

TRANSLINES

Monthly Publication of the Kansas Department of Transportation

May 2024

GOING ORANGE! The 119th Street bridge over I-35 in Olathe glowed brightly in support of highway workers during National Work Zone Awareness Week. Read more on pages 6 and 7. Photo by Multimedia Services

Lights! Camera! Safety! Commercials center around safety for highway workers

By Kim Stich
Senior Communications Manager

With truck seats against a white backdrop, people across Kansas tell emotional traffic safety incidents for TV commercials being aired statewide that are tied around the theme “Who do you make it home for?”

During National Work Zone Awareness Week in April, three KDOT employees from the Ottawa Subarea office participated in this series and focused on the dangerous situations they have experienced in work zones. Equipment Operator Specialist Joseph Hazen and Equipment Operators Frank Trumbly and Virgil George talked about being in work zones and jumping out of the way of oncoming vehicles, being hit by side mirrors, watching motorists look at cell phones while driving past them and more.

The bad thing is - these aren't isolated incidents that occur in work zones. The highway workers estimated they deal with situations like this once or twice a week.

When asked what their message would be to those drivers, they all stressed – slow down and pay attention. Just like you, we have families who care about us and want us to come home safely.

Hazen and other Ottawa crew members have participated in several projects highlighting work zone safety.

“We think it's important to support the effort to promote increased safety for all workers along the roadways as well as the traveling public,” Hazen said. “Work zone safety is a nationwide problem, not just a KDOT problem.”

KDOT efforts for the work zone safety week included a blog/video series, buildings in orange, Go Orange photos, a



Equipment Operator Specialist Joseph Hazen (left) and Equipment Operators Frank Trumbly and Virgil George (above), all of the Ottawa Subarea office, talk about hazards they have faced in work zones and why safety is important while filming for commercials to be aired across Kansas. Photos by Kim Stich

proclamation from Governor Laura Kelly, a statewide public service announcement, daily social media posts and more.

JNA Video Production is creating the series of commercials as part of KDOT's ongoing commitment to improve the driving safety culture around the state. The commercials are aired throughout the year – click [HERE](#) for some past examples.



Let's talk.

Transportation Secretary Calvin Reed

SNICE season gives way to KDOT's 'busy season'

In case there was any doubt, it's official: SNICE season is over. I just learned April 15 was the closing date for an annual snow prediction contest amongst a group of KDOT staff. Let's consider the contest wrap-up as the "all clear" after a season of significant statewide snow and ice storms and wildly fluctuating temperatures.

April was a busy month. Flooding hit southeast Kansas that involved our crews flagging traffic and closing roads. Crews assisted law enforcement with traffic control when several semitrucks were blown over on I-70. They also provided support in wildland fire recovery activities.

As I write this, KDOT forces are assisting the city of Westmoreland with the cleanup from a devastating tornado that impacted the town of 700 people. It is sometimes underappreciated how these weather-related public service efforts involve our crews throughout the year.

So now KDOT transitions into "busy season," where across Kansas we catch up on winter-related damage by patching potholes and working on roadway shoulders. Extreme high winds resulted in more sign repair work than normal. And, with much of Kansas having received substantial April

showers, mowing vegetation along highway right of ways will begin soon.

On the construction side, it's all hands on deck when it comes to the large number of projects getting started. Timing was appropriate for the recent observance of National Work Zone Awareness Week, as scores of projects get underway with the coming of warmer temperatures. Orange will be the color of choice as construction work picks up across much of the state's highway system.

Our roads are busy. Our people are busy. Let's all be mindful of this seasonal activity across our system and proactively encourage safety both on the job and when traveling.

I should mention another springtime assignment in our districts' shops. Crews are in the process of cleaning, lubricating and storing snowplows, spreaders and other SNICE equipment. Already we're ordering and receiving anti-icing materials to make sure supplies are adequate for the coming winter. Snowfall predictions notwithstanding, KDOT is spending time this spring getting ready for the snow and ice season ahead. Seems we can't totally let go of snow and ice season, even when the weather warms up.



