

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

June 7, 2023

Wichita North Junction I-135 ramp opens



Left: Speakers at the opening of the new North Junction I-135 ramp prepare to cut the ribbon at the event in Wichita on May 31. Below: After attendees drove on the ramp, it opened to all motorists. Photos by Tracy Statton, District Five

By Tracy Statton
District Five

A ribbon cutting ceremony took place May 31 to open a new two-lane flyover from northbound I-135 to southbound I-235 in Wichita.



“Replacing the existing bottleneck loop ramp with a two-lane flyover direct connection and replacing the ramp from northbound I-135 to southbound I-235 will allow for more efficient and safer movement of the nearly 100,000 vehicles, including 10,000 trucks, that use the Wichita North Junction every single day,” said Acting Secretary Calvin Reed.

Speakers joining Secretary Reed at the event included District Five Engineer Nick Squires, Wichita Mayor Brandon Whipple, Sedgwick County Commission Chair Pete Meitzner, Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Chair Becky Tuttle, Federal Highway Administrator/Kansas Division Rick Backlund and Tom

Dondlinger, from Dondlinger Construction.

The project is part of multiple projects to improve the traffic flow at the North Junction. The new two-lane flyover bridge is a 1,323-foot, seven-pier, weathering steel superstructure on a curved alignment.

The project cost \$36.3 million. It began in April of 2021. Jeff Sims’ road squad and Mark Hurt’s bridge squad designed the project.

Work continues south of the ramp as other improvements are made at the I-135/K-96 interchange. A direct connection from northbound I-235 to eastbound K-96 will improve traffic flow in the area.

Run for the Wall participants welcomed across Kansas

Hundreds of participants pull into the KTA rest area just east of Topeka early on May 22 as part of the Run for the Wall event. They were welcomed by people from KTA, KDOT, Kansas ABATE chapter and other organizations.

Citizens across Kansas greeted the motorcyclists as they traveled along I-70 on May 21 and 22. Run for the Wall is an annual event where motorcyclists travel from the west coast to Washington, D.C., to honor all veterans.



KTA donated \$500 of fuel to the riders, and Love's Travel Stop and Country Store donated water. [Click here](#) for more information on Run for the Wall. Photos by Kim Stich, Headquarters

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

Kansas Department of Transportation

Eisenhower State Office Building
700 SW Harrison
Topeka, KS

Acting Transportation Secretary
Calvin Reed

Interim Deputy Secretary
Greg Schieber

**Interim Senior Director/
Fiscal and Asset Management**
Pam Anderson

Interim Senior Director
Vanessa Lamoreaux

Administration
Allison Sedore

Aviation
Bob Brock

Chief Counsel
Gelene Savage

Communications
Steve Hale

Engineering and Design
Scott King (Interim)

Field Operations
Clay Adams

IT Services
Shawn Brown

Multimodal Transportation and Innovation
Cory Davis

Planning and Development
Chris Herrick

Policy and Legislative Affairs
Joel Skelley

Program and Project Management
Colby Farlow (Interim)

Project Delivery
Tony Menke (Interim)

Safety
Troy Whitworth

Employee spotlight: Osvaldo Erives, District Six Shop

1. *What's your job title?*

Equipment Shop Superintendent in Garden City.

2. *What sort of duties do you have at work?*

Making sure the fleet is up and running.

3. *What kind of music do you like?*

I have favorite songs in every genre and in both languages, English and Spanish.

4. *What's the most exciting part of your job?*

Receiving new equipment and testing it brand new.

5. *What's something you're proud of?*

I take pride in every aspect of my job.

6. *What's your favorite food?*

Grandma's food is my favorite.

7. *What's your favorite movie?*

"Goodfellas."

8. *Do you have any hidden talents or hobbies?*

My hobbies are motorsports, welding and fabrication.

9. *Do you have any pets?*

Alexander Maxwell Erives, the pug. And we recently lost Jinx, our cat.

10. *Are you a sports fan? Who are your favorite teams?*

I watch the NFL, sadly the Dallas Cowboys.

11. *Are you a morning person or a night owl?*

Night owl.

12. *Are you a coffee, tea or pop person?*

Monster energy drink.

13. *What's something you enjoy at your job?*

Working on equipment is still my favorite.



