New East Topeka Interchange now open

Interchange brings together KDOT, KTA, City of Topeka, Shawnee County

By Kim Stich

The new East Topeka Interchange project, after almost six years and more than $90 million, opened to traffic August 1. KDOT, the KTA, the City of Topeka, and Shawnee County joined together to fund one of the single largest transportation investments in our state’s history.

“This interchange is an excellent example of four organizations working together to provide a safer, more efficient transportation system for all motorists,” said Secretary E. Dean Carlson. “Whether you live in Topeka or are traveling through the area, motorists for years to come will reap the benefits of this new interchange.”

Secretary E. Dean Carlson

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This project will be a living testament to multijurisdictional cooperation and achievement. The economic future of Topeka and northeast Kansas will be enhanced by this investment,” said Michael L. Johnston, Kansas Turnpike Authority President/CEO.

The new interchange will:
◆ Connect the Oakland Expressway to I-70 and the Kansas Turnpike;
◆ Improve the I-70 alignment in east Topeka;
◆ Include a folded diamond interchange at Rice Road/I-70 with roundabouts at the ramp terminals as well as a folded

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Put the Brakes on Fatalities

I’d like you to imagine the unthinkable for a moment. Imagine if a fully loaded 737 jetliner crashed every day of the year killing everybody aboard. A grisly scenario, I know, but I’d like you to think about what the result would be. My guess is that we would all be demanding that something be done to improve the safety of air travel and that many of us would cease traveling by air until something was done.

Yes, yes, you’re saying, but something like that would never happen. Yet, incredible as it may seem, something like that does happen every day. I’m talking about highway fatalities. According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) figures, an average of 42,000 people a year died on our nation’s highways between 1994 and 1999. This averages out to about 115 people a day - about the same number that would be killed in that hypothetical plane crash. But last time I looked, not many of us were refusing to drive on the highways, and few of us seem to be clamoring that something be done.

Well, it’s time to start clamoring and I’m pleased to say that KDOT is playing a lead role in doing just that. Larry Emig, of the Bureau of Local Projects, has been working in his role with the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) to create a “Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day.” The goal is to establish a day similar in concept to the Great American Smoke Out or Earth Day - a day where people are hit with messages that make them think about an issue.

The idea is simple enough: focus attention on a problem, make people think about it, and give them information they can use to help solve it. The efforts of the NSPE have paid off and the first “Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day” will take place this October 10. The messages will be aimed at three key areas of highway safety: the driver, the vehicle, and the roadway. Events will take place all across the country and it’s hoped this will become an annual event.

More than 40 organizations, both public and private, have now joined in sponsoring this event. To name just a few, they include Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), American Automobile Association (AAA) and The Road Information Project (TRIP).

You’ll be hearing more about this event in the days ahead, but you don’t have to wait until then to start making a difference. You know the right things to do when you’re driving, and our “Kansas Driving: Safe. Not Sorry” is helping make sure everyone knows. So drive safely, and help put the brakes on fatalities every day you’re on the road.

Calendar of Events

September 3 - State employees off for Labor Day holiday.

September 7-16 - 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. - KDOT booth at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson. Booth located in the Eisenhower Building.

September 11 - 11 a.m., KDOT Employees’ Council Meeting, Seventh Floor Conference Room, Docking State Office Building.

September 12 - 2 p.m. - Construction Bid Letting, Wichita Airport Hilton.

September 13-14 - Highway Advisory Commission meeting - District Four field trip.

October 2-3 - KDOT Operations meeting at the Holiday Inn in Great Bend
The origin-destination study that took place around Lawrence in June was necessary to determine future transportation needs in the area. Providing traffic control for those doing the study was an important job. This team effort received the Example of Excellence award for the second quarter of 2001.

“On very short notice, four Subareas and the Area Two Maintenance crew were given the assignment to provide traffic control for the origin-destination survey,” said Bob Bowden, Area Two Engineer. “This consisted of simultaneous lane drops in both directions, at three separate four-lane locations.”

Maintaining safety while accomplishing the goal was a priority. Traffic control was also necessary from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day. “With tremendous cooperation between crew members, we were able to consolidate our resources and coordinate manpower to accomplish this assignment,” Bowden said. Due to the short notice, work schedules had to be significantly altered. Many people made personal sacrifices to arrive in Lawrence before sunrise, or return home at late hours.

Employees also had to make last-minute changes due to the weather. When a thunderstorm hit, Bowden said they had to quickly remove the traffic control and reset everything after the storm passed.

For their efforts, Secretary E. Dean Carlson presented a plaque to the group and certificates to each person at a gathering on August 14 at the Area Office in Osage City.


