

TRANS**LINES**

Monthly Publication of the Kansas Department of Transportation

April 2024

2024 **SOLAR ECLIPSE**

The Great American Solar Eclipse on April 8 will impact travel in Kansas. Read more on page 4.

\$930M in highway projects added to IKE Development Pipeline
[Click here to learn more](#)

Standing for Development Educator underscores value of state highway improvements

Dr. John Wyrick, Superintendent, Labette County Schools, gained notable attention when he joined Governor Laura Kelly and Secretary Calvin Reed in the Kansas Statehouse to announce highway expansion and modernization projects being moved into the IKE Development Pipeline. The USD 506 superintendent's appreciation for the U.S. 160 project in Labette and Montgomery counties to be among the 17 projects selected was expected.

His passion was not.

Like the 1,400 Kansans who advocated for nearly \$9 billion in highway projects as discussed and prioritized in the latest round of Local Consult meetings held across Kansas, Dr. Wyrick understands the significance quality highways can have on a community. His remarks resonated not for being unique to southeast Kansas, but because his words echoed why so many bring their own sense of passion and urgency to the IKE pipeline process.

From Dr. Wyrick's remarks on March 8:

Not just a roadway – This endeavor is more than just asphalt and concrete. It embodies the spirit of progress and connectivity, linking communities and fostering economic vitality throughout the region. This project is not just a roadway, but a pathway to prosperity and a project that addresses the safety of students and families in southeast Kansas.



Dr. John Wyrick speaks at the IKE Development Pipeline announcement last month. Photo by Multimedia Services

Bridging communities – By enhancing transportation infrastructure, we are not only reducing travel times but also breaking down barriers that have hindered collaboration and growth in this region for years.

Economic vitality – Investing in infrastructure is investing in our future. This highway project is a catalyst for economic development, attracting businesses, spurring job creation and unlocking opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Safety is paramount – Every time a police officer, an ambulance driver or a fire truck goes by my office with lights on and sirens blaring, my heart sinks with fear. I immediately think the worst. This project is not only saving time, but also saving lives.

Community collaboration – None of this would be possible without our communities' unwavering support and collaboration. I extend my sincerest gratitude to all the stakeholders, leaders and residents who have contributed their time, expertise and enthusiasm to make this project a reality. Your dedication is truly commendable.

Brighter tomorrow – Let us embrace the opportunity before us—a chance to shape the future of southeast Kansas and leave a lasting legacy of safety, progress and prosperity. I am excited to know the work and dedication of those involved have not fallen on silent ears. Together let us pave the way for a brighter tomorrow – one mile at a time.



Let's talk.

Transportation Secretary Calvin Reed

Strategic Plan – Let's hear from you

The writer Leo Tolstoy once said, “Spring is the time of plans and projects.” There is something magical about spring. Growth is all around us and new possibilities abound – no wonder it’s a great time to make plans. I’m excited to report some significant progress on our own strategic planning effort. With consultation from KDOT leaders across the agency, our Senior Leadership staff have crafted the purpose, values and goals for our 5-year strategic plan. These combined pieces of the plan craft a vision for what we want to achieve, why we do what we do and how we aspire to do our work.

Our purpose is as follows:

- KDOT delivers transportation that keeps Kansans moving forward.

These are the **values** that should define how we do our work.

- **People Focused:** Our work puts people first.
- **Results:** We strive to do every job well and decisions are informed by data and experience.
- **Forward Looking:** We deliver today and plan for future generations.
- **Accountable:** We earn trust through transparent and consistent actions.

These are the goals we want to achieve:

1. **Empower People:** Provide employees and our partners with the tools, resources and guidance they need to be successful.
2. **Improve Safety:** For all transportation users and our workforce.
3. **Stewardship:** Use resources to maximize benefits today and for the future.
4. **Program and Service Delivery:** Continually improve the way we do our work.

You’ll notice these goals are broad in scope. That’s intentional. These goals need to be relatable to every individual working at KDOT. They are also long-term goals. It’s going to take a series of actions by all of us over time across the agency to make progress.

We can build towards that progress by setting measurable objectives for how we’re going to achieve these goals. And we have assembled four work groups each focused around one of the goals to craft agency wide objectives to help us achieve that goal. Each working group has a team of talented people with varying roles within our agency that

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Eisenhower State Office Building
2nd Floor West
700 SW Harrison St.
Topeka, KS 66603-3745

Governor: Laura Kelly
Transportation Secretary: Calvin Reed
Editors: Steve Hale, Director of Communications
Kim Stich, Senior Communications Manager

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Inside the **LINES**



Ashley Lytle
Administrative Assistant
Garnett

Duties at work?

A few examples are - pay bills, track inventory, do weekly equipment mileage reports, handle all fuel issues/reconciliation and work with Shawn Denny on the noxious weeds tickets/invoices.

Favorite music?

All kinds of country music.

Most exciting part of your job?

Being able to come to a place where I enjoy what I do and help others if needed.

Something you're proud of?

My three sons - they are 21, 15 and 7 years old.

Favorite food and movie?

My mother's fried chicken - it's hard to find any that compares to it. My favorite movie is "The Notebook."

Any hobbies?

I like to read and do puzzles with my youngest son. I also like to go four-wheeler riding with the family.

Any pets?

I have a 14-year-old cat named Camo and 15 chickens.

Something people might not know about you?

I live every day in pain from Type 1 Diabetes and Hashimoto's Thyroid Disease. Most days are bearable, but other days it hurts to be touched.



Linda Limon-Rocha
Senior Administrative Assistant
Topeka

Duties at work?

As the front office receptionist, I manage the District's main phone, support right-of-way permitting, schedule/set up the conference room and serve on Employee Fund Committee.

Favorite music?

Christian rock.

Most exciting part of your job?

Meeting people.

Something you're proud of?

The team I work with.

Favorite food and movie?

Italian food and "A Walk to Remember."

Any hobbies?

Crocheting, reading and taking my dog on walks.

Any pets?

