

# TRANS LINES

Monthly Publication of the Kansas Department of Transportation

March 2024

## FINAL STAND

*The sun shines one last time on the Metropolitan Avenue bridge over I-635 in Wyandotte County on Feb. 23. The structure was demolished later that night to make way for a replacement bridge. See page 8 for more details.*

Photo by Delaney Tholen

## Exploring road usage charge

### Pilot study helps KDOT learn about what does and does not work for Kansas

It takes funding and foresight to pave the way for the future. KDOT is taking advantage of the present to prepare.

KDOT has launched a three-month pilot study exploring whether a pay-per-mile road usage charge (RUC) could potentially replace the current state motor fuel tax as a new way to fund roads and bridges. The study, part of the Kansas Midwest RUC Study, asks Kansans to try out mileage reporting options and provide feedback about their experience.

Today, gasoline-powered vehicles pay a 24-cent per gallon state gas tax, and diesel-powered vehicles pay a 26-cent per gallon state diesel tax. As more vehicles transition to being more fuel efficient or not using gas or diesel at all, state transportation funding may fall short.

KDOT is proactively exploring whether a RUC might be a sustainable, long-term funding source for transportation in the state. KDOT, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, is using federal grant money to study potential alternative approaches to transportation funding. To date, most states exploring RUC are on the East and West coasts. Kansas is adding a Midwest perspective to this national conversation.

KDOT is actively recruiting driver participants for the study,

which is scheduled to begin in April. Drivers across the state are asked to take part, especially rural Kansans who drive passenger vehicles or medium-duty trucks, people working in the agriculture industry and owners or operators of large trucks.

Participants who fully complete the study can earn a \$100 incentive. State employees, including KDOT employees, can participate if selected.

Kansans interested can visit [www.midwestruc.org](http://www.midwestruc.org) for more information or to complete an interest form.

KDOT employees are encouraged to help recruit drivers for the study. Specifically, we're asking participants to try out and provide feedback on four

different options for reporting mileage:

- Manual reporting through an online form.
- Odometer photo reporting through a smartphone.
- Smartphone mobile app with GPS.
- Direct vehicle reporting (for connected vehicles).

Exploring a RUC does not mean Kansas will adopt it. This helps KDOT learn about what does and does not work for Kansans.





# Let's talk.

Transportation Secretary Calvin Reed

## Strategic Plan – Let's hear from you

The impact KDOT has on the lives of Kansans never ceases to amaze me. We do this in some obvious ways, like plowing snow, maintaining roadsides, planning, designing and constructing the bridges and roadways of the future, assisting communities in delivering their visions, partnering with transit providers to help those unable (or who choose not) to drive, etc.

Less obvious, but just as important, are the functions of the agency that keep things going behind the scenes, like our legal staff, accountants, purchasers, building support staff and communications teams. Few agencies perform such a diversity of work and touch the lives of every person, every day, like KDOT does. Put simply, our purpose is to deliver transportation that keeps Kansans moving forward.

I have directed the agency leadership – District Engineers, Bureau Chiefs and Division Directors – to have focused discussions amongst their teams with the goal of understanding what we are doing well, what could be better and what some of the threats and opportunities are to delivering on our purpose. These have been good, candid discussions.

The result is to move forward with the development of a five-year strategic plan for the agency. This plan will serve as a road map – identifying where we want to be, what factors we can and cannot control, where we need to dedicate

resources and how we measure progress. It will also be inclusive. KDOT leadership made it very clear for this to be successful, all levels of the agency must be engaged.

I have no doubt this will work. When we devote resources to a task and measure progress, we are successful. Examples include:

- Employee safety – Since 2020, the number of lost days due to workplace incidents has dropped by approximately 60%. Credit KDOT for elevating employee safety in leadership, implementing commonsense practices and tracking progress. The impacts were immediate. We saw a big drop in worksite incidents in 2021 with continued progress since.
- Employee recruitment – Coming into the Secretary position, I identified employee recruiting as a top priority. I directed our Bureau of Human Resources to partner with Communications and work with the various divisions to develop strategies to increase recruitment and identify trackable measures of success. I am proud to say they surpassed my expectations. Staffing in the agency in January 2024 is up about 6% compared to January 2023.

Over the next month, there will be opportunities for those who are interested to participate in the development of the strategic plan. Please step up and let us know. Thanks for all you do!



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

*This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request. For information about obtaining an alternative format, contact the KDOT Communications Division, 700 SW Harrison St., 2nd Floor West, Topeka, KS 66603-3745 or phone 785-296-3585 (Voice)/Hearing Impaired – 711.*



# Inside the **LINES**



**Justin Sly**  
Engineering Technician,  
Concordia

#### **Duties at work?**

I oversee projects and document all contractor construction activities.

#### **Favorite music?**

Rock, country, contemporary Christian and old-time gospel.

#### **Most exciting part of your job?**

Learning the many different aspects of construction.

#### **Something you're proud of?**

My son, Samuel. He is a member of the Kansas Army National Guard.

#### **Favorite food and movie?**

The "Western Burger" at Concordia's Easy G Sports Grill, and the "Naked Gun" series is the bomb.

