

# TRANS LINES

Monthly Publication of the Kansas Department of Transportation

January 2024

## ALL ABOARD!

### BIL funds set stage for return of Heartland Flyer to Kansas

*The Heartland Flyer was selected by the Federal Railroad Administration to receive funding for a Service Development Plan. Courtesy photo.*

The Heartland Flyer is destined to fly again. The proposed extension of Amtrak's Heartland Flyer passenger rail corridor into Kansas was selected by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to receive up to \$500,000 for the development of a Service Development Plan. With the announcement, the reopening of this critical passenger rail connection is now in line for future FRA funding to complete the project.

The Heartland Flyer corridor would expand Amtrak's existing passenger rail service between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City, extending north to Wichita and then Newton. It would include new station stops in the Oklahoma cities of Edmond, Perry and Ponca City, as well as Kansas stops in Arkansas City, Wichita and Newton.

This is big news for Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas travelers. Discontinued in 1979, the Heartland Flyer extension would re-connect Oklahoma and Kansas communities north to the national Amtrak network via the Southwest Chief. The Southwest Chief currently stops in Newton on its cross-county route connecting Los Angeles and Chicago. Among the letters of support for Heartland Flyer funding were the cities of Shawnee in northeast Kansas and Dodge City in the southwest, emphasizing the statewide significance of reopening this passenger rail corridor.

"The extension of the Heartland Flyer Passenger Rail would further connect Kansans to Oklahoma City and North Central Texas, unlocking business, educational and cultural opportunities and enabling our neighbors to the south to add to the Kansas economy," said Governor Laura Kelly.

Funding to advance the Heartland Flyer corridor is a direct result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Nationwide as part of BIL, \$1.8 billion has been allocated for new rail corridor planning in the next five years. In this recent funding cycle, the FRA announced \$365 million will go to 69 corridor selections across 44 states through the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program, which will drive future passenger rail expansion.

KDOT submitted the Corridor ID Program application for the Heartland Flyer corridor in partnership with the Oklahoma and Texas departments of transportation. KDOT has completed a scope, schedule, cost estimate and other preliminary staging. This advance work, combined with ongoing support of state and local governments, significantly strengthened the three-state application and has advanced the Heartland Flyer extension into the FRA funding pipeline.

**374** 2023 Kansas traffic  
crash deaths

**↓ 8.8%**

Compared to 1/1/22 - 12/31/22  
Preliminary data as of 1/2/24



# let's talk.

Transportation Secretary Calvin Reed

**H**appy New Year's! I hope everyone was able to celebrate the holidays and enjoy time with friends and family.

As we step into 2024, I would like to take a moment to look back at 2023 and a few of the notable accomplishments for KDOT:

- **Continued to deliver the IKE program.** In June, we wrapped up year three of the IKE Transportation program. During this last year, KDOT let nearly \$700 million in construction projects. The warm, dry weather across the state allowed for contractors to get a lot done – nearly \$1.1 billion in contract payments were made in 2023. KDOT also announced an additional \$350 million worth of projects to be added to our Expansion/Modernization Construction pipeline as well as the two remaining projects for the T-WORKS program.
- **Decreased highway fatalities.** For the first time in five years, Kansas saw a decrease in traffic fatalities in 2022. Continued focus on safety culture within the Agency and with the Drive to Zero Coalition has continued that momentum into 2023, where the preliminary numbers **indicate an 8.8% decrease in fatalities compared to 2022.**
- **Delivered Local Consult.** In October 2023, KDOT held eight in-person public meetings across the state and one virtual meeting, with nearly 1,400 people in attendance. In these

meetings we discussed regional priorities and discussed nearly \$9 billion worth of highway projects to be added to our Development Pipeline. As part of Local Consult, KDOT surveyed the public about our services. Nearly 57% rated satisfaction as “Good” or “Very Good.” While still room for improvement, this represents a 14% increase compared to just a few years back.

- **Revamped Recruitment Efforts.** I have been very excited to see what our new recruiting team has been able to accomplish in just a few short months. They have attended over 40 career fairs at colleges, technical colleges and high schools across the region making over 1,800 connections, getting 750 resumes and an uptick in applicants and new hires. I look forward to seeing continued momentum as we build our KDOT team.

- **Fiscal/Accounting accomplishment.** This year, KDOT Bureau of Fiscal Services was recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for 35 consecutive years of Excellence in Financial Reporting.

Over the course of the last year in this role, I have been amazed not just by the amount of work we do as an agency, but how diverse the work is. Here's to a successful 2023 and looking forward to a prosperous 2024. Thanks for all you do to keep Kansans moving.



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# Inside the **LINES**



## **What sort of duties do you have at work?**

I plan and coordinate tasks for my crew. I also coordinate with neighboring subareas to offer assistance or ask for assistance since we are shorthanded.