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Governor: Laura Kelly

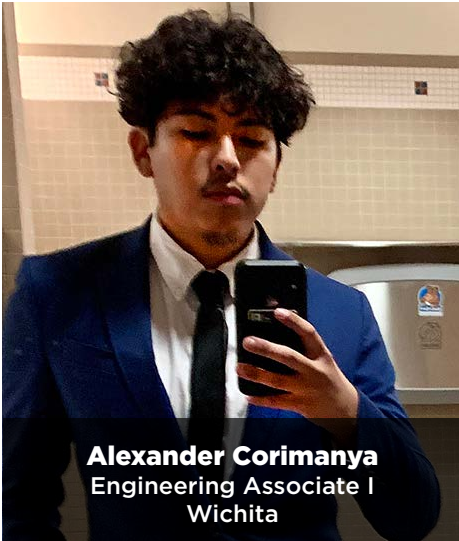
Transportation Secretary: Calvin Reed

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Inside the **LINES**



Alexander Corimanya
Engineering Associate I
Wichita

Duties at work?

Overall supervision and support on a bridge renovation project on I-35 and 85th Street in Park City.

Favorite music?

From modern indie music, reggaeton, underground rap to Mexican corridos.

Most exciting part of your job?

Serving the public and contributing to the betterment of all humans.

Something you're proud of?

As an immigrant from Peru, my parents made sacrifices to come to the U.S. I am proud I'm making my parents happy and fulfilled their dream of their kids having better opportunities.

Favorite food and movie?

Aji de gallina, which roughly translates to "spice of the rooster." It's a weird name because it's simply chicken. I love numerous movies.

Any hobbies?

Weightlifting, dancing, soccer, video games and curating playlists on Spotify.

Any pets?

Yes, my dog, Maya.

Something people might not know about you?

My last name, "Corimanya," hails from one of the original five royalty Incan family names. "Corimanya" means "The one who witnesses gold" in Quechua, the native language.



Galen Ludlow
Highway Maintenance
Superintendent - Dodge City

Duties at work?

Manage/coordinate six subareas and area shop mechanics for daily highway maintenance activities and equipment repairs to provide the public with safe travel. Acquire/order materials needed. Process highway use, access and hay permits.

Favorite music?

Rock and roll.

Most exciting part of your job?

Learning new processes and having input on highway projects. Plowing snow and other SNICE activities.

Something you're proud of?

My wife, Rhonda; daughter, Rachel; and stepdaughter, Brandi.

Favorite food and movie?

Anything spicy and sci-fi movies.

Any hobbies?

Anything with outdoor activities, fishing, camping, boating, water skiing and hunting.

Any pets?

Not currently.

Something people might not know about you?

Nothing really. I am a plain-cover open book.



Raeann Dennett
Office Coordinator/Engineering
Technician - Winfield

Duties at work?

I keep the paperwork going for projects. I process pay estimates and change orders, create precon notes and meetings, help inspectors, track vehicle maintenance, enter alert bulletin info, key equipment mileage and keep office and project supplies in stock. I sit in on interviews.

Favorite music?

80s-90s rock.

Most exciting part of job?

Friendships made over the years.

Something you're proud of?

My two daughters – Madalyn, 15, and Maycee, 11. They both are very good students. I have been a single mom for 8+ years. We bought a house and are making it into our home.

Favorite food and movie?

Mexican food. I love a lot of movies.

Any hobbies?

I enjoy watching my girls participate in sporting events. I am a scrapbooker and attend scrap camps throughout the year.

Any pets?

Yes, we have a male miniature dachshund, named Scarlett.

Something people might not know about you?

I am a BIG KU basketball fan. I also work parttime at the Cowley County jail.

Lamoreaux named Deputy Secretary

Vanessa Lamoreaux, who has been serving as Interim Senior Director for KDOT, has been promoted to Deputy Secretary, according to Secretary Calvin Reed.

As Deputy Secretary, Lamoreaux will oversee and lead communications functions for the agency. She will be responsible for the activities and staff of the Divisions of Safety, Policy, Performance Measures, Communications and Public Involvement.

Lamoreaux has been with KDOT for three years, working in a variety of functions including the Kansas Infrastructure Hub, public involvement and as a lead for the 2023 Local Consult. She is also spearheading efforts for the development of KDOT's five-year strategic plan.

Lamoreaux has 20 years of experience conducting executive-level marketing operations, business development, event planning and project management for leading associations, non-profits and government organizations. Prior to joining KDOT, she was Vice President, Administrative Services, for the Kansas Association of Realtors.

