THE YEAR IN (PROJECT) REVIEW

Each year, TxDOT archeologists and historians review hundreds of transportation projects to evaluate potential impacts to cultural resources. Field work and research are undertaken to learn more about these resources. These efforts can capture incredible finds, such as new archeological sites, notable buildings, and little-known stories.

This year’s cultural resources surveys recorded a 20th-century African American school in east Texas and a cotton seed farm outside of Waco known for its hardy varietal. They also revealed general resource trends: for example, post-WWII neighborhoods and suburban development repeatedly appeared in resource surveys, prompting historians to develop techniques and methods to efficiently deal with these common resources.

Archeologists and historians work with federally-recognized tribes, County Historical Commissions, and other interest groups to share their discoveries and learn more from local experts. When important cultural resources are identified in a project area, the team works with engineers to eliminate or lessen harmful outcomes. TxDOT works to avoid impacting cultural resources by making design changes and incorporating smart planning strategies.

PROTECTING THE PAST

Texas has hundreds of historic bridges, more than any other state.

Learn about this exciting aspect of our engineering heritage through TxDOT’s StoryMaps, videos, and educational activities. Recent TxDOT projects preserved 50 percent of historic bridges slated for demolition by moving them to parks, trails, or museums so they can have new life. Our Historic Bridge Legacy Program keeps the stories of these bridges alive.

TxDOT is currently in the process of removing the historic 1959 Harbor Bridge in Corpus Christi. As a result, we captured the history of that iconic bridge through a traveling exhibit, video, and oral history project. Travel into the past at www.TxDOT.gov, keyword “Harbor Bridge” or “historic bridges.”

LIZARD LAB

Moving can be hard.

For the state-listed threatened species Texas horned lizard, relocation from its small home range can be deadly. So, when TxDOT projects in Zapata, Starr, and Cameron Counties needed to move horned lizards from the work area before construction began, staff from Environmental Affairs’ Natural Resources Management Section reached out to the “Lizard Lab.” The lab, based within the Center for Conservation and Research (CCR) at the San Antonio Zoo, houses and breeds Texas horned lizards in a converted 450-square-foot warehouse. TxDOT staff transported lizards found while clearing vegetation to the lab, where they became part of the captive breeding program that supplies little lizards for reintroduction into the wild.

Young lizards are released to CCR-approved locations in early fall and are regularly monitored. The goal is to keep horned lizard populations healthy, improve native biodiversity, and raise awareness around this threatened Texas species. Thanks to the partnership between TxDOT and the CCR “Lizard Lab,” the Texas horned lizard stands a fighting chance.

SECTION 106 VIRTUAL TRAINING

Historic preservation regulations can be complicated.

TxDOT wants you to participate in our transportation projects, so we have created a virtual training portal that helps explain our public involvement process. Learn about how TxDOT completes archeology and history surveys, manages historic bridges, and addresses other environmental concerns in projects.

The training happens in a “virtual open house” format where visitors stop at 15 different stations through the training. The first stops include a Welcome and seven separate training modules viewed as 10 to 12 minute videos on YouTube. Each video highlights a step in the Section 106/historic preservation process and provides additional information, links, and definitions.

Get involved in shaping TxDOT projects by visiting sec106txdot.org and completing the training at your own pace.

WE ASKED, YOU RESPONDED!

Thank you to the hundreds that completed our survey in 2021 about TxDOT’s historic preservation program! Your feedback is important to us—it lets us know we are on the right track! More than 1,000 people gave us thoughts on sharing our history and historic resources, telling environmental stories through our Roadside Chat webinars, and providing brochures, posters, stickers, and postcards to hand out to your organizations.

We learned that you want us to have simple, clear materials, do more outreach on social media, and work more with Texas magazines, TV shows, and news programs. We also learned we need to do better with outreach to historically underrepresented communities and responding to needs from our communities. We hope you will continue to be involved in our projects and processes to improve transportation in Texas!

PUBLIC AWARENESS “CAT-PAIGN”

Feline friends are cute, but when feral cats became TxDOT rest area residents, action needed to be taken.

The cats, often abandoned by their owners, posed health and safety issues for the travelling public. Someone fed the cats, encouraging them to stay. Rest areas are not animal shelters. More importantly, abandoning animals is a misdemeanor crime under Texas law.

Collaboration among TxDOT divisions led to a solution. Environmental Affairs division staff helped Maintenance division staff understand state animal regulations and provided general guidance. The Maintenance, Traffic Safety, and Communication divisions implemented a public awareness campaign to discourage people from leaving cats at rest areas. The campaign designed an official sign and educational poster for rest areas to display. A pilot program is testing the materials at select spots before launching statewide.

GET INVOLVED

Attend a Meeting or Engage Online

Learn about a project and provide your comments on the design as well as any community, economic, historical and environmental impacts.

Project Tracker

Check the status of projects online. This interactive map shows how much projects cost and when you can expect them to be completed. Go to www.TxDOT.gov, keywords “Project Tracker.”

Talk to Your District or Area Engineer

Each TxDOT project has an Area Engineer that oversees the work. Find your Area Engineer at www.TxDOT.gov, keywords “Locate a District.” Call, visit or email the area engineer with your input.