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

I enjoy using our equipment. We have some pretty nice equipment, and it's exciting to operate. I enjoy visiting my crew every morning and getting caught up on current events over a cup of coffee.

## **What kind of music do you like?**

I enjoy classic rock, or really anything before the turn of the century. Everything nowadays is just mashed potatoes.

## **What's your favorite food?**

I'm partial to beef. I really like a good ribeye steak.

## **What's your favorite movie?**

At first thought I would say "Lonesome Dove," but then I would have to go with the entire series of "Centennial." It's just a great story of American history.

## **What's something you're proud of?**

I'm proud of my wife and three daughters. They see to it my cows get fed during snowstorms when I'm in plowing.

## **Do you have any hidden talents or hobbies?**

I love to hunt and fish. My girls and I enjoy calling coyotes in the wintertime. In the summer, we enjoy going to the big lake and fishing for big blue catfish.

## **Do you have any pets?**

I have two dogs, Buddy and Daisy. I'd have to say all my cows too.

## **What's something people might not know about you?**

For years I've operated the clock and scoreboard for all of South Central High School's home football and basketball games.



## **What sort of duties do you have at work?**

I provide technical guidance and administration for highway construction and other projects (preconstruction conferences with contractors, utilities, county and city personnel and construction projects in the four-counties). I also prepare work schedules and make sure documentation and testing is finalized to substantiate contract payments.

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

All the people I encounter. They are a very diverse group, and much can be learned from them.

## **What kind of music do you like?**

I am eclectic, but I am most fond of classic country/western and classic rock.

## **What's your favorite food?**

What? I have to pick one? I suppose carne feliz (fajita steak).

## **What's your favorite movie?**

"Raiders of the Lost Ark."

## **What's something you're proud of?**

My children and the adults they have become. And of course, my grandson!

## **Do you have any hidden talents or hobbies?**

Hunting, fishing, camping, recoil therapy; anything that involves spending time with my family in nature.

## **Do you have any pets?**

Four dogs: Festy (Shih Tzu), Belle (Lab mix), Lu (German Shepherd) and Athena (Bulldog mix)

## **What's something people might not know about you?**

I am an active member of the Kansas Muzzleloading Association. I have been an officer of our local black powder club for the past 15 years. I am an advocate for the education of the early history of the western United States and the lifestyle particularly between the early 1700s and 1840 (the heyday of the fur-trapping era).



# Safe at home

Kansas communities step up to improve roadway safety

*The City of Independence was one of 48 implementation grants and will receive \$1.3 million in federal funds to put in place proven safety countermeasures from its adopted safety action plan. Photo courtesy of the City of Independence*

**S**tand up and be recognized, City of Independence. You, too, Paola. And Emporia. And Gray County. And 34 other Kansas cities, counties and agencies. All are to be commended for taking the initiative to secure federal and state funding to improve safety on their communities' streets and roadways.

Kansas fared exceptionally well in 2023 in submitting successful applications for federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) funding. In this first year of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) program, 38 Kansas communities received funding; 19 in December, seven in October and 12 in February. The combined total is nearly \$14.8 million in federal funds, \$3 million in state contribution and \$743,00 in local match contribution.

"SS4A is instrumental in Kansas because we have such a vast local road network in the state, and most of our severe injury crashes happen on the local road network," said Vanessa Spartan, KDOT's Chief of Transportation Safety. "Between funding and resources made available through the Cost-Share Program and the Kansas Infrastructure Hub, local

agencies in Kansas are competing nationally, and it's getting national attention."

Case in point is the City of Independence. While most recipients' SS4A applications were for Planning and Demonstration activities, Independence is one of only 48 successful Implementation grants announced nationally in the latest round of SS4A awards. Independence will receive nearly \$1.3 million in federal funds to implement proven safety countermeasures recommended in its previously adopted safety action plan.

Spartan said many of the local entities applying for SS4A funds have no long-range safety planning guide or their current plan is decades old. She said having local and regional agencies making data-driven and safety-conscious investment decisions is "monumental" and will guide implementation for years to come.

Federal awards to Kansas communities ranged from \$100,000 to \$1.52 million. The list of successful SS4A applicants, several with multijurisdictional applications, from Kansas can be found [here](#).



*District Two staff work to clear the roads on Dec. 26. Photo by Ashley Perez, District Two*

## KDOT crews work holiday storm

Many KDOT crews spent time on and around Christmas clearing snow as well as treating bridges and highways to reduce the buildup of ice. The storm impacted different parts of the state, but most of the snow was received north of I-70.

I-70 was closed in Kansas for several hours in coordination with the Colorado DOT to allow for time to clear the roads from snow and crashed vehicles.

District Two Equipment Training Coordinator Phil Nelson operated the tow plow on the holiday. "I was proud to help motorists get to their Christmas destinations," he said.



