

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

Oct. 7, 2020

KDOT responds to striping concerns from public



This photo from last year shows KDOT employees testing a new paint striper at the Salina Subarea. The striper was used to improve the striping on U.S. 50 recently. Photo by Ashley Perez, District Two

By Ashley Perez
District Two

KDOT values input from the public and works to resolve concerns as much as possible.

An example of this happened recently when truck driver Ronnie Jagers contacted KDOT on Sept. 24 regarding the poor visibility of paint on U.S. 50 between Emporia and Newton. It's a route he drives regularly to haul meat. Jagers was concerned about the poor visibility of pavement markings, especially in bad weather and as winter approaches.

Jagger contacted District One Office Coordinator Angel Fitzgerald, who forwarded the information to Districts Two and Five as most of this route is in these Districts. District Two Maintenance Engineer James Roudybush contacted the Marion Area office and confirmed that they knew about the concern.

Roudybush then talked with Mike Hahn, District Paint Crew Supervisor, about the condition of the pavement and found out the work was already scheduled. District Two Maintenance Superintendent Howard Reece also checked with Hahn - the work was planned to take place within the next two weeks as part of routine striping. They decided to start a little sooner and the striping operations began on U.S. 50 on Sept. 30. Work on the roadway was finished on Oct. 5.



This photo shows striping work on U.S. 50 that was completed this week. Photo by Billy Joe Wilson, District Two

"Mike Hahn did a great job of going down there and taking care of what needed to be done," Reece said. "They do great work."

Jagers noticed the work that had been done on the stretch of highway and left a voice mail expressing his gratitude. "I've been driving this whole thing today and I just wanted to say thank you for all your hard work, what a great improvement," he said. "I'm sure a lot of people will appreciate you doing this."

Henthorne named bureau chief

By Kim Stich
Headquarters

Bob Henthorne has been named the Bureau Chief of Structures and Geotechnical Services for the Kansas Department of Transportation.

Henthorne already served the agency for 35 years. He began at KDOT in 1984 in the Lawrence Construction office, working for retiree Rosie Ingram. He transferred to the Geology section in Topeka for a short time, then went to the Geology office in Chanute for 17 years. In 2002, Henthorne was promoted to Chief Geologist and returned to Topeka.

Geology is an important part in constructing a high-quality transportation system. "If you have good information for your foundation, you can build everything else," he said. "By testing, drilling and analyzing capacity for the soil and rock, you can give the designers the information to build the best quality and most economical roads and bridges."

He retired from KDOT in 2016 and went to work for Bettis companies. But calls from current employees encouraged Henthorne to give KDOT a second run. "It feels good, I'm excited to be back," he said.

According to Henthorne, KDOT has many young engineers and geologists and, "I want to be a mentor to them and also help the bureau continue to move forward as well as keep projects on time and under budget," he said.

COVID-19 has affected the workplace in general, and "I think our routines are going to be different, not necessarily bad, just different," he said. "We need to work together to figure out what is best for KDOT and its employees."

Henthorne and his wife, Mary Ann, have three grown daughters and five grandchildren they keep connected with on Zoom meetings. He also enjoys hunting and fishing.



Bob Henthorne

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KDOT workers at crashes: They've seen the toll, they've felt the toll

By Tim Potter
District Five

Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day is Oct. 10, but it's important to focus on traffic safety and saving lives all year long. A special thanks to KDOT workers across the state who work to maintain the highways and, when requested, assist at crash scenes.

Over the years, in crash after crash on Kansas highways, they've seen bodies covered by sheets – and worse.

One remembers a car seat outside a mangled vehicle. It's imprinted in his memory.

They've witnessed grief, up close – a woman looking for her sister.

They're not law enforcement or rescue crews. But they are among the first responders. They are Kansas Department of Transportation crews who are asked to provide traffic control at crashes so rescuers and law enforcement can focus on the emergency and so traffic can be directed around the wreckage.

At all hours, in all kinds of weather, these KDOT



Jeff Romine

workers see the toll. They experience it. From this exposure, they have a unique perspective on the importance of traffic safety.

