From recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, to statewide funding initiatives, it’s been a busy year for TxDOT.
At TxDOT, we spend a lot of time talking about, planning for and practicing good on-the-job safety habits. And that’s because we know that the more we spread the message, the greater the likelihood that you’ll get home at the end of each day. But that’s what you do for family. You want to protect them.

But you know, as much as we are a family within this agency, our ties extend past district boundaries and division offices. Your at-home family is as much a part of our TxDOT family as the man or woman with whom you share a cubicle wall. And it’s our responsibility as well to care for them, to make sure they’re protected, too.

That really hit home with me when I was looking at my calendar the other day and planning the last few months of 2018. I am hoping — as I am sure you are — to spend some quality time with family. Besides my TxDOT family, my wife and kids — or should I say, young adults — are the most important people in my life.

That’s why, in the Bass household, there are a few non-negotiable rules:

**Safety rule no. 1:** Always wear your seat belt. That’s something I drilled into my kids from day one. Of course, it was a lot easier to make them do it when they were in car seats, but as they got older, they knew that the Bass-mobile didn’t move until everybody was buckled up.

**Safety rule no. 2:** This one I’ve found myself saying more now that they’re driving age, and that’s “Remember: hands go on the wheel and off the cell phone.” Distracted driving is a plague on our country, and it’s ending lives at an alarming rate. Whatever we have to do to stop it, I’m for it.

**Safety rule no. 3:** The words “drinking” and “driving” must never be practiced together. Enough said.

**Safety rule no. 4:** The numbers on a speed limit sign are not suggestions. Slow down. Don’t speed.

They probably look familiar, albeit with a slight “Dad” twist. They’re the same messages we’ve preached to Texans for years — and we’ll keep preaching them until no one dies on our roadways. But I submit to you that since we will never tire of working to save the lives of those we serve, we owe the same to our families. I know my family deserves it. So does yours.

Thanks for proudly and selflessly serving the citizens of Texas, and I look forward to the work we’ll do together in 2019.
As 2018 draws to a close, TN takes a look back at an eventful year that included continuing Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts and the funding of Texas Clear Lanes projects.

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New district engineers for Corpus Christi and Wichita Falls

Valente Olivarez Jr. and Michael Beaver became TxDOT’s newest district engineers in September. Olivarez is the new district engineer for Corpus Christi. He has served as deputy district engineer for the district since 2015 and was also project manager for the $1 billion Harbor Bridge design-build project. Michael Beaver became the district engineer for the Wichita Falls District. Beaver began his TxDOT career in 1993. He has been involved in roadway design, bridge inspection and maintenance activities.

Bridge Division gets new director

Graham Bettis was named the new director of the Bridge Division effective Sept. 1. Bettis was most recently the deputy division director. He has successfully led many efforts including the systematic inspection of more than 4,000 bridges affected by Hurricane Harvey. Prior to joining the Bridge Division, Bettis spent five years in the Construction Division’s Cedar Park lab. Bettis has a degree in architectural engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.

Changes to FMLA period tracking

TxDOT recently changed the way it tracks family and medical leave timeframes. The Family and Medical Leave Act, or FMLA, allows eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks unpaid, job-protected leave in a defined 12-month period for specified family and medical reasons. Previously, TxDOT tracked FMLA use on a 12-month fixed period based on the fiscal year. On Oct. 15, TxDOT began tracking this leave using a “rolling” 12-month period measured backward from the date an employee’s FMLA leave begins. The amount of family and medical leave awarded will be based on the date of need and the amount of leave available.

Division changes this fall

As of Sept. 1, the Traffic Operations Division changed its name to the Traffic Safety Division. Job functions and its acronym, TRF, remain the same. In addition, the Materials and Tests Section of the Construction Division is now a separate division. The Materials and Tests Division, or MTD, will bring added focus to providing quality materials for day-to-day operations.

Langtry travel center celebrates 50 years

Nov. 1 marks the 50th anniversary of the Texas Travel Information Center at Langtry, also known as the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center. Located in the Big Bend region, this center includes the original building of Judge Roy Bean’s saloon. Look for more details of the celebration in the January/February issue of TN.
In August, the Corpus Christi District welcomed the newest ferry to its Port Aransas fleet with a public dedication and christening of the 28-vehicle passenger vessel Phil Wilson. Named in honor of Phil Wilson, former TxDOT executive director, the new ferry becomes the fourth 28-vehicle vessel in the Port Aransas fleet of eight ferries.

TxDOT Executive Director James Bass and Port Aransas Mayor Pro Tem Wendy Moore took part in the dedication along with Wilson. It included a ribbon-cutting followed by a tour of the ferry.

The Phil Wilson features the latest in marine technology including more horsepower, better safety systems and more advanced navigation systems. It has three 750-horsepower engines versus two 600-horsepower engines on the previous design. Its propeller system improves maneuverability and increases safety. A diesel-electric design and advanced emissions technology significantly reduces the ferry’s diesel engine emissions.

TxDOT operates the ferry system as a public service between Port Aransas and Harbor Island 24-hours a day, 365 days a year and transports more than 3 million vehicles annually. The ferries are named for former executive directors of TxDOT and are trimmed in the color of the director's alma mater, which in the case of Wilson is purple for Hardin-Simmons University.
**AROUND THE STATE**

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

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**FORT WORTH**

Next phase of DFW Connector project begins

In August, the Fort Worth District and the city of Grapevine hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for the I-635/SH 121 Interchange project. The $370 million project is the next big piece of the DFW Connector.

The project was funded by Proposition 1 and cost $28.1 million. It also included reconstruction of the north and southbound frontage road intersections at I-35 and U.S. 79, as well as the addition of a third left-turn lane from U.S. 79 to southbound I-35.

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**AUSTIN**

Braided ramps open on I-35 in Round Rock

Drivers traveling north through Round Rock now have new ways to get on and off I-35.

After two years of construction, TxDOT opened new braided ramps in September in Round Rock in the Austin District. The ramps were built crossing over each other, between Hester’s Crossing and RM 620.