One dog - a lab/husky mix named Rosie

Something people might not know about you?

I speak fluent Spanish, and I am also learning American Sign Language.



Catherine Magaña
Legislative Liaison/Policy Analyst
Topeka

Duties at work?

I am the point of contact for Kansas legislators. I also work with the state's federal delegation and address inquiries we receive. I help maintain a presence at the Statehouse, especially during the session, and monitor bills and policy issues that affect KDOT.

Favorite music?

Alternative rock and Hall & Oates.

Most exciting part of job?

Getting to work with and learn from so many different people, including a wide array of KDOT staff, legislators and lobbyists.

Something you're proud of?

My bachelor's degree in political science from KU - I graduated in May 2023.

Favorite food and movie?

Crab legs and "Heathers" (1988).

Any hobbies?

I really enjoy live music and KU basketball games. Horseback riding if I get the chance.

Any pets?

None at the moment, but I am definitely a cat person.

Something people might not know about you?

I love to cook and grow a lot of my own herbs, especially basil so I can make fresh pesto.

Herrick retires after 33 years at KDOT

By **Kim Stich**
Senior Communications Manager

After graduating from the University of Kansas, Chris Herrick worked in sales for NCR Corporation - but it wasn't his passion. His father-in-law said since he loved math and numbers, Herrick should become an engineer. And the rest is history - he retired from KDOT as the Director of Planning and Development on March 18.

Because of his father-in-law's advice, he went back to college and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in civil engineering. He started at KDOT in January 1991 and worked his entire career in the Division of Planning and Development.

"What stood out was all the people I got to work with and all the friends I made," Herrick said. "I never imagined staying in one place for 33 years, and when you do, you have wonderful lifelong friends."

After starting as a Models and Forecasting Engineering Associate, he received several promotions and was selected as Transportation Planning Bureau Chief in 2004. Four years later, he was named the Director of the division. He also served for three years as the Interim Director of Fiscal and Asset Management and Inspector General during this time.

Herrick appreciates all his friends and good memories, but he's excited about retirement. He and his wife, Susan, are looking forward to time with family - they have two sons,



Chris Herrick talks with Maintenance Bureau Chief Robert Fuller during his retirement gathering on March 1. Photo by Multimedia Services

Caleb and Ethan, and five granddaughters. They also intend to travel.

In addition, Herrick has been an avid cyclist for years and has biked across the state several times. He and his brothers are planning to bike along trails this summer in Missouri, from Kansas City to St. Charles. He joked in his farewell email, "Drive safe everyone and if you see a white-haired guy riding a bicycle, please be extra careful around him!"

Total solar eclipse to cross North America on April 8

By **Tracy Statton**
Public Affairs Manager, District Five

While Kansas will only be about 70-80% dark during the total solar eclipse crossing North America on April 8, there are things to keep in mind.

"Remember that the shoulders of highways and interstates are for emergencies only," said KHP Capt. Candice Breshears. "Finding a safe and secure location to view the eclipse is a must for all travelers to make it to their destinations safely."

Travelers should be patient, avoid distractions and practice safe driving habits.

"Pay attention to the roadway, not the sky," said KDOT Director of Safety Troy Whitworth. "Be on the lookout for other drivers who may be distracted. Traffic will most likely be heavy before, during and after the event in the locations where the eclipse can be viewed."

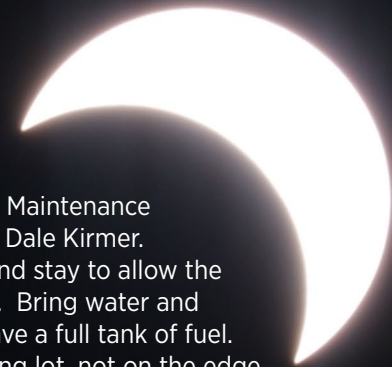
The event will begin in Mexico and enter the United States in Texas, and parts of 14 additional states will experience the total solar eclipse as it travels northeast across the country.

Then it will enter Canada.

"Plan your trip ahead," said Bureau of Maintenance Staff Engineer Dale Kirmer. "Arrive early and stay to allow the crowd to clear. Bring water and snacks, and have a full tank of fuel. Park in a parking lot, not on the edge of a highway. Watch the weather. If an area is overcast, be aware when changing locations. Cell phone circuits may be busy; you may experience delays," he said.

NASA says a solar eclipse happens when the moon passes between the sun and Earth, completely blocking off the face of the sun. The sky darkens as if it were dawn or dusk.

To safely view the eclipse, use specialized eye protection. Viewing the sun through a camera lens, binoculars or telescope without a special solar filter will cause severe eye injury. To see a map of how much totality Kansas and neighboring states will experience, [click here](#).





Planning for the future

KDOT employees from across the state met to discuss agency objectives in Salina last month. Photo by Mallory Goeke

KDOT employees build strategic goals

By Mallory Goeke
Communications Specialist

Two decades have passed since KDOT took a fresh approach to its Strategic Plan. That’s about to change.

A multi-disciplinary group of employees from across the agency recently gathered in Salina for a day-long agency objectives workgroup kickoff event. Employee work groups met to define and develop agency objectives based on four areas of focus as determined by KDOT leadership:

- **Empowering People**
- **Improving Safety**
- **Stewardship**
- **Program and Service Delivery**

“When we say what our purpose and values are, those are things every member of the KDOT family can get on board with and identify how they can contribute,” said KDOT Interim Senior Director Vanessa Lamoreaux. “This is an opportunity for folks to get engaged and helps us achieve KDOT’s purpose to deliver transportation that keeps Kansas moving forward.”

Lamoreaux said strategic plans are designed to help the agency focus energies, efforts and resources. She anticipates it will take a month for the employee work groups to finalize measurable and actionable agency objectives. Once agreed-upon objectives are shared across the agency, individual work units will develop and deploy work unit objectives that contribute to the agency objectives and goals.

Holly Taylor, Senior Administrative Specialist in the Chief Counsel’s Office, said the kickoff meeting was productive.