KDOT workers across the state share their experiences as part of the national safety campaign Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day, which focuses on all types of traffic safety. Here are their accounts:

Wamego superintendent

Jeff Romine, Highway Maintenance Superintendent with the Wamego Area Shop, remembers an early

“The worst ones to take is when you got a family involved. Because it’s just like your family. It could have been you.”

Jeff Romine

morning crash that closed a highway. It took the Kansas Highway Patrol hours to document the scene. It took fire trucks a while to wash biohazards off the pavement.

As a superintendent, Romine goes to crashes to help direct his crew. “I just get up and go,” no matter the hour, he says. He tries to keep the new workers from having close exposure.

Even when KDOT workers flagging traffic are stationed relatively far from the wreckage, sometimes they come face to face with relatives of the people injured or killed. The loved ones want to get closer. They want to talk to officers investigating. Romine remembers a husband who arrived to see about his wife. She had just died in the crash.

The man waited until an officer could break away from the investigation to talk to him. During those 20 minutes,

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KDOT workers at crashes

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the KDOT workers tried to gently engage the man – without saying anything insensitive. They passed the time in small talk, Romine remembers.

After responding to so many crashes, Romine sees patterns. He learns from law enforcement some of the factors suspected in the crashes. One of the most common, he says, seems to be driver distraction. “I think the biggest thing is the cell phones,” he says. “And then, of course, the seat belts come in. More than not, they weren’t wearing a seat belt, are the ones who got killed.”

It’s impossible not to be affected, Romine says. “The worst ones to take is when you got a family involved. Because it’s just like your family. It could have been you,” he says.

“There was one where a baby got killed, and that bothered me for a long time.” He was doing traffic control.

“When I got there, there was a child seat there, outside the vehicle.”

Wellington supervisor

Kim Brownlee is Wellington Subarea Supervisor. He recalls a fatal accident that left a long trail of debris. It was at night, so it wasn’t easy to see.

Area Superintendent Greg Dixon asked the Wellington crew to re-walk a ditch by the crash site the next day.

“Because he said the family is going to want to go back out there,” Brownlee recalls.



Kim Brownlee

During their check, they found a piece of human remains and called a sheriff’s deputy.

A relative of the victim learned about the recovery and voiced her appreciation, Brownlee said.

“Thank you for going back out and doing what you did,” she told him.

Topeka maintenance superintendent

Dave Studebaker, Highway Maintenance Superintendent in Topeka, says distraught people show up at crash sites. But KDOT workers aren’t in a position to convey information to them. That’s law enforcement’s role. Still, the KDOT workers are often the first people that relatives approach.

Studebaker remembers helping with traffic control after one crash when a woman ran up to the KDOT workers. He told her he couldn’t let her move closer, for her safety.

“That’s my sister,” the woman told him.

The woman became upset, and he told her: “I understand you.” He said he would ask for a sheriff’s deputy to come over to her. “I just got on the radio and told them to come up there,” he recalls.

In a situation like that, Studebaker says, the KDOT workers must be respectful and compassionate.

“Unfortunately,” he says, “it did turn out to be her sister.”

Altamont supervisor

Kevin Crain, Altamont Subarea Supervisor, has worked for KDOT for about 22 years. He also is a former EMT with Cherryvale Fire/EMS.

Earlier in his KDOT career, before he was a supervisor,



Dave Studebaker

Continued on next page

KDOT workers at crashes

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Crain went out to set up traffic control after a multiple-fatality crash.

When he arrived, Crain recalls, “Bodies are still on the ground with sheets over them, and you have to drive around that.”

Now, he goes to crash sites as a supervisor. “A lot of times, I’ll roll up and there’s still bodies in the car,” he says.

“I tell my new employees, ‘You don’t know what you’re going to find on the side of the road, and you don’t know what you’re going to drive into. You have to be prepared for about anything out there.’”

And there’s another thing about responding to crashes, he says: “When you work in these communities, it’s a small world.

“It could be your family, a buddy’s family, it could be your next-door neighbor. You’re hoping it’s not the vehicle it is.”

Having to flag traffic at a crash site means having to work in all conditions. “I’ve flagged at midnight in heavy fog for a fatality accident,” Crain says. “We’ve done ‘em in pouring-down rain.”

