

# TEN

March/April 2025

# Courtesy & Kindness



**TxDOT safety initiative  
emphasizing core values goes public**

**DRIVE *like a* TEXAN™**

**Kind. Courteous. Safe.**



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COLUMN

From storm response to project delivery, TxDOT has plenty to brag about



**"Thanks for giving me plenty to brag about and for all that you do for Texas."**

**— Marc Williams**

In January, severe winter storms hit a large part of Texas. And, once again, you delivered a statewide Team Texas response. From plow operators to brine applicators, to those stationed at Emergency Operations Centers — and everywhere in between — you worked around the clock to keep our roads open and ensure the safety of those we serve. Thank you.

Storm response is just one example of how we demonstrate to our legislators and Texans that we are good stewards of our state's transportation system and that we value the resources they have given us to deliver on our mission.

Leading the charge to deliver is our Texas Transportation Commission Chairman, J. Bruce Bugg, Jr., who this past February minted his 10-year anniversary on the Commission — an era that has witnessed astronomic growth in transportation investments and delivery throughout the state.

With Chairman Bugg's leadership, our 10-year investment plan for construction — the Unified Transportation Program — grew more than 200% to just over \$104 billion in Fiscal Year 2025. We've also directed \$18 billion to rural projects since 2015, marking an 800% increase.

These are only two of the key points from TxDOT's new Progress Report that Chairman Bugg recently unveiled at the Texas Transportation Forum, highlighting the last 10-years of TxDOT's work to improve the lives of Texans. You can see more from the report on page 13.

As Texas continues to grow, so will its transportation needs. We have requested more than \$40 billion over the next two-year period from our state lawmakers to help us meet those needs.

The work you do every day, whether responding to severe weather events or delivering projects, speaks volumes to our commitment to be responsible stewards of our state's transportation system.

Thanks for giving me plenty to brag about and for all that you do for Texas. ▼

**MARC WILLIAMS** | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





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**DIRECTOR OF  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**  
Alejandro Garcia

**COMMUNICATIONS  
DIVISION DIRECTOR**  
Diann Hodges

**INTERNAL  
COMMUNICATIONS  
DIRECTOR/EDITOR**  
Becky Ozuna

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Shannon McIntire

**ASSISTANT  
MANAGING EDITORS**  
Ryan Self  
Paul Stinson

**STAFF WRITERS**  
Victoria Burns  
Kelly E. Lindner

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
TxDOT  
Unless otherwise noted

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
Aaron de Anda

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**CONTACT TN EDITOR**  
Have questions or  
comments about TN?  
Email [TNideas@txdot.gov](mailto:TNideas@txdot.gov)  
and include "TN Editor"  
in the subject line.

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## 6 I AM A... MAINTENANCE CREW CHIEF

YOAKUM  
DISTRICT

## WHEELY BIG DEAL

### TxDOT DUO HELPS RECOVER LOST TIRE

**T**wo Yoakum District employees helped out a young driver in a harrowing situation on the highway after the entire wheel of her car detached and rolled away.

Kenneth Brown and Charles Rochester, general transportation technicians with the Gonzales Maintenance Office, were on U.S. 183 when they came upon a car by the side of the road with its flashers on.

"As we went by, we noticed that the car had completely lost one of its tires," Rochester said. "We turned around, parked behind her and put on our emergency lights."

The driver was a young woman about 17 years old. Her little brother was with her.

"She was very scared," Rochester said. "We asked her if she was all right and she said yes."

The driver said her father, Caleb Young, was on his way to get her and the tire had rolled away into a nearby pasture.

"We told her we would stay with her until her dad came," Rochester said. "We found the tire about 40 or 50 yards out in the pasture. Kenneth went and got it and rolled it back up to the car."

When Young arrived, Rochester directed traffic while Brown helped get the tire back on the vehicle. Young brought a trailer for the car and Brown helped get it loaded and strapped into place.

"We got them back on their way," said Rochester.

Young was very appreciative of their help, posting about the incident on social media.

"I would like to thank Kenneth Brown and Charles Rochester of the Gonzales TxDOT office," Young said. "They stopped and helped my daughter



Charles Rochester (left) and Kenneth Brown aided a young driver whose wheel went for a spin in a pasture. Photo by Lucea'n Kuykendall

when she lost a wheel. To their supervisor at TxDOT: they are outstanding employees and men."

Indeed, their district colleagues sang the praises of their efforts.

"It's pretty amazing what our crews will do to make sure the traveling public is safe," said Yoakum District Engineer Jeffery Vinklerek. "I'm very proud of them."

Brown and Rochester were pleased to be able to help.

"We do it because we would like somebody to do it for our family," Brown said. ▼

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*Send information or any thank-you emails, letters or calls you or your colleagues receive to [TxDOT@txdot.gov](mailto:TxDOT@txdot.gov) so we can recognize TxDOT employee achievements.*



TxDOT's own Leah Moncure, the first woman in Texas to earn a professional engineering license, was honored in January with a new historical marker in Bastrop County.



Members of the Moncure family celebrate the marker's unveiling.  
Photo by Jeff Barker



**AUSTIN  
DISTRICT**



**T**he first woman engineer in Texas, Leah Moncure, was honored in January with a new historical marker in Bastrop County near her childhood home.

Moncure cemented her place in Texas history in 1938 by becoming the first woman in the state to earn a professional engineering license. She went on to work for the Texas Highway Department — now TxDOT — for 32 years, specializing in research, right of way and road design. During her historic tenure, Moncure worked in Houston, Austin, Beaumont and Lufkin. Moncure passed away in 1972.

Her trailblazing spirit paved the way for the more than 300 female engineers currently employed at the agency.

Along with the Texas Historical Commission, the Kings Highway Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution unveiled the new historical marker outside of Moncure's childhood home at a celebration attended by members of her family.

Diana Schulze, an area engineer in Moncure's hometown of Bastrop, spoke at the ceremony.

"I think it's pretty neat that we both have ties to Bastrop County," she said. "We've come a long way, and it's important we continue to honor Leah's legacy. She paved the way for future women engineers, including myself."

When Schulze started her current role in 2016, she became the first female engineer to hold the top spot at any office in the Austin District. She continues that legacy by mentoring the next generation of female engineers in Texas.

"There's no reason that upcoming female engineers can't be successful like Leah and many others before them," Schulze said. ▼



# Juan Hartnett

## I AM A... MAINTENANCE CREW CHIEF



EL PASO  
DISTRICT

**J**uan Hartnett, a maintenance crew chief with the El Paso District, first worked with the Fort Davis Maintenance Office in 1986 as a summer hire. Later he joined TxDOT full time. Over the course of almost three decades with the agency, Hartnett advanced his way through each designation of general transportation technician from I through V, before becoming interim maintenance section assistant and his current position as crew chief.

Hartnett grew up in Fort Davis where his parents both worked for the state of Texas. His brother Ramon also works for TxDOT at the Fort Davis Maintenance Office. He has two sisters who still live nearby.

### **Describe what you do on a day-to-day basis as a maintenance crew chief.**

My main day-to-day duties as crew chief are leading crews in the field to conduct assigned maintenance field work. We begin with stretch and flex, then discuss a safety topic and work assignments for the day. In addition, I help train new employees on equipment and the maintenance practices we conduct at TxDOT. Safety is the biggest priority. Our work helps keep the traveling public safe, and we want to conduct it safely to make sure our people return to their families at the end of the day.

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

As a summer hire, I watched and learned how operators ran equipment and how jobs were done. I learned the job, got an opportunity to run equipment, took trainings and began leading crews in the field. I feel my responsibility, dependability, reliability, experience, knowledge and dedication to TxDOT helped me get where I am today to help lead our crews.

### **What do you find most rewarding about being a maintenance crew chief?**

The most rewarding aspect of my job is knowing that the work I do can alleviate some stress for the traveling public. Our systems are vital to them and their daily commutes. Traveling can be intimidating enough for some, so providing people with the knowledge they need to plan for the best commute is rewarding. The public can simply watch the news to see what they can expect on their journey.

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

One of the most challenging aspects of the job has been the high turnaround with new employees over the years. While the roads we maintain are surrounded by some of the most beautiful scenery in Texas,

being part of the maintenance force can be tough and it isn't for everyone. It can be mentally exhausting and stressful. The way I handle the stress is by talking to my supervisor because he understands the stresses and supports me.

