Gearing up for snow, ice at Winter Training Expo

Outside, the trucks stood ready, plows and wings affixed, brine tanks or spreaders mounted. Equipment operators quickly attached chains to truck tires. Inside, others scanned computer screens for the latest weather information. Still others discussed snowfighting strategies and analyzed plans of attack. Yet, no trucks rolled, no plows pushed any snow, no storms hit, and nobody went to 24-hour operations.

The scene was the third annual Kansas Winter Training Expo in Salina, September 5 and 6. A group of 525 KDOT employees, mostly Equipment Operators, and 100 city and county maintenance workers gathered to learn more about battling snow and ice and

KDOT looking to improve roadside vegetation, beauty

Millions of dollars are spent each year on equipment and manpower to keep the roadsides along Kansas highways well maintained. To cut these costs, while at the same time improving the look of the roadways, KDOT teamed up with the Audubon of Kansas in February to implement a study that would look at different ways to manage roadside vegetation.

Wildflowers can beautify as well as improve safety along the roadways. KDOT and Audubon of Kansas are studying ways to manage roadside vegetation.

INSIDE ...

◆ ROAD WARRIORS HAVE JOBS THAT REALLY COUNT
◆ TAKING A LOOK AT THE NEW WESTGATE BRIDGE
◆ SIGHTS AT THE WINTER TRAINING EXPO
◆ LOTS TO LEARN, LOTS TO SEE AT KANSAS STATE FAIR
◆ SHIVERS HELPS BABY FIND NEW HOME IN UNITED STATES

2001 State Fair

Jerica Talcott and Shelly Talcott, District Five employees, talk to people at the KDOT booth to learn more about transportation during the State Fair in Hutchinson. Fun give-away items and information on roundabouts, bicycle safety, employment opportunities, and other topics were available.

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From Where I Sit
by E. Dean Carlson

**Tunnel project benefits everyone**

Some of you may have heard or read about a proposal to construct a network of tunnels between the State Capitol and the Landon State Office Building, the new Signature State Office Building, and the Security Benefit Group Building (where KDOT is planning to move in 2003). Some of what you’ve heard or read may have been critical of this plan. I’d like to give you KDOT’s position and explain in further detail why we think that this is a good idea.

First, a little background on the proposed funding for this project. The money would come from the Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program. The TE Program was initiated under the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and continued under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The TE Program has been a very popular program that has helped many communities across the nation improve their transportation systems through historic restorations, scenic improvements, and construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that serve as part of a transportation system. I expect that this program will continue under the next federal highway act and may possibly receive even more funding.

In the 12 years since this program began, Kansas has received about $87 million. The majority of that funding has gone to public entities and other state agencies. (This is not the case in many states. Many DOTs choose to keep the TE funds for use at a statewide level.) The tunnel project is the first and only time that KDOT has chosen to use the funds for a “state” project. KDOT has been proud to share with local communities by asking them for project applications and then awarding funding to projects determined to be worthwhile.

I believe this tunnel project is worthwhile and that it is a legitimate use of TE funds. The tunnel project will be an improvement and an enhancement to the Capitol Area Complex by providing a transportation service to its constituents, its customers, and the general public. It will also serve what is arguably the most historic building in the state - the State Capitol. The tunnel project has an estimated cost of about $10 million and will use one year’s worth of TE funding. The tunnel project would be funded with 100 percent federal funds that are not available for use on highway construction type projects.

While the tunnel project allocates funding to a state project instead of allocating funds to public entities, the project will not affect any future projects supported by public entities. In fact, we just awarded 20 projects to public entities totaling $8.4 million in federal funding. So why are some people criticizing this? Different opponents have different motivations.

Some complain that the tunnels are solely for the benefit of state employees - “to keep bureaucrats warm and dry.” State employees may indeed use these tunnels if they’re built but they are not the reason behind them. Thousands of people come to the State Capitol every year, and tens of thousands more come to the State Office Buildings surrounding it to conduct business. These people will be the true beneficiaries of the tunnel net benefit.

NOTE: This information is available in alternative accessible formats. To obtain an alternative format, contact the KDOT Office of Transportation Information, Docking State Office Building, Room 754, Topeka, Kan., 66612-1568, or phone (785) 296-3585 (Voice)/(TTY).
Shivers helps baby find new home in U.S.

A Chinese baby abandoned in front of a stationery store now has a safe home where she is being loved and nurtured thanks to a KDOT employee.