This was the second group selected in the Example of Excellence program. The award is given quarterly with the third quarter nominations due to the Office of Transportation Information by September 30. -K.S.

Crew members from four Subareas and the Area Two office are honored in the Employee Recognition program.

Area Two Engineer Bob Bowden (right) chats with Secretary E. Dean Carlson after the ceremony.

Electronic nomination forms now even more convenient

Division Directors, Bureau Chiefs, District Engineers, Area Engineers, and Subarea Supervisors are encouraged to nominate any group, team, or office that goes above the call of duty.

And now to make it even more convenient, nomination forms can be completed and submitted electronically on KDOT’s Intranet. Just go to the Forms Warehouse, and search for Form DOT 1204, Example of Excellence/Employee Recognition Form. Hard copies of the form are also available by calling Transportation Information at (785) 296-3585.
**KDOT conducting statewide road rallies**

KDOT wants to know what the public thinks about roadway features across the state. Answers to that question are being obtained through road rallies in each of KDOT’s six districts.

In April, KDOT conducted the first of six road rallies across Kansas that target input from Kansas residents and Special Interest Groups/Stakeholders. The remaining five road rallies are being organized for late summer. Each road rally covers a 45 to 60-mile course selected by KDOT managers and comprises a variety of segmented highway types and classifications geographically distributed across the state.

“The road rallies are supplemental to the KDOT external survey completed in December 2000,” said Ron McMurry, KDOT Strategic Planning Manager. “The rallies provide the public with the opportunity to tell us what it is they specifically like or dislike about our roadways.”

The District One course covered observations on 14 different sections including ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘D’ roadway classifications. The sections, varying in both design and condition, included K-7, K-10, I-35, US-56 and I-435. Rallies were held at three different times during the day allowing for collection of a solid demographic sampling.

KDOT provided existing technical data for each segment of the highway including: the type of surface/number of lanes, IRI (international roughness index or similar rating), pavement condition rating, width of shoulders, width of lanes, date of last striping/paint type, bridge width, traffic counts, and/or other data that is available.

Participants were asked to provide their perceived level of satisfaction with specific highway features such as pavement condition, smoothness, lane width, sight distance, shoulder condition, horizontal alignment, center striping, roadside striping, traffic flow, ease of getting on/off the highway, signage, landscaping, and width of bridges for each individual segment of the road rally.

‘The rallies provide the public with the opportunity to tell us what it is they specifically like or dislike about our roadways.’

Ron McMurry

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**AASHTO Highway Subcommittee on Construction meeting**

AASHTO delegates and their spouses had the opportunity to socialize and enjoy an evening meal at the Boathouse in Wichita on the opening night of the meeting.

At right, a meal at the fairgrounds in Hutchinson was followed by a visit to the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center on Wednesday night.

Dean Testa, Chief of Construction and Maintenance, delivers welcoming comments at the AASHTO Highway Subcommittee on Construction meeting August 5-10 in Wichita.
Step Back in Time

A Kansas Highway Commission booth at the Kansas State Free Fair provided the public safety-related information in September of 1956.
diamond interchange at US-40/K-4;
◆ Feature two new toll plaza facilities that have commuter parking areas and K-tag lanes.

“The project is the epitome of intergovernmental cooperation,” said Topeka Mayor Butch Felker. “It will be the catalyst for many economic development projects in Topeka.”

The project will have many advantages for people in Topeka and throughout northeast Kansas with:
◆ Improved traffic flow in the area;
◆ Reduced travel time;
◆ Decreased congestion;
◆ Local residents having improved access to the major corridors;
◆ Improved access to east Topeka through the Rice Road interchange to Croco Road;
◆ Economic development possibilities.

“The citizens of Shawnee County are excited about the completion of the East Topeka Interchange,” said Shawnee County Commission Chairman Vic Miller. “This project represents the best in intergovernmental cooperation and opens doors to development in a long neglected part of our community.”

While the project opened to traffic August 1, work on removing the existing KTA toll plaza and constructing the ramp and connections to the Rice Road/I-70 roundabouts will not be finished until late this fall. In addition, landscaping and seeding as well as work on other areas off the roadway will continue until late 2002.

The Hamm Companies of Perry is the prime contractor on the interchange project.
New interchange has tremendous advantages

Determining future transportation needs can be difficult, especially when city, county, state and turnpike roadways are all located in a small area in east Topeka. By taking all four agencies’ needs into consideration and combining them together into one big project, the new East Topeka Interchange will be a tremendous advantage for motorists in east Topeka.

