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The wrong message, the wrong time

During last year’s presidential campaign we heard a lot about earmarks and none of it was good. Candidates expressed their disdain for earmarks much like they expressed their disgust for million-dollar, Wall Street bonuses. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to put as much distance as possible between themselves and anything that could be branded as an earmark.

But, of course, whether it’s called an earmark, pork or just doing a good job of taking care of the home district, it has long been one of the ways business is done in Washington.

And over the years, transportation in Kansas has benefited from these funds. Because good solid processes and lots of communication about transportation have developed between the state’s congressional delegation, Kansas communities and KDOT, we’ve avoided problems that other states have had with earmarks. When a Kansas transportation project is earmarked, more often than not the earmark is for a project that is already being planned and the new dollars can be incorporated in a beneficial way.

Small amounts of money for an expensive project for which no planning is under way may seem like a way to get a foot in the door, but it can be difficult to put the money to meaningful use. The Kansas Congressional delegation usually consults with us first. Working together, we can always come up with projects for which funding can be put to work no matter the amount.

Communities and transportation groups in the state know that earmarks can get a project off the ground and often times they have requested that I write letters endorsing their projects. I have written lots of those letters over the years. I’ve appreciated the open communication we’ve had on these projects and I think Kansas has benefited from it.

So what I’m getting ready to say isn’t meant as an indictment of the process or of the earmarked projects that have been built in Kansas. But this year, I will not be writing those letters.

I think asking Congress to earmark projects this year is the wrong message at the wrong time.

Why is it the wrong message? Our national economy feels like it is unraveling. The one-time fix of the federal Highway Trust Fund back in the fall of 2009 now doesn’t appear likely to last through the end of the current fiscal year. And the long-term deficit in the fund has yet to be addressed. Absent a solution we don’t have yet, federal highway dollars are going to plunge significantly in 2010. The current federal transportation program expires this year and no one knows when a new program will be authorized or how it will be funded.

In this environment, my message to Congress is to make fixing the trust fund and putting it on sound fiscal footing top priority. Urging our Washington leaders to earmark money that I’m not even sure we have sends the wrong signal to everyone involved.

So I’ve been putting local governments on notice that this year KDOT won’t be requesting any earmarks. If a member of the state’s delegation asks us for recommendations for earmark projects, we will certainly engage them. We won’t do anything that disadvantages Kansas to the benefit of other states. But, neither will I sign letters that encourage earmarking.

I know some communities will accept my decision better than others. I can appreciate the concern, but asking for earmarks now sure doesn’t feel right to me.

We’re not in a time of business as usual and we can’t act as if it is.
McDiffett to retire from department

By Kristen Brands
District Three Engineer Chriss B. McDiffett will officially retire from the KDOT Norton office on March 9 with more than 25 years of state service.

McDiffett started working for KDOT as the Area Engineer in Atwood in 1983. He was promoted to the District Construction Engineer in 1987 and then promoted to the District Engineer in 1988 – managing the 18-county, northwest Kansas region. McDiffett has served as the District Three Engineer for almost 21 years, longer than any of his predecessors.

With the 10-year Comprehensive Transportation Program (CTP) being completed this year and the uncertainty of future transportation programs, McDiffett believes this is time to turn the helm over to someone else. He plans on enjoying his hobbies - walking, hiking, hunting and showing and driving his antique vehicles.

Chriss and his wife, Evelyn, will remain in Norton, but do plan on visiting their four children and nine grandchildren.

K-10 bus service awarded $500,000

A popular K-10 bus service between south Johnson County and Lawrence is the beneficiary of $500,000 in state funds awarded to Johnson County Transit.

The funds awarded by KDOT will assist with the operation of K-10 Connector. The service, popular with college students and commuters, makes stops at the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence and at Johnson County Community College and the KU Edwards Campus in Johnson County. The service was started by Johnson County Transit in January 2007 and has peak ridership of more than 1,000 a day.

“KDOT is happy to provide funding for K-10 Connector. It’s a great test case for how popular this kind of transit service can be in Kansas,” said Lisa Koch, KDOT’s Public Transit Manager.

The City of Lawrence has received federal funding through KDOT in the amount of $120,000 for a scheduling and routing study of Lawrence Transit and KU on Wheels. The funding, which is specifically designated for transit planning, requires a 20 percent local match, which will be shared by the city and KU.

K-TOC community continues to grow

The Kansas Transportation Online Community (K-TOC) is off to a great start, according to Patrick Quinn, K-TOC Administrator.