Accidents happen at all hours. “When we get a phone



Kevin Crain

call in the middle of the night, you kind of wake up, and you go in ‘Go mode,’” Crain says.

When he arrives at the crash site, he talks to law enforcement to check on whether bodies are present. He wants to protect or at least prepare the crew for what they might encounter.

Depending on the highway configuration, KDOT traffic control flaggers can be hundreds of feet to 2 to 3 miles from the crash site. “We try to be as far back as we can – you don’t want to be in the way,” he says.

“Some of the wrecks you have to deal with over the years; you still see them clear as day.”

Kevin Crain

“We’ll do whatever we can do to alleviate the problem.”

After reacting to crashes and being exposed to what happened, he says, a KDOT crew has to be careful not to discuss it in front of others out in the community – because you never know who might be listening: It could be the loved one of the crash victim. When KDOT workers visit a convenience store or the café, someone might ask about the wreck they just handled.

KDOT employees do not want to unnecessarily cause emotional hurt to someone. “If you work some of these wrecks, you have to be mindful,” he says. “Kind of what you see here – what happens out on the highway – stays here with us.”

Being exposed to crashes “does affect you,” Crain says.

“Some of the wrecks you have to deal with over the years; you still see them clear as day.”

For him, he says, “It’s not something that wakes you up with nightmares, but it’s still something you see vividly in your mind.”

Short line rail improvement projects announced

Gov. Laura Kelly and Secretary Julie Lorenz announced on Oct. 6 that 13 projects were awarded grants totaling \$5 million as part of KDOT's new Short Line Rail Fund program.

Four projects were awarded to short line railroads, and nine projects were awarded to shippers. The program is a partnership between the public and private sectors, as applicants are required to provide 30% in matching funds. This year's selected projects will improve and/or construct nearly 15 miles of track totaling a \$7 million investment.

"This project and the IKE program as a whole exemplify the change in how this administration does business," said Gov. Kelly. "The State of Kansas will benefit because of programs like IKE, which demonstrates how government can be dynamic, fiscally responsible and implement cutting-edge strategies to produce results for our communities."

Projects were selected based on the following criteria:

- Long-term impact on rail operations, economic competitiveness and safety;

- Enhanced goods movement and logistical improvements;
- Job creation and the ability to expand currently served markets; and
- Enhanced efficiency of rail operations and the reliability of the impacted railroad.

The Short Line Rail Fund was created under Gov. Kelly's Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program, commonly referred to as IKE. It provides \$5 million annually for three years.

"KDOT recognizes the important role that rail plays in our state's economy, and the Short Line Rail Improvement Fund is another opportunity for us to partner with industry to help modernize and make needed improvements," said Secretary Lorenz. "Across all of our funding programs, KDOT is partnering on rail projects worth over \$102 million in 36 counties across Kansas."

To see a list of all the projects, click [here](#).



Sporer Land Development provided this photo from their drone of crews backfilling a reinforced concrete bridge extension on the U.S. 281 modernization project in Russell County. The new alignment section can also be seen in the background.

Gage complex building new facilities

By Kelly Kultala
District One

Demolition of part of the old Gage facility in Topeka began in early October to make way for a new area office and construction office, as part of a District One, Area Four modernization project. The construction office, front garage bays and fuel pumps will be removed, and the current Area Office will be gutted and remodeled.

The original part of the old Gage facility was built in 1958, with the construction office and some of the garage bays added in the early 1960s. In the 1980s, the area office and two subareas were consolidated into the Gage office, and in 2010, one subarea moved out and became the Oakland Subarea in Topeka.

The new facilities will include new area and construction office space, a large conference room, an employee/ Human Resources meeting room and a breakroom, which they have never had. The old stockroom, IT area and bathrooms will stay in place.

In the meantime, area employees have temporarily moved into trailers or the Eagle's Nest. The mechanic shop and 10-bay garage area are staying where they are.

The construction project is expected to be completed in fall 2021.



Above, the fuel tanks are removed from in front of the Gage main complex office, which is shown below. Photos by Steve Baalman, District One



The aerial photo at left shows the part of the Gage office being demolished and the part being remodeled.