“We did a great job of bringing in a variety of people from the districts and headquarters,” Taylor said. “People were looking at different aspects and areas of the agency and where they want to see developments and improvements.”

Lamoreaux said she was proud of everyone who participated in the Salina meeting.

“It was a lot of information to take on and take in and then turn around and take action,” she said. “I was really proud to see how excited folks are about what they are being asked to do and that they want to do it. I can’t wait to see where we go.”

Secretary’s column - Let’s hear from you

Continued from page 2

will be helpful for crafting objectives applicable across KDOT. I want to thank all our working group members for taking on this important responsibility and to congratulate them on having a successful kickoff work session last month. You can learn more about their efforts in the article above.

Once the working groups have helped leadership craft agency-wide objectives, together we will proceed to the final stage of our strategic planning effort, the development of

work unit objectives and strategies. All work units will have the opportunity to craft their own objectives for how their teams can contribute to our goals and develop strategies for how to meet those objectives. We will provide more information about this stage of the plan when we reach it.

In the meantime, if any of our working group members reach out to you for information or help in their efforts, please take the time to assist them. This is a priority for our agency.

And I hope when the opportunity arises to contribute to our plan, you’ll seize it. This is your chance to craft recommendations that will make our agency a better place to work and improve how we deliver transportation for Kansans.

Don't put highway workers in harm's way



By Troy Whitworth
Director, Division of Safety

During my 20 years in the field, I spent many hours in work zones. I remember a safety commercial where a person is sitting at a desk in the middle of the highway with cars coming very close and going about 75 mph. The message – you don't want someone speeding and driving carelessly in your work area, and neither do highway workers.

Each year we highlight the significance of driving safely through work zones. Awareness is important, but changing the culture of drivers is even more important. There are many possible distractions - texting, answering a cell phone, eating, looking at directions, etc. But distractions within a work zone with limited space, cones, equipment and people can endanger both motorists and highway workers.

At the beginning of a work zone, drivers receive guidance

from signs such as one-lane road ahead, flagman ahead and upcoming speed limit reductions. These signs make way for lead-in cones along the centerline in advance of a flagger.

The flagger uses a flagging paddle to control traffic and alert drivers if they need to stop or slow down at their station before proceeding through the work zone.

Distracted drivers can put flaggers in danger. On many occasions, flaggers have had to dive out of the way or into the ditch. If the distracted driving continues, other workers and motorists throughout the work area could also be in harm's way.

In 2023, there were 1,469 work zone crashes in Kansas – that's an average of four crashes every day of the year. And the main cause of those crashes – inattention.

Each of our co-workers wants to make it home safe every day. It is critical that drivers focus on the task at hand, which is driving. For Your Family and Mine.

Work zone safety important all year long

Work zone safety. It means a lot at KDOT. But it means even more to the families and friends of KDOT employees who work along the highway every day.

Raising awareness on work zone safety and the impact a work zone crash could have on family and friends, in addition to the workers, will be highlighted during National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 15-19.

A blog by Secretary Calvin Reed will kick off a four-part video series – part of it features KDOT highway workers and



their family members, and part talks about not being the cause of a family receiving tragic news.

To illustrate why work zone safety is important all year long, KDOT will feature Go Orange photos, buildings/bridges lit in orange, safety ideas on dynamic message signs, a coloring page, a public service announcement on TV in April and May, posters, banners, daily social media posts and more.





LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Now that the legislative session has reached first adjournment, or the end of the regular legislative session, a three-week break will take place until lawmakers reconvene in late April.

During the last week of March, both the House and Senate chambers met on the floor and held meetings known as conference committees. These are meetings where joint committees made up of legislators from both chambers debate the amended differences in bills made in one chamber but not the other.

During this time, legislation can become more difficult to track. Contents of certain bills may be inserted into other bills, and legislative action can happen quickly. Additionally, the contents of a bill could then be attached to a new bill number that had nothing to do with its original content. The Division of Policy will continue to track bills, attend conference committee meetings and watch chamber floor proceedings and votes relevant to KDOT.

Before adjournment, they will address the remaining major legislative items, namely, the budget. The “mega budget” bill is the state’s overall budget bill, which the Legislature will pass before first adjournment. KDOT continues to pay attention to this bill, which currently includes a pay increase for state employees. A major tax bill is also being considered by the Legislature.

When the Legislature reconvenes at the end of April for the veto session, it will reconsider any bills vetoed by the Governor and any outstanding budgetary items, including an omnibus budget bill, or “budget cleanup” bill. KDOT expects the veto session to last only a day or two, and then the legislative session will conclude. Since this is an election year for all legislators, many will then begin campaigning in their home districts.

Sign up [HERE](#) to receive information posted on bills KDOT is tracking that may affect the agency and its stakeholders. For KDOT testimony presented to the Legislature, click [HERE](#).

EMPOWERING KANSAS
A collaborative approach to public involvement

By Alicea Thompson
Public Involvement Specialist

The International Association for Public Participation has developed a framework defining different levels of public involvement. They include inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

These outlined levels show how much input the public has in organizational decisions. Depending on how complex a project is, the public might see a mix of these levels in action.

When it comes to public involvement, KDOT strives to keep folks informed and has a system in place to consult communities. For nearly 20 years, Local Consult meetings have taken place. And in 2019, KDOT conducted its first round of Local Consult meetings in conjunction with the Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program.

Having these meetings every two years allows projects to be reviewed and evaluated for possible selection in the Development Pipeline. It is a time when KDOT and citizens collaborate and discuss their expectations of the projects in their community.

Public Involvement staff want to make sure that citizens stay involved in the process – that they can learn about project details and share their concerns. The staff wants to make sure the decisions KDOT presents take into account what the public thinks is valuable.

It’s not just a one-way street; the public is encouraged to be part of the decision-making process. KDOT empowers folks to have a say, which creates two-way collaboration. Decisions are made with input from all sides. In the end, it’s all about making sure everyone’s voice is heard and respected.