In its first month of operation, the community registered more than 450 members. Much of the community’s attention has been devoted to questions surrounding the proposed federal economic stimulus package. Secretary Deb Miller issued a statement to the community on the stimulus and how KDOT intends to manage the funds, and other blogs have also discussed this issue.

But politics isn’t the only topic of interest at K-TOC. Discussion groups have been established for practicing engineers and transportation and the environment, with more groups to be added in the future.

Quinn encourages people to check K-TOC at www.ktoc.net and share a suggestion or a question with the rest of the community.
Building cities, possible careers in engineering

By Kim Stich

Getting 7th and 8th students interested in engineering now may encourage them to take a more math- and science-related curriculum later, thus paving the way to a possible career in engineering.

That’s the goal of the Future City competition where students design and build a city of tomorrow, according to Howard Lubliner, Road Design Leader and Future City Regional Coordinator for the event.

“The program helps students learn what engineering is,” Lubliner said. “A lot of them may not understand that engineering is the primary profession where math and science is applied. This program helps students understand that linkage and how engineering impacts their lives.”

A record number 62 teams participated in the regional Future City competition on Jan. 24 at Kansas State University. Lubliner said numerous KDOT employees volunteered their time to help organize the event. KDOT and other transportation-related organizations sponsored the competition, and many people helped serve as judges.

This year the essay topic was water conservation and water resources. Each team had four tasks - create a future city using SimCity software, write a technical essay and a description of their city, make a model of a portion of their city using recycled materials and make an oral presentation.

Of the students participating, two of them were 8th grader Aaron Spicer and 7th grader Mark Spicer, sons of Alan Spicer, Assistant Bureau Chief of Transportation Planning, who attend St. Matthew Catholic School in Topeka.

With their third team member John Meinhardt, team Awsome constructed a city of floating pods off the coast of western Australia that recycled all water used within the buildings.

“I think they enjoyed it and they have some pride in the final product,” Spicer said. “They really got a lot of valuable experience from it such as making the presentation at K-State.”

The team named Lenexa, from Overland Park, won this regional event. Each regional winning team participated in the 17th annual Future City National Finals in Washington, D.C., Feb. 17-18, during National Engineers Week.

Retirees

The following employee will officially retire from KDOT in March.

**Headquarters**

*Bob House*, Research Analyst III, Transportation Planning

The following employees will officially retire from KDOT in April.

**District Two**

*Scott Davis*, Equipment Operator, Ellsworth

*Linda Duffy*, Accountant I, Salina

**District Three**

*Marlene Bebb*, District Office Coordinator, Norton

**District Four**

*Chriss McDiffett*, District Engineer, Norton

*Richard Moneo*, Equipment Operator, Sedan

Employees who choose to have retirement reception information shared on the Internet can be found at [www.ksdot.org](http://www.ksdot.org), under News and Announcements.
Financial chief guides KDOT through turbulent times

By Steve Swartz

If managing your shrinking investment portfolio keeps you awake at night, consider how restless Bruce Burditt must be when he tries to sleep. His portfolio tops $2 billion!

Burditt, chief of the newly-formed Office of Financial and Investment Management, deals with KDOT’s cash flow projections and the agency’s investment and debt management. The investment side of his management duties covers $350 million. But his debt management responsibilities include overseeing $1.7 billion. Of that, more than $900 million is in variable debt, which means he actively and aggressively seeks out the best deals available to keep interest rates as low as possible for KDOT.

“We have managed our way through a challenging environment,” Burditt said. “Like a boxer, we’ve had to bob and weave. As situations have been thrown at us, we’ve changed the portfolio.”

It’s clear from talking with Burditt that he relishes high finance and big challenges. After all, he got used to big challenges during his days running cross country and track at Wichita North High School. Successful enough to eventually earn an athletic scholarship to Wichita State University, he still could never catch the cross-town rival from Wichita East – Jim Ryun.

“Virtually every race I was in included Jim Ryun,” said Burditt, still awed that Ryun, after participating in his first Olympics, returned to Wichita in time to participate in the high school regional and state cross country championships.

“I can recognize him from the back,” he said.

A Certified Public Accountant since 1975, Burditt has had a long career in state service that includes several stints at KDOT. In addition to working at KDOT, where he was first hired in 1989, he spent time as chief financial officer for KPERS and as a trustee to KPERS between 1997 and 2007. He will be a candidate in the April trustee election.

Burditt, a licensed investment advisor representative, has served as chief accountant to the Kansas Securities Commission and also as the executive director of the trade association for the state securities commissioners.

This fall, Burditt guided the agency through an unusual investment opportunity. Because of the abnormally high interest rates on variable rate debt (on which the rate is reset each week), the U.S. Treasury allowed governmental issuers like KDOT to temporarily invest in their own debt. So, the agency bought $136 million in KDOT bonds and received the interest rather than paying it to a second party.

