

Translines



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*By Secretary
Deb Miller*

The KDOT climate

What is it that makes a person stay at a job?

Good pay and benefits? Challenging work? A comfortable office? Training opportunities?

Certainly, those things factor into the career decisions each of us makes. But there is no bigger factor than one's immediate manager.

Massive studies over the past 30 years have found that managers trump companies when it comes to retaining talented employees. Two Gallup Organization authors, in their book, "First Break All the Rules," write that it is preferable to work for a "great manager in an old-fashioned company than for a terrible manager in a company offering an enlightened, employee-focused culture." In another study conducted by Saratoga Institute, "poor management" was the most frequently mentioned issue for employees who left their employer.

At KDOT, I suspect that supervisors and the

people they supervise know that their's is an important relationship. But I doubt that either group realizes just how important it is. Supervisors set the tone and climate of our agency, they create the family atmosphere, and they serve as role models.

Of course, some supervisors do it better than others. So, we want to find out where they are, what they are doing right and then share what we've learned with all supervisors.

In the next month, all KDOT employees will have the opportunity to tell us about their work environment in an anonymous "Climate Survey" that will be conducted by the Bureau of Personnel Services and consultant Lee Schmucker of Wichita. On the survey, you will be asked to respond to questions using a scale of one to five – one being "strongly disagree" and five being "strongly agree."

Some of the questions might surprise you. While they might not make perfect sense on their own, together they are designed to get at the most important underlying issues.

This survey differs from the "internal surveys" conducted a few years back. Yes, the results will provide some baseline data for use in our workforce performance measures. But, more importantly, they will identify the behaviors of our best supervisors so others can learn from them.

When you are completing your survey, please consider it an opportunity to help improve KDOT. As an agency, we're on a journey to get better. And, helping our supervisors improve is one of the best ways to get us where we want to go.

(A story about the survey appears on page 3.)

On the...

COVER

Employees with Rebar Setters, Inc., of Holt, Mo., tie reinforcing steel for the stem wall of the tunnel along the K-39 bridge replacement project under way in Chanute.

Photo by Sonya Scheuneman



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Calendar of Events

April 3-4 – Kansas Transportation Engineering Conference, Kansas State University in Manhattan.

April 7 – 10 a.m., KDOT futility golf tournament at Lake Shawnee in Topeka. Enter by contacting Kevin Adams (kevina@ksdot.org, 296-5297).

April 10 – 11 a.m., KDOT Employees' Council meeting, Third Floor, Eisenhower State Office Building.

April 13 – 9:30 a.m., Highway Advisory Commission meeting.

April 17-18 – Transportation Safety Conference. Hyatt Regency Hotel and Century II Convention Center in Wichita.

April 18 – 1 p.m., Construction Bid Letting, Fourth Floor West Wing, Eisenhower State Office Building.

June 9 – KDOT Employees' Council annual co-rec softball tournament, Topeka.

Comstock 'enjoyed every minute' at KDOT

By Kim Stich

David Comstock graduated from the University of Missouri at Rolla and decided KDOT was the best place to work. And 39 years later, it's safe to say that was a very good decision as he plans to retire from the agency as the Director of Engineering and Design on April 1.



David Comstock

Comstock was drawn to KDOT because of the Rotational Training Program. His first assignment was in the Edwardsville office to assist on four-lane construction on US-73 from the Kansas Turnpike north to Lansing as well as assist in surveying the I-635 bridge over the

railroad hump yards in Kansas City.

"We were warned about these hump yards because they push the rail cars off these hills and they roll of their own accord to make up trains," Comstock said. "We were cautioned to never get on the tracks and never turn your back because they don't make any noise when they're

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Project Topeka



KDOT employee Debbie Greeve (left) assists Project Topeka volunteers load donated food. Through various activities, KDOT donated \$3,912.91 for Project Topeka. Photo by Sonya Scheuneman

Survey to aid KDOT retention effort

By Steve Swartz

Within the next month, all KDOT employees will be asked to participate in a survey that addresses the relationship between supervisors and the people they supervise.

The findings of the "Climate Survey," which will be conducted by the Bureau of Personnel Services and Schmucker Training and Consulting, Wichita, will be part of an agency-wide effort to retain employees. And, it also will establish baseline data for a performance measures target area.

"It's part of a retention effort and to show that we take positive employee-employer relationships seriously," said Allen Humphrey, Chief of the Bureau of Personnel Services.