The District Four project in the \$3 million and over category was selected as the Project of the Year at the KDOT/KCA partnering conference in Manhattan. Those pictured, from left, are Ian Stringham, KDOT; Kenneth Ruppel, KDOT; Alan Daniels, Bryon Punches and Mark Walls, Bettis Asphalt and Construction Inc.; and Tony Menke, KDOT. Photo by Multimedia Services

Statewide partnering efforts honored

KDOT and the Kansas Contractors Association joined forces more than 30 years ago to make partnering and improving communications a key part of a highway project.

Those efforts were highlighted at the annual partnering conference – this year’s event was Feb. 29 and March 1 in Manhattan. In addition to the speakers, partnering awards were presented. Up to three projects were recognized, depending on cost. The winners for the \$3 million and over category in each district were:

District One – Olathe Construction Office and Clarkson Construction Inc., Johnson County project on K-10.

District Two - Marion Construction Office and Wildcat

Construction Co. Inc., K-177 project in Morris and Geary counties.

District Three - Phillipsburg Construction Office and Venture Corp., Norton County project on K-383.

District Four - Garnett Construction Office and Bettis Asphalt & Construction Inc., Franklin County project on U.S. 59 (this project was also named Project of the Year).

District Five - Great Bend/Hutchinson Construction offices and Bob Bergkamp Construction Co. Inc., project in Reno and Rice counties on K-14.

District Six - Dodge City Construction Office and Venture Corp., Ness County project on K-96.



Go cashless with KTA

The Kansas Turnpike will become cashless in July. Want to know how cashless tolling will work? Visit [DriveKS.com](https://driveks.com) for all cashless tolling information, including short instructional videos, FAQs and more. Sign up to receive monthly updates on our [Cashless Tolling Updates](#) page.

KTA in the community

KTA wants to help customers get ready for cashless tolling and is seeking presentation opportunities and places to share materials as schedules permit. Click [HERE](#) to request materials, presentations or KTAG pop-up events.

Construction updates

KTA’s construction season has begun, and many of the 20 projects planned for 2024 are underway. One involves increasing the vertical clearance and rehabilitation of the U.S. 166 bridge, which crosses I-35/KTA at mile marker 4.049. A [designated detour](#) for U.S. 166 traffic began March 28 and will continue through mid-November, weather and schedule permitting. More details are available in the [news release](#).



New equipment aims to make debris removal safer

By **Kate Craft**

District shops in Topeka and Hutchinson recently installed new equipment on two Kansas Highway Patrol vehicles used as part of the Motorist Assist Program, helping to make removing roadway debris easier and, more importantly, safer for workers.

Currently, when debris needs to be removed from the roadway, workers park on the shoulder and wait for a clear opportunity to dash into the travel lanes to retrieve the item(s), which can be anything from a mattress, tree limbs or an animal carcass.

The DebrisClear and LaneBlade tools are designed to quickly clear debris and push disabled vehicles off roadways

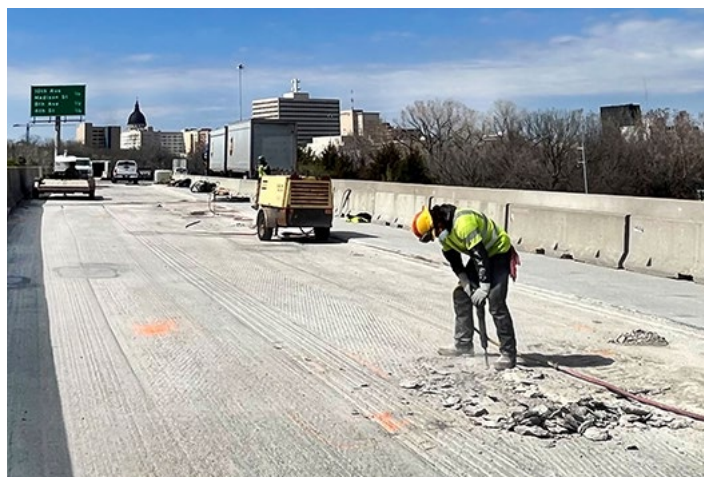


Above left, the LaneBlade system installed on a Wichita-area Motorist Assist vehicle. Right, the DebrisClear system that will be used by the KHP in the Kansas City area. Photos by Brent Engelland, Hutchinson, and Kate Craft

while the operator remains in the truck cab, where they're able to deploy, control and monitor the system.

KDOT purchased the equipment with funds from the State Transportation Innovation Council, a federal program that provides funding for the

implementation of innovative ideas or tools. Two different models were selected to be evaluated for possible future purchases. The project will be administered by the Bureau of Maintenance in coordination with the KHP.



Putting in the hours

Clockwise from above left: Bill Rice and Mike Yoho of the Emporia Construction Office discuss the crossovers being built in preparation to reroute traffic during the replacement of the southbound I-35 bridge over Lincoln Avenue in Lyon County. The Kansas Capitol stands in the distance as I-70 pavement improvements continue in Topeka. A new reinforced concrete box nears completion at the U.S. 40 (Sixth Street)/K-10 diverging diamond interchange project in Lawrence. Photos by Delaney Tholen

The I-470 bridge over I-70 in Topeka was torn down in less than a day, making way for the construction of a new structure. Photos by Kate Craft and Multimedia Services



I-470 bridge in Topeka demolished overnight

By Kate Craft

The westbound I-470 bridge in Topeka spanned I-70 for nearly 65 years, but on March 8-9, the structure was demolished and removed in just over 24 hours.

Crews began prepping the area the morning of March 8. Because of its location over I-70 and other nearby structures, the bridge needed to be dismantled with heavy equipment, rather than detonated.

At 7 p.m. on March 8, I-70 was fully closed under the bridge, and demolition was underway. Up to 10 excavators worked simultaneously throughout the night, hammering at and breaking apart the structure, while loaders and dump trucks hauled off the rubble.