Osvaldo Erives, at the District Six Shop in Garden City.

GETTING TO KNOW

OUR KDOT CO-WORKERS

Featuring an employee each month from different offices throughout KDOT.

14. *What's your favorite season?*

Fall is my favorite.

15. *What three items would you take with you to a deserted island?*

A fishing pole, knife and a lighter.



Above: Governor Kelly took an individual photo with Ocasio. (The Governor even wore Ocasio's vest for the group photo.) Photos courtesy of Governor's staff

Governor honors state employees

Below: District One employees Alma Ocasio, Area Two Engineering Technician Senior (third from left), and Jeff Romine, Area Five Maintenance Superintendent (second from right), joined other state employees at a proclamation signing on April 28 at the Capitol with Governor Laura Kelly for Public Service Recognition Week. Ocasio and Romine represented KDOT alongside employees from other state agencies.



Governor Laura Kelly visited the Area Four office in Topeka in early May in conjunction with Public Service Recognition Week. She thanked KDOT employees for their ongoing efforts to build and maintain Kansas highways. The Governor spent about 20 minutes chatting with employees before heading out to visit more state employees.



Above: Governor Laura Kelly poses with KDOT employees at the Area Four office. Left: Governor Kelly greets Roy Condley, Mechanic I, along with other employees. Right: Governor Kelly spends time talking and laughing with employees. Photos by Multimedia Services



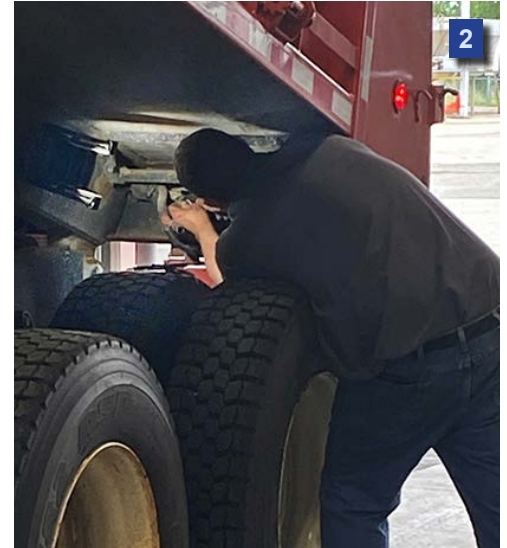
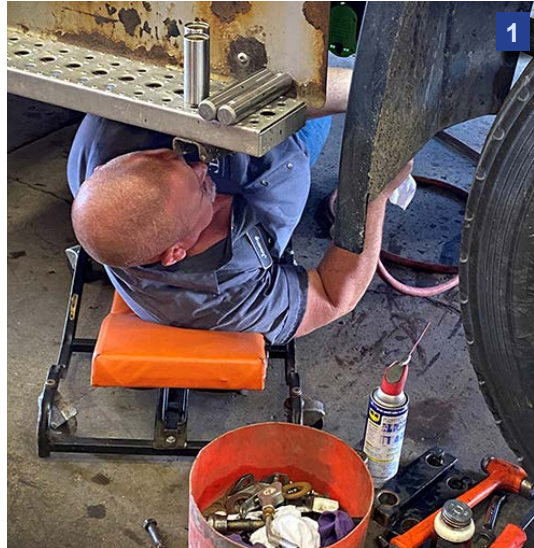
KDOT mechanics help keep agency moving

By Ashley Perez
District Two

Behind the scenes in KDOT shops across the state, mechanics work to keep vehicles and equipment operating efficiently.

“Workers can’t do their job if equipment is broken down, so we work to fix it as quickly as possible,” said Chris Younger, Equipment Mechanic at Salina.

Sometimes repairing equipment quickly means working in extreme temperatures. Stewart Graves, Equipment Mechanic Senior at Salina, said he had to repair a transmission line on one of the trucks during a snowstorm at a rest area over the winter, which was much more difficult as mechanical parts don’t move freely in the bitter cold.



Max Bell, Equipment Mechanic Specialist in Salina, said while he finds the biggest challenge right now is a lack of mechanics in many areas, he appreciates everyone for helping to keep equipment maintained and operational.