"We know that salaries and benefits are important, but some very large surveys by The Gallup Organiza-

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Communities looking to implement quiet zones

Implementing quiet zones and containerized cargo congestion were two of the many topics featured at the 2007 Kansas/Missouri Highway-Rail Safety Conference in Overland Park on March 7-8.

There are no quiet zones currently in Kansas, but several communities are looking to implement them, according to Al Cathcart, KDOT Coordinating Engineer. Atchison and Lenexa are scheduled to implement them soon and a three-mile corridor in Olathe should have one by early 2009.

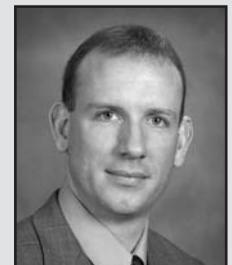
Continued on page 9

KDOT no stranger to new Chief Counsel

By Stan Whitley

Joe Erskine's appointment as KDOT's Chief Counsel will be a transition for the Overland Park attorney, but he won't be venturing into foreign territory.

Erskine assumed his position overseeing the Office of the Chief Counsel on March 15. He comes to KDOT



Joe Erskine

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Small supports troops in Patriot Guard activities

By Martin Miller

District Five Public Affairs Manager

MEDICINE LODGE - Lonnie Small, Equipment Operator Senior at the Medicine Lodge Subarea, agrees that, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." This is the motto of the Kansas Patriot Guard – a group he joined to "support all of the effort put forward and sacrifices made by our troops," he said.

The Kansas Patriot Guard started about 18 months ago in Mulvane as an offshoot of the American Legion Riders to provide a motorcycle escort for funerals of military personnel killed in action. They also provide support for homecoming celebrations of returning troops. The Patriot Guard has grown to more than 90,000 members nationwide and members do not have to own or ride motorcycles to be involved.

Small started riding with the American Legion Riders from the Pratt American Legion Post a year ago and began participating with the Kansas Patriot Guard activities at that time.

"While I have not served in the military, my father had and I have a nephew currently deployed in Iraq serving as part of a Marine convoy," he said.

Being a member of the Patriot Guard showed Small how important it is to get involved.

"I then saw the need to strengthen and build membership in the American Legion Post 69 in Medicine Lodge, so three months ago I worked to establish the American Legion Riders locally," he said.

One of the tasks Small managed at KDOT was installing signs on US-281 in Barber County commemorating this highway as the "American Legion Memorial Highway."

As with many of the Patriot Guard members, Small rides a Harley Davidson motorcycle with a large American Flag unfurled and flying behind it as he rides, "but all types of motorcycles are welcome to participate," he said.

Going along with the Harley, he has the nickname of "Pig Pen," which is associated with the Harley "Hog" motorcycle's



KDOT Equipment Operator Senior Lonnie Small rides his Harley Davidson motorcycle while participating in Kansas Patriot Guard activities. Photo by Martin Miller

nickname. It's only a nickname though - his motorcycle, leather jacket, chaps and boots are all immaculate.

He uses his annual leave from KDOT to travel with the Kansas Patriot Guard. Small has taken part in escorting or attending more than 10 funerals for U.S. military servicemen. He has attended military funerals as far away as Lincoln, Neb., and recently participated in a funeral procession escort from Wichita to Coldwater. One of these 10 funerals was for Lance Cpl. Brian A. Escalante of Dodge City, who, as Small stated, "served in the same Marine battalion as my nephew."

Small comes from a KDOT family - his father, Guy, retired from KDOT as the Pratt Area Maintenance Supervisor; his wife, Colleen, is the Office Coordinator for the Pratt Construction Office; and his daughter, Brittany, has worked as KDOT summer help. He says his son, Joshua, may have KDOT in his future, too.



Two engineers in charge of KC metro

Metro Engineer duties in Kansas City will now be a joint endeavor following veteran engineer Mick Halter's retirement.

Halter retired from KDOT in March following 35 years of state service. Twenty of those years were spent overseeing construction and maintenance activities in the metro area. Two new Metro Engineers will now handle those responsibilities in Kansas City.

Catherine Patrick is the new Metro North Engineer located at the Bonner Springs office and is responsible for activities in Wyandotte and Leavenworth counties. Burt Morey is the new Metro South Engineer located at the Olathe office and responsible for activities in Johnson County.