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

Two instances stand out to me. First, assisting the Presidio Area Office when the low water crossing on FM 170 flooded. During that event, we rescued a family stuck in a vehicle in high water.

Another instance is the Rock House Fire on April 9, 2011. That wildfire started in Marfa and swept through Fort Davis, burning more than 300,000 acres due to high winds. We assisted with traffic control, supplied fuel, delivered water, conducted debris and structure cleanup, and helped with heavy equipment operations and dust control.

### **What would you want the rest of TxDOT to know about the El Paso District?**

The El Paso District is huge, covering many lane miles and a few of the state's biggest counties. I think our section, which includes Jeff Davis and Presidio counties, has some of the most beautiful and scenic areas in Texas. ▼

*"I feel my responsibility, dependability, reliability, experience, knowledge and dedication to TxDOT helped me get where I am today to help lead our crews."*

— Juan Hartnett





## TxDOT takes the

# DRIVE like a TEXAN™

## campaign to the public

After offering employees a sneak peek last summer of a statewide safety campaign on how our routine values of respect can make the roads safer, TxDOT is taking its Drive like a Texan™ campaign statewide to the public.

Signaling the start of a safety awareness campaign that will grow throughout 2025, Deputy Executive Director Brandye Hendrickson and Communications Division Director Diann Hodges joined Travis County Judge Andy Brown and other community members to launch the safety initiative during a news conference at the annual Trail of Lights festival at Zilker Park in Austin.

The kickoff was one of the six campaign events during the holiday season, said Hodges.

“December can be one of the deadliest months of the year on Texas roadways with more people on our highways and unpredictable weather conditions,” she said. “This campaign is about reminding Texans to extend the same respect behind the wheel that we show to one another face to face.”

Every day in Texas, lives are lost on our roads — an average of 12 a day in 2023 alone.

## COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Texans are famous for their generous spirit, from holding doors open to showing kindness to strangers. But too often, this attitude doesn’t carry over to the road. *Drive like a Texan* aims to bridge this gap by promoting the core values of kindness, courtesy and safety on Texas roadways.

TxDOT’s public launch of the campaign included an interactive display at the Trail of Lights that offered visitors the opportunity to experience the initiative first-hand through a series of activities. Visitors crafted custom leather keychains celebrating their Texas pride, snapped pictures at a transportation-themed photo booth and took home reflective safety lights.

TxDOT also brought its message to



Brandye Hendrickson spoke at the launch of the *Drive like a Texan* campaign.





The Communications Division's Creative Services Section developed the concept and materials for a new safety campaign.

other beloved holiday events, including Hidalgo's Festival of Lights, Abilene's United Way Winter Light Festival and Grand Prairie's Prairie Lights. Families and communities learned about the *Drive like a Texan* vision for saving lives while enjoying the season's festivities.

TxDOT employees first caught a sneak peek of *Drive like a Texan* last summer through a series of engaging videos, interactive website content and emails. In a first for a statewide safety campaign, the Communications Division's Creative Services Section developed the concept for *Drive like a Texan* and produced all the videos and collateral that debuted early last year.

"We have enormous talent within TxDOT, and our hope is that we continue to harness that creative power to make this campaign successful with Texas drivers," said Creative Services Section Director Elliot Mayén.

Media Producer Dustin Cohen and Creative Strategist Becca Silvas brought "Cowboy Carl" to life in the Lessons in Texan video series with witty scripts that embodied the Texas values at the center of the initiative. Video editors and photographers put finishing touches to make a lasting impression on audiences. TxDOT's team of graphic designers

developed the brand's look and feel, and Graphic Designer Zach Fedell created ads for *TN Magazine* and conference programs. The Web Services team brought those designs to fruition on DriveLikeATexan.com.

"We are thrilled to take this fresh and positive approach to safety, and we have every hope that it will impact lives on the road," said Deputy Executive

**Expect to see the campaign's message popping up on gas pump video displays and even pizza box toppers.**

Director Brandye Hendrickson, who was instrumental in supporting the internal rollout last year. "We heard directly from drivers who told us they're aware of the importance of safety, but they often need reminders presented in a way that feels relatable and positive."

Following the well-received internal rollout, *Drive like a Texan's* public debut is reaching Texans through radio, television, social media and billboards.

"Texas' diverse population and, specifically, the high incidence of fatalities among those communities have been key in guiding our strategy," Mayén said.

To reach these audiences, the TV and radio spots, website and marketing materials all have a Spanish-language counterpart, such as ManejaComoUnTejano.com.

"It was to our advantage to have Mexican-born media producer Cynthia Vaquera as our cultural consultant to develop these materials," Mayén said.

As *Drive like a Texan* continues its rollout, expect to see the campaign's message popping up on gas pump video displays, coffee sleeves and even pizza box toppers.

The initiative will also evolve to engage Texans with relatable videos, compelling articles and impactful community events. From students in El Paso to truck drivers in rural areas or IT professionals in the Metroplex, TxDOT's ambitious safety campaign celebrates all Texans while emphasizing the shared values that unite us on the road.

So, as you navigate Texas highways and byways, remember: every act of kindness, courtesy and safety behind the wheel celebrates who we are as Texans. ▼



## FORUM TAKES STOCK OF TRANSPORTATION IN TEXAS

Following a record year for infrastructure investment, TxDOT leadership recently told a regional gathering of employees, contractors and other transportation partners the agency is meeting the increasing demand for safety, delivery and innovation as the Texas population continues to grow like no other.

"You all have seen just tremendous growth in resources that we have been the beneficiary of as an agency," Executive Director Marc Williams told a crowd of more than 1,000 at the three-day Texas Transportation Forum held in January. "[Texas Transportation Commission] Chairman Bugg has been a tremendous leader helping us not only obtain those resources and advocate for that, but to execute on that."

During a one-on-one conversation with Williams, the chairman lauded the daily contributions of TxDOT's 13,000 employees, opening his remarks by underscoring the importance of the agency's partnerships and also the leadership of the state's top official.

"I want to thank Governor Greg Abbott for appointing me as chairman," he told attendees, referring to his ascent to TxDOT's top post in 2017 following his start at the Texas Transportation Commission in 2015. "I love what I do and I'll tell you why: every day we're





Amanda Austin with the Design Division presented at Forum. Photos by Jen Reel

**"We have so many projects in the pipeline. Our motto is 'Connecting you with Texas' — there's a lot of Texas to connect you with."**

**— J. Bruce Bugg Jr.,  
Texas Transportation Commission Chairman**

serving Texans throughout the state of Texas in ways that help them get your kids to school, help people get to work," Bugg continued.

Attendees received hard copies of TxDOT's Progress Report, an annual publication detailing the agency's achievements and commitments to deliver on safety,

support statewide connectivity and congestion relief in the state's major metros.

In addition to highlighting the \$80 billion of non-tolled projects that are complete, under construction or planned to get urban Texans out of gridlock under the Texas Clear Lanes program, the report underscores TxDOT's unwavering dedication to improving the lives of Texans in every corner of the state.

The report also emphasizes the record investments driving economic development in the world's eighth-largest economy, including TxDOT's \$104 billion Unified Transportation Program, the agency's 10-year investment plan for construction projects.

The chairman thanked Texans for their overwhelming support at the ballot box a decade ago when they approved Propositions 1 and 7 — a pair of funding measures to support transportation infrastructure.

"We didn't get the revenue streams without the support of the Texas voters, you in this room," he said. "What we've done with that is that we have \$54 billion of projects that are under construction right now in real-time with \$36 billion that we got from 1 and 7."

Those sources of funding helped TxDOT achieve \$13.7 billion in lettings in fiscal year 2024. November 2024 also saw an all-time record contractor payment of \$1.3 billion.

For calendar year 2024, lettings grew 30% compared to 2023 — which had also previously been an agency best.

Discussions of growth in population, technology and innovation percolated in the corners and hallways of the event, with numerous TxDOT officials taking stock of what it means to provide transportation infrastructure to a state that added nearly 4 million people between 2010 and 2020.

"With a growing population comes a growing demand for safe arrivals with a broader statewide transportation network," Director of Transportation Planning and Programming Humberto "Tito" Gonzalez said during his presentation at the Forum.