The top ramp allows drivers to get onto the interstate from the frontage road, while the bottom ramp lets people exit I-35 to reach RM 620. TxDOT officials and Round Rock city leaders said the project would help alleviate some of the merging traffic on the busy interstate.

The project was funded by Proposition 1 and cost $28.1 million. It also included reconstruction of the north and southbound frontage road intersections at I-35 and U.S. 79, as well as the addition of a third left-turn lane from U.S. 79 to southbound I-35.
Operation Safe Driver supports safety in Laredo

The Laredo District partnered with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Laredo Police Department and other members of the regional TxDOT Traffic Safety Coalition to present Operation Safe Driver in August.

During this event, federal border safety inspection personnel based in Laredo and serving at World Trade Bridge conducted inspections on buses and tractor-trailers for compliance with safety, an event supported by the Laredo district engineer and traffic safety section.

This event included a one-day presentation from the U.S. Department of Transportation on the importance of commercial motor vehicle safety and a TxDOT presentation on distracted driving, or rather, not being distracted while driving.

The Operation Safe Driver Program was launched in 2007 by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance in partnership with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and law enforcement to reduce the number of deaths and injuries resulting from unsafe driving behaviors.

Lufkin celebrates U.S. 69 South groundbreaking

In July, the Lufkin District celebrated the groundbreaking of U.S. 69 South with local residents, stakeholders and business owners. The event included Texas Transportation Commissioner Jeff Austin III, State Rep. Trent Ashby, TxDOT Executive Director James Bass and Lufkin District Engineer Cheryl Flood.

The $71.6 million construction project will widen U.S. 69 South from two to four lanes. The project has been in the works for many years and is designed to enhance the safety of the roadway and provide a much improved evacuation route from Beaumont and Louisiana. It will also provide better connectivity to further the TxDOT mission of delivering a safe, reliable and integrated transportation system that enables the movement of people and goods.
One common way that online accounts are breached is through password spraying. Spraying is when cyber attackers use a small number of common passwords to attack large numbers of accounts. These brute force attacks are successful because in any large set of users some will be using common passwords. These attacks can slip under the radar of protective monitoring, which looks at each account in isolation.

To understand how much of a problem password spraying is, the National Cyber Security Centre recently conducted a study that allowed participating organizations to assess how vulnerable they would be to such an attack.

The study found:
- 75 percent of the organizations had accounts with passwords featured in the top 1,000 passwords
- 87 percent had accounts with passwords in the top 10,000 passwords

Cyber attackers have developed sophisticated programs that can guess passwords, and they are constantly getting better at it. They can break into accounts if the passwords are weak.

For the best protection, passwords should be as long as possible. The longer a password is, the stronger it is. In fact, instead of using just a single word as a password, use multiple words. This is called a passphrase. For example, a passphrase could be something simple like: Where Is My Coffee?

To make passphrases even more secure, consider doing the following:
- Use a number
- Have at least one lowercase and one uppercase letter
- Use a symbol such as @ or $

For example, the letter ‘o’ can be replaced with the number zero or the letter ‘e’ with the number three. In addition, symbols can be common punctuation such as a question mark. Using these characters creates a strong password that is difficult for cyber criminals to compromise, yet is simple to remember and easy to type.

It is important to put thought into a password. Commonly used passwords like “Password123,” “letmein,” “qwerty” and “56789” are not secure. Simple passwords like these make spraying attacks effective.

Report all suspicious activity to the help desk at 512-302-4357 and forward suspicious emails to spam@txdot.gov.
The Yoakum District is home to the Sternadel family which has seen three generations serving TxDOT. From left: David, Victor and Elroy Sternadel.

FOR STERNADELS, TxDOT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

The Yoakum District is home to the Sternadels, a family which has seen three generations serving TxDOT.

The story begins after World War II when Victor Sternadel joined the State Highway Department as TxDOT was then known. Victor grew up west of Schulenburg and was among the troops who landed on Omaha Beach in 1944, and served as a translator for Gen. George S. Patton.

Victor was hired as a motor grader operator for what is now the Yoakum District. “He would blade asphalt,” said Elroy Sternadel, Victor’s son. “He always enjoyed his time at TxDOT.”

Elroy Sternadel started at TxDOT in 1969. Like his father, he had just finished service in the army.

“I had been working for Mobile Oil, but they wanted me to move to Corpus Christi,” said Elroy.

Elroy started out working as a floater (similar to special crew work). “I’d go wherever they needed me,” he said. “I moved to the sign shop. We made all of our own signs then.”

In 1971, Elroy transferred to the signal department and later, he moved into the maintenance section working on signals.

“I saw a lot of changes,” said Elroy. “The biggest for me was when we switched from mechanical signal lights to computerized lights.”

Elroy retired in 2003 but not before his son, David, joined the Yoakum District in 1997. “I encouraged him to join because the benefits would mean a lot in the long run,” said Elroy.

David began as part of the summer hire program and is now the maintenance supervisor for Lavaca County.

“Being third generation really makes you aware of how things have changed,” said David. “As a kid, I always heard stories of the work my father and grandfather did for the department.”

For David, the increased safety awareness has been the biggest change.

David has two children of his own in college but he’s not pressuring them to continue the tradition.

“I’m going to leave that up to them,” he said. “I just know TxDOT has really benefited my family.”
The past year was an eventful one for TxDOT. From the continuing recovery efforts following Hurricane Harvey to new efforts to improve efficiency, to progress on Texas Clear Lanes projects, it was a year of moving forward.

Harvey aftermath

A year ago, Texas faced a natural disaster on a scale that is rarely seen. Hurricane Harvey dropped as much as 40 inches of rain in a four-day period. After coming ashore near Rockport, it pounded the Texas coast and dumped rain from Houston to the Louisiana state line.

TxDOT plans for hurricanes and its employees are old hands at responding to severe weather. But Harvey tested the agency in ways not seen before.