“We were on the front edge of this,” Burditt said, flashing a big smile. “This turned out to be a good deal for the agency. That’s the most exciting investment we had in the past three or four years. We bought our own debt.”

Burditt, who married his high school sweetheart Linda, has two daughters – Julie and Amy – and three grandchildren. He’s already excited about the agency’s next opportunity to save the state money.

“After March 4, we’ll make another significant change to the portfolio and we think it will drive down the overall cost of debt,” he said. “We think we’re making progress.”

That’s good news and it should make it a little easier for him to fall asleep tonight.

Calendar of Events

March 4-5 – Kansas-Missouri highway/roadway safety conference, Doubletree Hotel Overland Park.

March 5 – Structural Engineering Conference, University of Kansas Union.

March 10 – 11 a.m., KDOT employees’ Council Meeting, Third Floor, Eisenhower State Office Building.

March 13 – 9:30 a.m. - Highway Advisory Commission meeting.

March 18 – 1 p.m. Construction bid letting, Fourth Floor, West Wing, Eisenhower State Office Building.

April 7-8 – Transportation Safety Conference, Hyatt Regency, Wichita.
Capsule views of upcoming construction

The construction season in Kansas will soon be under way. Here’s a capsule view of the key projects in each District.

**DISTRICT ONE**

1. **Location:** Atchison.
   **Scope of work:** Four-lane replacement of existing Amelia Earhart Missouri River Bridge.
   **Cost:** $63.2 million.
   **Completion:** Spring 2011.

2. **Location:** Douglas County.
   **Scope of work:** Grading and bridge work for four-lane expansion of U.S. 59 from the Douglas-Franklin county line north 11.1 miles.
   **Cost:** $57.1 million.
   **Completion:** Fall 2011.

**DISTRICT TWO**

1. **Location:** K-18 from the Geary-Riley county line northeast 0.7 mile.
   **Scope of work:** Continuation of the four-lane construction on K-18 from I-70 to Manhattan. Project includes construction of a new bridge over the Kansas River, a new interchange at 12th street into Fort Riley and a bridge repair and pavement reconstruction on the existing road.
   **Cost:** $40.3 million.
   **Completion:** Fall 2010.

2. **Location:** Junction City.
   **Scope of work:** Intersection improvements including roundabout at I-70 Exit 298/E. Chestnut Street, plus reconstruction of E. Chestnut from U.S. 40B to I-70.
   **Cost:** $5.3 million.
   **Completion:** May 2009.

**DISTRICT THREE**

1. **Location:** City of Downs economic development project.
   **Scope of work:** Grading and surfacing to construct new roadway on existing and new alignment from U.S. 24 south and east to Third and Commercial Street.
   **Cost:** $2.7 million (Estimated let in February).
   **Completion:** Fall 2009.

**DISTRICT FOUR**

1. **Location:** U.S. 59 in Franklin County
   **Scope of work:** Surfacing from I-35 northeast of Ottawa north to the Franklin-Douglas county line for expansion of four-lane freeway.
   **Cost:** $19.8 million.
   **Start:** Spring 2009.
   **Completion:** Late 2009.

2. **Location:** I-135 & U.S.54 (Kellogg Ave.) interchange in Wichita.
   **Scope:** Reconstruct ramps and repair 11 bridges.
   **Cost:** $17.5 million.
   **Completion:** November 2009.

**DISTRICT FIVE**

1. **Location:** K-61 in Reno County.
   **Scope of work:** Expansion of K-61 from two to four lanes in an 8.6-mile area from Hutchinson to the Reno-McPherson county line.
   **Cost:** $41.1 million.
   **Completion:** November 2011.

2. **Location:** 1-35 & U.S.54 (Kellogg Ave.) interchange in Wichita.
   **Scope:** Reconstruct ramps and repair 11 bridges.
   **Cost:** $17.5 million.
   **Completion:** November 2009.

**DISTRICT SIX**

1. **Location:** U.S. 50/U.S. 400 in Finney County from 1 mile west of Holcomb to 1.4 miles east of the west junction of U.S. 50/U.S. 83.
   **Scope:** Construction of 4-lane upgradeable expressway with interchanges at U.S. 50 & Big Lowe Road near Holcomb and at the west junction of U.S. 50/U.S. 83 and at-grade intersections at Chemlka Road, Anderson Road, VFW Road and 3rd Street.
   **Cost:** $68.1 million.
   **Completion:** July 2011.