 Demolition underway

 Remodel

Trivia!

Eye color and blinking

1. What is the world's most common eye color?
2. What pigment affects the color of your eyes?
3. What is the condition called when a person is born with two different-colored eyes?
4. On average, how many times does a person blink?
5. How long does a blink last?
6. What percent of people have blue eyes?
7. What causes red eyes in photos?

Bridge Inspectors work their way through Wichita Metro

By Tracy Crockett
District Five

Thousands of vehicles drive on the exit ramp from eastbound U.S. 54 to southbound I-235 every day in Wichita, but on Sept. 30, it was closed to motorists as KDOT's bridge inspection team was busy inspecting the bridge.

A special lift truck called a snooper truck was brought in during the inspection. It allows crews to get up and under the bridge. The team looks for flaws or imperfections ranging from cracks in the steel or concrete to paint defects.

"These bridges carry so much weight and traffic, and with this bridge being a two-girder bridge, we inspect it at a higher interval rate," said KDOT Bridge Inspector Matt Bleier. "We just want to keep the public safe."

Once complete, the inspection will be sent to area metro engineers. They'll review the data found and decide if anything needs maintenance or repair.

The KDOT bridge inspection team is based out of Topeka and inspects every bridge on all state highways, K routes, U.S. routes and interstates.



Inspections take place on the eastbound U.S. 54 to southbound I-235 ramp. Photo by Tracy Crockett, District Five

"We inspect bridges 12 months a year," Bleier. "We'll do it when it's 105, and we've done it when it's about 5 degrees outside and snowing."

Trivia answers

1. Brown.
2. Melanin.
3. Heterochromia.
4. About 12 times a minute.
5. About 1/10th of a second.
6. About 8 percent.
7. More light enters the eyes, and the retinas cannot constrict fast enough to prevent it from bouncing back.

Drone photos offer different perspective

By Priscilla Petersen
District Four

Once each month, Warren Ebberts and Rowdy Glaser meet at a construction site and send their shared KDOT drone flying high above the work zone, capturing photos of the work in progress to help document the life of the project.

Ebberts, an Engineering Technician Senior at the Iola office, is also an amateur photographer and drone owner. He and Glaser, an Engineering Technician Senior at Pittsburg, are the designated drone operators in District Four. Each attended a two-week course in Salina earlier this year. The course included classroom time necessary to obtain a federal license and outdoor training with staff from Kansas State University Polytechnic.



Warren Ebberts took the aerial photo of U.S. 169 reconstruction in Anderson County above while Rowdy Glaser took the aerial photo below.



According to Ebberts, the aerial drone photos afford a different perspective from land-based pictures. The drone is GPS-enabled. “That drone knows where it is in relationship to the ground,” he said, and is in constant contact with satellites as well. A secondary display monitor is attached to the drone’s controller so the operator can view the terrain and activity, then frame and take photos accordingly.

“We’ve been trying to fly once a month” to remain proficient as drone operators, said Glaser. Although the focus is currently on project photography, future drone uses will include mapping and surveying.

“The cost came down on them [the drones],” Ebberts added. “They’re getting easier to fly, they’re more affordable, and the cameras are getting better.”

The drone is housed at the district office in Chanute. After checking it out from the office, when working on the projects, Ebberts and Glaser trade off – one operating the drone while the other acts as a required ‘visual observer.’ Glaser said more KDOT staff are being trained as visual observers so he and Ebberts won’t always need to work in tandem.

Greg Gonzales’ road squad and Shawn Schwensen’s bridge squad designed the U.S. 169 project.

Fall maintenance projects in full progress

By Lisa Knoll
District Six

With fall here and the dog days of summer behind us, District Six crews are busy “buttoning things up” for winter, as Area Three Superintendent Galen Ludlow puts it.

One of the many tasks is completing patching and overlay projects before temperatures drop. Colder temperatures cause the patching or overlay mix to clump. Warmer temperatures help the overlay or patch bond to existing surface.

“Warmer temperatures give us the opportunity to dig in and remove deteriorating material and moisture, so we can get a solid overlay or patch that lasts longer,” says Ludlow.