# Weather stations help plan for winter conditions

By Tracy Statton  
District Five

When severe weather heads toward the state, KDOT field staff head toward a global weather station network to help make decisions regarding preparations for treatment and staffing.

“The Weather Sentry system utilizes the road weather station information to help provide a calibrated pavement forecast for each area,” said Dale Kirmer, Staff Engineer in the Bureau of Maintenance.

Fifty-three sites across the state help gather weather information about Kansas highways. According to the system’s website, the service provides accurate weather forecasts and real-time insights to help make informed decisions before, during and after weather events.

“The area superintendents and their staff can access the Weather Sentry product through the intranet or on their cell phone app to help plan and manage their response to a winter storm event,” Kirmer said.

The information is available to staff and the public via the KDOT website. The map shows all the station locations. Once you click on the site, it shows air temperature, the average wind speed, wind gust speed and direction. Info from the pavement sensors provides the surface condition, surface temperature and sub-surface temperature.

A more detailed page of district-specific information is available to employees via the KDOT intranet.

KDOT has been using Weather Sentry since 2000.

*Weather stations are placed throughout the state to provide weather information for specific locations. Courtesy photo.*



# What is Public Involvement?



**By Alicea Thompson**  
**Public Involvement Specialist**

**F**or KDOT to keep Kansas moving in the right direction, it's important our customers have a voice in where we're going and how we make it happen.

KDOT's Public Involvement team is at the forefront in fostering two-way communication between the public and the agency. The team wants Kansans to have the opportunity to get involved and to stay engaged with transportation projects and programs that impact their communities' accessibility, mobility, safety, commerce and overall quality of life.

Public involvement at KDOT is a proactive process where listening is the main component. KDOT takes steps to secure public input and then, as possible, incorporate that

feedback into a project, program or plan. This takes place in a variety of ways, including public open houses, social media, websites, mailers and more. Almost always there's a concentrated effort to inform and get input from affected property owners, local leaders and key stakeholders.

Coordinating such outreach requires extensive planning and execution. KDOT regularly works with project consultants and the agency's Program Management Consultant (PMC) to make sure all aspects of community outreach are carried out for the public to be able to both receive information and share ideas on projects that impact their community and region. Public Involvement is a two-way street that requires communication at every level.

It is KDOT's goal that Public Involvement works as a partnership between the project teams, the PMC and the public so informed and collaborative decisions are made.



## One step closer

The Kansas Turnpike is one step closer to becoming a cashless toll system. Construction of new toll zones, which started in 2021, wrapped up in mid-November. The last overhead gantry was installed at MM 151, I-335/KTA, near Admire. Technology equipment installation has already begun and will be ready to launch mid-2024. Until then, customers should continue to use the road as normal.



## Honoring troopers

In mid-December, Dobski and Associates Inc. hosted a grand opening for their new McDonald's at KTA's Topeka Service (I-70/KTA, MM 189) and unveiled the Trooper's Room. The room is dedicated to the fallen members of the Kansas Highway Patrol and intended to be used for a quiet place for on-duty troopers.

## Construction report

There are not many cones on the Turnpike right now, but the 2024 Construction Season is fast approaching. View the latest status of KTA's ongoing roadway projects in December's Construction Report.

For monthly construction updates delivered directly to your inbox, sign up for KTA's Construction News subscription on our website: <https://www.ksturnpike.com/communication>.



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**A**s 2024 begins, a group of 165 Kansans are thinking about more than just personal resolutions. The Kansas Legislature is getting ready to introduce and debate resolutions and bills to become state laws.

The 90-day session begins on Jan. 8 and concludes in late April or early May. 2024 is an election year, with all the legislative seats in the House and Senate up for election. This will have some impact on what bills are introduced and debated.

KDOT will be regularly attending several committee meetings to work with legislators on bills and resolutions that may have an impact on the agency. KDOT is actively involved with the Senate Transportation Committee, House Transportation Committee, House Transportation Public Safety Budget Committee, Senate Ways and Means Committee and House



**Joel Skelley**  
Division of Policy Director



**Catherine Magaña**  
Division of Policy

## During the legislative session, KDOT works with these committees:

- Senate Transportation
- House Transportation
- House Transportation Public Safety Budget
- Senate Ways and Means
- House Appropriations
- Senate Tax

Appropriations Committee. The agency also pays attention to bills and actions in the House and Senate Tax Committees.

Catherine Magaña and Joel Skelley, in KDOT's Policy Division, will attend many of these meetings. Several of the bills to be introduced and debated this session may have an impact on the agency. Magaña and Skelley will provide testimony to inform and educate the legislators of how the bill might affect KDOT.

"In our efforts to cover committees, provide testimony and respond to legislator inquiries, we may be reaching out to some of you for information that helps draft agency testimony and provides answers to legislator questions," Skelley said.