All 25 districts were eventually called upon to provide support as the storm stalled over the state and continued to drop rain. Areas flooded that had never flooded before. More than 5,000 TxDOT employees responded to the storm either directly or indirectly, logging in more than 1 million work hours.

In the aftermath of the storm, crews worked tirelessly to get our roads open again. They removed more than 21 million cubic feet of debris, working for months after the storm. More than 2,000 employees logged more than 286,000 hours removing debris in cities and counties. That amount is equal to about 100,000 truckloads that, if parked bumper-to-bumper, would create a line of dump trucks that would stretch from Laredo to Denton.

Gov. Greg Abbott singled out TxDOT’s debris removal efforts for special praise.

TxDOT crews were exemplary during this unprecedented event. They worked long hours and made personal sacrifices to get the job done.
Looking for efficiencies

In 2018, TxDOT set a department goal to identify $613 million in cost savings through the Unified Transportation Program, or UTP, period by August 2019. To achieve this goal, the agency appealed to employees for ideas. A dedicated webpage was created on Crossroads for employees to submit ideas.

TxDOT also created a work group focused on this effort. This work group will identify and prepare ideas for the department. It will also help with tracking the progress over time.

The department plans to regularly recognize those who are innovating and achieving savings for the department. That recognition will be encouraged in performance evaluations.

Texas Clear Lanes gets moving

In November of 2014 and 2015, Texas voters approved extra funding in the forms of two constitutional amendments: Proposition 1 and Proposition 7. With this additional funding, TxDOT has dedicated more than $3 billion to date for non-tolled congestion relief projects in the state's five largest metro areas — Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio.

TxDOT’s goal is to address gridlock for Texas drivers statewide. These five areas represent more than 65 percent of the Texas population and in 2017 were home to 92 of the Top 100 most congested roadway segments in the state.

Texas Clear Lanes projects were approved in 2018 and included in the state’s Unified Transportation Program, or UTP, our 10-year project development plan. At $75.4 billion, it is the largest UTP in the agency’s history.

This year saw some of these congestion projects taking shape, including the completion of the I-35 at 51st Street project in Austin and the SH 121/360 interchange project in the Fort Worth District. Fort Worth also celebrated the groundbreaking for the I-635/SH 121 interchange project (see story on page 6). The $370 million project is the next big piece of the DFW Connector. It will reconstruct and widen SH 121 to accommodate a new interchange at I-635 and new direct connectors at SH 26 and FM 2499.

Continued on page 12
Port Aransas gets two new ferries

This year saw the launch of two new ferries in Port Aransas in the Corpus Christi District. Ferries are named for former executive directors of TxDOT and these were named after Amadeo Saenz Jr. and Phil Wilson.

The new ferries hold 28 vehicles, which is larger than some of the others serving the crossing. The larger ferries will help keep up with increased demand. The new ferries also have pollution reducing systems and new technologies.

Between two and six ferries run the Port Aransas route and connect Aransas Pass on the mainland with Port Aransas on Mustang Island.

Redesigned Project Tracker launches

This year also saw the launch of the redesigned Project Tracker, an online tool for the public to follow more than 10,000 transportation projects.

Project Tracker consolidates project-specific information from several TxDOT databases and maps it into one publicly accessible location. Recognizing how valuable the tool is, TxDOT conducted an extensive outreach effort to identify ways to improve it and increase its usage. Through surveys and focus groups, more than 2,000 people contributed to the effort.

Improvements included an easier to use search function, a more user-friendly design and at-a-glance project summaries.
Diversity and hiring

Encouraging and embracing diversity was a theme for TxDOT in 2018. One of TxDOT’s ongoing goals is to ensure an inclusive and diverse workforce that reflects the cultural richness of the people we serve. To that end, the Human Resources Division launched a major recruitment campaign in the fall to build awareness about TxDOT and its recruitment efforts.

The division hopes to boost attendance at recruitment events and convey that TxDOT welcomes and values diversity.

It’s been quite a year! And, as always, TxDOT employees can be proud of their work. 

TN
TxDOT helps ancient bones find their way home

When an ancient skeleton was uncovered in the wall of a bridge in Frio County, south of San Antonio, TxDOT’s team of archeologists went digging for the truth. Pictured (l to r): Scott Pletka and Jim Abbott.
Texas’ landscape is dotted with thousands of archeological sites that reveal important pieces of our history and heritage. TxDOT’s staff archeologists dig into archival records, geographic information systems and literally in the dirt to find these sites before construction starts. But surprises can be revealed long after roads are built. That’s just what happened recently in Frio County south of San Antonio.

This summer, a TxDOT bridge inspector conducting a routine inspection noticed something strange jutting out of the wall of the riverbank under a bridge. It appeared to be part of a human skeleton. The skeleton was in the dirt wall, which had eroded because of rain water and river flow since the bridge was constructed in 1958. Without a casket or other feature to indicate a cemetery, it could be a crime scene or an ancient or prehistoric burial. The discovery of human remains requires law enforcement be notified to rule out a crime scene.

The unusual setting suggested the remains could have been associated with the bridge construction in the 1950s. Texas Rangers engaged a forensic team from Texas State University who uncovered a stone arrow point among the remains. The burial was indeed prehistoric. Assured that this was no modern crime scene, law enforcement turned the investigation over to TxDOT. At the request of the Texas Historical Commission, TxDOT directed the forensics team’s investigation.

TxDOT and the Texas Historical Commission used drone technology to analyze the geological setting, along with traditional archeological techniques to analyze the soil and other features. They concluded that the wall of the riverbank might actually be part of an ancient pit house, or underground house. The burial was placed within and below the pit house.

Ancient people created pit houses by excavating a shallow pit two or three feet deep. Poles and branches were used to create walls and a roof, and layers of clay were plastered on the walls. At some point after construction, this pit house burned and collapsed. While pit houses are not uncommon archeological sites in the state, this is the first one discovered in this part of Texas. The closest one is hundreds of miles away where ancient settlers routinely lived in pit houses like this.