2. **Location:** U.S. 400 Dodge City Southwest Bypass.
   **Scope of Work:** New construction of 3.5 miles of two-lane roadway on four-lane right-of-way including bridges over U.S. 50 and BNSF Railroad, the Arkansas River, U.S. 56 and the Cimarron Valley Railroad and Marshall Road over U.S. 400.
   **Cost:** $23.4 million.
   **Completion:** November 2009.

Construction continues on the new U.S. 400 Dodge City southwest bypass. It is expected to be completed in November. Photo by Kirk Hutchinson.
Finding best ways to communicate

In today’s world we must be able to communicate in a number of ways and, personally, I struggle determining which method is the right one. At KDOT, we currently have a number of available options such as the telephone, email, some form of Instant Messaging, etc. With all of these options and more available to us, I wonder from time to time if we choose the right one. I hope after you read this column that you, too, will think about the best way to communicate.

Like many of you, I receive a large number of emails daily. Some of these emails are important, some need a quick response, some are solicitations and some are junk. I am often amazed that as employees we trust the email system enough to communicate urgent requests and deadlines to others we work with. I find this amazing because a number of us complain about the network being down or being slow, but when we send an important email we rarely think about whether or not it was received. To head off a catastrophe, I would suggest following up with a phone call or a personal visit to ensure important emails were received.

While watching my teenage son and his friends, I have noticed personal communication has moved toward text messages, Facebook, MySpace and other technology driven communication modes. As a parent, I do not understand why teenagers use texting instead of just calling the person they want to talk with or just talking to them face-to-face. I have actually witnessed people text messaging the person sitting right next to them! The only reasonable conclusion I can come to is they want their conversation private and quiet. I am sure many of you have seen this happen at one time or another and probably wondered the same thing.

Let’s look into the future five to 10 years and try to figure out what a staff meeting might look like if this way of communicating continues. I foresee several people sitting in their offices, cars and homes texting, emailing or instant messaging into a meeting to discuss their part of a project. Ideally they will send design drawings or other notes to help facilitate the meeting, but nothing will be exchanged verbally. The participants may not even know the other people they are working with other than by their username. Their office environment will be quiet and relaxed and their productivity may be high because they will not require any face-to-face interactions. But, face-to-face personal interaction is important when trying to come to a consensus where gauging another’s true emotions, thoughts or feelings may be important to the outcome.

I hope you can see why I struggle with what mode of communication to use because we are all a little different in our preference. Hopefully, we will not forget to pick up the phone or just go visit someone to discuss issues or ideas. I believe that face-to-face communication is a great method of communication that should be used more often. It helps everyone involved to understand the issues at hand and the person you are working with. I strongly encourage new and long-term employees in the agency to use face-to-face communication when possible simply because it helps us to know our co-workers, adds an element of humanity to the job and I believe it will improve the efficiencies and the climate of KDOT.

Mike Floberg is the Chief of Transportation Safety and Technology.
KDOT Computer Training
– from the KCTC

Increase your efficiency!

**Feature: A little history and a thank you**

As we move forward in times of uncertainty and “doing more with less,” the KCTC is pleased to continue to serve KDOT employees by helping them be an efficient and capable workforce in the areas of computer usage.

We’ve recently compiled 2008 year-end results and found even ourselves surprised by the sheer volume of class completion across the state. Last year 2,223 KDOT students completed instructor-led classes held in Topeka at the Eisenhower Building and in classes delivered to them in each District.

Additionally, 200 students from our neighboring state agencies completed classes through the KCTC. Certainly, the delivery of Crew Card training and the launching of the ET Progression accounted for large classroom volume. Crew Card classes alone trained and completed 380 students.

By comparison, in 2007, the KCTC completed 1,017 KDOT employees and 138 from additional agencies. So it is with great pleasure that the KCTC continues to help serve the ever changing educational needs of our agency.

Thank you!
The KCTC: Misty, Karen & Ingrid

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Check out the shared calendar: KCTC for on-going classes. Contact the KCTC at kctc@ksdot.org or call Ingrid Vandervort 785-296-8993.

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KDOT hauls soil to be used in the new Zimmerman Family Riding Arena at the Parsons State Hospital and Training Center. Photo submitted

**KDOT hauls soil for arena at Parsons State Hospital**

By Priscilla Petersen

Some of the dirt and sand left over from the KDOT project to construct the U.S. 400 bypass at Parsons now serves as the base of the new indoor equestrian arena at the Parsons State Hospital and Training Center (PSHTC).