#### **Any hobbies?**

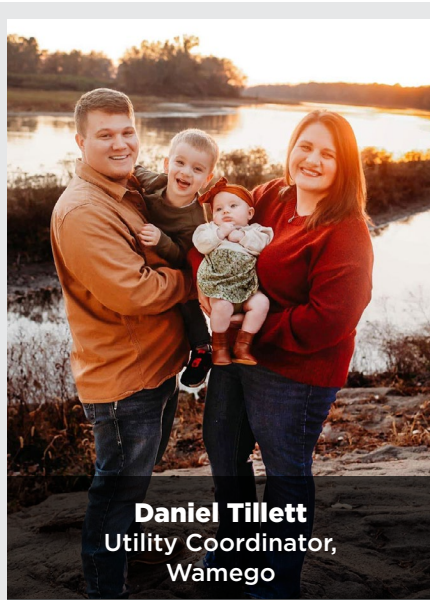
I'd been drumming in nightclubs since high school, with a national TV appearance on TNN's "Charlie Daniels' Talent Round-Up" in the '90s. I volunteer and take pictures of Belleville High Banks events.

#### **Any pets?**

Dogs Jack and Bean, and Budha the cat.

#### **Something people might not know about you?**

My grandfather was a Kansas Highway Commission employee in the 1940s, and my cousins, Kathy and Brandon Meierhoff, work for the Marion Construction Office.



**Daniel Tillett**  
Utility Coordinator,  
Wamego

#### **Duties at work?**

Mainly utility/access/hay permitting and inspection, coordinating and inspecting utility relocations for KDOT construction projects and coordinating AAH groups.

#### **Favorite music?**

Gospel

#### **Most exciting part of job?**

Being able to work independently.

#### **Something you're proud of?**

My wife. Between putting up with me, working, and being a good mother, she's the best.

#### **Favorite food and movie?**

Cheeseburger and "Pitch Perfect."

#### **Any hobbies?**

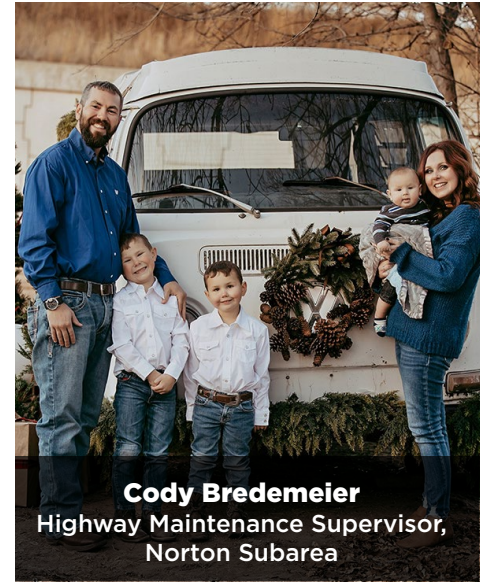
Disc golf, pickleball and fishing.

#### **Any pets?**

None at the moment.

#### **Something people might not know about you?**

I build wooden furniture.



**Cody Bredemeier**  
Highway Maintenance Supervisor,  
Norton Subarea

#### **Duties at work?**

I oversee the day-to-day activities for our Subarea.

#### **Favorite music?**

Rock.

#### **Most exciting part of your job?**

Snow and ice season.

#### **Something you're proud of?**

My family.

#### **Favorite food and movie?**

My favorite food is Chinese and favorite movie is "Forrest Gump."

#### **Any hobbies?**

Riding motorcycles with my club, The Salty Dawgs.

#### **Any pets?**

We have a black pug named Loki.

#### **Something people might not know about you?**

I help coordinate an annual Lego run to the children's hospital in Denver every year that averages around \$10,000 worth of toys donated to the patients.

# Safety at the statehouse

## *Drive to Zero Day raises awareness on improving traffic safety*

By Ingrid Vandervort  
Safety Engagement Strategist

Transportation safety reached a new level of visibility and awareness at the Drive To Zero Day at the Capitol on Feb. 29.

The Drive To Zero Coalition and KDOT hosted the event, with the goal of increasing awareness and reducing fatal and serious injury crashes on all roads in Kansas. Legislators, stakeholders and the public learned about current initiatives designed to drive down fatality crashes.

“At KDOT, we don’t only build and maintain our state’s highways, we also support local agencies in making transportation investment choices, and we execute behavioral safety campaigns to reduce risky driving behaviors and raise awareness about road user vulnerabilities,” said Secretary Calvin Reed, one of the event speakers. “There is a vibrant network of stakeholders, hundreds that we are actively engaging with and working with to advance our shared vision of zero lives lost.”

Other speakers included KHP Superintendent Col. Erik Smith, KDHE Secretary Janet Stanek and House Transportation Committee Chairman Rep. Shannon Francis. Display booths highlighted the Safe System Approach adopted by the DTZ Coalition, the Kansas Safety Corridor Pilot Program, behavioral safety campaigns and Drive To Zero Crash Data Dashboard demonstrations.



Visitors to Drive to Zero Day at the Capitol had an opportunity to hear several speakers (above) and learn more about the Drive to Zero Crash Data Dashboard and the Safety Corridor Pilot Programs (below). Photos by Multimedia Services





# Flying with IKE

## More than \$14M awarded for Kansas airport improvements

General aviation airports across Kansas are thankful for IKE this month. KDOT has announced 58 projects at 37 airports have been selected to receive \$14.4 million as part of the Kansas Airport Improvement Program (KAIP).