Archeologists believe the body was buried after the structure burned down. The person likely had some connection to the site, but the relationship remains uncertain.

Radiocarbon dates and other analyses are pending. That data should provide a clearer picture. However, there might not be a chance to examine the site again. Heavy rains have recently flooded the river and could have destroyed it.

The arrow point found at the site, called an Edwards point, is among the very earliest to appear in Texas, around 1,000 years ago.

While the investigation continues, the final resting place of this ancient individual needs to be determined. The federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act governs the treatment of ancient burials. TxDOT will work closely with Native American tribes to identify and repatriate the individual. It might be years before the individual will finally be put to rest.

This discovery was different from other work conducted by TxDOT archeologists because it wasn’t actually associated with a planned construction project. Nonetheless, it is part of the agency’s work to manage the preservation of cultural resources in the right of way.
Changes are underway in the Procurement Division that will make department purchasing easier and faster for districts and divisions. Since becoming director in 2017, Kenneth Wood has made it his mission to improve customer service in the division.

The Procurement Division is the central purchasing office for the department, procuring goods and non-professional services under the State Purchasing Act. The division develops purchasing policies and procedures and serves as the department liaison to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts and Department of Information Resources. It also manages suppliers, facilitates procurement negotiations, provides procurement training, oversees purchasing cards and provides outreach activities for the department’s Historically Underutilized Business program.
Wood, with assistance and input from division managers, recently reorganized the division to better support its customers in the districts and divisions. The division now has three sections:

- **The Tactical Purchasing Section**, directed by Jo Woten, is responsible for processing day-to-day purchases.
- **The Strategic Purchasing Section**, directed by Matt Jordan, is responsible for larger purchases. Staff also evaluates tactical procurement practices to identify efficiencies in spot purchases.
- **The Support Operations Section**, directed by Leigh Bailey, is responsible for the Payment Card program, PeopleSoft Purchase Order system administration and other administrative and legislative duties.

In addition to reorganization, Wood is also implementing several purchasing initiatives. First, online ordering is now available with some department vendors. Much like other online shopping, division purchasers can go to the vendor website, make a purchase by placing items in their cart, check out using the purchase order and have the product delivered. The online purchasing system is much faster than using the traditional purchase order.

Another initiative is the virtual credit card. It is a one-time use electronic credit card delivered via email. The virtual credit card is limited to a specific vendor and the purchase amount is only good for a specific number of days. These cards are frequently sent by the division to department employees who are registering for a conference or paying for outside training. Again, using the virtual card is faster and avoids emailing employees’ confidential information.

Purchase order monitoring is also making a big difference for the division’s customers by assisting them with budget management. The division has specific employees assigned to monitor purchase orders and release excess budget encumbrances — usually by reducing the quantity of items purchased — so that those monies can be used for other purposes. This avoids having money that will not be used from sitting idle and maximizes the department’s purchasing power.

Another improvement that has been implemented is bringing all of the division contract specialists under one umbrella as part of the Strategic Purchasing section. Now all contract logs are uniform and maintained pursuant to division policies and procedures. This means all open contracts can be found in one place — no searching in districts and divisions.

Wood has also designated division advocates. These employees serve as liaisons between the Procurement Division and other divisions and districts. Their job is to monitor purchases and communicate with their customers. These employees will serve in a project management role to ensure purchases happen without delays due to lack of communication.

All of these initiatives are part of the division’s focus on improving customer service. “We are making efforts and finding ways to better serve the districts and divisions. By this, I mean we are dedicated to walking our talk,” said Wood.

To learn more about the reorganization of the Procurement Division and its initiatives, visit the division’s SharePoint site at https://txdot.sharepoint.com/sites/division-pro/ SitePages/Home.aspx.
For employees wondering about the next step in their TxDOT career, a great resource is the new sample TxDOT career paths from the Human Resources Division. These paths help answer questions about different job families that require similar skill sets and knowledge.

Career paths provide a way for employees to take ownership of their career development. The paths can help employees explore an area of interest, learn what skills and knowledge are needed for different roles and chart a map for achieving career goals.

For the past year, the Career Development Team has developed sample career paths for TxDOT job families and possible paths for growth and development. These sample career paths now cover 80 percent of job functions within TxDOT. No matter where someone works or what they do, a career path is available to help visualize ways to grow within the department.

### AVAILABLE PATHS

**Division Career Paths**
- Engineering and Design
- Finance and Auditing
- Communications and Information
- Human Resources
- Procurement and Contracts
- Regulatory Compliance and Property Management
- Research and Statistics

**District Career Paths**
- Maintenance
- Professional Engineering
- Engineering Support

**Learning Paths**
- Contracts and Purchasing
- Leadership and Professional Development

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**Getting started with career paths**

- Find the sample career path that a job position appears in. Certain positions may appear in more than one path, and the same skills and experiences may be found on multiple paths.
- Explore other job positions in the sample career path. Consider horizontal, as well as vertical, moves on the path.
- Compare a current job position to other positions of interest. Consider the experience, training and skills necessary to become a competitive candidate for positions of interest.

Remember, the sample career paths are just examples of possible paths. The paths reflect advancement opportunities within TxDOT, but every employee must chart the course that makes the most sense for their individual career goals. Remember to discuss career goals with your supervisor for guidance.

Check out the sample career paths online:
Go to HRDNet > HR Programs > Career Development Program > TxDOT Careers.

Questions? Call the Career Development Team at 512-416-2700 or email at development@txdot.gov.
The city of Laredo recently renamed its K. Tarver Recreational Center the Margarito Benavides Jr. Recreational Center after the Laredo District’s own general transportation tech. Benavides is a former city council member who was once the youngest elected official in Laredo. This renaming was dedicated to him for the hard work he has invested in his community. As a council member, he was known for paving many streets in his district, as well as bringing sidewalks and parks.

He also served on the city’s Planning and Zoning Commission and the city’s Airport Advisory Board.