Originally, the Oakland Expressway, that now stops at S.E. 6th Street, was eventually to be extended south and west to connect to I-70 and that was it – no direct connection to go east or west on the Turnpike and no access to Rice Road.

The original concept also did not allow the Kansas Turnpike room to expand and include new technology to assist motorists. Access for city and county roads to I-70 and the Turnpike would have been considered separately at some point in the future.

KDOT and the KTA decided to join forces and requested the City of Topeka and Shawnee County to join them. “Each entity was pursuing separate plans on how to solve transportation problems in this area,” said Steve King, KDOT Squad Leader in charge of design on the East Topeka Interchange. “The two agencies got together and developed a plan that would serve each other well along with the local streets and county roads in that area.”

City and county funds were predicated on a vote of taxpayers on August 6, 1996, to extend a quarter-cent sales tax. It passed by a large margin. “A lot of people wanted to see it done and they’re getting a good bang for their buck,” King said.

The total project cost was originally estimated at $98.6 million, but now it is expected to cost about $5 million less. The project funds are 50 percent from KDOT, 41 percent from the KTA, 4.5 percent from the City of Topeka and 4.5 percent from Shawnee County.

The East Topeka Interchange will feature several safety enhancements:
◆ Helping local and through traffic;
◆ Connecting the KTA with I-70 and the Oakland Expressway;
◆ Reducing congestion at the existing toll plaza by building an improved toll facility;
◆ Using roundabouts at the Rice Road/I-70 ramp terminals to handle the large volumes of traffic coming to and from I-70. -K.S.

Work far from over on East Topeka Interchange

The new East Topeka Interchange is open to traffic, but the project is far from complete. This fall, a major landscaping project will begin along the new roadways that will take more than a year to complete.

This landscaping project is one of the largest planting projects ever undertaken. Since some areas are inaccessible to mow, there will be numerous naturalized areas to help reduce maintenance needs and add beauty to the area.

Native grasses such as Little Blue Stem, Big Blue Stem and Side Oats Gramma as well as wildflowers including Grey Headed Coneflower, Pale Purple Coneflower and Purple Prairie Clover will be used throughout the project. Trees will be planted in several areas including along Rice Road and shrubs will be planted in the middle of the roundabouts.

The landscaping project will not affect traffic, but motorists are asked to use extra caution throughout the new interchange as highway workers and contractors will be working near the roadways. -K.S.
Teaching Grandma?

By Ron Kaufman

Albert Einstein has been quoted as saying “You do not really understand something unless you can explain it to your grandmother.” Albert Einstein is your quintessential smart person. He understood the speed of light and he understood the limits of the universe. I wonder, however, whether he would have understood speed limits. Some things just seem beyond normal human reason.

Still, speed limits exist and most drivers (85 percent) seem to follow them reasonably well. Drivers probably can’t tell you why they follow the speed limits. Most would probably say it’s just the law. If only we could get 85 percent compliance with seat belt use. When I first came to KDOT almost three years ago, I struggled to understand speed limits. At first, the very idea of the driving public having some influence over such an important matter seemed like anarchy. I recalled my past visits to New York City. New York is a corner of the universe where “speed” and “limits” do not seem to coexist. Eventually, I came to better understand speed limits, but I still struggle with trying to explain them to grandma. Clearly, I’m no Einstein.

One of the most challenging parts of our jobs is to try to explain such heady things to the people we serve. Public involvement is one part information, one part education, and one part involvement. Effective involvement depends on accurate information about the work we do and a certain amount of education to help reasonable people understand it. If people can’t understand what we do and if we seem to have no interest in helping them understand, we can become the target of their frustration. At the same time, we are less likely to appreciate our efforts unless they seem to understand our efforts. As a public servant you might appreciate not being the target of ill feelings, even if there’s no place for public involvement in your work. So, being able to adequately explain our work in understandable terms is important for all concerned.

How do we explain our work so others can understand it? Simply stated, try teaching your grandmother. Testing an explanation on another significant person works just as well. In a pinch, use your imagination and pretend that you are teaching your “inner public.” Humans are sublimely self-involved, so begin your explanation with your listener. People build knowledge and understanding on the foundation of things learned or experienced earlier in life. So, listen to their stories and ask questions to clarify what you hear. Only then will you know how to proceed. Draw from what you hear and break down your explanation into smaller ideas with similarities in everyday life. Once you have established some understanding with simple examples, you can start to build a more complex message. Always try to relate to your listener’s experiences and frequently check to see if they agree with or understand what you are saying. If the examples you use do not seem to match your listener’s experiences, you are likely to be misunderstood, so be prepared with several different examples. When possible, use non-technical pictures, drawings, or other visual tools. Always remember to respect your listener’s age and experiences. Never talk to adults as if they were children! When you believe you have achieved your goals, check once again for understanding. If they “get it,” give yourself a pat on the back. If not, then repeat or stop, depending on your listener’s wishes. You might have to be satisfied with igniting the spark of understanding rather than the fireworks of complete success.