Ludlow added, “Many of our crews are down to three or four guys, and our Subareas are 30 or more miles apart. So our crews are working together to complete overlays and patching before it gets too cold.”

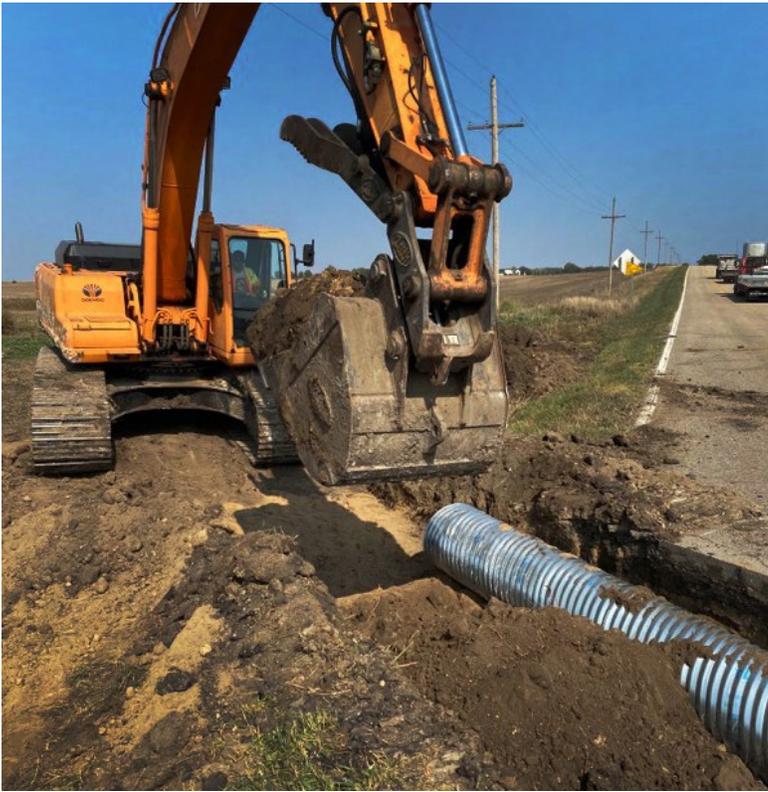


The Dodge City Subarea, including George Schulte, Loyde Heady and Ethan Soeken, assist the Jetmore and Ness City subareas with an overlay on K-156 at the Hodgeman/Pawnee county line.



Above and at right, Burke Koehn and Jamie Davis from the Scott City Subarea overlay asphalt on K-96 in Scott City.





Above and below, K-182 in Smith County was temporarily closed on Sept. 22 so KDOT crews could replace a crossroad pipe. Crew members from Smith Center, Phillipsburg, Osborne and the district bridge crew worked together and completed the repairs the same day. Photos by Rod Bencken, District Three



Thank you for your service

Retirees

The following employees will retire from KDOT on Nov. 1.

Headquarters

Zandra Myrick, Management Analyst II, Construction & Materials

District Three

Curtis Glenn, Equipment Operator Specialist, Norton

District Four

James Metcalfe, Professional Civil Engineer III, Chanute

District Five

Norman Unruh, Equipment Operator Senior, Greenburg

In Memory

Condolences to the family and friends of retiree Vera McFaddin, who passed away on Aug. 25 in Topeka. McFaddin began at KDOT in 1966 and worked in Topeka as an Office Assistant IV for more than 27 years. She retired in 1993.

Condolences to the family and friends of retiree Clifton L. Lowe, Jr., who passed away on Sept. 15 in Topeka. He started at KDOT in 1970 and worked at the Olathe office as a Highway Maintenance Superintendent. He retired in 1998 after nearly 29 years of service.

Condolences to the family and friends of retiree Warren Allen White who passed away on Sept. 15 in Manhattan. He worked for KDOT for more than 35 years, serving as the District Three Construction Engineer. He also worked on the last stretch of I-70 to the Colorado state line. White retired in 1984.