"There has been tremendous growth in population and traffic in the Kansas City area over the past 20 years," said District One Engineer Dan Scherschligt. "Those two factors make this reorganization necessary to effectively manage the highway system in Johnson, Wyandotte and Leavenworth counties."

Scherschligt said long range planning identified commercial truck traffic and overall traffic as a major concern in the future for urban routes. In the past 20 years, traffic has tripled at I-435 and I-70 while doubling at I-35.

"Two metro engineers will provide more help in handling projects that are large in scope, addressing future capacity concerns on our urban routes and handling evolving technological issues," said Scherschligt.

Patrick began working for KDOT in 1990 as a Project Engineer at the Shawnee Construction Office. She worked 15 years in the Kansas City area, also serving at Bonner Springs and Olathe, before moving to Headquarters.

In Topeka she was the Assistant Bureau Chief for Construction and Maintenance in the Change Order Section. Patrick was promoted to the Topeka Metro Engineer in 2006 before accept-



New Kansas City Metro Engineers Burt Morey, left, and Catherine Patrick discuss KDOT issues with retiring Mick Halter. Photo by Larry Katsbulas

ing her recent promotion.

Morey started at KDOT in 1995 as a Designer in the Bridge Section. He left in 1999 to work for Douglas County before coming back to Bridge Design in 2001. Morey then worked in Bridge Design for 2½ years before accepting a position as the Construction Engineer at the Lawrence Construction office.

In 2006 he was promoted to the Assistant District One Construction Engineer before accepting his recent promotion.

Scherschligt said the KDOT office at I-35 and Lamar will remain open following the reorganization. ITS, utilities, materials lab, miscellaneous computer functions and the Lamar sub-area will still reside at this location. — S.W.

Dear Vince (Vince Grier, Oskaloosa Supervisor):

The McLouth Fire Department would like to express our deep gratitude for the help your crew gave us on Friday, February 23 on a house fire east of McLouth on Highway 16. When the sleet and snow started coming down hard, the driveway, which had two sharp curves, became very slick making it difficult for the fire trucks to get back to the house.

Your crews came in and salted a portion of the drive which allowed us to keep the trucks running back and forth for water without any problems. Had it not been for this, I'm sure we would have ended up with trucks stuck in the driveway causing us to run out of water.

We appreciate the fact that we didn't even have to call for you help, the crew just showed up with help. Once again, thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,
Carl Chalfant, McLouth Fire Chief



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Highway Crew,

I want you to know how much I appreciated all your hard work this winter. I usually am at K-15 and Rock Road by 10:30 p.m. each night coming home from work.

I have never failed to see a snow plow some where between Mulvane and Winfield this winter and all the 20 winters before as soon as I see that snow plow I know I'm going to make it home safely and have all your crews to thank for that. It means so much to me. Guys, thank you very much and God Bless each and every one of you.

Sincerely
Karen Floyd, Winfield

US-69 expansion continues in SE Kansas

Projects in Districts Four and Five are featured in this edition of Translines. Articles have been written by Public Affairs Managers Priscilla Petersen, District Four; and Martin Miller, District Five.

DISTRICT FIVE

US-50 in Reno County

Construction has begun on two tied projects on US-50 in Reno County (K-7409-01 Major Modification & K-8257-01 System Enhancement). This combined project was let for construction in August 2006 and will expand US-50 to four lanes from the west junction of US-50/K-96 in South Hutchinson east to 0.1 mile west of east junction of US-50/K-61 in Hutchinson and improve the US-50 and K-96 interchange at South Hutchinson.

All driveway and side road access will be closed in this section of US-50 to provide full access control. A new diamond interchange will be constructed at the intersection of US-50 and Scott Boulevard. This new interchange will serve the South Hutchinson Industrial Park area. Koss Construction of Topeka is the prime contractor of this \$33.4 million project.

Additional US-50 right of way has been purchased in Reno County from the junction of US-50/K-61 east to the US-50 intersection with Airport/Yoder Road. This right of way will be used for the future US-50 project (K-7409-02) to build four lane improvements with interchanges to be constructed at the east junction of US-50/K-61 and at the US-50 & Airport/Yoder Road intersection. This second US-50 project is scheduled for letting in August 2009 at an estimated cost of \$51 million.

US-54 in Kingman County

A major modification project on US-54 in Kingman County, from the start of the four lane section east of the City of Kingman east 6.4 miles to the K-17 junction, will be under way again after a winter shutdown period.