When she was two months old, baby XinXia was left in front of the Nanning, China store. She spent the next five months in an orphanage and eight more months in foster care before being adopted by KDOT’s Mary Shivers and her fiancé Todd.

Shivers, a Management Systems Analyst in Management and Budget, and Todd recently traveled to China to bring back their bundle of joy. They were united on June 27 in a Nanning hotel and, fittingly, Marissa XinXia Shivers obtained her U.S. citizenship on July 4.

“It was a very long process to adopt Marissa, but it certainly has been worth the wait,” said Shivers. “She’s going through a lot of changes living in a different country, hearing a different language, and having someone completely different taking care of her.”

Mary and Marissa have spent a lot of quality time together since coming to the U.S. Mary took time off from work to be with Marissa at her Topeka home before returning to work after Labor Day.

Shivers, who has no other children, got the idea of adopting after seeing an advertisement in the local newspaper concerning an international adoption meeting in Topeka. She heard the presentation and talked with the local Chinese adoption coordinator, then made up her mind to adopt.

Marissa was adopted through His Kids Adoptions International, which worked closely with the China Center of Adoption Affairs and the Immigration and Naturalization Service to secure the adoption.

“The process started about 1 1/2 years ago and it took six months just to get through all the paperwork,” said Shivers. “There was considerable home study, we had to submit a dossier to China and there was a lot of coordination between the U.S. and Chinese governments. Then we had to wait a year because of the backlog.”

Shivers received her referral one month before going to China. The referral contained important information about Marissa and a picture.

Mary and Todd left Kansas City for the 20-hour flight to China in June. Two other adopting couples - one from Lawrence and the other from Missouri - accompanied them on the flight.

They arrived at a hotel in Nanning where the babies were immediately brought to them. A 10-day stay in China was necessary to finalize paperwork before they came home.

“It was difficult at first because Marissa was upset about leaving,” said Shivers. “Now that we’ve been spending a lot of time together she’s bonding with myself and Todd.”

Marissa, Mary, and Todd returned to Topeka on July 6. They attended a baby shower on July 31 at KDOT headquarters where clothing, toys, books, and other necessities were given as gifts. - S.W.
By Stan Whitley

On the road again

These KDOT workers just can't wait to get on the road again

Setting counters and making new friends
These KDOT workers are on the road again”

They are true road warriors with a KDOT job that definitely counts.

Rance Biesecker and Lynn Whittlesey are two of KDOT’s traffic count collectors in Transportation Planning that spend the majority of their time on the road the entire year. They readily admit their “lone wolf” job wouldn’t appeal to many people, but it suits them just fine.

“If you like working outdoors, enjoy constant travel and don’t want to be confined by four walls, it’s an ideal job,” said Biesecker. “We get to see the beauty of Kansas by traveling to every county in the state.”

Biesecker lives in Abilene and Whittlesey lives in Manhattan, but they are really at home on the road. They go to between 30-50 locations each day to set up and later collect data that is used to determine 24 and 48 hour traffic counts.

Within a two-year period, counts are taken on all Interstate, Kansas and U.S. routes that comprise the State Highway System. Counts are taken every three years on all rural secondary routes, every six years on minor collector routes, and every nine years on local roads.

“We’re fourth in the nation in the number of public roads, so there’s a lot of miles to cover,” said Biesecker. “Our job really involves more windshield time than pavement time.”

How much windshield time? Try 30,000-35,000 miles per year, accumulated in working four 10-hour days per week.

“This job has taught me how to be a better driver,” said Whittlesey. “I consider myself a professional driver representing the agency and we need to set an example for motorists. Traffic counts continue to rise and people are driving faster, so you have to take extra caution.”

Planning estimates its four traffic count collectors have logged more than one million miles of travel and in FY 2001 collected 12,000 counts. The good news is those miles have

KDOT Traffic Count Collector Lynn Whittlesey prepare to set a traffic counter.

KDOT Traffic Count Collector Rance Biesecker works at 30-50 different locations each day.
come without any serious accidents. “The only accident I had involving a KDOT vehicle occurred in Kansas City,” said Whittlesey. “Police were chasing a man that had stolen a vehicle and they knocked on my motel door in the middle of the night to tell me the abandoned stolen vehicle had struck my vehicle in the parking lot.”

Mother Nature can pose a major concern for the traffic count collectors. “The weather can be a problem because you work in all different kinds of conditions,” said Biesecker. “The weather can change quickly so we pay close attention.”