The Division of Aviation received 135 applications seeking more than \$84 million for projects in this round of KAIP grants. Projects were selected from throughout the state and prioritized with a focus on safety, pavement preservation and air ambulance accessibility to remote communities.

“These general aviation airport improvements couldn’t happen without local partners and KDOT working together,” said Secretary Calvin Reed. “Programs like this help Kansans

have access to renewed and reliable transportation options available to them in every region of the state.”

The KAIP typically receives \$5 million annually through the Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program. Local matching funds are required, the amount varying depending on the project. KDOT increased funding to the program in this cycle to help address the large amount of grant applications. With the matching local funds, total KAIP project value for State Fiscal Year 2025 is more than \$34 million.

Click [HERE](#) for the full news release and the list of approved KAIP projects.

## Aviation awareness soars at Feb. 15 event

By Rachel Adkins  
Division of Aviation

Aviation stakeholders came together to help raise awareness of aviation industry opportunities across Kansas during Aviation Day at the Capitol on Feb. 15.

“Aviation Day showcases aviation education and employment opportunities available statewide by connecting students with academic institutions, job seekers with industry employers, and legislators with state, federal and aviation industry stakeholders,” said Ray Seif, KDOT Aviation Director. “This event also highlights the aviation industry’s impact on Kansas’ economy.”

Job prospects, infrastructure and emerging technologies were shared with attendees at booths hosted by industry partners.

Keynote speakers included Joe Miniace, Federal Aviation Administration Central Region Administrator, and Pierre Harter, Associate Vice President for Industry and Defense

Programs, Research Operations at Wichita State University.

The event was sponsored by KDOT and the Kansas Commission on Aerospace Education.



Visitors were able to stop at numerous booths highlighting aviation in Kansas at the Aviation Day event at the Capitol on Feb. 15. Photo by KDOT Multimedia Services





# BACK SEAT DRIVERS: Helpful or annoying?

Courtesy photo

**By Troy Whitworth**  
**Director, Division of Safety**

Imagine driving down the road with a passenger dictating to you how to drive. They may explain which lane to be in or how they would have taken a different route. Speed up, slow down, whoa - you missed the turn. Back-seat driving can be very distracting and, honestly, downright annoying.

Back-seat drivers can increase the risk of a crash. I don't know about you, but I get irritated when someone critiques my driving. And unfortunately, the irritation causes me to sometimes make poor decisions. These people usually are just trying to help - they could be anxious since they don't have control of the situation. But it can disrupt the driver.

However, back-seat drivers can play positive roles. It's hard trying to find my way when the destination is somewhere I've never been. You wouldn't believe how many times

I have missed a turn as my phone mocks me by saying, "recalculating." A good navigator can help so you're not trying to figure it out on your own.

The passenger can also help identify hazards. This is different than the typical back-seat driver role. Here, the driver and passenger work together as a team.

An example is when I come up to a stop sign. I will typically ask the front passenger if anyone is coming from their direction. This extra set of eyes can add another layer of safety. I still always double check, but they may see something I couldn't since they have a different perspective.

A passenger can play a key role in bringing added safety when traveling. Being the passenger is not the time to take a nap or cause distractions for the driver. It's the time to be an active team member and assist the driver to help everyone arrive at the destination safely. For Your Family and Mine.



## Engaging the public

Building bridges  
through collaboration



**By Lindsey Milburn**  
**Public Involvement Specialist**

Public involvement and public relations play crucial roles in shaping the relationship between organizations and the communities they serve. At KDOT, the public involvement team engages with Kansans in the decision-making process for expansion and improvement projects to make sure their voices are heard as the project moves forward.

Public involvement aims for collaboration and inclusivity as an iterative process. We meet with the public, listen to their feedback and refine and improve projects. Public relations often aim for one-way communication for the public to adopt a favorable attitude.

Effective public involvement and public relations strategies

often intersect, reinforcing each other. Engaging the public through open communication channels such as social media platforms, news releases and fact sheets fosters a positive reputation, while a well-managed public image creates a conducive environment for public involvement.

KDOT's vision to continue to be a national transportation leader involves not only listening to transportation enthusiasts, but also hearing what they need to better serve their communities. Public involvement and public relations share the goal of creating a positive relationship between KDOT and the public by establishing clear communication channels, addressing concerns and building a positive perception.

Together, we are the storytellers and translators; we are the public's view of the work KDOT accomplishes every day.

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## Legislative session reaches halfway mark

The Kansas Legislature 2024 session has officially reached the halfway point known as Turnaround. Legislators are getting ready to hold hearings and consider bills that have passed the other chamber.

At the turnaround point, any legislative bill that has not passed one chamber or touched an exempt committee is officially stopped and given no further consideration during the session.

The second half of session began Feb. 28 and will focus on the remaining bills in March. Bills that had almost seven weeks for hearings to occur now only have about three weeks to make it through the committee process to be brought to the second chamber floor for consideration to become law.

In addition, the development of the state's budget bills will consume a large amount of time and attention, not to

mention any possible tax policy consideration.

Over the next few weeks, KDOT staff will attend multiple committee hearings and provide testimony on different bills, as well as continue to track bills that may impact the agency.