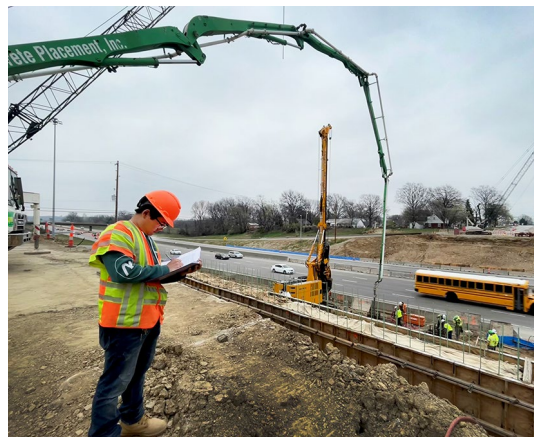
Around 6 a.m. on March 9, I-70 was reopened with one lane in each direction. By 8:30 a.m., the interstate was fully open to traffic.

Work on the I-470 bridge replacement project started in February and is expected to be complete by the end of



the year. Rebuilding the bridge in one construction season is a big task, but with the multi-year I-70/Polk-Quincy Viaduct replacement project scheduled to begin next year in downtown Topeka, KDOT – and motorists – will need the I-470 bridge open for use.

Greg Gonzales' road squad and Shawn Schwensen's bridge squad designed the new project.



Metropolitan Avenue bridge progress

From left: construction crews work on the bridge forms for the Metropolitan Avenue bridge replacement in Kansas City. Yin Tse, Engineering Associate III, Bonner Springs, reviews inspection notes at the site. Photos by Delaney Tholen



District Safety Coordinator William Cline (far left), evaluates as Jesse Spear, Equipment Operator, Ellsworth, shows the proper PPE required to use a chainsaw and how to properly handle the equipment to Alan Waymaster, Equipment Operator, Ellsworth. District Construction Mentor Neal Saskowski (far right), watches the training. Photo by Ashley Perez

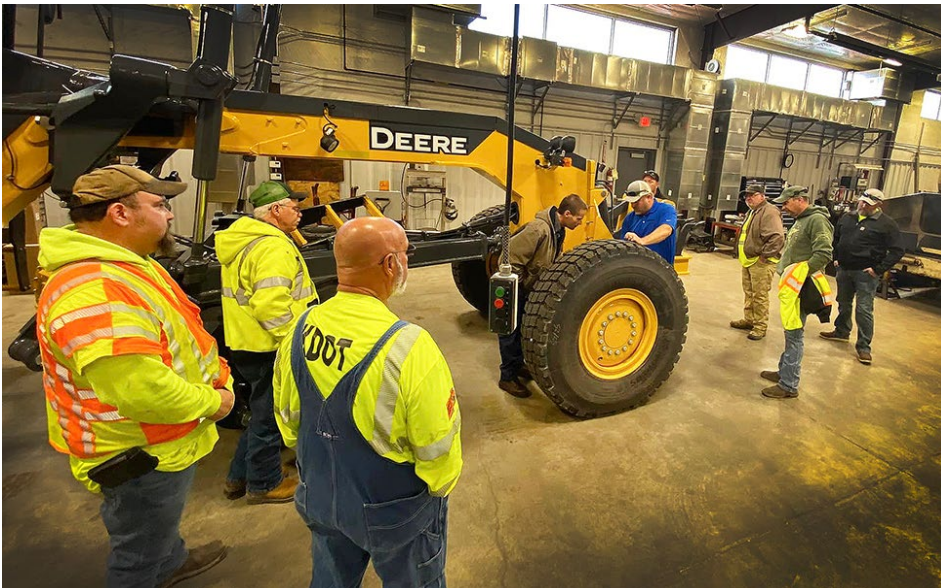
Building skills through the progression program in District Two

By Ashley Perez

Across KDOT, many employees can participate in progression programs to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities, which benefits both the employees and the agency.

In mid-March, equipment operators and engineering technicians in District Two engaged in the Transition to Leadership course. After gaining various training in the classroom, workers were able to practice those new leadership skills by providing safety training on topics such as flagger safety, chainsaw safety, fence repair and more.

The demonstrations are an important part of the program that allows employees to improve their abilities in new roles and apply those new skills by preparing a short demonstration on how they would teach a new employee to safely execute parts of their job.



Out and about in District Two

Left, after receiving a new motor grader at the Council Grove Office, a group of equipment operators and mechanics received operational training on the machine from a Murphy Tractor employee.

Below, the Ellsworth Subarea crew work on guardrail along westbound I-70 near the K-156 junction in Ellsworth County on a sunny day in mid-March. Photos by Ashley Perez

Filling the cracks

Right, equipment operators from the Beloit Subarea complete crack routing repairs on K-193 in Mitchell County in mid-March. Photo by Roger Simoneau, Beloit





Employees recognized during District Three annual meeting

By **Lisa Mussman**

District Three held its annual construction and maintenance meeting on March 20 in Hays.

The meeting kicked off with a welcome and district update from District Engineer Jeff Stewart. Stewart noted District Three continues to lead the state in pavement performance and thanked employees for making the best of their resources to continue making that happen.

Secretary Calvin Reed led off a slate of presentations from KDOT leadership. Secretary Reed discussed KDOT's upcoming strategic plan and shared positive updates on agency staffing, traffic safety and customer service. He reminded



Service anniversary honorees (left to right): front, Mark Becker, 45 years; Rick Gitchel, 45 years; Bruce Arnhold, 10 years; Kevin Zimmer, 25 years; Dave Oelke, 40 years; Mike Conrad, 25 years. Back, Dan Moore, 15 years; Chris Hrabe, 25 years; Kenny Stewart, 30 years; Robert Winters, 25 years. Not pictured, Kent Huss, 35 years; Brad Prester, 30 years; Dean Jay, 25 years and Terry Augustine, 15 years. Photo by Lisa Mussman



Safety award winners (from left): Gavlin Henderson, District Safety Specialist; Dan Zordel, Hays Subarea Supervisor; Tim Weigel, Area Three Maintenance Superintendent and Kevin Zimmer, Area Three Engineer. Photo by Lisa Mussman

employees that as public servants, we must always remember who our customer is – the traveling public – and to keep looking for ways to serve those customers better.