The event also attracted transportation leaders from other fast-growing states — Nevada and Utah — who joined a panel discussion on the use of technology for reducing roadway fatalities and the continued need for public engagement to address behavioral habits that innovation may not be able to solve.

Former Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) head Shailen Bhatt also shared his insights on innovation.

“This is the thing about technology — it’s not about tech for tech’s sake, it’s about tech for outcomes,” said Bhatt, who now serves as chief operations officer for AtkinsRéalis, a Montreal, Canada-based engineering company.

TxDOT’s Williams told panelists that innovations, including the use of automated vehicles (AVs), could offer a considerable safety boost.

“AVs don’t get drunk,” he said, adding: “and they have the capacity to make decisions that have 360-view of what’s going on around them to protect pedestrians and others we humans don’t have.”

“Ultimately, I believe that’s going to be a big part of helping us to dramatically begin to reduce our fatalities. But we’ve got to help continue to guide that industry in a way that they don’t derail themselves before they’re able to achieve that outcome,” Williams said, emphasizing the need for that industry to prioritize safety or run the risk of being shut down.

Ali Aiden-Sullivan, head of state political strategy for Waymo, an autonomous vehicle company providing a combined 200,000 public rides weekly for riders in Phoenix, Los Angeles and San Francisco, told attendees at a separate panel

that removing drivers from the act of transportation carried a considerable safety windfall.

Aiden-Sullivan said, when it comes to causes for deadly crashes: “it’s distracted drivers, drivers playing with their phones, drivers who are drunk, drivers who are playing with the radio — all of which my car never does.”

Waymo cars are frequently seen on the streets of Austin, with the service currently available to a small number of “trusted testers” to access rides and provide feedback on its growing fleet of AVs.

“We are planning to open up that service to the general public later this year in Austin, so we’re very excited about that milestone,” said Aiden-Sullivan, who indicated that other large markets in the state could soon start to see similar AV activity.

With safety a paramount concern for every project, Chairman Bugg underscored TxDOT’s continued progress in meeting the challenges of rapid growth, highlighting that since 2015, Texas has seen an 800% increase for rural transportation funding and \$8.1 billion for border infrastructure.

“We have so many projects in the pipeline,” said Bugg. “Our motto is ‘Connecting you with Texas’ — there’s a lot of Texas to connect you with.” ▼



Executive Director Marc Williams and Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr. highlighted some of TxDOT's achievements during the 2025 Texas Transportation Forum.



# Connecting you with Texas

## TxDOT Progress Report Highlights

**D**uring the Texas Transportation Forum in January, Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr. unveiled the latest Progress Report showcasing TxDOT's accomplishments since he was first appointed by Governor Abbott.



### Construction Awards Reached Record Levels in 2024

- \$54.0 billion under contract.
- \$13.7 billion in new highway improvement and maintenance awards.

TxDOT is reducing congestion statewide. Compared to 2014, Texans are driving 17% more miles while experiencing a 15% reduction in annual hours of delay and saving \$316 annually on TxDOT roadways.



### Texas Clear Lanes Provides Congestion Relief

The Texas Clear Lanes (TCL) initiative provides much needed congestion relief in the state's major metropolitan regions.

- \$80 billion in non-tolled current and planned TCL projects in the Austin, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Houston and San Antonio regions (2015-2024).
  - 21 projects completed.
  - 31 projects under construction.
  - 78 projects planned.



### Safety is #1 and every project is a safety project at TxDOT

- \$3.8 billion for 6,900 data-driven projects (2015-2024) to engineer safety on Texas roads.
- 5,000+ employees available to deploy when severe weather and disasters strike.



### \$148 billion record 10-Year investment in Texas' infrastructure system

- \$104 billion investment for 2025 Unified Transportation Program (UTP).
  - TxDOT's 10-year plan for construction projects.
- \$44 billion for maintenance and project development for 9,000+ projects.



### Statewide and Rural Connectivity

Statewide and rural roadways provide safe, reliable, and efficient travel to and from economic activity and population centers throughout Texas.

- From 2015 to 2024 TxDOT's investment in rural areas of the state has grown from under \$2 billion to over \$18 billion, an 800% increase for rural transportation funding.



## HOUSTON DISTRICT



# MEET THE HENDERSONS: FOUR MEMBERS OF ONE FAMILY CALL HOUSTON DISTRICT HOME

Four members of the Henderson family work in the Houston District: (l to r) Ricky, Rick, Hanna and Cheryl Henderson. Photo by Fred Whitaker

**O**n the first floor of the Houston District headquarters building, you can't miss the big voice and boisterous laughter of Survey Specialist Rick Henderson. A longtime fixture at the district, he brings a wealth of experience including his mapping knowledge and expertise.

"I think the key to my dad's success is his personality and always optimistic attitude," said Resource Management Analyst Hanna Henderson, Rick's daughter, who also works in Houston District Maintenance. "He is — and always has been — a fun and caring person. He makes you feel comfortable and happy. He is always ready to make work and life fun."

She always noticed how her father enjoyed his time at TxDOT and when it was time to get a "real job," Hanna decided to apply at the agency that her father has called home for 39 years.

"My first interview was unsuccessful, so when I got a phone call to come interview for an administrative assistant position for Houston maintenance, I

thought it wouldn't work out. Six years later, I'm still here," she said.

Eventually Rick's wife Cheryl and his son Ricky also joined him at the agency. Cheryl became interested in TxDOT when she noticed how both Rick and Hanna enjoyed working together. After first taking a position with the Fleet Operations Division's Houston office, Cheryl now works as the warehouse coordinator at the North Harris Maintenance Office.

Son Ricky is the most recent Henderson to join the TxDOT family.

"Seeing how happy my family was working at TxDOT and how they always had stories to tell during dinner made me think 'You know what, maybe I should look into a position there,'" said Ricky, who works in the Houston District's Transportation Planning and Development office. "So I applied and here I am. I'm very happy working at TxDOT. It is relatively stress-free and there are great and wonderful people."

All three Hendersons agree that Rick influenced them to consider a career

with TxDOT and to be the best they could be in their lives. He says his family members have only added to the joy of working at TxDOT.

"Even before my wife and kids came on, for me, TxDOT felt like a family at work and it's been a whole lot better since they started working with me," said Rick. "I love my family."

"We all love him very much and he's the rock of our family," Hanna said. "There isn't a day that goes by that I don't need my dad. I am so happy that we all get to experience being a family and working together. We call TxDOT the family business."

Rick Henderson is thankful to see the family legacy that began nearly forty years ago will live on as he draws closer to retirement. However, he will always be known as that colleague that was ready to cheer you up even on the cloudiest day.

"You can tell that people love being around him and his ability to light up the room is something I have always loved about him," Hanna said. ▼



## NEW RESOURCES OFFER EASY GUIDE TO *CRAFTING ENTERPRISE POLICY*

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES  
AND INNOVATION DIVISION



Strategic management analysts Ron Bauerle-McKnight, David Glessner and Kaitlyn Lang-Ricci developed the new enterprise policy resources and training. Photo by Julie Kelly

As part of an ongoing effort to help TxDOT employees better understand the full spectrum of enterprise policy, the Strategic Initiatives and Innovation Division (STR) recently updated its educational outreach resources to include updated SharePoint pages, a refined Enterprise Learning Management (ELM) training program and a new Policy Owner's Toolkit.

An enterprise policy is any TxDOT management decision approved by executive leadership that applies to more than one division or district. These policies are housed in the Enterprise Policy Library and are usually related to activity within the department, such as employee behavior and responsibilities. In other words, enterprise policies are directives written by a division or district — and approved by executive leadership — that must be followed by the entire department.

“The updated SharePoint pages are now more inviting and intuitive thanks to a stylistic refresh that highlights user-friendly menu items making it easier for employees to draft, review and publish enterprise policies,” said Strategic Management Analyst Ron Bauerle-McKnight. “We wanted to offer a more modern design that enhances the overall user experience.”

The online ELM Training course (DEV470) serves as an introduction to the enterprise policy process or a refresher for anyone seeking guidance on how to create effective policy. The course explains policy versus procedure; how enterprise policy interacts with federal law and legislation; the types of enterprise policy and the paths they travel for review and approval; a policy owner's responsibilities; and how to collaborate with the Enterprise Policy Team.