Concrete patching of the existing mainline concrete pavement and replacing the existing rock shoulders with full depth asphalt shoulders was completed in 2006. Final overlaying of the patched concrete pavement with a reflective crack interlayer, then placing an additional 2.5 inch top lift asphalt overlay and bridge is scheduled to be completed in June 2007.

In July 2006 KDOT awarded Koss Construction Company, Inc., of Topeka the contract for the sixth US-69 expansion project (K-7891-01). Located in Linn County and incorporating part of the Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge, the project starts 2½ miles north of Pleasanton and continues north for approximately 6.4 miles.

KDOT, working in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, is also constructing a new safety rest area near the north US-69/K-52 junction. The rest area will feature a number of interpretive displays about the area.



A portion of the recently-completed US-69. Photo by Priscilla Petersen

Venture Inc. of Great Bend is the prime contractor of this \$12.1 million project.

DISTRICT FOUR

US-69 Expansion

By the end of the decade, eight projects will expand US-69 to a four-lane freeway between Louisburg and Fort Scott. The two Miami County projects south of Louisburg are complete. Four-lane traffic has been placed on the two tied projects through Bourbon County and southern Linn County, and also on the northernmost Linn County project.

Brian Schafer, Garnett Area Construction Engineer, said earthwork on the southbound lanes is almost finished through the wetlands. The culverts are complete, and work has shifted to constructing the bridges. The cost of construction on K-7891-01 is approximately \$45 million, and the project should be finished by late 2008. The remaining two US-69 expansion projects are also in Linn County.

The contract for the first of these

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Lots of snow, lots of water



High temperatures in mid-February in western Kansas melted lots of snow quickly. So much snow melted that water ran over the highway in some areas such as K-25 north of Lakin as shown above, and traffic had to be flagged and/or rerouted for a couple days. Photo by Ron Munyan

Survey

Continued from page 3

tion and Saratoga Institute have found that the relationship one has with his or her immediate supervisor is the most important factor in deciding whether to remain at a job.”

The survey will contain 16 to 20 questions and will be strictly confidential. To assure confidentiality, completed surveys will be sent to a third party (Schmucker Training and Consulting) for tabulation and analysis. In addition, work groups of fewer than eight people will be combined with other groups to assure anonymity.

Survey data will be put in graphs for each supervisor and his or her manager to review. The findings then will be explained to managers and supervisors in sessions at district offices and at headquarters.

“KDOT’s workplace climate will be strengthened by supervisors who claim their responsibility, learn from their mistakes and take steps to develop strong work teams of engaged employees,” said Lee Schmucker.

“This survey will be a useful tool to accomplish that.”

The survey will contain a mix of questions that will require either a number response (one for “strongly disagree” up to five for “strongly agree”), or a written comment.

For KDOT field staff, paper surveys will be mailed to their homes. Others will receive their surveys electronically.

For more information about the survey, see Secretary Miller’s column on page 2.

Construction

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– located south of K-7891-01 and including the community of Pleasanton - was awarded to Koss in January 2007. The eighth and final expansion project lets in April of this year.

K-7 from K-126 north to Girard

Reconstruction began last November on a second leg of K-7 in Crawford County (K-7405-01). Heckert Construction Company of Pittsburg was awarded the \$7.9 million construction contract. The six-mile-long project runs from the K-126 junction north to the south city limits of Girard. The reconstructed roadway will have 12-foot-wide driving lanes and 10-foot shoulders. Other improvements are: reconstruction of the K-7/K-126 intersection; a partial roadway realignment to eliminate curves; replacement of the Second Cow Creek and Limestone Creek bridges; adding acceleration and deceleration lanes at major crossroads; replacement of two existing culverts with bridges; guard fence upgrades; and signing. Traffic is being detoured around the project on K-47, US-69 and K-126.

The wintry weather has resulted in substantial icing on the project, said Pittsburg Area Construction Engineer Bob Gudgen. Grading and bridge work will begin when conditions improve, he said, with paving later this summer. The project has a calendar completion date of Nov. 16.

The first Crawford County section of K-7 to undergo reconstruction ran from the US-400 junction at Cherokee north for five miles to K-126. The section was opened to traffic in May.



By
**Dan
Scherschligt**

**TRANSPORTATION
TALK**

Progression

Progression.