On Feb. 4, KDOT crew members from the Altamont Subarea coordinated with crews from the City of Parsons to haul around 720 yards of topsoil and approximately 300 yards of sand to the arena, where it was spread as flooring. According to Altamont Equipment Operator Specialist Steve Black, who supervised the effort for KDOT, a total of 10 dump trucks – four from Altamont and six from Parsons – hauled the material all day long by way of a five-mile route. Equipment Operator Midpoint Marty Volz ran KDOT’s loader. Operating the KDOT trucks were Equipment Operator Seniors David Bertling, Jim Smith and Bill Shields and Equipment Operator David Pillar.

The state hospital purchased the leftover soil from a local landowner at a substantial discount, said Jim Captain of PSHTC’s Training Department. Captain made a video of the dirt-hauling work to be included in a special presentation about the new arena that is being prepared for Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

Each September the state hospital sponsors the Gary J. Daniels Sunbelt Rodeo, which draws participants from Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas. Recalling that wet weather has put a damper on several previous rodeos, Captain said he especially welcomed the covered facility. “We now have a place to ride when it rains.” The arena will be used throughout the year by PSHTC clients and members of the community.

“KDOT was such a great help,” noted Jerry Rea, PSHTC Superintendent. The Parsons State Hospital Endowment Association built the 20,000-square-foot Zimmerman Family Riding Arena with the help of a generous donation from the Marvin Zimmerman family.
Welcome new KDOT employees!

Headquarters
Justin Loebel, Technical Support Consultant II, Topeka

District One
Donald Gibbs, Equipment Operator Trainee, Wamego
Timothy Hill, Equipment Operator Trainee, Marysville
William Schmidt, Equipment Mechanic, Olathe

District Two
Caleb Kidd, Equipment Operator Trainee, Junction City
Jerod Johnson, Equipment Operator Trainee, Mankato

District Three
Terry Augustine, Equipment Operator Trainee, Hays
Jason Gerstner, Equipment Operator Trainee, Hays
Chad Hanna, Equipment Operator Trainee, Oakley
Matthew Kuhlman, Mechanic, Norton
Eric Siegfreid, Equipment Operator Trainee, Stockton

District Four
Deric Hulett, Administrative Specialist, Garnett
Ashley Slemp, Equipment Operator Trainee, Ottawa

District Six
Thomas Morton, Equipment Operator Trainee, Dodge City
Elaine Murray, Engineering Associate I, Garden City
Rodney Musick, Equipment Operator Trainee, Cimarron
Michael Sullivan, Equipment Operator Trainee, Rolla
Tony Widener, Equipment Operator Trainee, Rolla

The Bureau of Personnel Services supplies information to Translines.

MindLeaders makes online learning easy

Learning at KDOT has now become easy thanks to the online employment development tool MindLeaders.

“It's an excellent program that allows employees access to state-of-the-art e-learning solutions from the comfort of their office,” said Sherry Petrie-Fitzgerald, KDOT Organizational Development Manager in the Bureau of Personnel Services. “You can learn at your own pace and focus on the training you need.”

KDOT began developing its MindLeaders program last August and rolled it out agency wide in February. Over 700 business and technical courses are available.

You can access MindLeaders by visiting the KDOT Learning Center at http://pathlore.ksdot.org/stc/LMSProd/cst_MainHomeFrameset.html and clicking on the MindLeaders link. When accessing MindLeaders your user ID is your Employee ID Number and your password is the word “password.” You can change your password by clicking on “Update Account” after you have logged in.

“The main advantages of MindLeaders are it’s a flexible and self-paced program that allows you to control the learning experience,” said Lori Jones, KDOT Learning Management System Project Manager. “You can start a course, stop and then go back to it on your time schedule.”

Each course includes a Skills Assessment, which is a group of 30 multiple choice or true-false questions. MindLeaders also incorporates audio and video to complement the e-learning class.

Jones pointed out that employees can use MindLeaders for either learning or as a reference tool. Supervisory approval is required before taking courses.

Classes are at no charge to agency employees, which Petrie-Fitzgerald said is a definite perk during today’s trying economic times.

For more information about the program, contact Jones at 785-296-4566. – S.W.
Deaths

Condolences to the family and friends of a KDOT employee who recently passed away.

Guadalupe “Pino” Lira, Jr., 64, died Jan. 18 in Kansas City. He was a long-time agency employee working in the Office of Support Services. He is survived by four daughters, eight grandchildren, one great-grandchild, seven sisters and four brothers.

Obituary Correction - Jack I. Amershek, 65, an engineer at the Pittsburg area office, died Dec. 25 in McCune. In the February edition of Translines his last name was incorrectly spelled.

Seitz enjoys being a part of public service

By Stan Whitley

A family atmosphere and diversity of work has made almost three decades go by quickly for KDOT’s new Bureau Chief of Fiscal Services.