KDOT will soon launch a website to provide employees and partners another outlet to receive information on bills that impact the agency. Future articles on the legislative session will also be in upcoming editions of Translines.



# UNDER PRESSURE!

## Safety rides on tire care

Photo by KDOT Multimedia Services

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

There's an advertising slogan that's rings very true: "So much is riding on your tires."

There are many reasons why a tire can lose air. It is common in the fall and winter for tire pressures to fluctuate 1 psi (pounds per square inch) for every 10-degree drop in temperature.

Having the tire pressure warning light come on doesn't necessarily mean a tire is flat, but it is a good idea to pull over at a safe location to make sure one isn't rapidly losing air.

Driving on underinflated tires can affect fuel mileage and cause tire wear. (According to AAA, properly inflated tires can save as much as 11 cents per gallon and can extend tire life by up to 4,700 additional miles.)

Low tire pressure can also make the vehicle harder to steer

and tires more prone to blowouts.

The correct pressure for a vehicle's tires can be found on a sticker inside the driver's side door. It gives the manufacturer's recommendation for getting the best fuel mileage and tire wear for that vehicle.

The air pressure listed on the tire's sidewall is the maximum pressure the tire will safely support. While that's good to know, it's not good to follow. Use the door sticker guidance for the best results.

It's estimated one in four vehicles has at least one under-inflated tire. Low tire warning systems have been required on all new cars since 2007, but it is important to periodically check the tire pressure manually because tires can still be underinflated or overinflated even if the warning light doesn't come on.

A good rule of thumb is manual checks monthly and before long trips. And don't forget to check the spare tire.

For Your Family and Mine.

## KDOT projects recognized



*The Kansas Asphalt Pavement Association presented awards at its 67th annual conference on Dec. 7 in Lawrence. The Director award recognizes the top project across the state and was given to the K-14 project in Rice and Reno counties. Pictured are, from left, KAPA Director Dan Scherschligt; Eric Smith, KDOT; Saul Gamboa, APAC; Neisha Vetter, KDOT; and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber. Top projects in each district are also selected - information and photos can be found on the district pages. All KAPA photos by KDOT Multimedia Services*





*Pavement replacement work is taking place on the frontage roads adjacent to U.S. 24 in Topeka. The local roads will carry U.S. 24 traffic in later phases of the reconstruction project. Photos by KDOT Multimedia Services*



## U.S. 24 project will improve roadway, driver safety

**By Kate Craft**

Nearly 6 miles of U.S. 24 in Shawnee and Jefferson counties will be reconstructed over the next four years as part of a \$64 million project that includes full pavement replacement, bridge work and intersection safety improvements.

Since work began this summer, efforts have focused on repairing the adjacent frontage roads in north Topeka. Traffic from U.S. 24 will later be shifted to the roads while the highway is reconstructed between Kansas Avenue and Goldwater Road.

A 2018 traffic study found that the urban section's fatal crash rate was 150% higher than statewide comparisons. Access management

improvements that are planned for the area's intersections are expected to reduce conflict points by approximately 70%, which should reduce crash frequency and severity.

The project's rural section extends to Muddy Creek near Grantville in Jefferson County. In addition to replacing pavement, five bridges along the corridor will be replaced or repaired, and two bridges located just east of Goldwater Road will be removed entirely. That area of U.S. 24



*Trees are removed along U.S. 24 to prepare for upcoming work on the project.*

will then be lowered roughly 15 feet, which will improve sight distance and drivers' safety.

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



### **KAPA Award**

*District One's first place overlay award from KAPA was presented to the KDOT secondary routes project in Nemaha County. From left are Dan Scherschligt, KAPA; Jake Lauer, Hall Brothers Inc.; Chris Rottinghaus, KDOT; Kirk Pfannenstiel, consultant; and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber.*

## Open house focuses on bridge replacement project

By Delaney Tholen

Groundhouse Coffee in downtown Gardner drew a crowd on Dec. 5 for a KDOT public open house.

The open house provided information for the project to replace the existing South Moonlight Road over I-35 bridge. Project work will include realignment of 183rd Street at I-35. Currently, the project is in the pre-construction preliminary design phase, and construction is scheduled to begin in 2026.

Following meetings with impacted property owners and elected officials, members of the public were invited to view project materials and ask questions of the project team.



On the right, Ryan Bowman and Jeff Sims, Road Design Squad Leaders, discuss the Moonlight Road/I-35 bridge replacement project with open house guests. Photo by Delaney Tholen



### Around the district

Above, Drake Jennings, Area Maintenance Superintendent, discusses snowplow operations with a TV crew in the Olathe area shop. Photo by Delaney Tholen

Left, staff photos adorn a tree the area team made for Ryan Barrett, Bonner Springs Metro Engineer. Photo by Amy Pope, Bonner Springs



## District One RCUT project nears completion

By Delaney Tholen

With utility delays impacting project phasing and extending the expected completion date, the Restricted Crossing U-Turn (RCUT) project at the U.S. 73 (K-7)/Parallel Parkway intersection reached a milestone last month.