The dictionary defines progression as the process of progressing or movement toward a goal. At KDOT, are we progressing? The answer is yes. And toward what goal are we progressing? I think the answer to that is we are in constant progression toward making KDOT a better place to work.

In order to move forward, we can't allow ourselves to get bogged down in what KDOT cannot directly control, such as pay. KDOT, as one agency, can't change the state pay matrix. It takes legislation to do that. So, once we get past pay, what has KDOT done that makes so many of us spend our entire career at this agency? There are the value and pride that comes with public service. There are the many relationships we have established at work. But there must be more that keeps us at KDOT. What is it?

I will start with progression itself. KDOT has in place a

program called Equipment Operator Senior progression. This program was first implemented in 2002. It provides the opportunity for our equipment operators, through training and testing, to achieve Equipment Operator Senior status.

This program has been extremely successful. Before this program, an equipment operator would have to wait for a vacancy before he or she could even be considered for a promotion. Now, potentially, an entire sub-area could be made up of all Equipment Operator Seniors. Not only has this provided opportunity, but it also has created a more qualified and better trained workforce. KDOT is in the process of developing similar programs for other job classes, such as Equipment Mechanics and Engineering Technicians.

The tools and equipment we use to perform our jobs also have progressed. How many of us have a home computer that has the features and storage of the computer you have at work? The facilities we work in have progressed. Have headquarters employees reminisced about the Docking building lately? I would say KDOT has progressed quite nicely with the movement into the Eisenhower building.

The vehicles we drive, from the central motor pool to our dump trucks, are modern and reliable. I remember my first state vehicle was a Dodge Aries, no air conditioning and plenty of miles!

Perhaps most importantly, the product we deliver has progressed. Our infrastructure, from airports to highways to bridges, is the best it's ever been. Our system is one of the best, if not the best, in the nation. That becomes quite evident when our travels take us to another state.

Now, let's reflect back to not too many years ago. I remember those initial meetings when we discussed a concept called "flex time." In those days, all employees, no excep-

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Transportation Briefs

USDOT deputy named

Vice Admiral Tom Barrett has been nominated by President Bush to be deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, replacing Maria Cino. Barrett, who served in the U.S. Coast Guard for more than 35 years, had been administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. - *Washington Letter on Transportation, March 5, 2007*

Turnpike celebrates

The second largest turnpike in the country celebrated its 50th anniversary

in January. The Florida turnpike connects Dade County to Sumter County, which stretches a total of 312 miles. Events took place in Orlando and Pompano Beach on Jan. 25. Two million travelers commute on the turnpike each day collecting \$650 million in tolls each year. - *American City and County, February 2007*

Red-light cameras approved

Legislation approved by the Virginia General Assembly will allow local governments in that state to set up cameras to catch drivers who run red lights. The measure, which would let towns, cities and counties with populations of 10,000 or more install the photo-monitoring sys-

tems, was criticized by some as unnecessary government "nannyism." A dozen states and Washington, D.C., use automated cameras for traffic enforcement. - *Washington Post, Feb. 21, 2007*

Storms drive up MoDOT spending

By early February, with weeks still remaining in the winter season, the Missouri Department of Transportation had used nearly twice as much road salt as it did all of last year. By Feb. 9, MoDOT had used nearly 240,000 tons of salt and had spent more than \$26 million on snow and ice removal. - *MoDOT Express Lane, Feb. 22, 2007*

KDOT Computer Training

— from the KCTC

CLASSES ARE ON THE CALENDAR AT ESOB

Increase your efficiency! Classes are on the KCTC schedule now through June. Please check out the Outlook shared KCTC calendar for a full schedule. Classes taught by Misty and Karen are now available Monday through Friday.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tips & Tricks:

◆ Need to add an Organization Chart to your PowerPoint Presentation? Just click on a slide where you want the chart added and click “Insert” - “Picture” - “Organization Chart”.

To label and edit the chart:

Label a square: Double-click on a box and start typing text. To add a subordinate, coworker, or assistant square: Click on a square, then click the “Insert Shape” pull-down in the “Organization Chart” toolbar. Change the layout: Click the “Layout” pull-down in the “Organization Chart” toolbar. Change the look of the boxes: Click the lightning bolt icon in the “Organization Chart” toolbar and choose a style from the “Organization Chart Style Gallery” dialog that appears.