“I’ve been here almost 30 years, but it doesn’t seem that long when there are continual changes at work, you enjoy what you do and the people that surround you,” said Rhonda Seitz. “There’s always something you can learn at this agency and it is rewarding to be a part of public service.”

Seitz was named the new Fiscal Services Bureau Chief in January. She succeeds long-time agency employee Dale Jost who retired.

Her career in finance began as a fiscal officer for the Northeast Kansas Community Action Program in 1975. She started working for state government in 1976 in the Audit Section of the SRS where she was responsible for auditing nursing homes in Kansas.

She came to KDOT in October 1980 as an Accountant IV where she was Chief Accountant of the General Accounting Section. In April 1994, Seitz was promoted to Accounting Operations Manager and held that position until being promoted to Bureau Chief.

“I’ve stayed with KDOT because I have a sense of loyalty to the agency,” said Seitz. “We have major initiatives and we are developing critical programs where I can offer my expertise.”

Seitz graduated from Emporia Kansas State College (changed to Emporia State University in 1977) with a degree in Business Administration in May 1975. That same year she married her husband Ron, who is KDOT’s Bureau Chief of Local Projects.

Ron was a high school teacher when Rhonda encouraged him to pursue a career in engineering. He got a degree and has been at KDOT 22 years.

“I thought it was a great field from my experience working at KDOT,” said Rhonda. “So we made a major decision and he returned to school earning a civil engineering degree from Kansas State.”

Seitz said the Fiscal staff is ready and willing to be of service to agency employees. She urged employees to call Fiscal if they need help or have questions.

Rhonda and Ron, who live in St. Marys, have four grown sons – Robin, Ryan, David and Steven.

Step Back in Time

New KDOT paint equipment being used during maintenance work in April 1953.
Adults and kids had a good time at the annual KDOT Employees’ Council Crazy Bowl in Topeka on Feb. 8 with 21 teams participating in the event. Photos by Sonya Scheuneman

Crazy Bowl

KDOT has a new video that focuses on the dangers of working along the roadways titled “Behind the Vest.” It’s a reminder to all of the hazards KDOT employees face every day and a reminder to drive safely in work zones.

A number of employees from across the state tell their stories and stress the need to improve work zones safety. Shirley McDonald also describes the tragedy of losing her son, KDOT employee Scotty McDonald, in a work zone crash.

To view the video, go to http://www.ksdot.org/bureaus/burcompser/podcast.asp, then click on the “Behind the Vest” link.

There was good news on Kansas highways last year with fatalities at their lowest in the 60 years KDOT has kept crash statistics.

Preliminary records indicate 384 fatalities for 2008, down from 416 in 2007, which would set an all-time low. Crash statistics, including fatalities, were first recorded in 1948. Last year is only the second time since then that the number of fatalities has been below 400. The only other year was 1992 when 387 people were killed.

“We have made significant progress, but there are still too many families who are grieving over what may have been a preventable death,” said Secretary Deb Miller. “Even though we’ve increased our seat belt use to 77.3 percent, this number reflects that nearly one person out of every four is still not buckling up.”

Many factors have played into the decrease in fatalities, including legislation in recent years addressing Child Passenger Safety, tougher DUI penalties, and a primary seat belt law for teens. KDOT has also been vigilant in developing partnerships with law enforcement agencies, and has increased its efforts to reduce the number of motorcycle fatalities.

“We have made significant progress, but there are still too many families who are grieving over what may have been a preventable death,”

Secretary Deb Miller

The decline in deaths on highways has reflected a national trend, partly attributed to fewer miles being driven as gas prices rose last summer. Motorists in Kansas drove approximately one million miles a day less in 2008 than 2007.

“We won’t be satisfied until our seat belt compliance rate is 100 percent, and deaths attributed to failure to buckle up are eliminated,” said Kansas Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Terry Maple. “In addition, there are still people killed from drinking and driving in Kansas. People are still driving while distracted, driving over the speed limit or driving too fast for conditions, causing needless deaths. Kansas traffic laws are enforced to prevent these tragedies.”

The most motorists killed in the past 60 years on Kansas highways was in 1969 when there were 780 deaths. -S.W.
Erickson experienced with KDOT budgeting

Working on KDOT’s budget is nothing new for the recently named Chief of the Office of the Budget.

In fact, Ethan Erickson has reviewed KDOT’s budget and those of many other state agencies in the past before he was named KDOT’s Budget Chief.

“I had experience dealing with the KDOT budget at the Department of Administration and working with Marci Ferrill (former Chief of Management and Budget),” said Erickson. “I knew this was a state agency where I’d enjoy working. It was a good opportunity to be part of an agency that had an excellent reputation.”