It can be a challenge to rethink the work with which you are familiar and break it down into chunks that can be understood by others. It is worth the effort, however. By doing so, you develop a new understanding of your work and a new view on how it is seen by others. Einstein was right in this respect. That is not too surprising. Yet, a puzzle remains. If it took his grandmother to help Einstein understand his work, which one was the genius? Suddenly, thanks to Einstein, I view my grandma in a whole new speed of light.

There is a handy explanation of speed limits on the KDOT Internet site, under the heading of “Safety.”
Dear KDOT:

I would like to thank your department for the help that one man offered to me on August 1. Kenneth McKenzie (District One Maintenance Superintendent) stopped on K-4 to make sure I was ok.

I’m 20 years old and was driving home from Topeka when my car died. At the time that my car died I had enough reception on my cell phone to call home and let my family know I was having problems, shortly after, my cell phone lost reception and I had no way of getting help. Mr. McKenzie offered assistance and calmed me down. He let me use his cell phone to call home and let them know I was ok, then he took me to the nearest gas station to wait for someone to get me.

About a half hour later, he came back to the gas station to make sure I was ok and that I had help on the way. He had given the highway patrol the information of where I was. Later, on his way back to Topeka, he stopped once again at my car and made sure we had a tow coming. This man was very generous. To your department and him, my family and I thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Amanda Roberts,
St. Joseph, Mo.

Deaths

Condolences to the family and friends of former KDOT employee John Harrington, who passed away July 9 at Topeka.

Harrington, 88, retired from KDOT in 1978. He is survived by three daughters, a sister and six grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Midland Hospice House, 200 S.W. Frazier Circle, 66606 or the St. Francis Hospital Foundation, 1700 S.W. 6th, 66606.

United Way of Greater Topeka campaign kicks into full gear

Planning will soon be in full gear for the 2001 United Way of Greater Topeka fund-raising drive.

Beginning with a campaign kick-off held on Thursday, September 6, the United Way will start its Annual Day of Caring fund-raising celebration. This community-wide celebration will continue through Friday, September 7 and Drew Rowland, UWGT Communications Specialist, hopes the addition of an extra day for the campaign will promote increased awareness for the cause and will give participating businesses more time to schedule fund-raising activities.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for members of the community to get hands-on experience helping others. Participants are able to see the impact that they’re making through their donation, what resources are generated, and how they are used,” Rowland said.

Dan Carter, Management Systems Analyst in Management and Budget, will serve as chairman for this year’s KDOT campaign. The theme will be “A Key to Caring” and Carter hopes to generate enough participation during the drive to have donations exceed the $28,328.83 that was raised last year.

Planning for this year’s KDOT campaign is underway and events will soon be organized. Carter said the campaign will probably begin in mid-September and run through the end of the month. Information on the different events will be distributed as it becomes available.

“I feel that for this year’s campaign to be truly successful, we need to surpass last year’s contributions by at least $1.00. We need everyone, in one way or another, to participate,” Carter said. “Just one person can make a difference.”
Looking for an entertaining and educational experience? The Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson, September 7-16, is your ticket.

Whether it’s viewing the 700-plus commercial exhibits, the thousands of competitive exhibits, enjoying fair rides, grandstand entertainment or food, there will be plenty of activity at the 89th annual fair.

KDOT’s Office of Transportation Information, with assistance from District Five staff, will once again have a booth at the fair. The booth in the Eisenhower Building will be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on opening day, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

“The fair offers an excellent opportunity to inform the public about KDOT’s programs and projects,” said Marty Matthews, KDOT Public Information Officer. “Our main emphasis will be promoting safety on Kansas roadways, answering questions and listening to the public’s concerns.”

KDOT’s booth is always a popular attraction with a wide variety of promotional items available including keys chains, the 2001-2002 official state transportation map, litter bags and book markers.

New promotional items will be orange plastic stadium cups, containing work zone safety tips on the outside, orange Give ‘Em a Brake pencils and magnets. The magnets contain important numbers the public can use to obtain information using the road condition hot line, KDOT connection and the internet address for weather-related road conditions.