On Dec. 22, traffic flow switches were completed, and all U.S. 73 (K-7) lanes in the project area fully opened in Wyandotte County.

Reconstruction of the intersection, which included grading, concrete surfacing, seeding, lighting, traffic signalization, signing and pavement marking, has been mostly completed.

The final phase of the \$11.1 million RCUT project, which began in September 2022, includes permanent seeding, permanent signing, erosion control work, traffic signal work and removal of crossovers between lanes.

While the remaining work is being completed, U.S. 73 (K-7)/Parallel Parkway turning movements will be limited, with some daily lane closures. Miles Excavating, of Basehor, is the project contractor.

Weather permitting, the project is on schedule to be finished this spring.



**Block by block**

*KDOT employees from the Ellsworth Subarea and District Special Crew work together to place concrete blocks on a wing wall along K-14 in Lincoln County on Dec. 19 and 20. The concrete blocks will support the wing wall from caving in. Photos by Donnie Burkholder, Salina, and Tim Hays, Ellsworth*



**Keeping the wheels turning**

*KDOT mechanics work hard to keep vehicles and equipment running properly. On Dec. 18, District employees Stewart Graves, Equipment Mechanic Senior, and Max Bell, Shop Supervisor, repaired electrical wiring on a truck in Salina. Photo by Ashley Perez*



**KAPA Award**

*The K-14 project in Ellsworth County received District Two's first place overlay award from KAPA. From left are Dan Scherschligt, KAPA; Zach Breen, APAC; Justin Kunc, KDOT; and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber.*



## K-383 reopens in Norton County

By **Lisa Mussman**

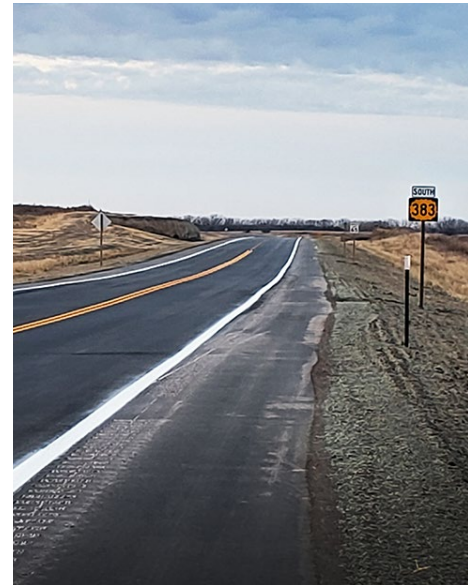
A portion of K-383 has reopened following completion of a \$15.3 million modernization project in Norton County.

Traffic began flowing again on Dec. 12 on the 6-mile stretch between the east U.S. 36 junction and Alma. KDOT closed the highway in March to begin the improvements, which included reconstructing and widening the road into a 24-foot mainline surface with 6-foot paved shoulders. New guardrail, drainage structures and rumble strips were also added.

“We appreciated the public’s patience with us during the closure and construction,” said District Construction

Engineer Jim Riener. “There have been a lot of good comments coming in about how happy people are with the road.”

The project was the second of three phases to modernize 26 miles of K-383 in Norton and Phillips counties. Phase I was constructed in 2022 on the easternmost 6 miles in Phillips County. Phase III will consist of the remaining 14 miles from Alma to east of Long Island. That project is currently scheduled to go to construction in 2026 and will officially mark the completion of the T-WORKS transportation program.



*Wider driving lanes and expanded shoulders highlight the updated portion of K-383 in Norton County. Photo by Lisa Mussman*



### **Congratulations**

*Randy Balluch, Equipment Operator Senior, WaKeeney Subarea, retired Dec. 9 after more than 44 years of state service. He began his career with KDOT in October 1979 as an Equipment Operator II. Photo by KDOT staff*



### **Welcome to KDOT**

*Human Resource Professional Ruth Shearer (standing) presents information during New Employee Orientation in December. Each district has started holding the sessions monthly to better support employees by providing them with employment-related information in a timelier manner. Photo by Lisa Mussman*



### **KAPA Award**

*District Three’s first place overlay award from KAPA went to the I-70 project in Gove and Logan counties. From left are Dan Scherschligt, KAPA; Brayden Jones, Venture Corp.; Darian Blackwell, Venture Corp.; Linda Liester, KDOT; and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber.*



## Memorial signs placed on U.S. 69 in Linn County

By **Priscilla Petersen**

On Dec. 6, almost 82 years to the day after he sacrificed his life for his country, signs designating a section of U.S. 69 as the AMM2c Walter Scott Brown Memorial Highway were posted at the K-52 north and south junctions in Linn County.