During a KDOT reorganization in December, Management and Budget was dissolved and the Office of the Budget was created. The Office also includes Budget Analysts Lisa Hockenberry and Martha Jones and Administrative Specialist Aimee Rosenow.

Erickson began working for KDOT in January 2006 as the Assistant Office Chief of Management and Budget. Serving as the agency Budget Officer, one of his key responsibilities was compiling, reviewing and presenting the agency’s annual budget report to the Division of the Budget and other legislative appropriation committees.

Erickson started his state employment in July 2000 as a Human Resource Consultant in the Department of Administration, Division of Personnel Services. He was promoted to a Human Resource Professional in July 2002 before accepting the position of Budget Analyst in the Division of Budget in June 2006.

He was responsible for administering the state’s Budget Management System ensuring the system performed correct budget calculations for state agencies. He also had the responsibility of reviewing state agency budget requests and prepared written budget analysis with recommendations for the Director of the Budget and the Governor.

Erickson graduated from Kansas State University in 1998 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration. He received his master’s degree in business from K-State in 2000.

With the economy in a recession, Erickson said budgeting will be a challenging task.

“There are so many uncertainties with state revenues and actions needed to shore up those revenues,” said Erickson. “We must plan for a lot of different scenarios that may happen.”

Erickson and his wife, Pamela, who is in charge of academic advising at Washburn University, have four children – two boys and two girls. – S.W.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Secretary Deb Miller talks with officials from cities in metropolitan areas on Feb. 13 outlining the estimated $350 million Kansas is expecting to receive under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for highway construction projects that will create or sustain thousands of jobs and make important improvements to the state’s transportation system.
KDOT has seen several staff reorganizational changes in the past couple years to improve organizational flow. Some of the changes include creation of:

- Office of Governmental Affairs;
- Office of the Budget;
- Office of Financial and Investment Management;
- Division of Financial Services.

Other reorganization includes:

- Combining the Bureau of Traffic Engineering, the Bureau of Traffic Safety and the ITS section to create the Bureau of Transportation Safety and Technology;
- Designation of a Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration.

At left is a chart showing the different Divisions, Bureaus, Offices and Districts.
Some spectacular views can be seen from Kansas highways as shown on the new 2009-2010 Kansas Official State Transportation Map.

The state’s nine Kansas Scenic Byways are featured on the map and consist of 578 miles of highways.

In addition to the basic state map on one side and city insets on the other are listings of recreation areas, museums, cities and counties. There is also information about accessing road conditions, visitor resources and other helpful phone numbers and Web sites.

“It’s a really nice document that will give tourists and even native Kansans interesting information about the state,” said KDOT Assistant Cartography Manager Fred Holthaus.

The Cartography staff goal for the publication is to be accurate, Holthaus said. With more than 69,000 elements just on one side of the map, there is a lot of information to check. Input from employees who viewed the map on the Intranet was also helpful.

“We spend a lot of time tracking changes that will affect the map,” Holthaus said.

KDOT works with several state agencies to create the map. More than one million copies will be distributed in Kansas and across the United States in the next two years.

Maps are available at Kansas Travel Centers, at KDOT Headquarters and District offices and at various hotels, attractions and other locations across the state. -K.S.

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**Fun Facts and Trivia**

**Do you know?**

**Former U.S. Presidents’ names**

(used for various features)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Times Used</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coolidge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Foreign country used as city name**

- Canada - Marion County
- Cuba - Republic County
- Denmark - Lincoln County
- Lebanon - Smith County
- Norway - Republic County
- Peru - Chautauqua County
- Solomon - Dickinson County

**Foreign capital used as city name**

(The cities may, or may not, have been named for that reason)

- (Switzerland) Bern - Nemaha County
- (Egypt) Cairo - Pratt County
- (Cuba) Havana - Montgomery County
- (Russia) Moscow - Stevens County
- (Canada) Ottawa - Franklin County
- (Granada) St. George - Pottawatomie County
- (Seychelles) Victoria - Ellis County
- (New Zealand) Wellington - Sumner County

Source: [http://www.about.com/](http://www.about.com/)

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**How many times do the following words appear on this map?**

(hint: For the word ‘Kansas’, Kansas City counts – Arkansas River does not)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Map side</th>
<th>Cover side</th>
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<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>River</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>Lake</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Other State Names)</td>
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<td>Arkansas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
15 graduate program

Fifteen KDOT employees recently completed the Certified Public Managers (CPM) Program designed to provide a foundation of knowledge and skills in management practices.