District Safety Specialist Gavlin Henderson presented the 2024 safety awards to the Hays Area and Hays Subarea employees. Several employees were also recognized for state service anniversaries reached in 2023.

The afternoon session consisted of separate breakouts for construction, maintenance and office staff that featured speakers from the Bureau of Maintenance, Office of Civil Rights Compliance, Division of Project Delivery and Bureau of Human Resources.



U.S. 40 bridge work

The first two of four concrete pours on the Smoky Hill River bridge along U.S. 40 in Wallace County were completed in March. Each pour takes around seven days to cure before crews can move to the next one. The project, which began last September, is expected to be completed later this fall. Photos by KDOT staff

Wild weather hits northwest Kansas

By Lisa Mussman

An impactful weather system prompted alerts from tornado warnings to blizzard warnings in District Three in the span of just over 24 hours March 24-25.

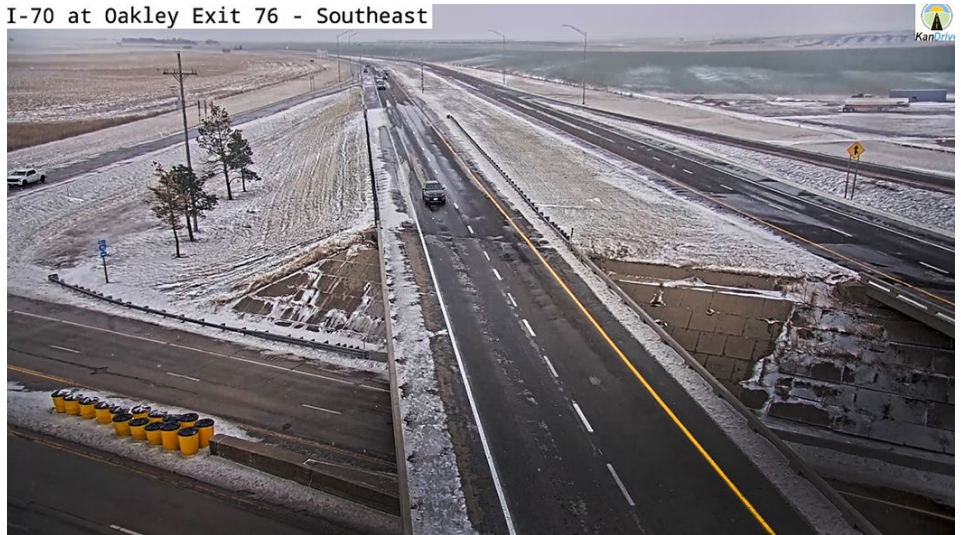
Severe weather moved into the region in the late afternoon of March 24. The storms spawned tornado warnings near Oakley and Grinnell. Weather analyst Evan Fryberger, who tracks storms on his YouTube channel, was able to spot a land spout tornado east of Oakley on KDOT's KanDrive cameras near one of the warned storms. The system also produced hail and strong winds that topped 60 mph in Norton County.

Areas of Cheyenne and Rawlins counties reported up to an inch of sleet/snow pellets that fell as a cooler air mass moved in behind the severe weather later that evening. That cold front would usher in snow and blizzard conditions the following day, causing the closure of I-70 between Hays and the Colorado border for several hours.

According to Jesse Lundquist, Warning Coordination Meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Goodland, the last time the region experienced a tornado followed by blizzard conditions was in November 2015.



Above, the land spout tornado captured by weather analyst Evan Fryberger on the KanDrive camera near Exit 76 at Oakley on March 24. Below, the area would transition from storms to snow less than 24 hours later.



State service

Above left, District Construction Engineer Jim Riener (right) congratulates Area One Construction Manager Dan Moore on 15 years of state service. Above right, Todd Anderson, Area Two/Four Construction Manager (right), presents Engineering Technician Supervisor Linda Liester of Atwood with her 10-year state service certificate.



One scoop or two?

District paint crew members Aragon Garza and Colby Menagh clear sidewalks at the District Three office after the March 25 snowstorm. Photo by Ruth Shearer, Norton



U.S. 166 expansion project nearing completion this summer

By Priscilla Petersen

The T-WORKS project to expand a 6-mile section of U.S. 166 to a four-lane expressway in Cherokee County is in the final stages of work, with completion expected early this summer.

The primary contractor, Emery Sapp & Sons, began construction on the expansion in January of 2022. The expressway is between the U.S. 166/400 and U.S. 166/K-26 junctions and is being built on an alignment south of the previously existing U.S. 166. The four-lane roadway tapers back to two lanes from south of K-26 to the Missouri state line. The project also includes the construction of interchanges at U.S. 400 and K-26.

Doug Pulliam, Engineering Technician Supervisor at the Pittsburg office, said the contractor is currently working on bridge tie-ins and asphalt paving on the project. Two-way traffic has been placed on the eastbound lanes of the new U.S. 166 alignment. K-26 is closed to traffic north of U.S. 166 until work on the interchange is completed.



Work is progressing toward an early summer finish on the T-WORKS U.S. 166 realignment and expansion project in the southeast corner of the state. Photos by Chris Ziegler, Pittsburg



District Four annual meeting

Robyn Daniels, Engineering Technician Supervisor, Independence, gives a construction update during the annual District Four construction and materials meeting on March 12 at Chanute. Headquarters and area staff made various presentations during the session. Secretary Calvin Reed told those gathered that KDOT is in the fourth year of the 10-year IKE program. He said the agency was experiencing higher staffing levels, thanks in part to pay increases and adjustments for the engineering technician and equipment operator classes during the past two years. "Every Kansan, every day, relies on what we do," Secretary Reed said. Photo by Priscilla Petersen



Work is in progress on the Rush County portion of a K-96 project. Photos by Craig Schartz and Neisha Vetter, Great Bend

Typical projects but important for smooth travel

By Tim Potter

Resurfacing is rolling along on K-96 in Barton and Rush counties and on U.S. 160 in Sumner County. As projects go, the work is straightforward, typical resurfacing.