1. Jeremy Bloom, Equipment Mechanic at Clay Center. 2. Chris Younger, Equipment Mechanic at Salina. 3. Stewart Graves, Equipment Mechanic Senior at District Two in Salina. 4. Randy Ziegler, Equipment Mechanic at Salina. Photos by Ashley Perez, District Two

U.S. 54 project close to complete

This photo shows the U.S. 54 T-WORKS project in Seward County from near Arkalon Road to just past Road R is nearly complete. The contractor is finishing final items on the 3-mile project. Steve Rockers' road squad and Peter Tobaben's bridge squad designed the project. This is the second of three T-WORKS projects located back-to-back near Liberal to be constructed along U.S. 54. Work on the last section of U.S. 54 is now underway. Photo provided by Kirkham Michael



Studies look to improve K-10 corridor, De Soto roads

By Delaney Tholen
District One

Spanning one of the fastest developing areas in the state, K-10 serves both individuals and industry, connects Douglas and Johnson counties and is adjacent to the new Panasonic electric vehicle battery plant currently under construction.

The K-10 Capacity Improvements Project is evaluating options to update this section of K-10. This corridor project encompasses more than 16 miles of K-10, from the Douglas-Johnson county line to the K-10/I-435 interchange, and includes the cities of De Soto, Olathe and Lenexa.

Updates to the corridor will look to improve safety, relieve congestion and support economic growth in the area. These options will incorporate roadway widening,

bridge and interchange improvements and system improvements to K-10/K-7 and K-10/I-435, as well as transit, technology and non-roadway improvements along the corridor. A second-phase tolling study is also underway to explore the possible addition of tolled express lanes from Cedar Creek Parkway to I-435.

Additionally, improvements to the local road network are advancing in the City of De Soto, with a progressive design-build project, allowing work to begin quickly and be completed in 2024. The project includes upgrading about 4.5 miles of two-lane roads to a four-lane divided highway with curb and gutter and sidewalk features.

In May, the K-10 corridor website was launched to keep the public apprised of updates, and the first advisory committee meeting was held. Click <https://k10.ksdot.gov/> for more information on the K-10 corridor. For information on De Soto local road improvements, click <https://desotoroadimprovements.ksdot.gov/>.

Take caution outdoors - don't risk your skin

By Troy Whitworth
Director of Safety

Summer is a great time of year for family reunions, vacations and frequent camping trips. Who doesn't like heading to a local lake to enjoy the cool, refreshing waters on a hot summer day? Afterward, unfortunately, I bet there were a few times when you had to pay for all that fun with a painful sunburn.

These are the times when an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I know when Ben Franklin coined this term almost 300 years ago that he wasn't talking about sunburns. But I do believe it fits here very well since sunscreen is one of the tools of prevention you can use to prevent sunburns.

It really is important to either cover up exposed skin or apply sunscreen when outdoors, and even on days when it's not sunny. UV (ultraviolet) rays damage skin and make it more likely a person will develop cancer at some point. It also can cause premature aging of the skin.

Sunscreen can help provide protection from some of this damage. The last time I was at the store, I noticed there were a number of different types of sunscreens with all types of SPF numbers (sun protection factor). The numbers can be confusing - here is a short video [link](#) from the Mayo Clinic explaining SPF numbers. It is

recommended to use a water-resistant, broad spectrum lip balm and sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, even on cloudy days.

Clouds block some light and heat, but they will still let UV light through. Think about the times when the sun is baking down on you. It is so intense that your skin feels like it is on fire. Those are the times when we look for shade. But when the sun is blocked by clouds, the heat is less intense and allows you to stay out longer,

which exposes you to more UV rays. Don't let cooler days trick you into thinking you're safe from UV rays.

UV protection for your eyes should also be considered. I always wear sunglasses with UV protection when I am outside for any length of time. I also wear a hat with a brim to protect my face. Even with those protections in place, I

still at times look like a raccoon at the end of the day when I take off my sunglasses.

Imagine if I hadn't worn sunglasses, my eyes could have received the same amount of UV that affected my face. When I was a kid, I remember a few times when my eyes felt like someone had used sandpaper on them from the painful sunburn from not wearing sunglasses. It is not something that I want to happen as an adult.