Besides stressing the Give ‘em a Brake program, KDOT’s new “Safe. Not Sorry” safe driving and education and awareness program will be highlighted. Special glove box folders that can hold the state map, along with insurance and registration documents, will be available. The folders contain the “Safe. Not Sorry” logo and key emergency contact information. Litter bags, ice scrapers, and window cling stickers will also be available.

The Kansas State Safety Belt Education Office (KSBEO) will be part of the KDOT booth once again. The office works to promote the need for safety belts and child seats at all times when traveling. Promotional items they will offer include pens, pencils, magnets, sunscreen crayons, and coloring books.

More information about the fair can be found at www.kansasstatefair.com.

- S.W.

Willetts

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sideways out of my chair and shook Regis’ hand,” he said. “We talked about me working at KDOT and he asked if we have traffic jams in Kansas. “I said yes, but for the most part they only last a couple minutes.”

Things went along pretty well, Willetts said, “then I got two questions in a row that were outside my strengths.” He didn’t know the name of the cricket in the book, “A Cricket in Times Square.” He asked the audience, but the vote was close, so he used the 50-50 and got the answer right.

On the next question, Willetts phoned a friend, Lee Lassiter, but he also didn’t know Julia Roberts’ profession in “Stepmom.” “I had seen other people lose, so I decided, that’s it, I’m walking,” he said.

The trip was a lot of fun, Willetts said. At first he dreaded going to New York, “but it was pretty exciting – a whole different culture and experience. I’d like to go back some day.” - K.S.

Welcome new KDOT employees!

Headquarters

Brian Briggs, Database Programmer Analyst II, Computer Services
Alex Hoover, Applications Programmer Analyst II, Computer Services
George Laliberte, Program Consultant II, Aviation
Richard Peat, Programmer and Analyst Manager, Computer Services
Kathleen Selvidge, Legal Assistant, Chief Counsel
Norman Stahl, Human Resources Professional II, Personnel Services

The Bureau of Personnel Services supplies information for new employees to Translines.
MILESTONES

KDOT salutes its employees celebrating anniversaries in August

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<tr>
<th>10 YEARS</th>
<th>30 YEARS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Bogina .................. Topeka</td>
<td>Ralph Gripka ............... Lawrence</td>
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<td>John Clark ..................... Fort Scott</td>
<td>Nels Just ................... Topeka</td>
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<td>Glen Coker .................... Sharon Springs</td>
<td>Robert Warhurst .......... Oakley</td>
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<td>Michael Hernandez Jr. ....... Topeka</td>
<td>Kent Portenier ............ Phillipsburg</td>
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<td>Susan Maxon ................. Topeka</td>
<td>Terry West ................. El Dorado</td>
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This information is compiled by each Office, Bureau, Division, and District.
Promotions/Transfers

Headquarters
Mark Johnson, Environmental Scientist II, Design
Becky Klenklen, Publications Writer I, Materials and Research
Betty Oliver, State Auditor I, Fiscal Services

District One
Jamie Gaddias, Engineering Technician Associate, Topeka
Drake Jennings, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Overland Park
Chad Ridgway, Engineering Technician Associate, Olathe
Richard Wyatt, Engineering Technician Associate, Merriam

District Two
Rex Flinn, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Mankato
Eric Moore, Equipment Operator III, Marion

District Three
Carlton Shumaker, Engineering Technician Senior, Junction City

District Five
Sidney Ochs, Equipment Operator III, Hoxie
Paul Stout, Engineering Technician Senior, Oakley
Marvin Withington, Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Atwood

District Six
Denver Cox, Right of Way Agent I, Garden City
Christine Urban, Human Resources Professional I, Garden City

The Bureau of Personnel Services supplies information to Translines.

KDOT
Office of Transportation Information
915 Harrison - Room 754
Topeka, KS 66612-1568

Training Opportunities

◆ Employee Benefit Seminar, September 5, 19, October 3, 17, 31 - no enrollment needed.
◆ Transition to Leadership, September 11-13, District Three and District Five; September 25-27, District Five; October 2-4, District Two.
◆ New Employee Orientation, September 27, and October 30, Topeka.
◆ Leadership Basics, September 18-20, Topeka.
◆ You’ll Catch On! October 2-3 and October 16-18, TBA.
◆ Basic Effective Supervisory Techniques, October 16-19 and November 6-9, Topeka.
◆ Leadership Forum, November 19-20, Topeka.

All classes, except BEST, are available to non-supervisors with supervisory permission and where space is available. A comprehensive training calendar is on the KDOT Intranet under Personnel, Training.