Biesecker and Whittlesey, who are both single, spend more nights lodging in motel rooms than their own homes. Whittlesey is a vegetarian, who many times goes to the grocery store in the nearest town to buy his food. Biesecker, on the hand, eats out and has an opinion on where the best food is located. “You learn what restaurants are closed on Monday and who has the best specials,” said Biesecker.

His gourmet list includes:
- Best Chinese - Phillipsburg
- Best Chicken fried steak - Hanover
- Best pizza - Ellis
- Best burger - Speed

“We both like the opportunity our job gives us to meet the people of Kansas,” said Whittlesey. “People tell us a lot of stories and they use us as a sounding board. If they want a sign put up, road improvements, or a pothole fixed they tell us because they want the message to get back to Topeka.”

Most of the traffic counters work is done during the day, except in metropolitan areas where they work between midnight and 5 a.m. as a safety precaution.

“We are very safety conscious,” said Biesecker. “Our motto is, try to avoid that run down feeling.”

work. Currently, a tunnel connects the Capitol to the Docking State Office Building. School kids and tour groups use it all the time.

Some are mad that they didn’t get their TE projects funded and are hoping that by stopping the tunnel project they can get money for their project. This all depends on the worthiness of the project. Worthy projects can be considered in future years.

Some say the project being built will only benefit those who visit Topeka. Well, you could use the same argument that the almost $ 7 million in TE funds spent to help restore the Dodge City Depot only benefits people who visit there. In fact, you could make the “it only helps the locals” argument about any TE project. This is far too parochial a view. I think enhancing any part of the state helps improve the entire state.

Some think the money would be better spent on roads or to help in other areas of the state budget. This can’t be done. These funds can only be used for very specific categories. (TE projects must enhance the scenic beauty, environmental protection, walk-ability and bike-ability, or historic preservation of an area affected by a surface transportation facility.)

Some think this money is being taken away from recreational hiking trails. It’s not. KDOT sends about $800,000 a year to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for those kinds of projects and that money is not affected at all.

Some just don’t know enough about the project and base their opposition on what they’ve heard from others or what they’ve read in editorials critical of the project. I hope that the information I’m sharing with you here gives you a better understanding of the project, which allows you to make an informed decision and may help you explain it to others who might ask.
Lots to see, learn at the State Fair

Several booths at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson handed out fun promotional items as well as important safety information related to transportation. At right is the KDOT booth, middle left is the Kansas Safety Belt Education Office booth, middle right is the Operation Lifesaver booth, and the bottom right photo is the Kansas Highway Patrol booth. In the bottom left photo, people also stopped at the KHP booth to see a car severely damaged in a wreck where the driver who was wearing a safety belt was not injured.
It was not my idea!

By Ron Kaufman

I didn’t do it. It happened all by itself. It wasn’t my fault. How often do you recall hearing words like these? If you have children, then you have probably heard them often. Were you once a child? Then you probably said them yourself! They sure came in handy when I was trying to weasel out of getting spanked for something. They still do. Some people just never grow up.

I recently took part in something that wasn’t my doing. Somebody else was responsible. I can’t wait until someone in authority finds out because when that happens, the perpetrators are going to be in a very sweet situation. I can’t share the glory.

I just went along for the ride.

That’s all. I’m talking about the Road Rallies that were held this year. Three sessions in one day were held in each district, with about 30 people participating in each session. Ten people were assigned to ride in each of three large vans. The sessions occurred in late morning, during late afternoon drive time, and in the late evening. The Road Rallies were a marvelous public involvement activity. So, I recently traveled to Garden City and Colby to see how they worked. I rode in a van with dedicated citizens to watch them survey the condition of the roads around those cities. Each rally took about two hours. Participants completed a questionnaire that asked them to rate each of 13 or 14 road sections. They were asked about their expectations regarding 12 roadway characteristics such as lane width, smoothness, sight distance, striping, signage, shoulders, and surface condition. A professional facilitator was in each van to help the participants complete the survey. Participants were also asked to offer their views when there were special circumstances surrounding a road section. For instance, because a study is underway for a System Enhancement project on US-50 west of Garden City, participants were asked for their opinions about that road section. Colby participants evaluated a detour on US-40 in Oakley.