The projects, totaling about \$12.5 million, involve milling and hot-mix-asphalt overlay. They're the result of a regular review of District Five highways, known as the 1R tour.

Though typical, the projects provide a benefit in the eyes - and feel - of the

traveling public. On both highways, motorists have been encountering potholes on aging or deteriorating pavement.

The K-96 work not only helps highway users. Area Four Engineer Michelle Burnett noted that the resurfacing helps the maintenance crew because they don't have to spend so much time patching pavement. It will give maintenance workers more time for mowing, which dominates their workload over the warm-weather months.

The projects began the week of March 25 and are due to be completed early May for K-96 and early June for U.S. 160.

The K-96 job is from U.S. 183 at Rush Center east 29 miles to the west city limits of Great Bend. Venture Corp., of Great Bend, is the primary contractor on the two projects totaling \$8 million. The U.S. 160 job is from the Harper/Sumner county line east 21.5 miles to the west city limits of Wellington. APAC Shears, of Hutchinson, is the primary contractor for the \$4.5 million project.

K-96 expansion will ease travel for generations to come

By J.B. Wilson

Development of the K-96 Expansion Project, from I-135 to I-35 in Wichita, aims to ease travel for motorists now and for generations to come.

Efforts have been made to address commuter issues such as safety and traffic congestion; traffic counts are expected to double by 2050. One section of K-96 being redeveloped to optimize traffic flow is the planned upgrades to interchanges at Hillside, Oliver, Woodlawn, Rock, Webb, Greenwich and 21st. These enhancements will help motorists merge at the desired rate of acceleration and improve overall accessibility.

As Wichita and its surrounding communities continue to expand, the need for developing infrastructure for an ever-increasing population becomes more evident.



Planning is underway on Wichita's K-96 Expansion Project. Photo from Google Maps

An open house on April 11 in Wichita State University's Eugene M. Hughes Metropolitan Complex will provide an informal opportunity for residents to learn more about the expansion's scope as well as make inquiries about current developments. Collaborative efforts on the K-96 Improvements Project will continue with an emphasis on safety and efficiency.



Father works to promote safe driving in honor of daughter's memory

By Yazmin Moreno

A father's love and determination sparked a movement to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving. Todd Linder, a resident of Garden City, has turned his personal tragedy into a powerful message for safe driving.

Linder's daughter, Cassy, lost her life in a crash on U.S. 50 in March of 2023. She was a victim of a distracted driver. Linder's world was shattered, but he found the strength to transform his grief into action.

To honor Cassy's memory, Linder chose a symbol with deep meaning: the sunflower, Cassy's favorite flower. To him, the vibrant petals symbolize Cassy's spirit, which continues to shine brightly. Linder believes that by embracing the sunflower, he can keep his daughter's story alive and remind others to stay focused while driving.

Recently, Linder donated a floor mat featuring a huge sunflower to the District Six office to continue his safety mission. It's in the main lobby, for everyone to see.

Linder has become a passionate advocate for safe driving, spreading his message throughout the community and the state. He shares Cassy's story, urging everyone to put their phones down, eliminate distractions and prioritize safety on the road. His story serves as a powerful reminder that one person can make a difference and help save lives. Linder hopes to inspire others to honor Cassy's memory by sharing his journey and choosing safe driving practices.

Linder continues to make an impact on safety, and he has shared his story in numerous ways. One was by writing a blog in KDOT's Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day safety series last year. From his blog:



Todd Linder (left) donated a custom door mat to the District Six office in honor of his daughter Cassy, who was killed by a distracted driver. Pictured with Linder is District Project Development Engineer Gary Bennett. Photo by Yazmin Moreno

“Every parent's nightmare is to outlive their child. The pain is unimaginable, yet it is a reality for too many families. I urge all drivers, especially those operating large vehicles, to understand the weight of responsibility on their shoulders. Each time you're behind the wheel, it's not just about getting from point A to point B, it's about safeguarding your life and the lives of others on the road.”



Annual meeting

From left, Deputy Secretary Greg Schieber and Secretary Calvin Reed talked to attendees at the annual construction and materials meeting on March 19 in Garden City. Deb Dillner, from KDOT's Office of Civil Rights Compliance, gave an office update including Title VI. Photos by KDOT Multimedia Services

Milestones – April

35 years

Gordon Fanders, Equipment Mechanic Specialist, Atwood

30 years

Scot Addison, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Cimarron

25 years

Darren Bailey, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Hutchinson

Augie Carrillo Jr., Engineering Technician Supervisor, Winfield

Robert Fuller, Maintenance Bureau Chief, Topeka

Gregory Gonzales Jr., Road Design Leader, Topeka

20 years

Damian Hancock, Engineering Technician Senior, Hutchinson

Jason Van Nice, Construction and Materials Bureau Chief, Topeka

Ingrid Vandervort, Public Service Executive II, Wakarusa

15 years

Cole Dennis, Equipment Operator, Louisburg

Deborah Lewis, Right of Way Property Appraiser II, Topeka

Kathleen Thornton, ADA/EEO/ER Specialist, Topeka

10 years

Paul Brady, Equipment Operator Specialist, Osage City

Vanessa Lamoreaux, Senior Director (Interim), Topeka

Sara Peters, Traffic Engineering Bureau Chief, Lawrence

Matthew Stormer, Innovative Technologies Manager, Topeka

Condolences



Bill Heptig

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT employee **William “Bill” Heptig**, who passed away on March 12 in Topeka. Heptig served at KDOT for more than 20 years. He started in 2003 in the Bureau of Road Design as an Engineering Associate. After a short time at the Area Four/Gage office in Topeka, Heptig transferred to the District One office in 2011. He was the Assistant Construction Engineer.

