardo Duran
Mauro A. Galvan
Sergio Garcia

SUPPORT SERVICES

- 25 David S. Haley

TRAFFIC SAFETY

- 10 Bernadine W. Moore
- 5 Gabriel C. Rodriguez
Andrea C. Smith

TRANSPORATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

- 15 Lorena Echeverria
de Misi
- 5 Curtis Jones

TYLER

- 25 Sarah E. Hatley
- 10 Paul M. Gibson
- 5 Jenny R. Bien
Simon Ryan

WACO

- 20 Charles P. Wright
- 5 Trevor W. Nelms
Ernest Wilson

WICHITA FALLS

- 25 Scott A. Carter
- 20 Michael C. Hosta
- 5 Jeremy L. Stone

YOAKUM

- 25 Rodney P. Svec
- 20 Kenneth J. Brown
Blair C. Goebel
- 10 Jason B. Fairchild
- 5 Kenneth W. Harris
Jeffery Muschalek

APRIL SERVICE AWARDS

ABILENE

- 10 Lori A. Morin
5 Amber Hicks
Ryan L. Wright

ADMINISTRATION

- 30 Carl L. Johnson

ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY

- 5 Teresa M. Zunker

AMARILLO

- 25 Earl H. Westbrook
20 Terry J. Townsend
15 Doug E. Lorensen
10 Joseph Davina
Jesse L. Jenkins
5 David M. Hartley

ATLANTA

- 20 Elton E. Bolden
10 Jerry L. Singleton Jr.

AUSTIN

- 20 Douglas L. Turner
5 James Davis
Denis Trudeau

BEAUMONT

- 10 Tommy L. Smith
Lisa L. Wilson
5 Mustafa A. Ali
Marcus W. Carey
Chadrick Hageon
Charles Hernandez
John Kelly
Raymond J. Kirkpatrick
Wesley Mosley
David Rogers
Wesley L. Stanley

BRIDGE

- 5 Christopher Gomez

BROWNWOOD

- 20 Sarah M. Dunlap
10 Christina D. Sheedy

BRYAN

- 25 Jared Rolling
20 Christopher J. Langdon
10 Jenea M. Martin
5 Thomas Curtis
Madison T. Lopez
Derik B. Matejka II

CHILDRESS

- 10 Jason A. Willis
5 Austin T. Hager

COMMUNICATIONS

- 5 Clinton H. Haffelder

CONSTRUCTION

- 30 Juan Paredez

CORPUS CHRISTI

- 35 Randall S. Kircher
20 Jeremiah J. Boehme
10 Andrew Alonzo
John Rader

DALLAS

- 25 Terry L. Blocker
20 Keith A. David
Charles M. Franklin

- 10 Steven J. Reynolds
Gary D. Smith
David N. Stegmaier
5 Alexander Cook
Bret L. Gilley
Colton Pyle

DESIGN

- 5 Craig J. Wuensche

EL PASO

- 20 Christina E. Drury
15 Jose Madrid Jr.
5 Jose Barraza Jr.
Troy E. Delira
Paul Descoteaux Jr.
Alfonso Molina

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 25 Karie M. Brown

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 35 Sandra Powell
10 Leticia Lopez

FLEET OPERATIONS

- 10 Christopher L. Speed
5 William A. McIntosh III
Johnny W. Vines

FORT WORTH

- 5 Jennifer L. Haggard
Sandip Tamrakar

HOUSTON

- 35 James L. Parnell
20 Robert S. Fischer
10 David Ballard
Luis G. Gonzalez
Joseph D. Roberson
5 Steve Almanza
Cordero Compean
Alberto R. Malapira

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 15 Tammy A. Hernandez
10 David K. Murphy

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 10 Timothy Walton
5 Mark Cooper
Margaret K. Jackson

INTERNAL AUDIT OFFICE

- 5 Megan Piwetz

LAREDO

- 20 Carlo R. Rogerio
10 Luis A. Sifuentes

LUBBOCK

- 10 Enrique C. Melendez
Ricky G. Scott
Christopher Thompson
Darrell R. Todd
5 Michael Garcia

LUFKIN

- 20 Willis H. Elliott

- 10 Wayne Byers
Raymond E. Duvall
Amy S. Jenkins
Christopher L. Windsor
5 William C. Ethridge
Jeffery Havard

MAINTENANCE

- 10 Charles Nesloney
5 Taehoon Lim

MARITIME

- 5 Geir-Eilif Kalhagen

MATERIALS AND TESTS

- 10 Rogelio Estrada
Ruben Rodriguez
5 Mohamed S. Salih

ODESSA

- 25 Jorge Estrada
10 Jesus G. De La Torr
Stuart A. Wyatt
5 Gregory Garrison
Shani Gomez

PARIS

- 10 Julie White
5 Caleb Ballard

PHARR

- 25 Jesus G. Ramirez
20 Rosbel Solis
10 Rogelio Montes Jr.
Francisco J. Morales
5 Alfonso Mendoza Jr.
David K. Travis III

PROCUREMENT

- 25 Kirby L. Bailey
10 Marshall Inman
Matthew A. Scasta

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- 10 Martha Juch
Patricia Litchfield

RIGHT OF WAY

- 30 Christina S. Melder

SAN ANGELO

- 10 John D. Magill
5 Jacob O. Flores
Richard T. Happner
Amy K. Hubbard

SAN ANTONIO

- 10 Joshua Connor
Kathleen T. Davila
Eva Maldonado
Jacob Maldonado
Robert Pursley
5 Barry Peyton