Staff members from ETC Institute conducted the rallies and I was impressed with their professionalism. I was even more impressed with the hard work each citizen displayed. They took their task very seriously and all of them seemed to appreciate that KDOT asked for their opinions in the first place. The Road Rallies were conducted as a part of KDOT’s External Survey process. The results of the rallies will help KDOT assess how our customers view our work on the highway system.

We often assume that the only time when people can provide input for KDOT is when a new highway is being developed. Activities like the Road Rallies demonstrate that the public’s opinions are valuable at many other times as well. I noted earlier that the Office of Public Involvement was not responsible for the Road Rallies. Staff members from the Office of Management and Budget, each District, and the Bureaus of Transportation Planning, Program Management, and Construction and Maintenance all played roles in this effort. I want to commend all of them for their contributions. Public involvement is a way of life in which many parts of the agency can (and are encouraged to) participate. There is no finer example than the Road Rallies.
Step Back in Time

An open house at the State Highway Commission shop at Atwood allows the public to find out more about proposed projects in 1954.
to look at some of the newest equipment out on the market.

“The purpose is to educate our equipment operators in the latest changes in snow and ice operations,” said Jaci Vogel, Bureau of Construction and Maintenance. “There have been a lot of changes in the last five years with new equipment and techniques. This is a way to get the information down to the equipment operators.”

The opportunity for the people on the front lines to attend a first class seminar such as this one is unique. Experts from Colorado, Nebraska, Minnesota, the National Weather Service and private industry taught classes, led discussions, offered tips and demonstrated techniques and equipment.

Larry Fears, District Six Paint Crew, appreciated the chance to see things firsthand. “It’s nice to feel involved and not just get the information passed down from someone else.”

As Ken Peterson, equipment operator from Lakin, put it, “It’s been very interesting. I’m glad I got to come.”

Any training that makes maintenance crews more proficient can be invaluable when you consider the cost of fighting snow and ice. Since 1997, the Kansas DOT has spent an average of $9.8 million a year.

Terry McCall and Brad Lare, both from Phillipsburg, also enjoyed taking a peek at some new equipment.

“I’m already making my Christmas list,” Lare joked.

McCAll added, “We don’t make the final equipment buying decisions, but maybe we’ve got some input.”

According to Ben Steinbruck from the Salina subarea, “Everybody needs to come at least once. I’m impressed.”

Steinbruck also earned $50 at the expo, winning the tire chain contest. He correctly installed a set of chains on one tire in 11.41 seconds. Artery Cooper, District Two Paint Crew, took second with a time of 13.34 seconds.

Classroom sessions included Internet Weather, Plowing Techniques, Winter Operations Technology, Winter Operations Materials, Avalanche Control, Equipment Technology of the Future and more. The show also featured demonstrations on using a backhoe, motor grader, loaders, and a brine maker. KDOT and the American Public Works Association sponsored the 2001 Winter Expo. -Story and photos by Kirk Hutchinson, District Six Public Involvement Liaison
The alliance was created after Audubon of Kansas contacted KDOT, requesting assistance with the Prairie Parkway, a marked route that comes down from the Nebraska border on K-99 and continues south through Kansas into Oklahoma. At that time, KDOT had been looking into a roadside vegetation management program and the two groups decided to work together and study 10 locations in southeast Kansas.

The chosen areas are all located in the eastern third of the state and will be studied to determine what type of vegetation management would be best for Kansas roadways. The sites stretch between 10 and 20 miles and are monitored by members of various groups including KDOT district offices, the Audubon board, and the Department of Wildlife and Parks.

“Roadside vegetation management is important to study for many reasons. There’s more involved than just the economic side of things,” Fred Markham, a landscape architect in Environmental Services said.

An effective roadside management program can produce many benefits, the most important being safety. Using proper mowing techniques, coupled with the integration of prairie grasses and wildflowers, the highways can become a much safer place to travel. The weather effects of water, snow, and ice can be minimized, driver fatigue due to monotonous views can be lessened, and a zone clear of hazardous objects can be maintained.

Other benefits produced by vegetation management along roadsides include increased productivity with planned work rather than reactive work, more efficient use of personnel, time and equipment, and maintained or improved water quality.

Markham says that he hopes the project will lead to more interactions between KDOT and the Audubon Society and that in the future more projects can be accomplished.

**Retirees**

The following employees will officially retire from KDOT on October 1.