◆ Did you know that you can easily go to a new file location with this short cut, just press CTRL+O. This tip is from the Bureau of Computer Services.

Enroll by e-mail kctc@ksdot.org or call Ingrid Vandervort 785-296-8993. **Questions are welcome!** Supervisor’s approval to enroll is necessary.



At right, Doug Dickinson with PPI Rail Products in Tampa, Fla., shows KDOT employees Jill Burton and Shawn Hennes pictures of equipment at the Kansas/Missouri Highway-Rail Safety Conference in Overland Park. Photo by Larry Katsbulas

Quiet zones

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Horns are blown at all intersections to alert the public of an oncoming train. If supplemental safety measures are put in place on a stretch of corridor and a quiet zone is designated, horns will not be blown unless there is an emergency or unexpected safety concern.

“When a train comes through in downtown Olathe, conversations stop because the train horns are that loud,” Cathcart said. “The quiet zone is going to be a quality of life improvement, but we’re also looking at making it a safety improvement.”

The track in Olathe is the busiest track in Kansas, he said, with 89 trains a day going through town.

“There are times when the trains are 10 minutes apart,” he said.

Every crossing will have some type of safety measure, Cathcart said. Some of the improvements include medians or four quadrant gates so that vehicles can’t drive

around the gates, wayside stationary horns and closing crossings.

In regards to containerized cargo congestion, Burlington Northern Santa Fe’s (BNSF) Argentine yard at I-635 and Kansas Avenue in Kansas City is very congested, Cathcart said. So BNSF is building a Logistics Park in Gardner to handle all containerized cargo destined for the Kansas City area. It is scheduled to open late in 2009.

“We see rail traffic in general increasing due to containerized cargo, and this will help them handle the increase,” he said.

A new interchange will be built at I-35 for the increased truck traffic. Additional tracks and warehouse facilities will also be built in Gardner.

“It’s going to be a large economic impact for the city of Gardner,” he said.

This conference brings together industries and vendors to focus on highway-rail crossing safety. It is the fourth year of a joint effort between KDOT and the Missouri DOT. **-K.S.**

Scherschligt

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tions, would have to be at work from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Bringing your infant to work with you? Who are you kidding? KDOT providing annual payment for personal protective equipment? No way.

Now we have flexible work hours, an infant at work program, and a personal protective equipment policy – all examples of progression.

I could cite more examples, but these make my point. It is easy to ask, “what have you done for me today?” Yet if we sit back and contemplate what this agency has done, we have to conclude that we’ve progressed toward making KDOT a better place to work. And, with the quality and dedicated staff we have at KDOT, I am confident we have just begun.

Dan Scherschligt is the District One Engineer.

Fun Facts and Trivia

Do you know?

Congestion Facts PART 3 from the Federal Highway Administration

- ◆ In Pennsylvania, the I-95 Traffic and Incident Management System (TIMS) reduced highway incident closure time by 55 percent.
- ◆ A dispatch center in Erie, NY reported that notification of incidents involving vehicles equipped with automated collision notification took about 1 minute, whereas notification of other incidents could take anywhere from 3 to 46 minutes.
- ◆ The New Jersey Turnpike Authority reports that their EZ Pass system reduces toll station traffic delay by 85 percent.
- ◆ In New York, NY the Tappan Zee Bridge reports 1,000 vehicles per hour in their electronic toll collection lane and less than 500 in the manual collection lane.
- ◆ The Advanced Regional Traffic Interactive Management & Information System serving Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky estimates that use of traveler information reduced fatalities 3.2 percent.

Miller named to TRB committee

Secretary Deb Miller has been named the new Vice Chair of the national Transportation Research Board (TRB) Executive Committee. Miller's term begins immediately and will run through mid-January 2008.

TRB members include senior transportation industry executives, top officials of public-sector transportation agencies, and distinguished researchers from academia.

Miller was a member of the TRB committee that produced the 1996 policy study report, "Paying Our Way: Estimating Marginal Social Costs of Freight Transpor-

tation," and served as chair of TRB's joint National Cooperative Highway Research Program and Transit Cooperative Research Program Project Panel on Commuting in America III.

Miller replaces former Vice Chair Carol Murray, who resigned from the TRB Executive Committee after stepping down from her position as Commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Linda Watson, the Chief Executive Officer of the LYNX-Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority, is the 2007 Chair of the TRB Executive Committee.

Comstock

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coming down the tracks."