So, the next time you plan on spending the day in the sun, cover up and apply sunscreen. This is the best thing you can do to protect yourself from the harmful UV rays from the sun. For your family and mine.



Newton Subarea shop is in business – and celebrated

By Tim Potter
District Five

May 30 was a big day for a key piece of District Five infrastructure.

The new Newton Subarea shop, along U.S. 50 on the southwest side of Newton, held an open house. Among those who attended were officials representing Newton and Harvey County, the Legislature and the Kansas Highway Patrol, along with Acting Secretary Calvin Reed and Acting Deputy Secretary Greg Schieber.

District Five officials noted that the new building -- with heated, wide and tall bays -- will allow larger trucks and blades used in SNICE operations to be efficiently and safely maintained inside during frigid, icy weather. The building's size and easy access to U.S. 50 will greatly help the Newton crew to treat and maintain highways much more quickly. The Newton crew maintains I-135, U.S. 50, K-196, K-89 and K-15.

Newton Subarea Supervisor Bobby Jones said eight



KDOT and local officials attended an open house on May 30 for the new Newton Subarea shop. Photo by Tim Potter, District Five

crew members have been working out of the new shop for over a month.

The new \$2.6 million shop and complex replaces one on 12th Street that was about 62 years old. The 8,600-square-foot shop will be aided by an expansive salt bunker and equipment shed. The Kansas Highway Patrol will also use office space at the shop.

Harman Huffman Construction Group, of Kechi, was the general contractor for the new subarea complex.



STEP BACK IN TIME ...

This photo taken in 1917 shows the beginnings of some road construction in Greeley County.

Trivia!

1. Where is the World's Largest Ball of Twine?
2. When did the project begin?
3. After four years, how big had it grown?
4. As of 2019, it is estimated that the Ball of Twine weighed approximately 20,622 pounds. About how

many feet of twine would that be?

5. What event takes place annually in August?
6. The object only contains sisal twine. What is that made from?

Superloads travel 660 miles through Kansas

By Lisa Mussman
District Three

Travelers saw some unique cargo traveling through Kansas late last month as two SpaceX superloads made their way through the state en route to Texas.

The loads originated in Ohio and traveled almost 660 miles over Kansas roads, crossing 192 bridges in Districts One, Two, Three and Six. Each weighed nearly 700,000 pounds, and was 290 feet long, 16 feet wide and just over 14 feet tall.

According to Dominique Shannon, Bridge Evaluation and Management Engineer, KDOT routes approximately 6,000 superloads each year, with only 8 to 10 of them being this extreme in size.



The two SpaceX loads travel along I-70 near WaKeeney. The loads entered Kansas in the Kansas City area by way of I-435 and exited on U.S. 56 in District Six. Photo courtesy KHP Trooper Tod Hileman

Trivia answers

1. Cawker City.
2. Frank Stoeber started it 70 years ago, in 1953.
3. In 1957, it weighed 5,000 pounds and was eight feet high.
4. About 8,326,881 feet.

5. A twine-a-thon, so that residents and visitors can add twine.

6. Sisal twine is made from the leaves of plant from the agave family. It is used for keeping small bales of hay together and is biodegradable.

Drive to Zero traffic deaths

Conference stresses safety is shared responsibility

By Ingrid Vandervort
Headquarters

While the 28th annual KDOT Transportation Safety Conference just took place last month in Wichita, plans are already underway for next year's event.

KDOT Transportation Safety Bureau Chief Vanessa Spartan would like to see increased attendance in 2024 and have people from each KDOT bureau and district attend.

"The Drive To Zero safety effort focuses on reducing traffic fatalities, with the ultimate goal of eliminating them altogether. This is a shared responsibility that will take each of us," Spartan said. "Every year, I want attendees to leave the conference feeling empowered to make a difference; that is how we will help create a 'safe system' in Kansas."

More than 280 people attended this year's conference, including 60 from KDOT. Attendees could choose from 20 different sessions, visit exhibitor booths and listen to keynote and luncheon speakers. Supervisors also receive supervisory credit hours.