The Benavides family was at the dedication to celebrate with him.
The Fleet Operations Division has been working to supplement funds for TxDOT’s alternative fuels program through grants. Its efforts recently paid off when TxDOT was awarded two grants.

A $36,000 grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, or TCEQ, will be used to purchase a plug-in hybrid Ford F250 pickup truck that will operate in the Houston District. The district is already home to several plug-in compact electric cars and charging stations.

“This pickup is directly due to our Fleet Services section’s hard work and diligence,” said Division Director Dalton Pratt.

The Fleet Operations Division also received $427,000 in October through a state allocation grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. This is a grant that is available to states that successfully apply for it. TCEQ assigned the Texas allocation to TxDOT. The funds will be available each year for the next three years as long as an application is submitted. The upcoming allocation will be used to replace aging dump trucks and an aerial device.

The Fleet Services Section oversees the alternative fuels program, and staff began researching grant opportunities as part of a larger effort to expand the program in a way that makes financial and practical sense for TxDOT. Its first success was a $20,000 grant from the Propane Council of Texas in September 2017.

The division hopes to build on these successes with more grants to expand the alternative fuels program.

Building and repairing highways is an endless task. More than 5,500 projects are underway or beginning soon, with 9,000 more in development. There’s also more underground in the form of utility lines including electrical systems, natural gas, waterlines and more.

Helping TxDOT keep track is Texas811, the state’s non-profit contact center for locating buried facilities prior to a dig.

Texas811 is intended to protect the underground traffic, but everyone should be working to prevent unnecessary damage.

Excavation workers can help by respecting ground markings and flags laid down by underground utility locators by using the Tolerance Zone.

In the state of Texas, the Tolerance Zone is half the nominal diameter of the underground pipeline, plus a minimum of 18 inches on either side of the outside edge of the underground pipeline on a horizontal plane.

Digging methods to consider in the Tolerance Zone other than careful hand digging include pot holing, soft digging and vacuum excavation. If you must break through pavement or concrete, these methods are not required until after the hard shell is removed.

Always verify the location of a buried utility by sight before using any power or mechanical equipment within the Tolerance Zone.

For more information, visit texas811.org.

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“This pickup is directly due to our Fleet Services section’s hard work and diligence,” said Division Director Dalton Pratt.

The Fleet Operations Division also received $427,000 in October through a state allocation grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. This is a grant that is available to states that successfully apply for it. TCEQ assigned the Texas allocation to TxDOT. The funds will be available each year for the next three years as long as an application is submitted. The upcoming allocation will be used to replace aging dump trucks and an aerial device.

The Fleet Services Section oversees the alternative fuels program, and staff began researching grant opportunities as part of a larger effort to expand the program in a way that makes financial and practical sense for TxDOT. Its first success was a $20,000 grant from the Propane Council of Texas in September 2017.

The division hopes to build on these successes with more grants to expand the alternative fuels program.
As TxDOT continues to strive for a diverse workforce reflective of Texas’ population, it’s important to maintain a culture that respects all employees. Every TxDOT employee has the right to work in an environment free of harassment. Respecting our co-workers’ differences begins with carefully considering the language we use.

Classes specifically protected under TxDOT’s Workplace Harassment policy include race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy (or related medical conditions), national origin, genetic information (for example, a family member’s medical history), citizenship or immigration status, disability, military status and age. Conduct that may violate this policy includes derogatory or insensitive jokes, racial slurs or nicknames, sexual gestures or innuendos and other offensive comments concerning classes protected by our policy.

One instance of this type of conduct may be enough to violate department policy and could be cause for termination of employment. It is also important to note that even if the conduct does not violate the department’s workplace harassment policy, it may violate the department’s policy on professionalism.

In most cases, there are no acceptable justifications for using inappropriate language at TxDOT. Under department policy, it does not matter if no one is complaining, if co-workers say similar things, or if everyone laughs at an obscene or otherwise offensive joke. Individual perceptions of and reactions to humor vary widely. What one person considers funny and harmless horseplay may be offensive to someone else. It’s possible that employees on the receiving end of an inappropriate comment or joke pretend to be amused to show they are a good sport or to avoid confrontation.

In fact, it does not matter if the person the comment is directed to is not offended or even if the speaker is the same race as the person. It is never all right to make derogatory comments or jokes regarding a person’s protected class or to use racial slurs of any kind. “I was joking” or “I didn’t mean it that way,” are not defenses.

The Human Resources Division’s Ethics and Equal Employment Opportunity Section can answer questions or concerns you have about harassment in the workplace. Contact them at EEO@TxDOT.gov.
This August, 10 engineers from the Fort Worth District took part in an all-girls’ summer camp called Girlgeneering, put on by the College of Engineering at the University of Texas at Arlington.

About 65 aspiring engineers came to the district office to learn what their future might hold. The camp focused on encouraging talented students in middle school to pursue careers in engineering by demonstrating its real-world social impact.

The TxDOT engineers described their job fields and gave students a hands-on look at the work engineers perform in each field. The girls learned about the science behind roadway design, bridge design, traffic operations and environmental issues. Presenters focused on using problem-solving skills, the value of teamwork and the importance of incorporating driver and worker safety.

Students were guided to consider the wide variety of factors engineers must consider when planning, designing or building a roadway including pedestrians, bicyclists, railroads, endangered animals and the aesthetic elements.

“I was impressed by their grasp of the safety logic,” said Transportation Engineer Cynthia De La Garza.

The I-35 East Managed Lanes Project isn’t just improving congestion, it’s bringing home awards.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials recently recognized TxDOT’s I-35 East project for its overall excellence. The project is giving Texans new lanes for a roughly 30-mile corridor from Dallas to Denton and a new bridge over Lake Lewisville.

Chief Engineer Bill Hale received the award in August at the Southern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, or SASHTO, conference.