Condolences to the family and friends of retiree Vickie Kaempfe who passed away on Sept. 22 in Newton. She worked for the Marion office as an Engineering Technician Senior for 11 years, retiring in 2009.

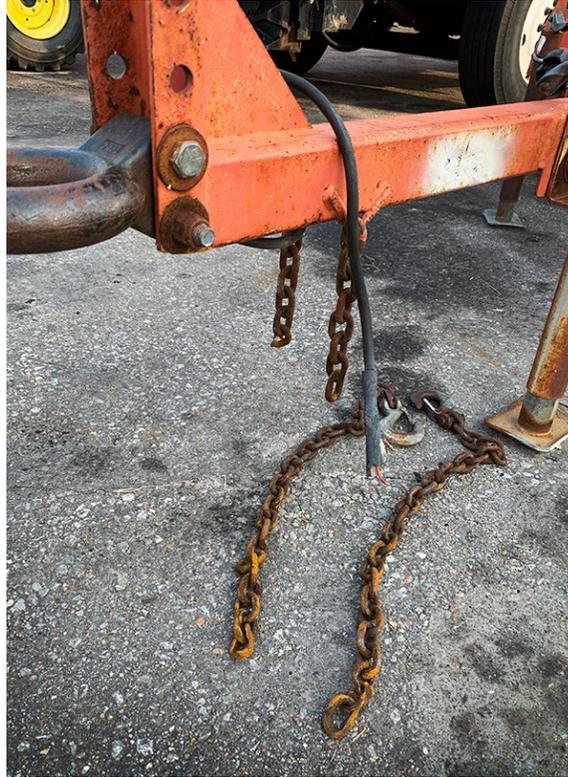
Safety alert: learning from towing incident

Safety Alerts are designed to share information about an incident so others can learn ways to improve, which is an important part of Secretary Julie Lorenz's Be Safe initiative. The people involved are not identified.

This summer, an Equipment Operator was hauling an arrow board from the Subarea yard to a highway for a lane closure. While en route to the destination, an Equipment Operator from an adjoining Subarea contacted him to let him know that he had lost the arrow board in the middle of a four-lane roadway. It had been struck by a truck traveling in the same direction.

Fortunately, the other Equipment Operator was in the same location where the arrow board came loose from the truck. He was able to get it moved off to the side of the road.

When checking out the trailer after the accident, both chains were in place on the truck and hooked as



Confirming that chains are hooked properly is important to haul equipment safely.

required. However, the arrow board had been dragged to the point that the chains were no longer able to keep the trailer attached. The bottom of the hitch assembly on the trailer had been ground off from being dragged down the road.

The Equipment Operator hauling the arrow board reported that it was hooked up correctly before leaving the yard. Two other individuals reported looking over the connection and said it looked to be hooked up correctly. However, no one could verify for certain if the pin was secured to lock down the latch.

Upon inspection by the Supervisor, he found that the pin could be installed and appear to be in the locked position, but not be in the completely latched position. The unsecured latch could allow a hitch to be knocked out of position if something caused the trailer to bounce.

Once unhitched, the trailer could then come off the hitch.

Employees are reminded to verify that the latch on the pintle hitch is completely latched down and secured. It's also important to check on the trailer as it is being hauled. Remember that safety chains are attached to retain the connection between the towing vehicle and trailer in the event of separation of the trailer coupling from the hitch. The connection is designed to be kept long enough to bring the vehicle to a stop. The safety chains are not intended to safely pull the trailer down the roadway.



KDOT crews keep busy

By Ashley Perez
District Two

KDOT workers across Kansas stay busy with a variety of tasks year-round to maintain the 140,000-plus acres of right of way along the highways.

Recently, it has been not uncommon to spot a KDOT worker picking up trash on one side of a road while mowing and trimming the right of way takes place on the other side.

Now that the mowing season has come to an end, workers are finishing what is called a “mow out,” or the final mowing of the season. During the “mow out,” workers mow at least two passes on each side of the roadway.

“We completely mow sections of the right of way on a four-year rotation,” says James Roudybush, District Two Maintenance Engineer. “This year we are mowing all of the south side of the right of way for the east-west routes.”