The conference offers educational and collaboration opportunities focused on best practices and encourages discussions aimed at reducing crashes, injuries and fatalities. Topics involving engineering, education, enforcement and emergency response addressed new technologies, behavioral trends, effective approaches and case studies. Six regional breakout sessions with geographic specific crash data provided on that region are a growing platform for discussion and idea sharing each year.

"This year's conference was my first to attend," said Tim Potter, KDOT District Five Public Affairs Manager. "I found it to be such a worthwhile and relevant experience. No matter what part of the state you work in, no matter what role you have at KDOT, there is a breakout group for you to learn and share ideas. It's informative and easygoing."

Local, regional and national speakers are featured each year, such as Tom Chapman, National Transportation Safety Board member, who addressed the crowd on the



Above, Tom Chapman, from the National Transportation Safety Board, was the keynote speaker at the annual Transportation Safety Conference in April. Below, Nick Rogers, KDOT Senior Traffic Control Engineer, spoke on "Back to Basics: Work Zone/Connective Safety." Photos by KDOT Multimedia Services



"Safe System Approach." Chapman also participated in sessions and shared ideas and information with attendees.

The 2024 Transportation Safety Conference will take place in Topeka from April 15-17. Conference planning will begin this summer, and registration for the event will start early next spring. Anyone with speaker or exhibit ideas can contact Ingrid Vandervort at Ingrid.vandervort@ks.gov.



Polk-Quincy Viaduct project open house takes place

KDOT and the City of Topeka hosted a community open house on May 4 for the I-70/Polk-Quincy Viaduct replacement project. More than 100 people attended the event, where they learned the latest project information and spoke one-on-one with project members.

Demolition work on acquired properties in the project area is already underway, and the City of Topeka expects to begin utility relocations this summer. Construction on the viaduct's replacement is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2025.

The Polk-Quincy Project will replace the 58-year-old viaduct, widen I-70 and provide frontage road and pedestrian connections to downtown Topeka. More information can be found at www.polkquincy.org.



Display boards, a PowerPoint slideshow and project staff provided information to attendees at the I-70/Polk-Quincy Viaduct community open house. Photo by Kate Craft, District One

Helping to keep the public informed

KDOT Public Involvement staff members Char Norville and Ames Howard hosted an Open House on May 11 to update employees on the Public Involvement process and how those efforts can help engage the public in upcoming transportation projects in their region. They explained how information is released to the public and how KDOT's project managers help engage and inform community members about projects. After the presentation, attendees were invited to examine display boards, fact sheets and other materials commonly found at KDOT open houses. Photo by Burns and McDonnell staff



U.S. 169 improvements continue in Neosho County

By Priscilla Petersen
District Four

For the past five years, U.S. 169 motorists in southeast Kansas have seen a lot of construction, and detours. The highway was initially reconstructed and widened south of Iola, then between Welda and Garnett, and shortly thereafter through northern Neosho and southern Allen County.

The improvements closed sections of the highways, with traffic placed on state route detours during each project. The traveling public breathed a collective sigh of relief once the barricades were pulled from the final project in November 2022.

However, U.S. 169 improvements are not quite finished. In late March, work began to add passing lanes and extend the Elk Creek Bridge north of K-47. A second passing lane project started south of Thayer last month.



Grading is underway on the U.S. 169 passing lane project south of Thayer.

The south project also includes replacing the rutted pavement on the mainline. This will necessitate another highway closure and detour, for a briefer 90 days.

Clarkson Construction Co. is the primary contractor on both projects, which are expected to be complete late this year. For now, the speed limit is reduced through both work zones. The 90-day closure is expected to go into effect later this summer.



Truck traffic is common on U.S. 169 throughout the region. Photos by Priscilla Petersen, District Four

KTA brief

Four of KTA's six Service Areas are undergoing a remodel. Below is the current schedule of availability, weather permitting. Click [here](#) for more information.

Location	New Concepts	Drive-Thru Reopen	Walk-In Reopen
Towanda, MM 65	Subway and Dairy Queen	Mid-July	Mid-July
Matfield Green, MM 97	Subway and Dairy Queen	Early August	Early August
Emporia, MM 132	Subway and Taco John's	Early June	Early June
Topeka, MM 188	McDonald's	Mid-August	Early September

Also, EZ GO was acquired by Love's Travel Stops. Love's will now be at five convenience stores along the turnpike.