The new Policy Owner's Toolkit is designed to help users navigate the review and approval process for enterprise policies. It includes:

- Guidance on drafting policies: Tips on what to consider and avoid
- Key definitions: Clarifications of commonly used terms
- Downloadable resources:
  - \* Enterprise policy template
  - \* Communications plans
  - \* Policy briefs
  - \* Style guides and presentation templates: Tools to ensure consistency and professionalism

Overall, the intent is to make employees more aware of TxDOT's enterprise policies and how to create and interact with them.

“Maintaining an effective enterprise policy library is critical for allowing employees access to important information needed to do their jobs,” said Enterprise Program Section Director Liz Osgood. “We know that writing policy can often be challenging and sometimes overwhelming, so we set out to offer these easy-to-use tools in a format that's simple to navigate and understand.” ▼



An aerial photograph showing a long line of white snowplows clearing a multi-lane highway. The plows are moving from the background towards the foreground, leaving a trail of cleared pavement behind them. The road is flanked by snow-covered shoulders and guardrails. The sky is overcast, and the overall scene depicts a winter storm response.

# **TxDOT FACES FROSTY STORMS TIMES TWO**

Snowplows were out in force on SH 360 during Winter Storm Cora. Photo by Michael Amador



**T**xDOT crews statewide rallied not once but twice to respond to winter weather in January, with crews traveling across the state to support their colleagues in other districts. The Team Texas effort encompassed 4,100 employees during the events as crews worked around the clock to keep roads clear and passable.

#### *Cora chills with snow and ice*

Winter Storm Cora hit the northern and western parts of the state in early January bringing freezing rain and snow. Employees braved the bone-rattling, winter air to treat roads ahead of the storm.

More than 1.3 million gallons of brine were applied in one day to roads across the state. More than 2,000 TxDOT employees helped respond to the winter weather, including crews in the field and in emergency operation centers at headquarters and across the state.

In a truly statewide effort, many TxDOT districts sent crews to the Dallas-Fort Worth area to help with brine-truck operations and removing snow and ice from roadways, including an 11-member crew from the Pharr District that traveled to Fort Worth to help their colleagues.

The Corpus Christi District sent a crew of 12 with additional brine trucks and salt spreaders. A 14-member team from the Amarillo District outfitted with six snowplows made the trek to the DFW area to join employees who were working around the clock, monitoring and pretreating roads.

In the El Paso District, crews patrolled and retreated roads, including trouble spots in higher elevations. In the Wichita Falls District, crews worked in 12-hour shifts, monitoring roadways and responding to trouble spots.

The Amarillo and Lubbock districts faced 10 to 14 inches of snow and whiteout conditions that especially affected I-40. In the Brownwood District, crews treated elevated structures and plowed slush from roads.

Across the state, TxDOT crews were out on the road to help.

#### *Enzo blankets Southeast Texas in historic snowfalls*

Texas barely had time to thaw out from Cora when the first snowflakes began to fall on Jan. 20 as the southeastern districts now faced their own arctic blast. Winter Storm Enzo's arrival affected a large part of the state for much of the week and TxDOT was back in action.



Snow blanketed I-35W during Winter Storm Cora. Photo by Michael Amador



Crews in the Beaumont District kept both the Rainbow and Veterans Memorial bridges open during historic snowfall. Photo by Bryce Broussard



The Wharton Area Office in the Yoakum District had a covering of snow in Winter Storm Enzo. Photo provided by the Yoakum District

Crews from Dallas, Fort Worth, Abilene and other areas that expected lighter wintery weather traveled to the Beaumont, Houston, Yoakum, Corpus Christi and San Antonio areas to assist with snowplow operations for roads that hadn't seen snow in years. In fact, parts of Southeast Texas received their first-ever blizzard warning.

El Paso District crews drove more than 700 miles on I-10 to help the Houston and Beaumont districts. Waco District crews arrived at the Houston District at 1 a.m. to support the winter response.

In the Beaumont District, field maintenance crews resolved to keep both the Rainbow and Veterans Memorial bridges open amid the snow and ice event. Historically, both bridges close during icy weather.

Orange Area Engineer Bryce Broussard said the feat wouldn't have been successful if it wasn't for the preparation, commitment and teamwork.

"It was something that's historic,"

Broussard said. "It's a once in a lifetime event — hopefully. Having the crew come together and having the wherewithal and fortitude to keep those bridges open was huge for them."

Houston District crews also responded to their share of winter weather, just months after working other historic weather events, including Hurricane Beryl. Their commitment to keep travelers and communities safe fueled their efforts to keep going.

"I'm so very proud of everyone who worked together," said Melody Galland, director of Maintenance for the Houston District. "Maintenance sections, area offices and all the districts who were here to support us during this event. We could not do this alone. We really work as a team."

During this year's first winter events, more than 10 million gallons of brine were applied on Texas roads along with more than 37,000 cubic yards of granular material. Approximately 4,100 TxDOT employees responded to the weather events across the state during the month.

And their work isn't done once the weather concludes. Crews also have to clean their equipment after use, so it's ready for the next storm.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this Team Texas weather response. ▼

More than 10 million gallons of brine were applied on Texas roads since the beginning of the year.  
Photo by Michael Amador





MATERIALS AND  
TESTS DIVISION

The Materials and Tests Division team runs tests to make certain roadway materials meet strict standards.

## METICULOUS MATERIALS TESTING IS A *RECIPE FOR TxDOT PROJECT SAFETY*

**A**t TxDOT's Materials and Tests Division, experts well-versed in asphalt, pavement, soils, coatings and other areas evaluate and analyze roadway materials including concrete and asphalt to see that they meet strict standards.

"We test to ensure that by meeting specification requirements, we are ensuring safety on our TxDOT projects," said Materials and Testing Division Director Ryan Barborak.

Using advanced medical equipment, lab technicians can analyze microscopic particles that are invisible to the human eye, allowing them to assess material chemistry and provide crucial information to TxDOT engineers about defective materials.

Another key service offered by the labs is petrographic analysis, an advanced method used to identify why materials fail to meet industry standards.

"The test procedure is basically the recipe for how to bake a cake, except here we are running a test," Barborak said.

Adherence to testing procedures yields a high level of consistency in the materials used statewide in TxDOT projects, making certain that TxDOT continues to maintain standards of high-quality material for use on roadways statewide.

Safety is at the forefront of everything the division does. However, it's not all concrete asphalt and roadway materials. In addition to ensuring pavement quality to promote safer roadway travel, employees continue to find ways to improve the reflectivity of road signs to allow for better night visibility — and by extension improve safety by allowing drivers more time to make their decisions.

Thanks to their relentless focus on testing, innovation and safety, the dedicated team in the Materials and Tests Division sees to it that roads in Texas are durable and safe for everyone.

"Our technicians and those performing the tests take great pride in what they do. And for that, I'm very thankful to our staff," Barborak said. ▼



# KEEP YOUR **MOMENTUM** GOING BY TRACKING HEALTHY HABITS

**A**s TxDOT employees wrap up the *Get Fit Texas!* Challenge at the end of March, it's important to keep the momentum going and continue to prioritize our health and well-being. With that in mind, the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) offers a valuable tool for health plan participants: the Buena Vida app. The innovative program — powered by WebMD — helps you take control of your well-being and achieve your personal health goals.

Buena Vida provides a judgment-free community to help you live your best life. Whether you're aiming to reach a fitness goal, improve your mental health or work toward financial wellness, Buena Vida supports every aspect of your well-being. With personalized health resources, wellness challenges and expert tips, Buena Vida offers something for everyone.

The Buena Vida app makes improving your well-being simple and enjoyable. Here are some of the key features:

- **Connect:** Access all your health plan and wellness benefits in one convenient place.
- **Sync trackers:** Easily sync your fitness trackers to monitor your progress.
- **Participate in challenges:** Join fun wellness challenges and engage with others. For example, the upcoming "Five to Thrive" challenge encourages participants to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day and track your intake along the way.
- **Track daily habits:** Stay on top of your well-being goals with daily habit tracking.
- **Learn:** Access expert health tips, webinars, podcasts and educational resources.

**With personalized health resources, wellness challenges and expert tips, Buena Vida offers something for everyone.**



- **Fitness classes:** Participate in free virtual fitness classes. Connect directly through the app.
- **Earn rewards:** Participate in challenges and earn rewards along your journey. Redeem points for camping chairs, tumblers, apparel, small home gadgets and more.