Agency employees graduating from the year-long course were: Roberta Bradbury, Laura Burnham, Edward Dawson, Todd Dugan, Debra Hepp, Edmond Leboeuf, Mary Sanders, and Kelley Wiley, Headquarters; Jason Van Nice, District One, Lawrence; Mark Willmann, District Two, Clay Center; Doug Lind, District Two, Marion; Dale Luedke, District Three, Atwood; Greg Dixon, District Five, Winfield; Valeria Mullen, District Five, Hutchinson; Cindy Ruthloff, District Five, El Dorado.

Logo wins contest

Stephany Kuhlman, KDOT Graphic Designer, designed the winning logo for the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). A contest took place late last fall to develop a logo with various state and local agencies submitting entries.

All the logos were voted on by various members of the public safety community statewide. Then the final selections were voted on by SIEC.

The SIEC was established to implement statewide communications interoperability by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. Secretary Deb Miller is one of the seven members of the committee.

Kuhlman was honored at a gathering for her work on Feb. 12 in Topeka.

Aviation adds Romo

The Division of Aviation has expanded with the addition of Jesse Romo as Program Manager in charge of coordinating federal and state issues.

Romo has worked at KDOT since January 2006 and was an Assistant Office Chief in Management and Budget before accepting his current position in December.

Romo is a UCLA graduate and has a master’s degree in business administration with a focus in aviation and specialization in human resource management from Embry-Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla. His aviation experience includes managing communications and planning for the FAA Center of Excellence for General Aviation Research and serving as a budget analysis at the Bob Hope Airport in Burbank. He’s also been a private pilot for 15 years.

Fatigue in Steel Bridges; Kansas Bridge Design Engineers Guide Research Solutions into Practice,” that was published in the November/December edition of TR News.

The article focuses on two bridges, the former K-96 bridge over the Little Arkansas River in Hutchinson and the K-16 bridge over Tuttle Creek Reservoir. Both had many distortion-induced fatigue cracks.

KDOT, through KTRAN research funding, partnered with the University of Kansas to evaluate and repair these bridges. After the work took place on the structures, both structures had significantly decreased stress ranges, Jones said.

This partnership benefitted the agency, taxpayers and motorists by developing and implementing repairs that extended the life of both bridges, which is considerably more economical than replacing, as well as less inconvenient to the traveling public.
Promotions/Transfers

Headquarters
Julie Prather, Accountant IV, Fiscal Services
Rhonda Seitz, Bureau Chief of Fiscal Services

District One
Kayne Kraus, Equipment Operator Specialist, Osage City
Dennis Lane, Public Service Administrator, Topeka
Brian Link, Equipment Operator Specialist, Gardner

District Two
Tony Glessner, Equipment Operator Specialist, Council Grove

District Five
Kenton DeBuhr, Equipment Operator Specialist, Wellington
Jack Hensley, Equipment Operator Specialist, Wichita

Upcoming KDOT Training Courses

Classes at District Offices
• Transition To Leadership & Ethics: Hutchinson, March 24, 25, 26
• Transition To Leadership & Ethics: Bonner Springs, April 7, 8, 9
• Transition To Leadership & Ethics: Chanute, April 14, 15, 16
• You’ll Catch On: Hutchinson, April 20, 21
• You’ll Catch On: Hutchinson, April 22, 23
• Business Writing I & II, Hutchinson, April 15
• Overcoming Negativity I & II, Hutchinson, April 16
• You’ll Catch On: Chanute, April 21, 22

Classes at Headquarters
• SMART Day, 1, 2, 3: March 10, 11, 12
• New Employee Orientation: March 19
• BEST – Week II: April 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

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

NOTE: This information is available in alternative accessible formats. To obtain an alternative format, contact Transportation Information, Eisenhower Building, 700 SW Harrison, 2nd Floor West, Topeka, Kan., 66603-3754, or (785) 296-3585 (Voice)/Hearing Impaired - 711.

Koch to study transit abroad

Public Transit Manager Lisa Koch has been selected to participate in the spring 2009 International Transit Studies Program mission on performance measurement and outcomes. The mission takes place from March 20 to April 3 where Koch, one person from the Federal Transit Administration and 11 transit operators from across the country will travel to Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Taipei.

Koch said they will be taking the transit systems and talking to the providers to see what would be beneficial to apply in the United States. The cities they are visiting have very substantial transit organizations that many people use, she said.

“It’s a great opportunity for me to learn a lot about what successful countries are doing with transit,” Koch said. “We can learn how they have made a service that customers flock to, what we can take back from that and how they strive towards excellence.”

Secretary Deb Miller nominated Koch as a candidate for this professional development opportunity.