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND INNOVATION

- 20 Erika A. Esparza
15 Benjamin C. Anyacho

SUPPORT SERVICES

- 25 David Escamilla Jr.
10 Jeff J. Kuechle
5 Justin Self

TRAFFIC SAFETY

- 10 Rafael A. Riojas
Eduardo Villalon

TRAVEL INFORMATION

- 20 Ana E. Perez

TYLER

- 25 Danny M. Henderson
Amy L. Stotts
20 Chase D. Wilson

WACO

- 20 Craig A. Walker
5 Brad Baglio
Zachary A. Biels
Todd W. Powers
Jerry D. Solis
Robert S. Toliver
Philemon L. White

WICHITA FALLS

- 10 Christian J. Sierra
5 Robert Estrada Jr.
Roger L. Phillips III

YOAKUM

- 40 Richard A. Steffek
25 Brian P. Kutach
Vernon J. Rerich Jr.
20 Danny J. Belshe
James R. Mazoch
10 Carol J. Charles

MILESTONES

JANUARY RETIREE AWARDS

ABILENE

26 Kenny D. Powell

AUSTIN

28 Jason H. Hudson

26 Joe David Riba

BRYAN

21 Ronald Becker

17 John P. Katzenberger

CORPUS CHRISTI

22 Mirko J. Latkovic

DALLAS

12 Nelson L. Underwood

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

10 Tarn S. Shelton

FORT WORTH

28 Nicholas Spencer

HOUSTON

39 Jeffery D. Thomson

19 Yongqian Lin

1 Larry Roberson

LUBBOCK

14 Manuel Marmolejo

MATERIALS AND TESTS

17 Lisa A. Keith

PARIS

18 Robert L. Cook III

RAIL

19 Jaime R. Ruiz

RIGHT OF WAY

11 Debra Ann Smith-McLin

SAN ANGELO

24 Jesse Mendoza III

SAN ANTONIO

25 Robert G. Salazar

23 Joseph Ingracia

19 Mark S. Andrews

SUPPORT SERVICES

9 Susan Rougeau

TYLER

28 James C. Jackson

WACO

20 Charles W. Smith

WICHITA FALLS

22 George B. Hall

YOAKUM

29 Mark A. Koeppen

FEBRUARY RETIREE AWARDS

ABILENE

10 Traci D. Graham

AUSTIN

30 Timothy J. McDonald

20 Michelle Renee Milford

Jonnie R. Perrine

DALLAS

29 John D. Hudspeth

27 Jennifer J. Godina

20 Vincent C. Ayala

8 Rodney J. Thornton

EL PASO

28 Eduardo Armendariz

25 Javier Castillo

FLEET OPERATIONS

20 Gerald S. Dent

14 Ronald W. Troyer

FORT WORTH

36 Janet L. Crawford

22 Matthew Lynn Evans

10 Scott Sopchak

HOUSTON

32 Alan J. Wang

21 Andres D. Varilla Jr.

7 Alfred Garcia

6 Douglas Leigh Martin

HUMAN RESOURCES

10 David McMillan

LAREDO

23 Diamantina Garcia

PARIS

25 Chad C. Ingram

PHARR

27 Jennie M. Pedraza

RAIL

19 Luke J. Chisenhall

RIGHT OF WAY

36 Rodney L. Murray

SAN ANGELO

18 Benjamin W. Kent

SAN ANTONIO

39 Homer U. Bermea

22 Jeffrey L. Henkes

14 Gary Stein

12 John A. Morin

TRAFFIC SAFETY

22 Leticia T. von Rossum

TYLER

17 Eldon Chalker II

WACO

30 Ernest F. Kutscherousky

WICHITA FALLS

31 Michael D. Beaver

21 Roger P. Krah

IN MEMORIAM

ATLANTA DISTRICT

Irene Webster

Traffic Safety Specialist

Date of Death: 4/4/2025

Years of Service: 29

Retired: 2021

LAREDO DISTRICT

Avelardo Puente

Construction Inspector

Date of Death: 4/2/2025

Years of Service: 2

YOAKUM DISTRICT

Ben Bohuslav

District Engineer

Date of Death: 03/26/2025

Years of Service: 30

Retired: 1992

PHARR
DISTRICT

ALLIGATOR RESCUE



An alligator created some excitement in the Pharr District when she found her way into a storm drain near a construction site. Photo by David Cano

Pharr District field employees were in for a big surprise at one of their work sites in February.

A special guest of the reptilian sort turned the FM 1015 and Camino de Verdad intersection in Weslaco into a point of interest. An alligator measuring more than six feet found her way into a storm drain near the intersection.

Construction Inspector David Cano learned about the scaly visitor after stopping by a nearby work site. He contacted local animal control and the game warden to

rescue the alligator. Eventually, the South Padre Island Birding, Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary stepped in to remove her.

"I was really surprised to see an alligator like that," Cano said. "Reptile eyes with slits. The sun was peering through, and you could barely see. It was exciting!"

After removing the gator — named Stormy in honor of her location — from the storm drain, her rescuers took her to the alligator sanctuary. ▼

YOUR TURN



What is the most underrated city you have ever visited?

HOUSTON DISTRICT



Suzanna Set
Transportation Engineer

"Duluth, Minnesota. I visited there last September and the weather was perfect. The North Shore of Lake Superior is breathtakingly beautiful and calming."

PARIS DISTRICT



Mike Glock
Construction Inspector

"Greer, Arizona. It is a quiet small town up in the pines with great snowboarding, hunting and fishing."

SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT



Marco Galindo
Alternative Project Delivery Supervisor

"Akumal, Mexico. You can enjoy the beautiful Caribbean Sea and great food without the crowds from nearby tourist destinations like Cancun."

WHEREVER THE ROAD TAKES YOU, DRIVE LIKE A *Texan*

Kindness, courtesy, and safety on the road start with you. Whether you're headed to a work site or you're on your way home, slow down, pay attention, and *Drive like a Texan*.