Buena Vida is available to HealthSelect of Texas medical plan participants — including those enrolled in Consumer Directed HealthSelectSM — who are age 18 or older.

Please note that HealthSelectSM Medicare Advantage Plan participants are not eligible to enroll.

To join, search "Wellness at Your Side" in the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. Be sure the app icon contains "WebMD Health Services." After downloading, enter the code "buenavida" and create a personal account using your information. You will not see the ERS branding in Buena Vida until you are logged in with your account. You can also visit [buenavidaers.com](https://buenavidaers.com) to join from a desktop.

Don't let the momentum from the *Get Fit Texas!* Challenge fade away. Join the Buena Vida community and continue your journey toward a healthier, happier you. Register today at [buenavidaers.com](https://buenavidaers.com) and start exploring all the benefits this platform has to offer. ▼

Contact [wellness@txdot.gov](mailto:wellness@txdot.gov) with any questions or for more information.





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](mailto:TNideas@txdot.gov). Deadline for submissions is March 26.



## Identified:



No one correctly identified last edition's photo, which featured the J.R. Curtis Jr. Memorial Garden for the Blind in Longview. The garden creates a space for learning and recreation to form a healing environment.

# UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

**March 27**  
Transportation  
Commission Meeting  
(Austin)

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**March 31**  
Cesar Chavez Day  
(Optional holiday)

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**April 18**  
Good Friday  
(Optional holiday)

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**April 21**  
San Jacinto Day  
(Minimal staff required)

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**April 24**  
Transportation  
Commission Meeting  
(Austin)

TRANSPORTATION  
PLANNING AND  
PROGRAMMING DIVISION

James Burnett (left) and Nicole Coronado with the Transportation Planning and Programming Division. Photo by Julie Kelly

## DISTRICTS TAKE THE WHEEL IN TRAFFIC FORECASTING

In a move that will allow districts to improve and better tailor traffic forecasting, TxDOT is taking a decentralized approach for gathering data by training and supporting district employees.

Traffic forecasting, also called traffic forecast analysis, provides data relied upon by districts for the planning, design and construction of most state highways. Powered by TxDOT's Calypso platform, which helps division staff analyze Statewide Traffic Analysis and Reporting System (STARS II) data, the process delivers crucial information about traffic load and movements, expected traffic volumes and key indicators for environmental studies. Without this information, many transportation projects cannot move forward.

Once primarily the domain of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP), the TPP's Transportation Analysis Branch took its Calypso training on the road to share with districts after it became clear that navigating 500 traffic forecast requests annually was not sustainable with only four team members.

"We recognized the need for a new strategy and initiated modern business processes with a decentralized approach," said Transportation Analysis Branch Manager Janie Temple. "Technology and process improvements allowed us to open traffic forecasting to the districts and planning partners, which we started doing in 2023 with traffic forecast training."

That approach has since taken flight with the training of staff in the Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, Corpus Christi and Beaumont districts to use Calypso for traffic forecasting analysis while also providing guidance on managing traffic forecasts.

"Decentralization allows districts to take the lead and work more efficiently with our partners and vendors," said Dan Perge, Metro Advance Transportation Planning director with the Dallas District. "We'll still have outstanding expert support from TPP's Transportation Analysis Branch, but we'll be able to accelerate traffic forecasting to meet our needs, priorities and schedules."

TPP's new strategy empowers districts to lead their traffic forecasting,

supported by the division's training and a robust knowledge base.

"The latest version of Calypso includes functionality that auto-populates 20 years of historical traffic data and reduces errors for all users," said Nicole Coronado, transportation engineer with the Transportation Analysis Branch of the Traffic Analysis Section. "That's a huge time-saver."

Further, the decentralized approach allows TxDOT to expand institutional knowledge about traffic forecasting as employees get acquainted with the platform. The increased sharing of knowledge on traffic forecasting and about the division's processes provide an in-depth understanding of the numerous facets of traffic forecasting projects and result in greater project efficiency.

"Getting where we are today with Calypso 9.0 has been a team effort within the Traffic Analysis Branch," said James Burnett, traffic analyst and creator of TxDOT's Calypso platform.

Looking ahead, TPP will continue to offer training and guidance to districts, including monthly meetings to help jump start district-led traffic forecasting analysis. ▼



# LAUREN BLACKMAN

## Planner



**BRYAN  
DISTRICT**

**L**auren Blackman, a planner with the Bryan District, grew up in College Station and graduated from Texas A&M University with a double major in applied mathematical science and economics. She joined TxDOT in 2017 as an office assistant then later served as a special projects coordinator. Outside of work, Lauren and her husband enjoy attending the activities of their three children, playing board games and spending time with their families who live nearby.



### **What five words best describe you?**

Reliable, driven, curious, practical and family-oriented.

### **Which Girl Scout Cookie is your favorite?**

Caramel deLites (also called Samoas) all the way!

### **What is your favorite sport to watch?**

My favorite sports to watch are the ones my kids play, like volleyball, soccer and wrestling. As a family, we love cheering on the Texas A&M Aggies in football and volleyball.

### **What do you like best about living in Bryan?**

Bryan has a small-town feel without being too small. It's a great place to raise a family, with plenty of local activities, parks and events. We especially love attending First Friday in Downtown Bryan.

### **Would you rather be able to control time or fly?**

Definitely control time. There never seems to be enough of it, especially during the hectic seasons of life.

### **Did you have a dream job as a kid?**

I always wanted to be an astronaut. I was fascinated by space and the idea of exploring places so few have been.

### **Tell us something you enjoy doing with your family.**

I love hanging out and making the most of our time as a family. Typically, we are playing a new board game or spending time at the park.

### **What is your favorite board game?**

I love trying new board games and even have a whole closet in my house dedicated to them. Right now, my favorite is a card game called Skyjo, but the family favorite is Aggravation.

### **Which season do you like the most and why?**

I love spring because it's finally warm enough to enjoy outdoor activities again. The weather is perfect — not too hot.

### **What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?**

Travel to space. I'd get to fulfill my childhood dream of being an astronaut without the long-term commitment of actually becoming one.

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

My husband and I have been together since we were sophomores in high school.

### **What is a family tradition you enjoy?**

My sister and I live in the same neighborhood, so we've recently started a tradition where one of us will host dinner once a week for our families. My kids enjoy getting to spend so much time with their cousins. It's become a highlight of the week for all of us.

### **What would you like everyone at TxDOT to know about the Bryan District?**

The Bryan District is a great place to live and work. Our primary goal is to make our roads safer, and we always strive to lead by example. It truly is a team effort accomplished by the commitment of every section within the district to work together to deliver the best, safest projects for the traveling public. ▼



# ALL ACROSS TxDOT

## What You Need to Know



The new 4-lane Cresson Relief Route provides a critical bridge over the Fort Worth and Western Railroad switching yard. Photo provided by TNP Inc.

### FORT WORTH DISTRICT FTW hosts ribbon cutting for Cresson Relief Route

The Fort Worth District celebrated the substantial completion of the Cresson Relief Route in Hood County with a ribbon-cutting last December. The new 4-lane relief route provides a critical bridge over the Fort Worth and Western Railroad switching yard just west of the city of Cresson, south of Fort Worth.

For decades, railroad switching yard activities routinely blocked U.S. 377 for long periods throughout the day. The switching yard frequently moves trains back and forth through the highway crossing as train cars from all over the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex are reorganized based on their final destination before heading out across the country. The blockages also limited mobility on SH 71 which intersects U.S. 377 just a few hundred feet south of the railroad crossing.

The relief route will reduce travel times and enhance safety for the more than 20,000 drivers traveling

the corridor from Hood, Erath and Somervell counties, and beyond to the DFW metroplex. ▼

### SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT SAT opens Loop 1604 North flyover

TxDOT celebrated the opening of the first flyover ramp on the Loop 1604 North Expansion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in January. The flyover ramp is part of Segment 2 of the project, which includes \$463 million of transportation improvements to transform the Loop 1604 and I-10 interchange into a 5-level, innovative design that will improve connectivity and mobility for San Antonio drivers.

"I am very excited to celebrate the opening of the first flyover ramp of the Loop 1604 North Expansion," said Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg Jr. "This milestone signifies major progress as part of our work on the Texas Clear Lanes initiative to improve mobility and tackle congestion on the most congested corridors in the state."