When the training program finished, he went to the Planning Department.

"Planning was a really interesting area because we were trying to develop data bases of information about the state highway system and bridges," he said.

Comstock said they did rural sufficiency ratings using a formula that took into account all the highways' characteristics. They spent a lot of time driving to gather this information.

"That was a wonderful opportunity because early in my career, I saw every mile of the state highway system," Comstock said.

Comstock was named Chief of Program Management in 1991 and that same year the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) introduced the Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program. Each state had to develop a program and Comstock and his staff created it from the ground up.

"Everyone has their opinion on the use of the money, but there are now some beautiful restored railroad depots and structures like that across the state that probably wouldn't exist anymore if it hadn't been for this program," he said.

While Comstock was at a Transportation Research Board meeting (to speak about the TE program) in Washington, D.C., he attended a session on public involvement. He then spoke to Deb Miller, then Director of Planning

and Development, about public involvement for the agency.

"I had long thought that we didn't have enough emphasis or resource on public involvement," he said.

About this time, he was named Chief of Design and he had the opportunity to give up a position in Design for the first KDOT Public Involvement Administrator, thereby helping to launch KDOT's public involvement emphasis.

"It was a chance to be able to donate resources – those are the kinds of things that you feel like you maybe made a difference over the years," he said.

The highlight of his career was successfully completing the design of the Comprehensive Highway Program (CHP) so it could be let to construction on time.

"The agency learned so much from the CHP that we used to propel ourselves through the Comprehensive Transportation Program and to prepare for future programs," he said. "We've shown over the last 20 years that, given the resources, we are able to provide a system that provides safe transportation and stimulates the economy to promote economic development."

He is keeping his options open, but for now Comstock plans to remodel his home, help on a friend's farm, travel, possibly work part time and spend time with his wife, Judy, two children and grandchild.

"I've really enjoyed every minute I've had here," he said. "The whole thing has been a real pleasure."

Welcome new KDOT employees!

Headquarters

Joyce Paynter, Administrative Assistant, Materials and Research

Rebecca Pepper, Transportation Planner, Planning

Jennifer Rodriguez, Legal Assistant, Chief Counsel

Wade Salley, Applications Developer I, Computer Services

District One – Northeast

Kevin Collins, Engineering Technician Specialist, Kansas City

District Five – Southcentral

Cory Wick, Geology Trainee, El Dorado

Promotions/Transfers

Headquarters

Brad Henry, Engineering Technician Specialist, Traffic Engineering

Tim Mayfield, Engineering Technician Senior, Design

Kelly Mathis, Senior Administrative Assistant, Right of Way

Jamie Morgan, Applications Developer II, Computer Services

Justin Shaw, Engineering Technician, Design

Jessica Tufts, Accountant II, Fiscal Services

District One – Northeast

Daniel Barnett, Engineering Technician Senior, Topeka

Jolene Flowers, Engineering Technician Associate, Topeka

Burt Morey, Professional Civil Engineer III, Olathe

Catherine Patrick, Professional Civil Engineer III, Bonner Springs

Johanna Terry, Public Service Administrator III, Topeka

District Five – Southcentral

Robbie Weishaar, Engineering Associate III, Winfield

Erskine

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from Foth and Orrick, LLP. He worked closely with firm partner Tim Orrick and has expertise handling real estate acquisition, relocation, condemnation and eminent domain litigation.

“KDOT was one of our clients we represented primarily in condemnation, property acquisition and relocation assistance matters,” said Erskine. “I believe this experience will help me in the Office of the Chief Counsel as we get involved with projects in the beginning and during various other stages.”

Erskine graduated from the University of Kansas law school. He completed his undergraduate and Masters Degree at Rockhurst University in Kansas City focusing on finance and economics. His professional career began in a corporate office for Mutual of New York before moving to H&R Block Financial Services as a Transition Coordinator. He then served at Sprint Corporation in corporate finance handling strategic initiatives before accepting his position with Foth and Orrick.

“Coming to KDOT is a great personal opportunity that dovetails into my past experience with the agency,” said Erskine. “I’ve already worked closely with many people at KDOT in Right of Way and Design, not to mention outside consultants retained by the agency. I’ve enjoyed my working relationships with the folks at KDOT, which made the deci-

sion to come here easy.”