The last week of March and the first week of April will bring the 2024 legislative session to first adjournment. During those two weeks, the House and Senate will debate all remaining bills on their respective floors being considered to become law.

People who want to know more about what is happening at the Legislature can sign up [HERE](#) to receive information posted on bills that KDOT is tracking in the current Session that may affect the agency and its stakeholders. It is updated weekly with legislative changes on each bill. In addition, KDOT testimony presented to the legislature can be found [HERE](#).



### Be Information & Stay Connected

Before hitting the road, KTA recommends all drivers:

- 1.) Subscribe to [KTA Alerts](#), texts notifying customers of travel impacts.
- 2.) Download [KanDrive](#), statewide traffic information and real-time road conditions.
- 3.) Sign up to receive [KTA's Cashless Tolling Updates](#)

### 2024 Construction Preview

KTA's 2024 construction season will kick-off this month. For an overview on this year's planned construction projects along the Kansas Turnpike, watch this [video](#) or read the [news release](#).

As a refresher, you can see the latest status of each project every month by viewing our monthly [construction report](#). For monthly Construction News delivered directly to your inbox, sign up on our [website](#).

### Cashless Tolling Update

The KTA has been preparing to switch to cashless tolling for over four years, and changes are now being on the road. Final details are wrapping up for the Kansas Turnpike to go cashless in July.

To prepare for the change:

- Stay up-to-date by regularly visiting [www.DriveKS.com](http://www.DriveKS.com).
- Sign up to receive [KTA's cashless tolling updates via email](#).
- Consider getting a K-TAG, if you don't have one, to pay the lowest toll rate.





Crews demolish the existing bridge above the protected I-635 roadway. Photo courtesy of Clarkson Construction.

## Demolition completed, bridge replacement underway in KCK

By Delaney Tholen

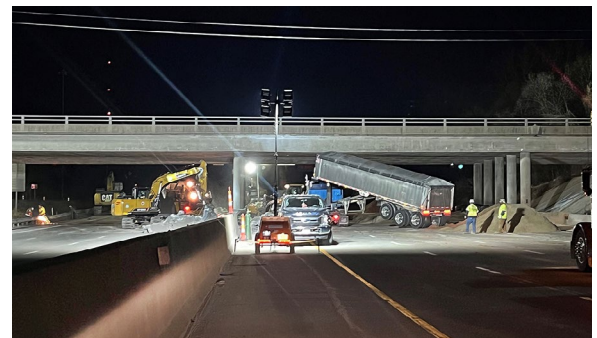
A vital connecting corridor in the Kansas City Turner neighborhood will have a new crossing thanks to a KDOT bridge project. Built in 1971, the longstanding Metropolitan Avenue bridge over I-635, demolished over the last weekend in February, was outdated and programmed for regular replacement.

Demolition required fully closing I-635 to traffic in both directions, as well as adjacent I-635 ramps. The work was completed in less than 48 hours - well ahead of Monday morning rush hour. Annual average daily traffic for the Metropolitan Avenue bridge is more than 10,000 vehicles per day and about 77,000 vehicles per day on the I-635 lanes below.

About 40 semitrailer loads of sand were placed to protect the roadway beneath and provide a cushion for demolition debris. The bridge was then removed, with metal guardrail and rebar separated. More than 230 truckloads of debris, including the protective sand, were hauled away. The I-635 lanes were broomed and prepared for traffic to resume.

Project improvements include replacement of the bridge, approach pavement and guardrails along with updated traffic signals, pedestrian crossings and ADA-compliant ramps. Part of the rubblized concrete from the previous structure will be used to form abutment walls beneath the new bridge, scheduled to be open to traffic in November.

*Above right: Traffic control crews preset equipment at nearby I-635 ramp locations, including Shawnee Drive, in preparation for multiple simultaneous closures. Middle: Truckloads of sand were delivered to the project demolition site in advance of removing the bridge. Metropolitan Avenue is visible as crews place temporary barrier wall following demolition. Photos by Delaney Tholen*





## KDOT office hosts open house for engineering students

By Kate Craft

Kansas School of Engineering students were invited to speak with KDOT staff at the on-campus office in the University of Kansas' Innovation Hall during an open house on Feb. 21.

Attendees learned about internships and career opportunities with the agency and were able to get hands-on experience with different technologies that are currently being used in transportation and at KDOT. Staff provided



Attendees were able to experience virtual bridge inspections with HoloLens and assistance from Mike Dillner and Jonathan Mushock, CADD Manager and Assistant CADD Manager.



Bob Brown, District One Land Surveyor, shares his surveying knowledge and equipment with an attendee. Photos by Kate Craft

demonstrations with drones, survey equipment, 3D designing with OpenRoads Designer, HoloLens virtual reality for bridge inspections and an Augmented Reality Sandbox for mapping and topography.

“Our goal was to raise awareness of KDOT’s presence on west campus, advertise our part- and full-time job opportunities, as well as show off KDOT as a resource to enhance the learning experience for students at KU in the transportation field,” said Amy Rockers, Road Support Engineer. “Kudos to the staff at the Lawrence office along with Mike Dillner and Jonathan Mushock with KDOT CADD Support Staff for putting on such a successful event.”

“A successful event” might be an understatement. This year’s attendance nearly tripled last year’s inaugural event, with about 15 students stopping by.

