

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17, 2021

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Litter removal and sweeping services clean up KC metro roadways

More than 50 tons of trash picked up along primary traffic corridors since June

The assignment is to pick up litter along major traffic corridors in Johnson and Wyandotte counties. But safety comes first.

Each weekday before heading out to collect unsightly and unsafe roadside debris, supervisor Troy Cummings gathers his crew for a safety briefing. The Interstate Business Solutions (IBS) team, contracted by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), goes over daily safety reminders and any problem areas identified on the day's route, most notably guardrails.

Guardrails require extra caution as they are close to passing motorists and often catch large amounts of litter blown off the roadway, including loose fast-food wrappers and packaging from passing freight. The IBS crew works during daylight hours and posts roadside safety signs every five miles to make drivers aware of the litter removal and workers on the shoulder. However, when working along guardrails, Cummings also follows the crew in a truck with flashing lights and signage for extra visibility as a safety precaution.

“Despite the warnings, we often see drivers, many using phones, who cross onto the shoulder at high speeds,” said Cummings. “They do not seem aware of workers walking on the roadside.”

When its work in the Kansas City metro began in June, IBS focused large debris cleanup efforts along 50 miles of roadway identified by KDOT and from public input as areas where roadside litter is prevalent. The first month's efforts were along I-435 in Johnson County, U.S. 69 from I-35 to 151st Street and I-635 in Wyandotte County. In July, IBS worked I-435 in Wyandotte County and I-35 in Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

There was plenty of trash to be found. To date, IBS has collected more than 106,000 pounds – more than 50 tons – of litter and debris along these routes. Each day, about eight miles of roadway are covered and cleanup results in filling an average of 110 trash bags.

Cummings said the majority of collected debris seems to come from unsecured loads on trucks, but the daily haul always includes an interesting mix of items. The IBS crew has picked up televisions, iPads, a saxophone, diaper bags, a box of straw hats and more than 5,000 pairs of nitrile gloves. That's in addition to numerous car parts, construction materials and large appliances.

Some items are especially unique. While walking along U.S. 69 at the 151st exit, an IBS crew member found an iPhone. The phone still had power and eventually its owner called. Turns out the mobile device had been stolen at a nearby gas station and apparently pitched. IBS was able to return the phone to its owner.

IBS, based in Indianapolis, Ind., hires local workers and partners with a Kansas City non-profit to employ individuals experiencing housing insecurity. Since completing its initial routes, IBS is now following a routine schedule of right-of-way litter maintenance. As part of this maintenance schedule, IBS returns to initially cleared locations every few weeks.

Cummings said when crews return to areas already worked, they often find the same debris-filled condition as before. "It's an ongoing job."

Roadside pickup efforts are supplemented by KDOT maintenance crews, Adopt-A-Highway volunteers and the Sponsor-A-Highway partners.

In addition to debris collection by hand, KDOT recently contracted Kasper, LLC, of Crocker, Mo., to provide sweeping services on metro-area roadways, expected to begin in October. Kasper crews will be working overnight Monday through Thursday, from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. Selected route segments will be swept in both directions along curbs and barriers for mainline and ramps.

Approximately 160 miles along major highway corridors in Johnson and Wyandotte counties have been identified for sweeping services and include, but are not limited to: I-35, I-70, I-435, I-635, I-670, U.S. 69 and K-10.

Public involvement helps maintain state roadways and is a benefit to motorists and surrounding communities. Information on KDOT Adopt-A-Highway volunteer opportunities and Sponsor-A-Highway programs can be found here: <https://www.ksdot.org/bureaus/burMaint/Adoptahighway.asp>.

KDOT urges all motorists to be alert and obey the warning signs when approaching and driving through a highway work zone. To stay aware of all road construction projects across Kansas go to www.kandrive.org or call 5-1-1. Drive safely and always wear your seat belt.



I-35 near 135th Street before and after IBS crews picked up roadside debris.

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