Segment 2 of the Loop 1604 North Expansion began construction in late summer 2022 and is expected to be complete in 2027. ▼

### RIGHT OF WAY DIVISION New map shows safe places to find wildflowers

The Right of Way Division (ROW) has created a map of safety rest areas located in wildflower habitats to help photographers find a safer alternative to stopping on the side of the road to

take their bluebonnet pictures. Whether you're near the Hill County, Polk County or anywhere in between, the new map created by ROW intern Blaze Foster gives you the safest options for getting those social media moments out among our native Texan plant life. You can find wildflowers near rest areas on the interactive Statewide Planning Map on TxDOT.gov. ▼



Chili champs: (l to r) Keith Varner with cook-off winners William McNew, Charles Bailey and Mark Hennig.

### BROWNWOOD DISTRICT Chili cook-off serves up delicious competition

Good food and a little competition brought together employees of the Eastland County Maintenance Section and Area Office in the Brownwood District in November. Eastland Maintenance Section Supervisor Keith Varner challenged crews to a chili cook-off just before Thanksgiving. They also invited the maintenance supervisors from other offices to compete.

The cook-off featured nine pots of chili. Attendees voted for their favorite. Visiting Comanche County Maintenance Supervisor William McNew won first place. General Transportation Technicians Charles Bailey and Mark Hennig were second and third, respectively. ▼





Class participants Denise Garcia (left) and Lindsey Schroeder are guided through an exercise on how to handle public concerns by Amy Redmond (standing).



## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING DIVISION

# CONSTRUCTION OUTREACH TRAINING

New course helps TxDOT build bridges between projects and communities

**T**xDOT employees can now take a specialized training course on how to conduct an effective outreach campaign during construction projects, thanks to a new offering from the Transportation Planning and Programming Division's Public Involvement Section.

Agency staff and consultants enrolled in EPI 300: Effective Outreach During Construction receive guidance on handling concerns raised by the public throughout a project's construction, thereby fostering stronger relationships with our communities.

"This class is great at showcasing the different methods and tools for communicating with the public impacted by construction projects," said Deputy Director of Construction Jason Duncan. "This is the kind of training I wish I had early in my career and recommend it to everyone that works on construction projects."

Launched in 2024, the class addresses a critical need identified by the San Antonio District and supported by the Construction Division for a specialized training on effective outreach during construction projects.

Developed in partnership with the Construction Division and the University of Texas while also drawing on the expertise of transportation professionals statewide and

beyond, the training incorporates various perspectives. A University of Texas research team interviewed TxDOT staff including engineers and public information officers to better understand the challenges and opportunities of communicating with the public during construction. The research team also reviewed construction outreach materials from other state departments of transportation.

The three-module training empowers employees with essential skills:

- How to identify and understand the importance of outreach goals in comparison to public involvement goals.
- How to create a strategic "hub" for outreach activities.
- How to effectively use various tools and techniques.

Participants also practice responding to challenging public questions and gain a deeper understanding of public concerns. Each class features an introduction from either Director of Construction Duane Milligan or Deputy Director of Construction Duncan.

When the training launched in March 2024, it was important to ensure broad statewide participation. Thanks to a unique system, each district's Director of Construction could nominate one individual per district to attend the first training. This innovative approach resulted in participation from all 25 districts for this groundbreaking program.

Based on the valuable feedback received from the first training, the program was refined to include a broader variety of scenarios and enhance interactivity. The course is already drawing rave reviews and word of the program is starting to spread, with the November training posting above-average scores on employee evaluations.

One participant said, "We need more engineers to take this class, so they understand the public involvement resources at their disposal." ▼



# Wearing Blue for human trafficking awareness

**T**xDOT employees renewed their annual and ongoing commitment to end human trafficking during National Human Trafficking Prevention Month by wearing blue statewide on Jan. 9. TxDOT helps raise awareness about the tragic reality of human trafficking by sharing important safety messages across the state, including new posters at Travel Information Centers. Employees posted photos to the agency's #WearBlueDay page all through January. Here are just a few snapshots raising awareness of human trafficking. To see more, visit Crossroads. ▼



The Austin District Emergency Operations Center wearing blue while watching the weather.



Wearing blue in the Paris District



The Carrizo Springs Area Office in blue at the Laredo District.



Washington County Maintenance in the Bryan District raising awareness.





The Langtry Travel Information Center staff share smiles as they wear blue.



Donna Hendrix and Charlotte Aslin wear their blue in the Atlanta District.



The Fort Stockton Area Office in the Odessa District encourages everyone to keep a watchful eye.



The Pharr District showing its support for #WearBlueDay.

# MILESTONES

## JANUARY SERVICE AWARDS

### ABILENE

- 25 Laramie A. Letz
- 20 Charlie C. Kimmel
- 5 Tommy Faircloth
- James W. Martin
- Michael Roetheli

### ADMINISTRATION

- 25 Cynthia M. Mueller

### ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY

- 35 Jose L. Sustaita

### AMARILLO

- 20 Patrick P. Brinkman
- 10 Aide Blacksher
- 5 Richard Owen

### ATLANTA

- 5 Alisha Endsley
- Natalie Turner
- Matthew S. Whatley

### AUSTIN

- 30 Timothy J. McDonald
- 25 Angela M. Erwin
- Carol A. Jarosek
- 20 John C. Gordon
- 15 Sarah Halbardier
- 10 Ryan Schuessler
- 5 Randall Lewis

### AVIATION

- 30 Brian M. Mosser

### BEAUMONT

- 20 Lisa M. Collins
- 5 Shannon Eddings
- Jason Hightower

### BRIDGE

- 20 Dina V. Dewane
- Jamie L. Griffin
- Ronald C. Reeves
- 10 Joycelyn B. Schroers

### BROWNWOOD

- 10 Jordan R. Perry
- John A. Zamora
- 5 Reed Hood

### BRYAN

- 25 Rayford L. Eagans
- 10 Susan B. Sullivan
- 5 Parker L. Denning
- Jason D. Jones

### CHILDRESS

- 10 Eloy V. Camacho

### COMMUNICATIONS

- 10 Rhonda Oaks-Donaldson
- 5 Jennifer Reel

### CONSTRUCTION

- 25 William C. Febinger IV
- James C. Langley

### CORPUS CHRISTI

- 25 Randy R. Mora
- 10 Johnny Aleman

### DALLAS

- 20 Victor Davalos
- Falon Renfro
- 5 Robert J. Board
- Darren Daniels
- Lance Kamp
- Jessica Padron
- Salomon C. Salmeron
- Dhwanil Shah
- Deleegn Shenkut
- Juan Tovar

### DESIGN

- 25 Javier Nava
- 5 Harrison D. Smith

### EL PASO

- 40 Gilberto Cangas
- 20 Ernecilio B. Gonzalez
- 10 Sammy Nunez
- Manuel M. Rivera
- 5 Estevan D. Benavidez

### FLEET OPERATIONS

- 35 Joe P. Cornett
- 20 Gerald S. Dent
- Michael J. Osborne
- 5 Eliazar Carrillo

### FORT WORTH

- 20 Julio Alva
- James G. Stouard
- Jose J. Torres
- 10 Douglas Fain
- Rafael R. Garza
- 5 Elhaj Ahmed

### GENERAL COUNSEL

- 20 Rebecca Blewett
- 10 Misty H. Barham

### GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

- 10 Corey Theurer

### HOUSTON

- 30 Wendy G. Chappell
- 25 Cindy C. Rohacek
- 20 Mona K. Kozman
- Christen N. Specht
- 10 Meladee Coakley
- Kidst D. Demeke
- 5 Sandquinette Benson
- Eric G. Enriquez
- Delinda Gonzalez
- Marcus Hawkins
- Joshua McCullough-George
- Viet Q. Pham
- Chandan Pokerna
- Mason Seets

### HUMAN RESOURCES

- 25 David J. Houston
- 10 Arlin F. Alvarez
- Kim Johannesen
- Christopher J. Young
- 5 Alison N. Huxel
- Jennifer Mendez

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 5 Eva Doughty
- John Skaarup

### INTERNAL AUDIT

- 20 Letta B. Hinton
- 5 Jose Reyes

### LAREDO

- 30 Epigmenio Gonzalez
- 20 David A. Aguilar
- 15 Enrique A. Gonzalez
- 5 Gisela L. Herrera
- Ramiro Quintanilla