## 69Express meeting draws crowd for project updates

By Delaney Tholen

With construction on the U.S. 69 project known as 69Express in Overland Park quickly progressing, KDOT hosted a public open house on Feb. 22 at the Tomahawk Ridge Community Center, with more than 100 in-person attendees.

Members of the project team, joined by KTA and City of Overland Park staff, answered questions and walked visitors through the project exhibits that featured visual displays of interchange designs, construction timelines, noise wall installation and toll lane operations. Tablets were provided as an option for attendees to input contact information or review the project website.

The \$572 million design-build project began construction in 2022 and is scheduled to be open to traffic by the end of 2025. New U.S. 69 lanes are being added, one in each direction from 103rd Street to 151st Street, which will operate as express lanes and allow drivers to choose to pay a toll to bypass congestion in the general-purpose lanes or remain in the toll-free lanes. 69Express also includes improvements at the U.S. 69/167th Street interchange.





## District Two holds annual meeting

By **Ashley Perez**

Attendees heard numerous topic updates during District Two's annual construction and materials meeting in Salina on Feb. 12.

Two of the speakers included Secretary Calvin Reed and Kody Henrichs, Engineering Associate I in Junction City.

Secretary Reed discussed the importance of gathering feedback within the agency to be successful in planning for the future.

"We want to be ready for the next transportation program," said Secretary Reed. "I want to hear more about what you value in the agency, how we move forward, what that looks like and means to you."

Henrichs discussed the development of the I-70 project through Junction City and provided details of the ongoing pavement replacement project. Staff members have worked together through past construction challenges to plan for the future as the project gets underway again this year.



*District Construction and Materials Engineer Joe Ausilio welcomed staff to the annual construction and materials meeting in Salina on Feb. 12. Photo by Ashley Perez*



### **Chip shots**

*Nice weather in February provided an opportunity for maintenance work to take place. Employees from the Ellsworth Subarea took advantage of a sunny day and worked to chip seal K-111 between K-140 and K-156 in Ellsworth County. Photos by Tim Hays, Ellsworth*



### **Smooth as glass**

*District Two Specials Crew and Concordia Subarea employees pour and smooth a concrete slab in the equipment shed at Concordia on Feb. 20. Photo by Randy Shadduck, Concordia*

## **Work to resume on I-70 at Junction City**

Construction is scheduled to resume in mid-March on Phase Two of the I-70 pavement replacement project at Junction City in Geary County.

Work will involve replacing all the deteriorated pavement in the westbound driving lane from mile marker 296 to 300. During construction, KDOT will also be closing I-70 ramps at various times to allow for pavement replacement.

More construction details and a timeline of scheduled ramp closures can be found [here](#).





## District Three preparing for busy construction season in 2024



Eleven miles of U.S. 281 will be closed for reconstruction starting in March. Photo by Neil Croxton, Salina

**By Lisa Mussman**

The 2024 construction season is off to a quick start in District Three with a slew of projects kicking off in March and April.

One of the more significant projects will be the closure of an 11-mile portion of U.S. 281 north of Russell. The road will be closed for reconstruction from Land Road to the west K-18 junction starting on March 18. This is the final part of the delayed T-WORKS modernization of the 15 miles of U.S. 281 between Russell and the west K-18 junction. Reconstruction of the initial 4 miles from Russell to Land Road was completed in late 2021.

Several bridges will also be closed for reconstruction across the district. They include structures on U.S. 40 west of Sharon Springs in Wallace County, U.S. 281 near Portis in Smith County and K-9 near Logan in Phillips County.



Reconstruction of the U.S. 183 bypass/I-70 interchange near Hays is one of several significant projects taking place in District Three during the 2024 construction season. Photo by Ashley Pfannenstiel, Hays

The district will see its first IKE project go to construction when work starts on the U.S. 183 bypass/I-70 interchange in Ellis County later this spring. Project work will include reconstruction of the bridge and interchange located at Exit 157 near Hays. Work is scheduled to start in late spring and be completed in the fall of 2025 with additional, off-roadway work continuing through March 2026.



### **Bridge closure**

Damage from multiple vehicle strikes has caused the closure of a bridge over I-70 near Collyer in Trego County. KDOT closed the bridge carrying 150th Avenue over the interstate on March 1 because of safety concerns about the damage. Photo by Cale Brown, Hays

## SERVICE AWARDS



Area Three Engineer Kevin Zimmer presented Hays Subarea employees Dennie Hagan (left), Equipment Operator, and Bruce Arnhold (right), Equipment Operator Senior, with their state service anniversary certificates in December 2023. Hagan was honored for five years of service, and Arnhold celebrated 10 years. Photo by KDOT staff





## Work to begin on new section of Flint Hills Trail

**By Priscilla Petersen**

In early March, KDOT will start work on transforming an undeveloped section of Flint Hills Trail State Park to a 10-foot-wide multi-use path with a pedestrian bridge over BNSF Railway.

The new section, located west of Ottawa, is 2.3 miles long and extends from Louisiana Terrace west to Iowa Road.

Upon completion, Flint Hills Trail will have 93 miles of continuous traversable trail for bicyclists and hikers from Osawatomie west to Council Grove. The entire trail is 118 miles in length between Osawatomie and Herington, with more miles of trail remaining to be developed on the western end.