Eight outstanding transportation projects from six southeastern states were honored in the regional America’s Transportation Awards competition. The projects were recognized for a host of achievements, including significantly reducing motor vehicle crashes through innovative roadway designs, creating new, safer routes for bicycles and pedestrians and restoring access to communities after natural disasters.

Congratulations to everyone involved in this project!
Employees with HealthSelect or Consumer Directed HealthSelect health plans have several important benefits offered to them. Here are seven benefits that these employees should know about. For even more resources, check out the HealthSelect of Texas website at healthselectoftexas.com.

**MEDICAL BENEFITS**

1. **In-network Doctors:** On the HealthSelect website, employees can find in-network doctors, hospitals and other providers. To help keep out-of-pocket costs as low as possible and get the highest level of benefits, employees should select a primary care physician.

2. **24/7 Nurseline:** The toll-free, 24/7 Nurseline is (800) 581-0368. Registered nurses can answer general health questions and advise patients.

3. **Virtual Doctor Visits:** Employees can consult with a virtual doctor any time online or via phone at no cost with two provider options: Doctor On Demand or MDLIVE.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS BENEFITS**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas has partnered with Well onTarget to provide wellness programs, resources and incentives to HealthSelect participants via their web portal.

4. **Wellness Incentives:** Blue Points is an incentive program where participants earn points from wellness activities, such as completing a health assessment, or synching and using a fitness device. Points can be used to get a variety of items for free.

5. **Lifestyle Questionnaire:** OnMyWay Health Assessment is an online survey on lifestyle and health habits and provides a personal wellness report with recommended goals and action steps. Completing this survey is part of the TxDOT Well Check Wellness Leave Program and employees can earn up to 8 hours of leave.

6. **Fitness Membership Program:** Through the Well onTarget portal, HealthSelect participants can enroll in a flexible fitness program which gives employees unlimited access to a variety of fitness centers nationwide for one monthly price. Membership is $25 a month.

7. **Weight Management Programs:** Looking for a weight-loss program? Naturally Slim and Real Appeal programs are available at no cost to employees and their dependents 18 years and older who are enrolled in a HealthSelect plan.

Naturally Slim is a 10-week online skill-building program focused on changing eating habits while losing weight and improving health. To enroll, go to naturallyslim.com/healthselect.

Real Appeal is a step-by-step program designed to teach healthy habits over time to help lead to lasting weight loss. To learn more and enroll, go to healthselect.realappeal.com.

To learn more about the wellness benefits available, visit the Wellness webpage on Crossroads or contact TxDOT statewide Wellness Program Administrators Arlin Alvarez, arlin.alvarez@txdot.gov, or Gina Akin, gina.akin@txdot.gov.
Anne Cook has been the TxDOT photo librarian since she was hired in April 1989. She says there’s nothing else she would rather do. Evenings, she spends equal amounts of time reading and watching movies. She’s a self-described cat lady (only three, she has limits.) On weekends you’ll find her at a museum or watching Formula One or Longhorn women's volleyball.

Describe what you do as a librarian and what a typical day is like.

I search for and share images requested by external customers and TxDOT personnel. To make retrieving images efficient, I catalog them in the library databases. I also label, file and organize department archival materials. Although the collection is termed a photo library, I have accepted additional department historical materials including journals and manuals. Safeguarding the agency’s legacy became a passion when I worked on the 80th anniversary and it hasn’t lessened with the passing of our Centennial. As a result, I also spend time researching answers to questions about the department’s history.

What skills, knowledge and outlook does a librarian need to have in order to be successful?

I have a master’s degree in library and information science. I also recommend being detail-oriented and having a good photographic memory along with a compulsion to organize. In this job, it also helps to be a bit of a hoarder.

What has turned your job into a nearly 30-year career?

Why have you stayed with TxDOT?

Because I find it impossible to pass an interesting book without stopping to read, I decided to specialize in non-print collections. I’ve worked at another state agency and in a college media center. When I came to TxDOT, I was so excited by the collection here (and the work it would require to keep it organized) and by my talented, friendly co-workers, I’ve never been tempted to look for another position.
Tell us about the TxDOT photo library. What’s your favorite piece or collection and why?

I do have favorites. One is of the goddess being removed from the top of the state capitol. She’s all strapped up with black webbing and looks unattractive and resigned to her fate — how I feel on my worst days! I also enjoy the archive photos of children, pets and families in their outdated clothing.

What is the most challenging/rewarding part of your job?

The photo library has over half a million prints and photographs, and with the addition of the growing digital collection, may reach a million images before I retire. Trying to properly catalog each image is very challenging. I have library customers who became friends and I often take advantage of their special interests. They help me to identify aircraft, machinery, historic buildings and other mysteries in the archives.
How would you spend one million dollars?
I’m pretty conservative, so I’d pocket the money and save it for a rainy day.

Describe your typical work day.
The Burnet County Maintenance Section covers the five western counties of the Austin District, so a typical day varies. But I usually start off with texts, phone calls and emails. Where I go first depends on the issues of that day.

What five words best describe you and why?
Firm, fair, punctual, committed and honest.

What is one of the things on your bucket list?
I want to dig for gold in Alaska!

What movie title would represent the story of your life?
“The Cowboys” starring John Wayne because I feel just like his character, Wil Andersen, sometimes.

What’s your secret talent that few people know about?
If I told you, it wouldn’t be a secret anymore, right?

What was your favorite subject in school?
Math, if you can believe it.

Which candy bar is most like you and why?
PayDay because I like pay day.

What part of your current job is your favorite?
Helping resolve issues.

What aspect of your personality adds the most value to your work?
I’m a people person.
Where Am I?

Here is a photo depicting an identifiable landmark you may have seen in your travels around Texas. If you think you know what this is a photo of or know where it was taken, send an email to TNideas@txdot.gov. Deadline for submissions is December 6.

Identified:

Congratulations to our first identifier David Young (SAT). Last edition’s photo featured the view of the Dallas skyline from Pioneer Plaza. The plaza between historic Pioneer Cemetery and the Dallas Convention Center features the world’s largest bronze monument, 40 Texas Longhorn steers being driven by three cowboys on horseback.