"I am honored to work with so many talented and passionate people at KDOT," said Lamoreaux. "I welcome the opportunity to serve the KDOT family and the citizens of our state to keep Kansas moving forward."

Outside the office, Lamoreaux is a "music junkie," always having music playing "and a soundtrack running in my head." She devotes much time to raising her son. Hobbies include crocheting, sewing, reading and enjoying the "oasis" of her back yard.



Vanessa Lamoreaux

Moriarty named Interim Director

Mike Moriarty is continuing his role in the Division of Planning and Development by now serving as Interim Director. During his 17 years at KDOT, all in this division, Moriarty knows it's important to focus both on current and upcoming needs.

"Planning is about understanding the problems faced today and determining how to address tomorrow's challenges," he said. "I look forward to working with the KDOT team – and our stakeholders across Kansas – to shape the future of mobility in the Sunflower State."

In his new position, Moriarty will oversee the bureaus of Transportation Planning, Transportation Safety and Intelligent Transportation Systems.

Moriarty began at KDOT as an intern in 2000. After that, he spent about seven years working in local government and the private sector, in addition to his 17 years at the agency. He started as a Transportation Planner, was promoted to Corridor Management Administrator and was later named State Transportation Planner. In 2015, he was selected as the Bureau Chief of Transportation Planning, where he served until his current position.

He replaces Chris Herrick, who retired in March after 33 years at KDOT.

"I've always tried to collaborate and partner with everyone internally and externally," Moriarty said. "That's something that Chris did a great job at, and I will continue to do so moving forward."

Outside of work, Moriarty enjoys bass fishing and spending time with family and friends. He lives in Topeka with his wife, Stacy, and daughter, Taylor.



Mike Moriarty

Street Smart training available

Using LiDAR (light detection and ranging) and images of the highway system to view, measure and review data.

Sound interesting? Street Smart classes are being offered to KDOT employees May 13-17. Interim Planning and

Development Director Mike Moriarty sent details to sign up in an email on April 30.

To review, go to [Street Smart](#) (use KDOT email with @kdot.ks.gov domain), or [2023 LiDAR data](#).

Safety takes center stage at conference

By Ingrid Vandervort
Safety Engagement Strategist

More than 400 people attended the 29th annual KDOT Transportation Safety Conference on April 16-17 in Topeka. This year's session focused on the Safe System Approach, with attendees learning about safer people, safer roads, safer speeds, safer vehicles and post-crash care.

"The safety conference's breakout and technology sessions seemed to hit home on some current issues we face as Kansans," said Slade Engstrom, Senior Vice President at TransSystems. "The breakout sessions by district/area are always interesting to hear current viewpoints and safety problems in different areas. I have several new things in my safety toolbox to think through how to apply on different projects."

Local, regional and national speakers offered insight and information on improving traffic safety. Sangeeta Badlani, who is from New Jersey, shared the devastating loss of her 11-year-old son, Nikhil, who was killed by a driver who ran a stop sign. Her family began a foundation in his name to improve traffic safety awareness and help underserved children in the area.



Conference speaker Sangeeta Badlani tells about losing her son in a traffic fatality. Photos by Multimedia Services

Planning will begin soon for the 2025 Transportation Safety Conference to take place in Wichita, March 3-5. For more information, contact Ingrid Vandervort, Ingrid.vandervort@ks.gov.



Conference participants attended sessions and stopped by safety booths.



Awards presented for safety efforts

Several awards were given at the Transportation Safety Conference.

The People Saving People award highlights a person's or organization's efforts. Those honored include:

- Douglass High School SADD/SAFE Chapter – A classmate and her mother were killed when a driver ran a stop sign. Students approached elected officials and others to petition for rumble strips and LED stop signs.
- Dana Mentzer, Police Clerk, Overbrook Police Department – Mentzer saw a need for child safety seat inspections in Overbrook and spearheaded efforts to get them started.
- Terry Weldin, retired motorcycle safety instructor - Weldin taught driver safety for more than 35 years and included motorcycle curriculum. He also served on the Kansas Motorcycle Safety Task Force.