The trail project was let under KDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program, which covers on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects



*Flint Hills Trail runs underneath K-68 in the city of Ottawa. In early March KDOT will begin work on a project to develop 2.3 miles of new trail west of Ottawa. Photo courtesy of Google Earth*

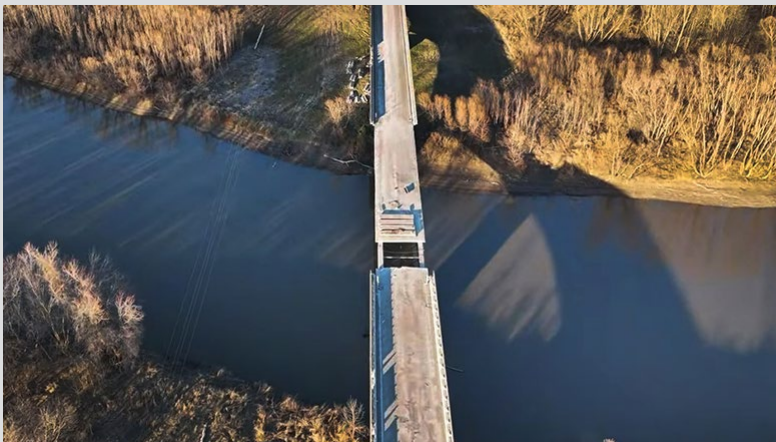
for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, and Safe Routes to School sidewalk improvements.

In addition to construction of the trail and pedestrian bridge, three existing bridges will be improved. The current Flint Hills Trail detour signed along Franklin County roads will be deactivated when the new stretch is finished. KDOT awarded the \$4.9 million

construction contract to Dondlinger & Sons Construction Co. Inc., of Wichita.

Flint Hills Trail follows old Missouri Pacific Railroad right of way through Miami, Franklin, Osage, Lyon and Morris counties. Communities on the trail include Rantoul, Ottawa, Pomona, Vassar, Osage City, Miller, Admire, Allen, Bushong and Council Grove. It's the eighth longest trail in the United States.

## BRINGING IT DOWN



*Demolition has started on the U.S. 59 bridge over the Neosho River south of Erie. Work on the bridge replacement project began at the end of January. Traffic is following a signed state detour on K-47, U.S. 169 and K-39. Photo courtesy of Neosho County Conservation District*

## K-68 meeting held

*A small but animated group made their thoughts known during a Feb. 13 meeting to discuss the proposed K-68 access management plan in Ottawa. David Seitz, KDOT Access*

*Management Manager, explained that the plan will allow development "in an orderly" manner along the K-68 corridor east of Ottawa. He said the plan will continue to be evaluated into the future. Above: Seitz, left, takes questions and suggestions from landowners who live along the corridor. Photo by Priscilla Petersen*







# District Five holds annual meeting, presents awards

By **Tim Potter**

District Five held a well-attended annual construction and materials meeting – and presented inspector awards – on Feb. 15 in Hutchinson.

Secretary Calvin Reed, leading a contingent of top KDOT officials who attended the meeting, shared positive trends in staffing. “Our employee numbers are up,” with more than 2,200 employees, Reed said. The biggest gains are in engineering technicians and equipment operators.

Then he posed this question: “Now here’s the challenge – how are we retaining employees?” The message, he added, is: “There’s no reason you have to leave KDOT to do something different in your careers.”

Other positive trends, Reed noted, are occurring in customer service and safety. Traffic fatalities have decreased. He stressed the importance of a simple safety message: Buckle up. Phone down.

Also at the meeting, District Construction Engineer Duane Flug announced the annual Inspector of the Year and Purple Pen awards for outstanding inspection work and overall excellence in 2023.

Therone Askins, Engineering Technician Senior, Area Three, was named Inspector of the Year. Askins was lead inspector for a multi-year project that included more than 34,000 tons of hot mix asphalt and 8,500 tons of reflective crack interlay.

Purple Pen award winners were Colleen Small, Engineering Technician Senior/Construction Office Coordinator, Area One; Jeff Storm, Engineering Technician Supervisor, and Tracey Zieman, Engineering Technician/Office Coordinator, Area Two; Darren Volkel, Engineering Technician, Area Four; Linda Guillen, Engineering Technician/Office Coordinator, Area Five North; and Alyssa Rodriguez, Engineering Technician, Area Five West.



*Secretary Calvin Reed speaks at the annual meeting in Hutchinson on Feb. 15. Photos by Tim Potter and Ian Oldenburg, Wichita.*



*Colleen Small, Area One*



*Jeff Storm and Tracey Zieman, Area Two*



*Darren Volkel, Area Four*



*Linda Guillen, Area Five North*



*Alyssa Rodriguez, Area Five West*



*Therone Askins, Area Three*



## AED units installed in District Five

By Tracy Statton

In a Division of Safety statewide effort to provide Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units at KDOT, there is now at least one unit in all District and Area office buildings, the Materials and Research Center and every KDOT floor at ESOB. The AEDs are used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest.

“Heart disease remains first among the leading causes of death for Kansas residents, and cancer is the second,” said KDOT Safety Section Industrial Hygienist Tammi Clark. “Kansas also has more preventable employee-related sudden cardiac arrests deaths than bordering states. Having an AED on-site increases the survival rate by 60% for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests.”