Others correctly identifying the photo were Hector Siller (PHR), Kim Deal (LFK), Chris Cowen (BRY), Joseph Hagler (LFK), Charles Kern (MNT), Richard Garza (ABL), Sharon Benson (WAC), Timothy Lowak (SAT), Gretchen Wighaman-Webb (MNT), Austin Valentine (GOV) and James Hoover (DAL). TN

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UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

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<th>Nov. 15</th>
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<td>Texas Transportation Commission Meeting (Austin)</td>
<td>Day before Thanksgiving (Minimal staff required)</td>
<td>Thanksgiving (All agencies closed)</td>
<td>Day after Thanksgiving (All agencies closed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Transportation Commission Meeting (Austin)</td>
<td>Christmas Eve (All agencies closed)</td>
<td>Christmas (All agencies closed)</td>
<td>Day after Christmas (All agencies closed)</td>
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DISTRICTS

ABILENE
20 James H. Smith
10 Kevin D. Taylor
5 Clarence Burson
Steven H. Davis
Gregory M. Pope
Michael D. Sanders

ATLANTA
25 Donna H. Barnes
Barbara F. Wyatt

AUSTIN
25 Daniel S. Bridges
20 Jason L. Brecht
David R. Franklin
5 Anthony A. Arobaire
Heather L. Beatty

BEAUMONT
20 Corrie J. Frank
10 Andrew C. Lee
Zhen Z. Tan
5 Roberto M. Rodriguez

BROWNSWOOD
5 Nicholas T. Durkop
Chance G. Emfinger
Darrell R. Greenwood
Caleb T. Payne

BRYAN
30 Maurice Maness
25 Bradley L. Powell
Lance W. Simmons
10 David G. Amos Jr.
Nicholas A. Berlan
5 Vincent A. Espinoza
Bradley C. Manthei

CHILDRESS
5 Randall N. Worley

CORPUS CHRISTI
25 Benito A. Galvan Jr.
Jose V. Guerra Jr.
20 Robert V. Allen
Adrian Lopez

DALLAS
25 Yuan R. Wang
20 Mary E. Lozano
10 Lacey G. Rodgers
10 Justin E. Dotson
Ashton M. Strong

SAN ANGELO
28 Gary J. Davenport
Dung H. Nguyen
Roger Reed Jr.
Gerald L. Waltman

EL PASO
30 Roman Gonzalez

FORT WORTH
30 Lynn E. Haehn
20 Jerry L. Menzdorf
5 Brian R. McGill
Juan C. San Martin
Kimberly P. White

HOUSTON
25 Ghasem A. Arjomandi
20 Shawky S. Albusheime
Beata G. Kwater
Thuy T. Luong
Joseph M. Martinez
15 Charles F. Chipman
Varuna A. Singh
10 Steven M. Wrona
5 Ryan J. Gainer
Annabel S. Martinez
Manuel I. Ortega
Christina L. Salmon
Jason J. Singleton

LAREDO
25 Juan Gomez
5 Carlos Palomo
Michael Ramirez
Juan J. Villareal

LUBBOCK
20 Kimberly L. Greener
Trine Soto Jr.
5 Brian P. Alumbaugh
Terry L. Baker
Rodger Wilkins

LUKFIN
5 Norma D. Martinez
Isaac R. Mings Jr.
James C. Wise

ODESSA
25 Robert L. Flores
20 Jesus Banegas Jr.
10 Sergio Miranda

PARIS
5 Randy N. Bullard
Bobbie J. Fugitt

PHARR
20 Judy B. Sanchez
15 Juan A. Bernal

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
40 Toni B. Kirkland
30 Miguel Cantu Jr.
25 Sylvia V. Mraz
20 Amanda S. Gipson-Mitchell
Linda K. Peavy
5 Gary R. Becker
Susie J. Duarte
Erik R. Johnson
Martha L. Lopez

FLEET OPERATIONS
20 Lloyd E. Garrett
15 Roland L. Thompson
5 Julie A. Klekar
Edward Morales
Linda A. Schneider

HUMAN RESOURCES
20 Norma J. Willman
5 Angela M. Bailey
Elizabeth P. Holick
Jessica L. Novick

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
25 James P. Pennington

PEPS
20 Judith D. Garza-Bosquez
Paula K. McGinley
5 Julia E. Hummel
Anita E. Wilkerson

PROCUREMENT
10 Carolyn M. Brooks
5 Maria C. Garza

PROJECT FINANCE, DEBT & STRATEGIC CONTRACTS
5 Lisa A. Carroll

RAIL
10 Erick V. Leslie

RIGHT OF WAY
10 Wendy A. Knox

SUPPORT SERVICES
45 Mary M. Otahal
30 Leah J. Rogers
10 Daniel A. Bynum

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING
30 John H. Foster
5 Christopher B. Bardash
Steven D. Linhart
Jolene A. Timpler

TRAVEL INFORMATION
25 Albert Garza
10 Denise S. Martinez
**IN MEMORIAM**

**DISTRICTS**

**ABILENE**
- 35 Howard K. Middleton
- 31 Glover L. Miller III
- 30 Timothy P. Meador
- 18 James R. Graves
- 17 J. Derrell Long

**AMARILLO**
- 34 Wesley N. Hopson

**ATLANTA**
- 31 David K. Neshyba
- 30 Jimmy D. Smithson

**AUSTIN**
- 37 Timmy J. Stacy
- 31 Michael B. Camus
- Anthony J. Reitan
- 29 Gregory L. Stark
- Bruce E. Thurin
- 28 James E. Schneider
- 4 Allen L. Stroud