Besides KDOT, the experience Erskine gained representing other clients at Foth and Orrick will be invaluable to him in his new position. Those clients included the Kansas Turnpike Authority, Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, the cities of Lenexa, Overland Park, Fairway, Salina, El Dorado and local businesses.

Erskine met with his predecessor Sally Howard and Interim Chief Counsel Vicky Johnson before starting to work for KDOT. That communication, coupled with his previous experience, helped him gain an understanding of agency policies and procedures.

“I wanted to come in here and hit the ground running,” said Erskine. “I feel KDOT is already a very sound organization and I just want to add value and build from there.”

During his free time, Erskine has been actively involved in Amateur Athletic Association (AAU) basketball for the past 13 years. AAU is one of the largest non-profit, volunteer youth sports organizations in the world. He has served as a coach, the 2002 and 2006 director of the AAU National basketball tournaments in Overland Park and is currently the President/CEO of the Missouri Valley Eclipse Amateur Athletic Club basketball organization.

Erskine and his wife, Ann, have one child – a five-month-old daughter Kristina.

M I L E S T O N E S

KDOT salutes employees celebrating state anniversaries in March

10 YEARS

Roberta Drake Neodesha
Toby Griffith Glade
Anthony Hirsh Kinsley
Darrell Hladek WaKeeney
Ricky Jenkins, Jr. El Dorado
Curtis Murphy Fontana
Nathan Talcott Halstead

20 YEARS

Gary Buum McPherson
William Oehm Marysville
Darin Oller Partridge
Rita Roblyer Great Bend
Douglas Vogel Chanute
Cynthia Wade Eskridge

30 YEARS

Charles Bradley Ozawkie

State service anniversaries are compiled by Personnel Services.

Sobriety Rocks contest encourages kids to say 'no'

By Sadie Warfield

KDOT is offering young Kansans a chance to earn up to a \$3,000 scholarship for higher education as well as influence other youth with the "Sobriety Rocks Scholarship Contest."

The contest is for Kansans ages 10 to 21 to encourage adolescents to say "no" to underage drinking as well as driving under the influence.

Adolescents who begin drinking before the age of 15 have been shown to be four times more likely to become dependent on alcohol as adults, and 96 percent of adult alcoholics began drinking before the age of 21. According to Stephen Halbett, Program Consultant in Traffic Safety, ages 15 to 24 make up 19 percent of the driving age in Kansas, but almost 40 percent of alcohol-related crashes.

A \$1,000 prize will be given in each of the three categories; Best Original Lyrics, Best Original Musical Score and Best Original Song. Contestants may enter in just one category or all three but must submit a registration form for each category they chose to enter. Only applicants whose lyrics have never been published or have received royalties for song writing will be considered. Entries must be postmarked by May 18.

The winners will be chosen May 31. Halbett said one of the judges will be Heather Shelley of Scott City, who won "Best New Act in Country Music" in the 2005 Colgate Country Showdown. Last fall, KDOT teamed up with Shelley to produce "In My Time," a song encouraging youth to abstain from underage drinking.

The scholarship may be applied to any institution of higher education in the state of Kansas.

Retirees

The following employees have officially retired from KDOT.

Headquarters

Ronald G. Balsters, Application Development Supervisor – 36 years of state service

G. David Comstock, Director of Engineering and Design – 39 years of state service

Franklin R. Heck, Engineering Technician at Emporia – 41 years of state service

Maria D. Martinez, Special Investigator I in Chief Counsel – 44 years of state service

Robert R. Reynolds, Senior Squad Leader in Design, 40 years of state service

District One

Walter L. Blount Jr., Equipment Operator at Strong City – 22 ½ years of state service

Kenneth L. DeLong, Highway

Maintenance Supervisor in Topeka – 40 years of state service

Edward M. Halter, Kansas City Metro Engineer – 35 years of state service

Jerrie L. Loader, Public Service Administrator III at Topeka – 30 years of state service

District Three

Fonda K. Lawrence, Senior Administrative Assistant at Norton – 32 years of state service

Paul W. Stout, Engineer Technician Senior in Oakley – 24 years of state service

District Five

Barrett M. Avery, Engineering Technician Senior at El Dorado – 40 years of state service

Manuel M. Perez, Equipment Operator Specialist at Larned – 20 years of state service

Kansas Department of Transportation

Bureau of Transportation Information
Eisenhower State Office Building
700 SW Harrison, Second Floor, West
Topeka, KS 66603-3754

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