Aviation Machinists' Mate 2nd class Walter Scott Brown was from Pleasanton. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in January 1940. Brown worked on seaplanes at the Naval Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Oahu, Hawaii. On the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese navy attacked Pearl Harbor and several other military bases, including Kaneohe Bay. Without regard for his own life, Brown, who was trained to fly seaplanes, got into a plane and was killed as Japanese attack planes strafed the base.

Brown was commended by the Commander in Chief of the



*Crews from the Mound City Subarea post one of the AMM2c Walter Scott Brown Memorial Highway signs on U.S. 69. Courtesy photo*

United States Fleet for his bravery. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. In his honor, the Navy destroyer escort ship Walter S Brown (DE-258) was put into service on Jan. 10, 1943.

"I firmly believe that since the United States Navy recognized this hero from Kansas for his bravery and sacrifice by naming a ship in his name, it would be fitting for his home state to recognize his bravery and sacrifice by naming a portion of U.S. Highway 69 in his honor as well," testified Kevin Barnes of Yates Center before the Kansas Legislature passed the Brown memorial highway bill in 2022.

Last summer Brown's descendants gathered privately to dedicate the

U.S. 69 highway section. The KDOT Bureau of Support Services created a smaller replica of the memorial sign for his family as the signs were not yet available for unveiling.

## KDOT welcomes Area Engineer at Pittsburg



Jeff Fischer has been named Area Engineer at Pittsburg KDOT. Fischer, who lives in Fort Scott, holds bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering

from the University of South Florida.

He previously worked in research and as a teacher, and most recently was the Learning Manager for Kiewit Power Constructors at Lenexa. During his time at Kiewit, Fischer put together a structured retention program for college graduates in engineering and construction management.

As a former member of the Bourbon County Commission, Fischer said he was in part drawn to apply at KDOT for the "public service aspect."



### KAPA Award

*The U.S. 400 project in Greenwood County was the recipient of District Four's first place overlay award from KAPA. From left are Dan Scherschligt, KAPA; Saul Gamboa, APAC; Troy Howard, KDOT; and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber.*



### Retirement Ahead!

*Joe Engle, Pittsburg Area Crew Supervisor, retired with over 33 years of service to KDOT. He, wife Joyce, children and grandchildren display his retirement cake during a reception on Dec. 8. Photo by KDOT staff*



A 7-mile stretch of U.S. 169 in southern Neosho County reopened to traffic late on Dec. 21. The section, from Thayer south to the Neosho-Labette county line, had been closed since mid-July. Improvements include new passing lanes and mainline concrete pavement. Clarkson Construction Co. was primary contractor on the \$15 million project. Photo by Priscilla Petersen



DISTRICT FIVE  
**SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS**

**District Engineer:** Nick Squires  
**Public Affairs Manager:** Tim Potter  
Tracy Statton



## KDOT, electric cooperative host meeting on U.S. 160 project

By **Tim Potter**

About 42 people attended a meeting hosted by KDOT and Sumner-Cowley Electric Cooperative about a project to improve U.S. 160 between I-35 and Oxford.

The meeting, held Dec. 5 at Cowley College Sumner Campus in Wellington, focused on property owners who could be affected by right-of-way acquisition or utility relocation needed for the construction.

The modernization project includes shoulder widening, culvert extension and pavement rehabilitation within the 9-mile section of U.S. 160 between the Turnpike interchange and Oxford. The project, in the IKE Construction Pipeline, is expected to begin in the spring of 2025 and be completed in two construction seasons, in 2027. During the work, which will be done in



*District Five Engineer Nick Squires addresses attendees at the U.S. 160 meeting in Wellington. Photo by Tim Potter*

several phases, one lane of traffic will remain open.

The key project benefit: The heavily traveled corridor will receive 10-foot shoulders; the current shoulders are narrow.

After a presentation by KDOT and Sumner-Cowley, representatives of the agency and the cooperative were available to answer questions.

## STAFF NOTES



Chase Shelby is the new District Five Safety Specialist. Shelby was an Equipment Operator Senior with the Hutchinson Subarea Crew before coming to the Division of Safety. He has been with KDOT since 2020. His first day in his new position was Dec. 11.

DISTRICT FIVE/SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS



**U.S. 54 RCUT project**

Concrete paving work continues on U.S. 54's mainlines in Goddard west of Wichita. The new concrete will provide two new driving lanes on U.S. 54. This is part of the RCUT (restricted crossing U-Turn intersection) project taking place. Photo by Tracy Statton



**Work continues on the Gold Project Phase 2B**

North Junction to I-135/K-96 interchange on I-135 and K-96 in Wichita. It will provide a direct link for eastbound K-96 from northbound I-235 and southbound I-135, new westbound K-96 ramps to I-135, and other new ramps at the K-96 and I-135 interchange. Photos by Tracy Statton



**KAPA Award**

The U.S. 56 project from Larned to Kinsley received District Five's first place overlay award from KAPA. From left are Dan Scherschligt, KAPA; Ben Sanders, Venture Corp.; Neisha Vetter, KDOT; and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber.