Two KDOT-funded EV, fast-charging stations now open

By Lisa Mussman
District Three

The first two KDOT-funded electric vehicle, fast-charging stations have opened for service in Belle Plaine and Oakley. The stations were constructed in part using funds received through Volkswagen Mitigation Trust in 2022, which made approximately \$2 million available to Kansas for EV charging infrastructure.

Belle Plaine and Oakley were among several sites that KDOT identified as priority locations on primary corridors to help improve public access to DC fast-charging stations.

Work is currently underway on stations at the Matfield



The Oakley EV charging stations opened for service on March 31. The stations are located just off of I-70 at Mitten's Travel Center. Photo by Lisa Mussman, District Three

Green KTA service area, with an anticipated opening date in late July. Construction is also expected to begin soon at locations in Abilene, Maple Hill and Russell.

Retirees

The following employees will retire on July 1.

Headquarters

Steve Colgrove, Engineering Technician Specialist, Construction and Materials

James Leaden, Professional Civil Engineer I, Structures and Geotechnical Services,

Joyce Paynter, Engineering Technician Senior, Construction and Materials

Karen Shufflebarger, Senior Laboratory Scientist, Construction and Materials

District One

Mark Wiedmer, Equipment Operator Senior, Troy

Ronald Young, Equipment Operator Specialist, Edwardsville

District Three

Beatrice Albers, Equipment Operator Senior, Oakley

Richard Shipley, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Hoxie

District Four

Steven Brown, Equipment Operator Senior, Columbus

Dale Updegrove, Equipment Mechanic Senior, Chanute

District Five

David Wiggins, Equipment Operator Senior, El Dorado

Kenneth Schmelzle, Engineering Technician Senior, Wichita

The following employee retired on June 1.

District One

Thank you for your service

Milestones

KDOT employees celebrating state service anniversaries in June.

40 years

Richard Baker, Public Service Executive II, Topeka

Jeffrey Romine, Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Eskridge

35 years

Dale Borger, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Jetmore

Richard Coghill, Engineering Technician Specialist, Garden City

Jeffrey Ruby, Professional Civil Engineer I, Silver Lake

30 years

Lisa Hockenberry, Management Analyst II, Topeka

Jace Loewen, Equipment Operator Senior, Moscow

25 years

Donald Benyshek, Engineering Technician, Cuba

Warren Ebberts, Construction Manager, Iola

Kathryn Meierhoff, Administrative Specialist, Marion

Darlene Osterhaus, Research Analyst III, Topeka

Colleen Small, Engineering Technician Senior, Medicine Lodge

Robert Winters, Equipment Operator Specialist, Stockton

20 years

Elizabeth Bagby, Human Resource Professional I, Topeka

William Heptig, Professional Civil Engineer I, Topeka

Leisa Mauch, Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Cunningham

Nicholas Rogers, Professional Civil Engineer I, Russell

Michael Yoho, Engineering Technician, Emporia

15 years

Dustin Covert, Facilities Specialist, Burrton

Karlton Place, Area Engineer, Ellsworth

Michael Rinehart, Information Systems Manager II, Topeka

James Uhlig II, Engineering Technician, Kansas City

Jacob Wilburn, Equipment Operator Senior, Lancaster

KDOT will now highlight employees for every five years of service (beginning with 10 years) in milestones and statewide news releases.

In memory

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Brian Thompson**, who passed away on April 30 in Topeka. Thompson started at KDOT in 1970 and worked as an Engineering Technician Senior in Road Design. He retired in 2004, after more than 33 years of service.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Dr. Safwat Wahba Bishara**, who passed away on May 6 in Miramar Beach, Florida. Bishara started at KDOT in 1983, and he was a Chemist III in the Bureau of Materials and Research. He retired in 2006 after more than 23 years of service.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Raymond Perez**, who passed away May 13 in Wichita. Perez worked for KDOT for more than 33 years. He started in 1972 and retired in 2006 as a Highway Maintenance Supervisor in Great Bend.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Donald 'Donnie' Lile**, who passed away on May 20 in Ottawa. Lile started at KDOT in 1992 and was an Engineering Technician Senior at the Garnett office. He retired in 2011, after more than 19 years of service.