The models were chosen for their ease to use. They are fully automated and will not allow a shock unless it is needed, and they have a youth/child button.

“No training is required since they are self-instructed,” Clark said. “It can also provide video instructions. Operating one is very easy. The hardest part is deciding to help. If an employee has taken a first aid class at KDOT it should have had AED training in the class.”

If the person is awake, has chest pain, shortness of breath, gray ashy look and has cold sweats, these are symptoms of a heart attack. If a person is experiencing heart attack symptoms, a helper would want to get the AED in case the person goes in sudden cardiac arrest.

“People have a greater likelihood of survival when a bystander uses an AED and are more likely to survive with minimal disabilities after cardiac arrest if a bystander provides AED treatment before emergency medical services provide it,” Clark said.

AED training will now be provided via a KDOT trainer or outside contractor. “If an office wants training on the device in these situations, they can reach out to their safety specialist or myself, and we can provide detailed training on their device,” Clark said.



A new AED is installed in the Area Five building in Wichita. Photo by Tracy Statton.



**Digging it!**  
Members of the District Five Special Crew and the Lyons Subarea Crew recently cleaned ditches along K-14 north of Lyons. Photos by Randy Miller, Lyons





# Brine spill causes slippery situation in Garden City



The Garden City Subarea crew worked together to contain brine that was spilled from this tank. Photo by Hector Terrones, Garden City

**By Yazmin Moreno**

The District Six Subarea in Garden City found themselves in a bit of a pickle when 10,000 gallons of brine spilled in the yard during a maintenance operation.

The incident occurred over the weekend of Feb. 11-12 while workers were preparing for another winter storm that was heading to their area.

Brine is a mixture of salt and water used to de-ice the roadways and bridges. It is used frequently in combating icy conditions and, if possible, before storms hit to reduce the accumulation of ice.

However, on this particular day, a mishap resulted in an unexpected spillage, creating quite a slippery situation. The Garden City Subarea crew members sprang into action, working tirelessly to contain the brine and minimize its impact on the surrounding area.

Their quick response and expertise helped prevent further complications. While the incident caused a temporary disruption, the crew was able to continue its efforts of treating and maintaining the roadways impacted by the storm.

## Mead promoted to Highway Maintenance Superintendent

Jason Mead was promoted in February to District Crew Superintendent in Garden City. He started back in November of 1999 as an HVAC Technician.

Over the years, he worked to learn other areas, and he was named acting Bridge Crew Supervisor in July of 2018. The next year, he was officially named the supervisor.

He replaces Rodney Crone, who retired in February.



Jason Mead

## Crone retires after 47 years

After more than 47 years, Rodney Crone retired as KDOT District Maintenance Superintendent in Garden City.

Crone joined KDOT in May of 1976 as an Equipment Operator I in the paint crew. In 2011, he was promoted to Paint Supervisor, where he worked until his promotion in 2017 to his current position where he oversaw the operations of both the paint and bridge crews.



District Six Engineer Ron Hall (right) congratulates Rodney Crone on his retirement. Photo by Yazmin Moreno

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## Milestones – March

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### 30 years

**Eric Anderson**, Professional Civil Engineer I, Topeka  
**Scott Mullen**, Area Engineer, Pratt  
**Brad Reeh**, Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Atwood  
**James Roudybush**, District Maintenance Engineer, Salina

### 25 years

**Priscilla Petersen**, Public Affairs Manager, Chanute  
**Roberta Wehking**, Management Analyst I, Topeka

### 20 years

**Jonny Madrid**, Engineering Technician Specialist, Topeka  
**Jolene Watson**, Accountant I, Garden City

### 10 years

**Kenneth Bowden Jr.**, Field Maintenance Coordinator, Garden City  
**Shane Drybread**, Equipment Mechanic Senior, Chanute  
**Landon Hamel**, Equipment Operator Specialist, Norton  
**Gavin Johnson**, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Marysville  
**Linda Liester**, Engineering Technician Supervisor, Atwood  
**Donna Schmit**, Bridge Team Leader, Topeka  
**Levi Sutton**, Construction Engineer Associate, Bonner Springs  
**Phillip Thompson**, Equipment Operator, Altoona  
**Scott Zima**, Equipment Operator Senior, Abilene

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## Retirees

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*The following employees retired on March 1:*

### Headquarters

**Shirley Buchmeier**, Procurement Officer III, Fiscal Services

### District One

**Rex Lloyd**, Equipment Operator Specialist, Oskaloosa

### District Two

**Michael Jones**, Equipment Operator Senior, Beloit



## KDOT retirees invited

KDOT retirees are invited to attend the monthly gathering, which starts at 11 a.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at Golden Corral, 1601 SE Wanamaker in Topeka.

For information contact Rich McReynolds at [rlm4017@gmail.com](mailto:rlm4017@gmail.com).