**BROWNWOOD**
- 35 Warren D. Brown
- 26 Joseph D. Finningan
- 25 Wesley G. Baxter

**BRYAN**
- 31 James D. Riley
- Thomas G. Stevens
- 30 Mark E. Jeffrey
- 19 Cecil D. Schroeder

**CHILDRESS**
- 33 Mark A. Hightower
- 27 Michael D. Trosper
- 25 Travis H. Bateman
- 17 Jerry W. Jones

**CORPUS CHRISTI**
- 37 Guillermo Cabello
- 29 Christopher D. Caron
- 26 Ricardo F. Benavides
- 23 Valentine A. Martinez
- Roel Rivera
- Juan Valenzuela
- 17 Roberto R. Gutierrez

**DALLAS**
- 38 Arthur R. Nance
- 36 Wade E. Goodwin Jr.
- 34 Jonathan Cox

**DISTRICTS**

**TYLER**

**George Loye Humphrey**
- Date of Death: 7/1/2018
- Retired: 2014
- Years of Service: 46

**Johnny Lee Mills**
- General Engineering Technician
- Date of Death: 6/1/2018
- Retired: 2013
- Years of Service: 36

**David L. Pitts**
- District Equipment Administrator
- Date of Death: 6/7/2018
- Retired: 2003
- Years of Service: 38

**Steven K. Barton**
- Purchaser
- Date of Death: 6/8/2018
- Retired: 2006
- Years of Service: 19

**FLEET OPERATIONS**
- 21 Carolyn S. Edge
- 20 Lloyd E. Garrett
- 18 Raymond L. Belk

**HUMAN RESOURCES**
- 21 Lucy A. Ross
- 7 Nancy A. Shiring

**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**
- 31 Karen D. Garcia
- 17 Reuben J. Calderon
- 16 Kimberly A. Hall

**MAINTENANCE**
- 32 Monica L. Merrill
- 28 Andrew W. Keith

**OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY**
- 13 Lucille Caraway

**PROCUREMENT**
- 21 Terry W. Day
- 18 Donna J. Redus

**PROJECT FINANCE, DEBT & STRATEGIC CONTRACTS**
- 16 Rudy P. Perales

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**
- 19 Edward A. Gensweiner

**RIGHT OF WAY**
- 32 Linda G. Fields

**SUPPORT SERVICES**
- 33 James H. Parkhurst
- 30 Adna R. Johnson
- 24 Samuel J. Reyes
- 23 Homer Villareal
- 20 Steve E. Riley
- 10 Charles R. Harding

**TOLL OPERATIONS**
- 20 Teresa J. Lemons

**TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING**
- 32 Richard C. Peters
- Robert D. Ramirez
- 30 John H. Foster
- 19 Mary J. Burns
What is your must-see Texas holiday display?

CHRISTY BIRD
INFORMATION SPECIALIST, BRIDGE DIVISION
“My must-see Texas holiday display is in Johnson City. The Courthouse and the Pedernales Electric Co-Op display are magical and get my family in the Christmas spirit!”

SYLVIA BADEAUX
OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, LUFKIN DISTRICT
“My husband and I deliver toys on our motorcycles as part of an annual Christmas toy run. My favorite display is the beautiful smiling faces when we deliver toys to children in East Texas.”

ERIC GREEN
CONSTRUCTION INSPECTOR, ATLANTA DISTRICT
“The Wonderland of Lights in Marshall, for sure.”

It was Oct. 10, 2017. General Transportation Technician Stan Waldrop and other employees from the Paris District started their day with a morning safety meeting as they prepared to continue cleanup efforts in the Beaumont District after Hurricane Harvey. In the meeting, workers were encouraged to pay attention to school buses and children because school was just starting back after the hurricane.

Following the meeting, Waldrop and the others began cleaning up debris on a dead-end road in Vidor. This area was hit particularly hard and the devastation done by the storm was everywhere. In the afternoon, a school bus came up the road to drop off a little girl. The little girl’s mother was waiting for her on the other side of the road where the crew was working with heavy equipment to remove large piles of debris. The little girl was scared and didn’t want to get off the bus.

Waldrop got on his radio and stopped everyone on the crew and made them shut off their equipment. Once the equipment was stopped, he walked to the bus and took the scared little girl by the hand. At first the girl was hesitant. Her mother told her it was all right to go with him. She finally stepped off the bus, and Waldrop walked her through the work site to her mother. He waited until they were both in the clear before he let the crew resume work.

Waldrop set the tone for TxDOT’s commitment to safety for its crews and the public. He set the example of what it means to be a TxDOT employee.

Read more about the good work employees are doing in Bright Lights on Crossroads: http://crossroads/brightlights. Send information on any thank-you emails, letters or calls you or your co-workers receive to AskTxDOT so we can continue to shine Bright Lights on TxDOT employee achievements.
TAKING CARE OF YOU DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holidays bring pretty lights, festive music and excited children. But the holidays can bring sadness, too. Unrealistic expectations, financial pressures and tense interactions can create stress and anxiety.

When you recognize those feelings, understand that you are not alone and take an active role in taking care of yourself.

Consider these tips to bring peace to the holiday season.

Set boundaries with friends and family members
Limit your time with those who add to your stress. Saying no without explaining why might feel strange, but acknowledging your capacity is more important.

Set realistic expectations
These holidays won’t be perfect so appreciate what you do have and acknowledge your limitations.

Let go of the guilt
Guilt comes from many places such as not having the money for that hot new toy. Manage expectations early on, seek input and be honest and realistic up front.

Give yourself the gift of physical activity
Regular exercise may help with depression, sleep, stress relief, mood, energy and stamina. Try to find a way to be active even if it is just for 10 minutes.

Get social
Seek out opportunities to spend time with those who bring joy to your life. Be proactive in reaching out; don’t wait on them. Volunteering can get you into the spirit of the holiday.

Watch for warning signs
Excessive alcohol, overeating and insomnia are signals that stress is becoming serious. Reach out to supportive family members and friends.

Seek extra help
If you’re feeling anxious or depressed, seek out professional help. Take advantage of the free and confidential services available to you or any other household member (even if they aren’t on your medical plan) at TxDOT. Contact our Employee Assistance Program, Alliance Work Partners, at 800-343-3822 at any time, day or night.

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