**Shining bright**

On Dec. 9, Area Three employees took part in a Christmas lights parade in Winfield. They decorated one of their trucks for the occasion. That's Administrative Assistant Kassi Adams walking along with the truck during the parade. Photo by Scott Kent, Winfield

**Filling up**  
At right, Wichita Metro employees gathered together to enjoy their annual Christmas dinner on Dec. 15. Photo by Tracy Statton





**U.S. 54 tie-in**

U.S. 54 recently received a boost with the four-lane expansion in Oklahoma that was connected to the Kansas portion of U.S. 54 in November. The Liberal Construction Office assisted by installing traffic control devices in Seward County when the tie-in took place. This new tie-in has made nearly all of U.S. 54 a four-lane highway, stretching from Dalhart, Texas, to the east side of the Cimarron River Bridge in Kansas, now known as the Jack Taylor Memorial Bridge. Photo by Yazmin Moreno

**U.S. 83 passing lane**

The passing lane project on U.S. 83 in Seward County is nearing completion. This project involves resurfacing, adding passing lanes and replacing the Cimarron River Bridge guard rail. Photo by Yazmin Moreno



**KAPA Award**

The first place overlay award from KAPA for District Six was presented to the U.S. 54 project in Meade County. From left are Dan Scherschligt, KAPA; Doug Werth, APAC; Joel Valdez, KDOT; and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber.



**Then and now**

Looking back at a photo from the District Six, Area One, Construction Office in the mid-2000s and a photo of the same construction office more than 20 years later, there are two familiar employees. First, the historical photo includes Leroy Koehn, back row left, who is now the District One Engineer. Second, the current photo includes Craig Schlott, second from right, who is the Area Construction Engineer. He's also in the historical photo, next to Koehn in the back row.

**Celebrating the season**

During the holiday season, District Six employees came together for a potluck to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas. The event provided an opportunity for colleagues to take a break to spend time enjoying the food and each other's company. Photo by Yazmin Moreno