His brother, Blair Heptig, also works at KDOT in the Bureau of Construction and Materials as a Field Engineer at the Materials and Research Center in Topeka.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Roger Carlisle**, who passed away on March 5 in Omaha, Neb. Carlisle joined KDOT immediately after graduating high school in 1979. He worked for nearly 35 years, retiring in 2014 as an Equipment Operator Senior at the Oberlin Subarea.

Promotions/transfers – February

Headquarters

Daniela Burkhart, IT Project Manager, Office of Information Technology Services

Kristina Jessica Gwaltney, Senior Administrative Specialist, Bureau of Human Resources

Marcus Howard, Engineering Technician, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

Ghaith Khresat, Engineering Associate III, Bureau of Road Design

Alicia Lopez, Human Resource Professional I, Bureau of Human Resources

District One

Randall Call, Equipment Operator, Tecumseh

Trenton Calvaruzo, Equipment Operator, Eskridge

Walker Gwaltney, Engineering Technician, Topeka

Blake Johnston, Equipment Operator, Lawrence

Grace Pond, Equipment Operator, Lawrence

Jeffrey Shunk, Engineering Technician, Horton

James Urton, Equipment Operator, Eskridge

Michael Yoho, Engineering Technician Supervisor, Emporia

District Two

Andrew Adamson, Engineering Associate II, Marion

Erik Duenas, Equipment Operator Senior, Concordia

Drake Poley, Equipment Operator, Clay Center

District Three

Beau Burkhalter, Equipment Operator, Atwood

District Four

Zachary Reagan, Equipment Operator Senior, Mound City

Benjamin Smith, Equipment Operator Midpoint, Independence

District Five

Jeremy Casper, Equipment Operator Senior, Medicine Lodge

Jerry Fields, Equipment Operator Senior, El Dorado

Kevin Mason, Equipment Operator, Newton

Landon McNown, Equipment Operator, El Dorado

Darin Schartz, Engineering Technician, Great Bend

District Six

Lane Bearce, Equipment Operator, Garden City

Logan Coghill, Equipment Operator Senior, Garden City

Jason Mead, Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Garden City

New hires – February

Headquarters

Martin Alvarez, Research Analyst III, Bureau of Multimodal Programs

Jake Comstock, Engineering Associate I, Bureau of Traffic Engineering

Luke Drevets, Attorney II, Office of Chief Counsel

Kassiah Martin, Senior Administrative Specialist, Bureau of Local Projects

Hunter Nance, Geology Trainee, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

Aaron Owings, Engineering Technician, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

Cody Pollman, Engineering Technician, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

Emilio Rivera, Engineering Technician Associate, Bureau of Construction and Materials

District One

Ronald Cheruiyot, Engineering Associate II, Olathe

Hunter Christenson, Equipment Operator Trainee, Topeka

Adam Crawford, Equipment Operator, Edwardsville

Tyler George, Equipment Operator Trainee, Osage City

Daniel Gessling, Equipment Operator, Emporia

Michael Jenkins Jr., Equipment Operator, Topeka

Dominick Marshall, Equipment Operator, Kansas City

Grady McDonald, Equipment Operator Trainee, Topeka

Kaden Ping, Equipment Operator, Topeka-Oakland Shop

Elizabeth Potter, Engineering Technician Associate, Bonner Springs

Brendan Rissen, Equipment Operator Trainee, Topeka

Samuel Ross, Equipment Operator Trainee, Topeka

John-Todd Staples, Equipment Operator, Shawnee

Devon Stich, Equipment Operator, Wamego

Haylee Williams, Administrative Assistant, Topeka

District Two

Holdan Hartman, Equipment Operator Trainee, Minneapolis

Jeffrey Metz, Equipment Operator, Washington

Brewster Sherraden, Equipment Operator Trainee, Abilene

Dalyn Zachgo, Equipment Operator Trainee, Concordia

District Three

Savanna Borden, Storekeeper Specialist, Norton

District Four

Malachi Abbott, Equipment Operator Trainee, Garnett

Charles Benner Jr., Engineering Technician Associate, Pittsburg

Jaron Bonczkowski, Engineering Technician Associate, Iola

Anthony Reaves, Engineering Technician Associate, Chanute

Christopher Williamson, Equipment Mechanic, Chanute

District Five

Tad Claar, Equipment Operator, Wellington

Raymond Clifton, Equipment Operator Trainee, Wichita

Madyson Dunn, Construction Inspector Trainee, Wichita

Charlene Harvey, Equipment Operator Trainee, Newton

Jesse Hunt, Equipment Operator, Kinsley

Cameron James, Equipment Operator Trainee, Wichita

Grady Luna, Equipment Operator Trainee, Wichita

Logan Millsagle, Construction Inspector Trainee, Wichita

Keelan Roach, Equipment Mechanic, Great Bend

Paul Taporco, Equipment Operator, Winfield

District Six

Nicholas Amerin, Equipment Operator Trainee, Meade

David Crockett, Equipment Operator Trainee, Rolla

James Fisher, Equipment Operator Trainee, Syracuse

Lynn LaMastres, Engineering Technician Associate, Garden City

Clayton Lupfer, Equipment Mechanic Specialist, Dodge City

Ashley N. Perez, Equipment Operator Trainee, Garden City

Juan Sanchez, Equipment Operator, Meade

Nicholas Wood, Equipment Operator, Ashland

Retirees

The following employees retired on April 1:

Headquarters

Rick Baker, Public Service Executive III, Information Technology

Allan Haverkamp, IRS Project Manager, Information Technology

Chris Herrick, Director, Planning and Development

Stephen Skea, IT Project Manager, Information Technology

District One

Steven Pralle, Equipment Operator Senior, Blaine

District Three

Kent Huss, Equipment Operator Senior, Hays

District Six

Wilbur Phelps, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Dodge City

The following employee will retire on May 1:

District Two

Mark Bowser, Equipment Operator Senior, Clay Center