### LUBBOCK

- 25 Curt Masters
- 20 David L. Bolton
- 10 Manuel H. Limon
- Terri W. Smith
- 5 Charles Childress
- Dominique Lornig-Nibaud
- Leonard Trevino

### LUFKIN

- 10 Cathy R. Williams
- 5 David G. Crawford
- Lauren P. Gerland

### MAINTENANCE

- 20 Sandra D. Kaderka
- 5 Todd Huddleson

### OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

- 20 Nicole R. Al-Sayed
- 5 Kimberly Minick

### ODESSA

- 25 David T. Dingle
- Maria L. Flores
- 10 Janice Craven
- Homer B. Slaughter
- 5 Joseph Reyes
- Adam Serrano

### PARIS

- 25 Christopher G. Harrison
- 20 Michael S. Underwood
- 15 Chris Harpold
- 10 John C. Vanderschaaf
- 5 Lisa Dunagan
- Jacob K. Vanderburg
- Stanley Walker

### PHARR

- 5 Arleene C. Garcia
- George W. Higginbotham II
- Miguel A. Landeros
- Julio C. Leo
- Arnoldo Molina
- Rudy R. Palomares
- Eduardo Resendez
- David Valdez
- Jason Vargas

### PROCUREMENT

- 30 Diana J. Huerta
- 10 Amanda Davenport
- Erika F. Rivera Romanos

- 5 Noe Hernandez
- Fernando Moncada
- Kasi O'Bryant

### PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- 25 Miki C. Cumby
- 20 Fleciano R. Montgomery
- 10 Jacy H. Butler

### PROJECT FINANCE AND TOLL OPERATIONS

- 5 Dominique Daruvalla

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 20 Vanessa Y. Owens
- 5 Christine Tremblay

### RAIL

- 10 Chad A. Coburn

### RIGHT OF WAY

- 15 Nicholas T. Partin

### SAN ANGELO

- 20 Jose L. Rodriguez

### SAN ANTONIO

- 25 Bodie J. Browning
- Travis O. Young
- 20 Jamie L. Johnson
- Andy C. Schramm
- 10 Brent E. Meyer
- Mark A. Tapia
- 5 Edmond E. Cirio
- Chris Day
- Zackory T. Schmidt

### SUPPORT SERVICES

- 25 Rosendo Garcia III
- 20 Jesse Gomez
- 10 David D. Johnson
- 5 Juan Rodriguez

### TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

- 20 Teresa N. Martinez
- 5 Alan T. Klinzing
- Enyu Li
- Robert G. Yaquinto

### TRAVEL INFORMATION

- 30 Sandra Torres
- 5 Tyson Bird
- Spencer Connole

### TYLER

- 30 Brandy B. McDaniel
- 15 Bryan E. Sessions
- 10 Chad W. Flores
- Jesse R. Kyle

### WACO

- 30 Carlos D. Alvarado
- Jody L. Valero
- Heath A. Zucha
- Steven L. Beaty
- 5 Matt R. Burrow
- Eric L. Smith

(Continued on next page)



# FEBRUARY SERVICE AWARDS

## WICHITA FALLS

- 20** Brian T. Moore  
**10** Callan M. Coltharp  
 Michael D. Wickham  
**5** Brian P. Dunn  
 Rodney C. Gillespie  
 Randi J. Wooldridge

## YOAKUM

- 40** Glenn R. Jaeger  
**25** Holly R. Netardus  
**20** Darren W. Mrkwa  
**10** Joshua A. Berckenhoff  
 Jason B. Fairchild  
 Wesley A. Pauler  
**5** Jeffrey J. Janecka  
 Charles W. Kolojaco  
 Paul Swoboda  
 Douglas B. Veselka

## FEBRUARY

## ABILENE

- 15** Edward S. Lujan  
**10** Richard G. Cooper

## ADMINISTRATION

- 20** Jessica A. Butler

## ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY

- 5** Elizabeth Cazares

## AMARILLO

- 20** Blake E. Tate  
**10** Brady C. Hart  
 David M. Pshigoda  
**5** Austin Borden

## ATLANTA

- 50** Gary G. Barnett  
**20** James E. Moore II  
**10** David Andrade  
 Roger D. Grimes  
 Tracy S. Morton  
 Adam W. Wilburn

## AUSTIN

- 25** Darren W. Everett  
**5** Yetnayet A. Bogale  
 Josh Neuroth  
 Sabrina Simpson

## BEAUMONT

- 10** Brent J. Rawlinson

## BRIDGE

- 10** Sara Watts

## BROWNWOOD

- 25** Steven W. Hamrick  
**10** Eric S. Haley  
 Winston D. Poe

## BRYAN

- 25** Crystal L. Moody  
**5** Johnny C. Vasquez

## COMMUNICATIONS

- 15** Mary E. Navarrete-Rodriguez

## CONSTRUCTION

- 15** Justin G. Smith  
**10** Thane A. Mitchell

## CONTRACT SERVICES

- 10** Clela Finn

## CORPUS CHRISTI

- 25** Joel Garcia  
**10** Richard Carr  
 Alfredo M. Jasso  
 Roberto A. Jimenez  
 John F. Maye  
 Celestino Rodriguez  
**5** Alex Cox

## DALLAS

- 20** Vincent C. Ayala  
 Jason T. Palmer  
 Amanda M. Miller  
**15** Marco Gutierrez  
 James L. Haynes  
 Bret Lackey  
 Antonio Mendoza  
 Pancho G. Ramirez  
 Ronnie Ramirez

## EL PASO

- 30** Martha A. Boyd  
**20** Ruben E. Martinez  
**5** Joseph A. Diaz  
 Cristina Gonzalez  
 Jorge Valverde  
 Isaac Zamora

## ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

- 5** Amanda Burton

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 10** Reane Gilder  
 Tammy James  
 Susan Amanda  
 Merriwether  
**5** Patricia Abelardo  
 Sylvia Garza-Solis  
 Olga Sauseda

## FLEET OPERATIONS

- 10** John W. Santana  
**5** Enrique Vazquez  
 Rudy Zapata

## FORT WORTH

- 30** Carlos E. Molin  
**20** Anthony R. Munoz  
**10** Scott Sopchak  
**5** Isaac D. Alva  
 Anthony Balatti  
 Christopher B. Neal  
 Daniel S. Ochoa  
 Jacob A. Sundin  
 James R. Travis  
 Dean K. Yanagi

## GENERAL COUNSEL

- 15** Karen E. Moore  
**5** Thornton Wood

## GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

- 15** Cassandra R. Mata

## HOUSTON

- 35** Elie J. Alkhoury  
**20** Craig D. Blend  
 Robert G. Lund

- 10** George D. Taft

- 5** Dip R. Bista  
 Nancy Hults  
 Marietou E. Zida

## HUMAN RESOURCES

- 10** Shandon Richardson

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 10** Samuel Stephens  
**5** Ava D. Baker  
 Blair Dunlap  
 Kelly Kimbriel

## LAREDO

- 30** Jose L. Franco III  
**5** Denisse Garcia  
 Jose A. Rodriguez

## LUBBOCK

- 25** Jose A. Moreno  
**10** David C. Martin  
**5** Gilbert A. Vasquez  
 Svetislav Vojisic

## LUFKIN

- 5** Christopher Birdwell  
 Paul G. Engelking  
 Bryan K. Herman  
 Kyle L. Johnson  
 Guadalupe Sandoval

## MAINTENANCE

- 5** Andrew Groves  
 Sang Ick Lee  
 Elizabeth Paul

## ODESSA

- 35** Donald McNatt  
**5** Jonathan Smith

## PARIS

- 15** Cody Weaver  
**5** Larry D. LaForge  
 Troy Young

## PHARR

- 10** Laura Rios  
**5** Alex Delgado  
 Ethan Garza  
 Ruben Gonzalez III  
 Jose A. Rodriguez Jr.  
 Michael Rodriguez  
 Luis A. Saucedo  
 Santos Sustaita  
 Denise Vasquez

## PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- 5** Krista R. Moreira

## PROJECT FINANCE AND TOLL OPERATIONS

- 10** Paula DeLong

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 5** Joanna Saenz

## SAN ANGELO

- 5** Kenneth R. Councilman

## SAN ANTONIO

- 30** Walter J. Alexander  
**25** Crystal J. King  
**20** Christen D. Longoria  
**15** Eugene Palacios  
**5** Michael A. Gonzalez  
 Victor G. Somers  
 Miguel A. Torres Jr.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

- 25** Leticia Maldonado  
**20** Norman L. Coddington  
**5** Rolando Barrera  
 Lisa Leal-Tate  
 Jerrold Wilkins

## TRAFFIC SAFETY

- 25** Tracie Mendez  
**20** Rodney S. Jones  
**5** Jyothirmal Bulusu  
 Dorothy Roberts

## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

- 35** James W. Burnett  
**30** Cary C. Karnstadt  
**10** Rebecca A. Ottaway  
**5** Seth M. Howard

## TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

- 5** Kevin U. Clark

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

- 10** Kristi M. Urkuski

## TYLER

- 25** William J. Fisher  
 Jeremy Taylor  
**10** Johnny Morrow  
 Jay D. Taylor  
 Chris Wiggins  
**5** Caleb Hutchings  
 Steven Schulte

## WACO

- 10** Terry P. McCoy  
**5** Stephen W. Minton  
 Johnny F. Woolner

## WICHITA FALLS

- 40** Charles E. Stanley  
**25** Dennis A. Ramsey  
**5** Jonathan L. Haseloff II  
 David R. Stroud

## YOAKUM

- 40** Howard Callis Jr.  
**35** Larry D. Howren  
**25** John A. Cochran Jr.  
 Robert G. Herman  
**10** Henry J. Kostelnik Jr.  
 Roy J. Waller  
**5** Veronica De Leon  
 Sarah M. Hogan  
 McKenzie L. Koehne  
 Michael P. Kunz

# MILESTONES

## NOVEMBER RETIREE AWARDS

### ABILENE

**28** Stephen T. Jones  
**10** Roger C. Crawford

### AMARILLO

**12** Larry Barber

### BROWNWOOD

**14** Keith R. Shaffer

### CORPUS CHRISTI

**20** Adam W. Sprague

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

**19** Mark M. Brown

### FLEET OPERATIONS

**21** Robert L. Smith  
**7** Mark William Burton

### HOUSTON

**29** Shianne M. Blease-Staine

### LUFKIN

**11** Roshal D. Mooney

### PROFESIONAL ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT SERVICES

**10** Lori Ann Wilson

### TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

**17** Shannon Y. Hall

### TYLER

**18** Javier Elizondo

### YOAKUM

**27** Thomas F. Kocian

## DECEMBER RETIREE AWARDS

### ABILENE

**28** Scott E. Darrow  
**11** Clarence Burson

### ATLANTA

**15** Charles R. Parker

### AUSTIN

**31** Brian C. Dailey

### BROWNWOOD

**26** Victoria McKee

### DALLAS

**26** Darla Payberah

### DESIGN

**23** Jane C. Lundquist

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

**26** Mary L. Amaya

### FLEET OPERATIONS

**37** Keith W. Harris  
**27** Thomas H. Holcomb  
**26** Michael A. Janssen  
**21** Joe D. McKee Jr.

### FORT WORTH

**25** Michael Dean Chandler  
**20** Larry G. Schraeder  
**18** David F. Thiesing

### HOUSTON

**33** James H. Mims IV  
**18** Lien Kim Nguyen

### LAREDO

**14** Fernando Javier Lozan  
**11** Rogelio Ramos

### MATERIALS AND TESTS

**25** Maria T. Sepulveda

### ODESSA

**12** Camie L. Adams

### PHARR

**27** Armando S. Rodriguez  
**17** Javier Martinez

### PROCUREMENT

**16** Carolyn M. Brooks

### SAN ANTONIO

**24** Logan C. Green  
**16** Gary Alan Pena

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND INNOVATION

**25** Elizabeth D. Simmons

### TYLER

**13** James A. O'Steen

### WICHITA FALLS

**31** Cosme Solis III

## IN MEMORIAM

### AMARILLO DISTRICT

**Doyel "Zip" Wayne Cowart**  
Supervisor at Special Jobs  
Date of Death: 10/27/2024  
Years of Service: 36  
Retired: 1993

### ATLANTA DISTRICT

**James "Jimmy" Simmons**  
Transportation Maintenance  
Technician/Sign Crew  
Date of Death: 01/23/2025  
Years of Service: 21  
Retired: 2008

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DIVISION

**Nettie Marcus**  
Date of Death: 01/30/2025  
Years of Service: 32  
Retired: 1989

**CORRECTION:** David J. Bowman and Michael T. Pettibon with the Occupational Safety Division celebrated 15 years with TxDOT in November, not 25 as listed last issue. We apologize for the error.



## SAFETY POINTS OF CONTACT *FILL VITAL ROLE*

**A**lthough a Safety Point of Contact's (SPOC) role is voluntary, they play a crucial role in ensuring safety and preventing complacency. Since safety is TxDOT's number one priority, the SPOC helps make sure all TxDOT employees get home safely.

A SPOC's duties include inspecting fire extinguishers to keep them in good working condition, performing dike inspections, responding to small spills and leading monthly safety meetings for the staff. These meetings keep safety at the forefront of everyone's mind and provide a platform to discuss incidents and safer handling methods.

These important roles and responsibilities are carried out by people like General Transportation Technician Roger West with the Odessa District. West has been with TxDOT

for four years, starting at the Lubbock District. Currently part of the Andrews Maintenance Section team, West said placing a premium on safety has always been a part of his approach to work and he enjoys discussing it with other employees.

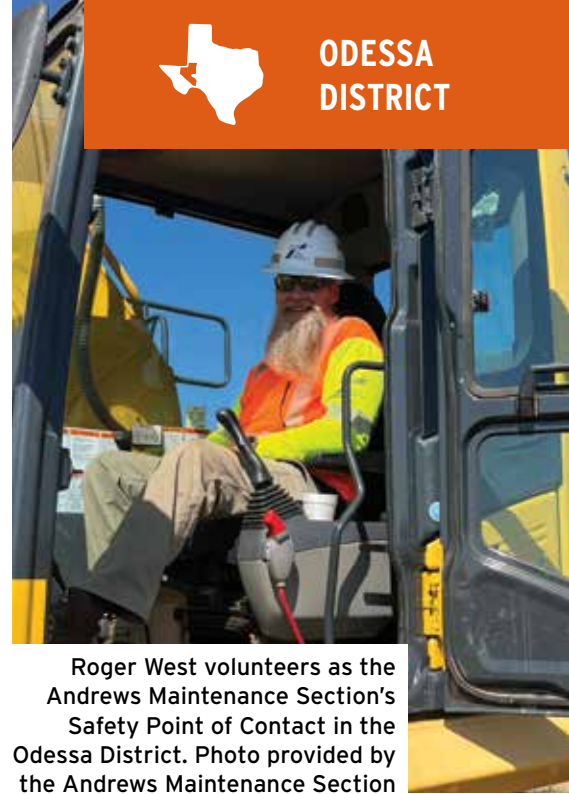
When asked what advice he would give to those considering becoming a SPOC, West said, "Don't get overwhelmed. It's a lot of information at once, but once you learn it, it is manageable. You just have to find what works best for you."

West's efforts have not gone unnoticed, either.

"He is always ready to help or do what is needed," said Eddy Rentas, safety officer for the Odessa District. "West has an excellent work ethic and genuinely enjoys helping his section with safety." ▼



**ODESSA  
DISTRICT**



Roger West volunteers as the Andrews Maintenance Section's Safety Point of Contact in the Odessa District. Photo provided by the Andrews Maintenance Section

## YOUR TURN



### *What is your favorite way to relax after a long day?*

#### CORPUS CHRISTI DISTRICT



**Sara Gonzalez**  
Business Services Coordinator

"After a long day, I love walking my fur baby, Bear, around the park. I also unwind by playing board games with my family or listening to music while I craft."

#### ODESSA DISTRICT



**Jacqueline Leyva**  
Construction Record Keeper

"I'll run a few miles, either by myself or with my kids. Then I'll head to the golf course and play a few holes with the rest of my family."

#### YOAKUM DISTRICT



**Jachelle Appelt**  
Construction Record Keeper

"I like to relax outside when the weather permits. I work in my garden and enjoy the fresh air."

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