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## New hires – November

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### Headquarters

**Andrew Van Fossen**, Engineering Technician Associate, Bureau of Construction & Materials

**Haylee Williams**, Administrative Assistant, Bureau of Human Resources

**James Ford**, Network Service Technician III, Bureau of Maintenance

**Jami Rogers**, Administrative Specialist, Bureau of Human Resources

**Wayne Blackburn**, Professional Civil Engineer I, Bureau of Right of Way

**Sean McGimpsey**, Public Service Executive I, Division of Aviation

**Shande Chapman**, Accountant II, Bureau of Fiscal Services

### District One

**Anthony Broyles**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Leavenworth

**Arberdella Hurd**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, 101 Gage

**Blake Johnston**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Lawrence

**Colton Winsor**, Equipment Operator, Alma

**Connor McVay**, Engineering Technician Associate, Wamego

**Donald Schoenborn**, Engineering Technician Associate, Olathe

**Grace Pond**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Lawrence

**Jacob Brown**, Equipment Operator, Topeka-Oakland Shop

**Kelsey Baxter**, Administrative Assistant, Wamego

**Kristopher Williams**, Equipment Operator, 101 Gage

### District Two

**Alfred Kohls**, Equipment Operator, Salina

**Arthur Schottel**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, Washington

**Brian Hartzell**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, Minneapolis

**Bryan Loberg**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, Washington

**Drake Poley**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Clay Center

**Eric Isaacson**, Equipment Operator, Belleville

**Kyle Willmann**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, Clay Center

**Nichole Stephens**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Concordia

**Rodney Rowley**, SNICE Seasonal Temp, Junction City

### District Three

**Grant Johnson**, Engineering Technician Associate, Hays

**John Williams**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, Atwood

**Karl Hafer**, Equipment Operator, Goodland

**Matthew Minchow**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, Goodland

**Robert Gittinger**, Utility Worker, Goodland

**Ross Breese**, SNICE Seasonal Temp, Hill City

**Turaj Benford**, Engineering Technician Associate, Oakley

### District Four

**David Inlow III**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Louisburg

### District Five

**Hunter Gray**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Kingman

**James Schiefen**, Engineering Technician Associate, Pratt

**Mckenzi Hoover**, Administrative Assistant, Pratt

**Michael Cadavid**, Utility Worker, Wichita

**Raymond McKee**, Equipment Operator, Anthony

**Russell Howard**, SNICE Seasonal Temp, Larned

**Tina Powell**, SNICE Seasonal Equipment Operator, Wichita

**Tristan Denio**, Engineering Technician Associate, Pratt

### District Six

**Johnathan McGinn**, Equipment Operator Trainee, Ness City

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## Condolences

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Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Ulyss “Paul” Reed**, who passed away on Dec. 7 in Topeka. Reed started in 1977 and was an Engineering Technician in the Bureau of Traffic Engineering. He retired in 1996, after nearly 20 years of service.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Dale Woodruff**, who passed away on Nov. 24 in Dodge City. Woodruff started at KDOT in 1949 in the Meade office. After more than 40 years of service, he retired in 1990 as an Engineering Technician Senior in the Dodge City office.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **James Lorimor**, who passed away on Nov. 20, 2023, in Dighton. Lorimor started at KDOT in 1963. He was the Equipment Shop Superintendent in Garden City. Lorimor worked for more than 32 years, retiring from the agency in 1995.

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## Milestones – January

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### 50 years

**Stephen Burnett**, Senior Bridge Engineer, Topeka

### 40 years

**Galen Ludlow**, Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Ness City

### 35 years

**Theresa Havenstein**, Research Analyst III, Topeka

### 30 years

**Jason Brown**, Engineering Technician Specialist, Hutchinson

**Kelly Broxterman**, Public Service Administrator II, Topeka

**Michael Orth**, Hydraulics Engineer, Lawrence

**Randel Scarbrough**, Right of Way Property Appraiser II, Topeka

**Dean Jay Jr.**, Project Engineer Associate, La Crosse

**Bret Mathias**, Production Technician, Topeka

### 20 years

**Ashley Evans**, Procurement Officer III, Topeka

**Joel Smith**, Construction Engineer Associate, Overland Park

### 15 years

**Terence Augustine**, Equipment Operator, Hays

**Timothy Hill**, Equipment Operator Specialist, Home

### 10 years

**David Ferencik**, Engineering Technician Specialist, Sedan

**Edward Lewis**, Equipment Operator, Eureka

**Kimberley Ortega**, Research Analyst III, Topeka

**Christopher Rottinghaus**, Construction Engineer Associate, Seneca

**Jesse Wallace**, Equipment Operator Senior, Winfield

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## Retirees

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*The following employees will retire on Feb. 1.*

### Headquarters

**Don Benyshek**, Engineering Technician, Right of Way

**Darlene Osterhaus**, Research Analyst III, Bureau of Multimodal Transportation

### District Five

**Michael Longshaw**, Wichita Metro Engineer, Wichita

### District Six

**Rodney Crone**, Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Garden City

*The following employees retired on Jan. 1.*

### Headquarters

**Charles Espinoza**, Engineering Technician Specialist, Bureau of Research

### District Four

**Richard Tyner**, Equipment Operator, Yates Center

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## Promotions/transfers – November

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### Headquarters

**Ahmed Chaudhry**, Industrial Hygienist, Division of Safety

**Andrew Spencer**, Bridge Management Engineer (PCE II), Bureau of Structures and Geotech

**Diana Rose**, IT Project Manager, Office of Information Technology Services

**Dovey LaPee**, Data Warehouse Supervisor, Office of Information Technology Services

**Emily Brown**, Attorney III, Office of Chief Counsel

**Gregory Grayson**, Administrative Assistant, Bureau of Construction & Materials

**Kylee Sims**, Public Service Executive, Division of Project Delivery

**Merle Kaufmann**, Engineering Technician Midpoint, Bureau of Structures and Geotech

**Robert Dressman**, Security Supervisor, Office of Information Technology Services

**Stephen Bass**, Assistant Bureau Chief (PCE III), Bureau of Road Design

### District One

**Evan Wright**, Equipment Operator, Edwardsville

**Jeffrey Ebers**, Equipment Operator Senior, Olathe

**Joseph Taylor**, Office Coordinator (ET), Olathe

**Matthew Choate**, Engineering Associate III, Olathe

**Micheal House**, Equipment Operator, Topeka

### District Two

**Brooke Zech**, Engineering Technician, Salina

**Jerry Hurde**, Equipment Operator, Salina

**John Pollard**, Equipment Operator, Salina

**Lance Wilton**, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Lincoln

**Leticia Calvillo**, Engineering Technician, Salina

**Miles Bauer**, Equipment Operator, Mankato

**Rebekah Mullen**, Equipment Operator Midpoint, Salina

### District Three

**Kenneth Gibson**, Equipment Operator, Norton

**Shaun Sloan**, Equipment Operator Specialist, Grainfield

### District Four

**Branden Dulin**, Engineering Technician, Garnett

**Donnie Tate**, Engineering Technician, Pittsburg

**Stephen Winder**, Engineering Technician, Chanute

### District Five

**Bryan Werner**, Equipment Operator Specialist, Wichita

### District Six

**James Beesley**, Engineering Technician Supervisor, Garden City

**Jimmy Eagan**, Equipment Operator, Jetmore