**Headquarters**

**Harold A. Erwin**, Right of Way Property Appraiser I in Right of Way - 8 years of state service

**Robert F. Grochowsky**, Information Resource Specialist III in Computer Services - 31 years of state service

**Larry E. Shankles**, Professional Civil Engineer in Design - 32 years of state service

**District One**

**Edward W. Pinder**, Equipment Operator in Olathe - 15 years of state service

**District Two**

**Darrel D. Kuntz**, Equipment Operator II at Abilene - 17 1/2 years of state service

**District Four**

**Richard E. Folk**, Highway Maintenance Supervisor at Independence - 19 years of state service

**Neil L. Spillman**, Engineering Technician Senior at Chanute, 37 1/2 years of state service

**District Five**

**Charles W. Detwiler**, Engineering Technician Senior at Pratt - 36 years of state service

**District Six**

**Michael D. Dorr**, Engineering Technician Senior at Wichita - 33 years of state service

**Francisco M. Perez**, Equipment Operator II at Larned - 28 years of state service

**Arnold L. Ruebke**, Equipment Operator III at Hutchinson - 15 1/2 years of state service

**Bob Bowden’s fast-pitch softball team won the girls’ Silver Division at the Kansas State Tournament in Class C. Bowden is the Area Engineer in Osage City.**

**Brown Bag Lunch**

**Topic:** Chief Counsel  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 3  
**Time:** Noon to 1 p.m.  
**Place:** Room 481, Docking  
*All employees are invited to attend.*
Deaths

Condolences to the family and friends of two former KDOT employees who recently passed away.

James A. Porter, 67, died September 8 at his home in Chanute. Porter was the former District Four Safety Coordinator and had worked for the agency 20 years before retiring. He is survived by his wife, Judy, three sons and two daughters.

Memorials may be made to the Red Cross and sent to the Johnson Mortuary in Chanute.

Robert J. Schoenfeld, 66, died August 14 at a Topeka care center. Schoenfeld was a printer for KDOT and retired in 1996. He is survived by two sons.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society, 1315 S.W. Arrowhead Road in Topeka.

KDOT salutes its employees celebrating anniversaries in September

10 YEARS

Joseph Beilman ...................... Topeka
Patrick Cobos ..................... Topeka
Roxane Crow ..................... Topeka
Daniel Espinosa .................... Pratt
John Farley ........................ Lawrence
Royall Hoffer ..................... Topeka
Jeff Simonton ..................... Oakley
David Ubel ....................... Dodge City

20 YEARS

Colbert Atkinson ............. Hutchinson
Donald Boatright ........... El Dorado
Linda Duffy .................... Salina
Dennis McGreevy ........... Great Bend
Larry Meyer ...................... Syracuse

40 YEARS

Vernon Basgall ................ Hays
Larry Marple ..................... Olathe
John Wherry ..................... Great Bend

The following employee celebrated a service anniversary in June.

30 YEARS

Claudia Ortega ........ Independence

The following employee celebrated a service anniversary in August.

20 YEARS

David Fosberg .................. Pratt

Westgate tour

KDOT employees take a tour of the new northbound Westgate bridge being constructed next to the existing southbound bridge in Topeka on US-75 over the Kansas River. The tour was part of the monthly Brown Bag lunch program. The new bridge will be open to traffic by the end of the year.
Training Opportunities

◆ Employee Benefit Seminar, October 3, 17, 31 - no enrollment needed.
◆ Transition to Leadership, October 2-4, District Two.
◆ New Employee Orientation, October 30 and December 17, 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.

Promotions/Transfers

Headquarters
Carl Hill, Program Consultant II, Public Affairs
Miles Klein, Engineering Technician, Design
Dennis Miller, Right of Way Property Appraiser I, Right of Way
Christina Pessagno, Accounting Specialist, Fiscal Services
Dan Mabry, Engineering Technician Specialist, Design

District One
Rickman Burton, Engineering Technician Specialist, Materials and Research
Chris Schaefer, Engineering Technician Senior, Topeka
Robert G. Turner, Equipment Operator III, Olathe

District Two
Steven Andreson, Equipment Operator III, Ellsworth
Gregory Hayes, Equipment Operator III, Ellsworth
Gerald Mai, Engineering Technician Specialist, Salina

District Four
Frederick Gebhardt, Engineering Technician Senior, Pittsburg

District Five
Valeria Mullen, Engineering Technician Specialist, Hutchinson

District Six
Clifton Trisler, Equipment Operator III, Dodge City

The Bureau of Personnel Services supplies information to Translines.

KDOT
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Topeka, KS 66612-1568