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## Promotions/transfers – January

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### Headquarters

**Corey Dinkel**, Road Squad Leader, Bureau of Road Design  
**Jennifer Jamerson**, Senior Administrative Specialist, Division of Administration  
**Patrick Toby**, Assistant Bureau Chief, Bureau of Transportation Planning

### District One

**Mitchell Custer**, Equipment Operator Midpoint, Manhattan  
**Calib Mallory**, Equipment Operator Midpoint, Manhattan  
**Darrin Rowley**, Equipment Operator Senior, Eskridge  
**Michelle Schroeder**, Engineering Technician, Topeka

### District Two

**Jacob Hinton**, Equipment Mechanic, Ellsworth  
**Nichole Stephens**, Equipment Operator, Concordia  
**Nathan Thimgan**, Engineering Technician, Salina

### District Three

**Reece Catlett**, Equipment Operator, Norton  
**Matthew Rist**, Engineering Technician, Hays

### District Four

**Samuel Armstrong**, Engineering Technician, Pittsburg  
**Clayton Holmquest**, Equipment Operator, Garnett  
**Aaron Rockers**, Equipment Operator Senior, Garnett

### District Five

**Steven Wells**, Engineering Technician, Wichita

### District Six

**Kadelyn Stavig**, Engineering Technician Associate, Syracuse

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## Condolences

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Condolences to the friends and family of KDOT retiree **William Harper**, who passed away Feb. 9 in Great Bend. Harper started in 1957. He worked at KDOT for more than 40 years and retired in 1998 as an Engineering Technician at the Great Bend Area office.

Condolences to the friends and family of KDOT retiree **Fred Chapman**, who passed away on Feb. 18 in Mission, Texas. Chapman started at KDOT in 1954 and worked at KDOT for more than 39 years. He was the Highway Maintenance Supervisor at the Beloit Subarea Office. Chapman retired in 1993.



## New hires – January

### Headquarters

**Edward Byrd**, Engineering Technician Associate, Bureau of Construction and Materials

**Michael Johnson**, Engineering Technician Specialist, Bureau of ITS

**Alexis Long**, Custodial Specialist, Bureau of Construction and Materials

**Ferdinand Niyonyungu**, Engineering Associate I, Bureau of Road Design

**Jacqueline Pierron**, Recruitment Lead, Bureau of Human Resources

**Jennifer Pokorny**, Public Service Executive I, Division of Aviation

**Raymond Seif**, Director of Aviation, Division of Aviation

**Christian Thompson**, Engineering Associate I, Bureau of Transportation Planning

### District One

**Michael Durkin**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Atchison

**Drew Gibbs**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Seneca

**Zachary Haben**, Engineering Technician Associate, Topeka

**Mikale Hicks**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Gardner

**Matthew Lindsay**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Bonner Springs

**Cheyenne Luth**, Administrative Specialist, Bonner Springs

**Christopher Perez**, Equipment Operator, Tecumseh

**Gunner Smith**, Engineering Technician Associate, Horton

**Kalvin Taylor**, Equipment Operator, Manhattan

**Cody Weis**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Wamego

**Matthew Wright**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Tecumseh

**Joshua Yeager**, Equipment Operator, Topeka

### District Two

**Jason Brew**, Equipment Operator, Clay Center

**James Gordon**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Washington

**Jason Hull**, Equipment Operator Specialist, Lincoln

### District Three

**Samuel Allen**, Equipment Operator, Hays

**Beau Burkhalter**, Equipment Operator, Atwood

**James Geihlsler**, Equipment Operator, Oberlin

**Colby Menagh**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Norton

### District Four

**Joseph Birdsong**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Mound City

**Dakota Hall**, Equipment Operator, Louisburg

**Chad Hare**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Eureka

**Joshua Lyons**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Garnett

**Bukola Oni**, Engineering Associate II, Pittsburg

### District Five

**Frank Hanks Jr.**, Equipment Operator, Wichita

**Robert Madison**, Equipment Operator, Kinsley

**Quinten Stokes**, Engineering Associate I, Wichita

**Alexander Sullivan**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Wichita

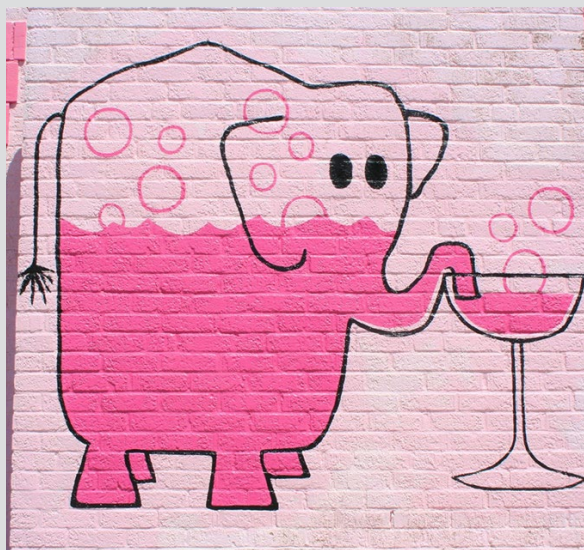
**Jacob Titus**, Equipment Mechanic, Winfield

**James Tonn**, Mechanic I, Hutchinson

### District Six

**Adam Blau**, Equipment Operator, Scott City

## KANSAS SNAPSHOTS



*Murals continue to pop up on buildings around the state as a way for communities to beautify their spaces. A pink elephant graces the side of a business in Yates Center, while a Welcome to Kansas mural greets visitors along U.S. 40 in Weskan. Photos by Neil Croxton, Salina and Lisa Mussman, Norton*