KDOT can also be found planting and working to keep unwanted vegetation out of the right of way during the summer and early fall. This helps keep the right of way clean during the winter season.



Above and bottom left, Roger Simoneau, Equipment Operator in Beloit, picked up trash along the right of way and removed road kill along K-9 west of Beloit in late September. Bottom right, workers from the Concordia Subarea mulch and seed the right of way along U.S. 24 in Cloud County about 5 miles east of U.S. 81. Photos by Ashley Perez and David Casper, District Two



It's also too early to know when snow and ice season will begin, but KDOT crews have been preparing equipment and stocking materials to be ready.

Section of K-96 in Wichita gets a facelift

By Tracy Crockett
District Five

Work is underway on K-96 in Wichita from the I-135 junction to Webb Road and Greenwich Road. Contractors are working to patch concrete on the mainline and ramps before the cold weather sets in.

“We’re going to do a thicker asphalt overlay, about a 3-inch lift. Two separate lifts, three inches total to hopefully keep a lot of that deterioration from the concrete reflecting up as quickly and give a better riding surface for the traveling public,” said Wichita Metro Engineer Don Snyder.

The original pavement was built in 1992. “This side of town is growing. When the roadway was opened, it was not nearly this busy, but in 25 years we are pretty much maxing out this roadway’s ability to carry traffic,” Snyder said. During the day, there are roughly 20,000 vehicles in the area. The closer to I-135, there are about 70,000 motorists.

“We hope this project buys a lot more life to this pavement. The roadway is at capacity at many locations with the amount of lane space that’s available. So we’re looking at other options for the future at what to do with



Work on K-96 from Webb to Greenwich roads will provide a better riding surface for motorists. Photo by Tracy Crockett, District Five

this roadway to expand it,” Snyder said.

The \$6.5 million pavement rehabilitation project is expected to run through the end of the year. Crews will then take a three- to four-month break, then begin the asphalt work.

A video highlighting K-96 work from the I-135 junction to the Webb and Greenwich area is available [here](#).

KTA briefs

KTA is seeking input from customers in its 2020 Customer Satisfaction Survey. This feedback has previously brought customer-driven changes, such as highway speed electronic lanes and commercial improvements. Provide your feedback today at this link [here](#).

Keep an eye out for a new safety message contest by the KTA. Winners will have their safety messages placed on digital message signs across the Turnpike. More details will be available starting Oct. 9 at www.ksturnpike.com

Fibers mixed into concrete make bridge decks more durable

By Tim Potter
District Five

District Five is doing its part in the war to shield bridges from the enemy of bridge decks – moisture and road salt invading over time through cracks in the concrete surface.

The protector: tiny polypropylene fibers mixed into concrete for bridge-deck overlays, says District Construction and Materials Engineer Nick Squires. Usually, the overlays occur after milling and patching done by contractors.

How it works: The fibers help prevent minute cracks from developing as the concrete cures and shrinks, by reinforcing the concrete, Squires says. It leaves the bridge deck with a more durable surface, he says.

District Five started using the microfibers last year.



*This photo shows fiber mixed in concrete.
Photo by Tina Powell, District Five*

The fibers come in bags. The bags dissolve after being placed in the concrete mix.

Among the recent or ongoing District Five projects using the fibers: K-156 bridge in Barton County, Whitewater bridge on U.S. 54 west of Augusta, K-254 bridges at Kechi, U.S. 56 bridge in Pawnee County on the west side of Larned and the K-19 Spur bridge on the south side of Larned.

Dave Meggers, KDOT Bureau Chief of Research, agrees that the fibers make a deck surface last longer.

“If you keep those cracks small enough, you don’t get much of anything down there” -- into the rebar in the underlying structure, Meggers

says.

The fibers are particularly useful in protecting high-traffic bridges in the state’s metro areas, where closing or limiting traffic to make repairs is especially difficult, Meggers says.



This historical photo, taken 60 years ago, shows the 6.5-mile portion of I-470 in Topeka was dedicated and opened to traffic on Oct. 21, 1960. The event concluded when a car with Gov. George Docking and his wife broke through a paper barricade near the south interchange of the Kansas Turnpike.