The Hero award recognizes people who risked their life while responding to or preventing a crash. Those honored include:

- Brent and Brady Ginther, Ginther Farms – This father and son saw a semi drive into the median of I-70 after the driver suffered a medical emergency. Together, they stopped the semi, averting a potentially deadly situation.
- Kendyl Renn, Southeast High School student – Renn saw a crash involving a school bus and provided aid to the students until first responders arrived.
- Officer Jacob Burrell, Overbrook Police Department – Burrell stopped an erratic driver identified as in distress and contacted family to assist.

KDOT has launched the Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment tool to support local public agencies in addressing pedestrian and cyclist safety risks. Click [HERE](#) to access the new tool.



KDOT employees go orange for safety

Employees across Kansas wore orange to support National Work Zone Awareness Week. Above are employees from Winfield; below left, employees from Hays; below right, employees from Bonner Springs; and top of next page, employees from Chanute. A few Go Orange photos are also included on the district pages in this edition. To see all of the photos submitted for the 2024 work zone safety effort as well as links to the blog/video series, coloring page, fact sheet and more, go to KDOT's Go Orange page [HERE](#). Photos provided.





Students focus on work zone safety



KDOT Equipment Operator Levi Murray poses with the winners of the work zone safety coloring contest he helped organize at Kiowa County Grade School in Greensburg. Photo provided.

By Kim Stich
Senior Communications Manager

They may not be driving for a while, but more than 50 students at Kiowa County Grade School in Greensburg took a little time to think about work zone safety by participating in a coloring contest organized by KDOT Equipment Operator Senior Levi Murray.

Murray contacted the principal about having a contest when he received a coloring sheet created by KDOT Communications Specialist Mallory Goeke as part of the agency's National Work Zone Awareness Week activities. He said his two kids liked to color and thought others might enjoy it.

One winner from each class from kindergarten through fifth grade was selected by KDOT employees from the Greensburg office and received a \$5 gift card to the Kiowa County Historical Museum and Soda Fountain.

"All the kids thought they were in trouble when the winners were called to the office, but then they were super excited that they won the contest," Murray said. "I don't know how much they got out of it, but it'll get them talking. And they took the artwork home to their parents."

Murray said his kids colored their sheets, but he didn't let them compete since he was a judge. "I'll take them out for ice cream later," he said.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Tax bill uncertain, budget bill gets approved

The 2024 regular legislative session has come to a close. April 30 was the conclusion of the Legislature's veto session (a short period when both chambers reconsidered the bills vetoed by Governor Laura Kelly and voted to either sustain or override the veto).

A new tax plan was passed by the Legislature, and if the Governor vetoes this plan, a special session could be called to further consider tax legislation.

The cleanup budget bill, or omnibus, contains numerous items that affect KDOT and state employees, one being pay adjustments for all state employees. The pay plan will be done through market-based adjustments. Details of how the pay raises will be implemented are now being worked out.

The raises will go into effect for the 2025 state fiscal year, which begins on July 1.

Governor Kelly signed the aviation funding increase bill ([HB 2498](#)) and the geographic plane coordinate system standardization bill ([SB 424](#)) into law. Unfortunately, [SB 142](#), or the safety bill, ultimately did not get passed by both chambers this session. It included a move-over requirement for disabled vehicles and a hands free requirement for work and school zones, as well as drivers 18 and under.

All Senate and House seats will be up for election this fall, with the Senate seats running in the newly drawn districts from the redistricting process after the 2020 Census.



Cashless tolling begins July 1 - In April, KTA's CEO Steve Hewitt announced the Kansas Turnpike will implement cashless tolling on July 1. A digital [Go! Cashless toolkit](#) is available with information on the best way for each person to use the turnpike. Check out the toolkit and more at [DriveKS.com](#).

On the road with KTA's CEO - For the past two years, KTA's CEO Steve Hewitt has shared regular updates on the progress toward cashless tolling. [In this edition](#), he looks at KTA's legacy of customer service.

Construction update - A contract to rehabilitate existing drainage structures on the Kansas Turnpike was recently awarded to Dondlinger & Sons Construction Co. Inc. More information on this project is in the [news release](#).

Also, be sure to sign up for our [monthly construction newsletter](#) to learn more about turnpike projects like

COMING
JULY 1, 2024

Cashless Tolling

Be ready for cashless tolling.
Get a KTAG to pay the lowest toll.

Learn more at [DriveKS.com](#)

project [#7917](#) highlighted in last month's issue. This project will modernize and improve roadway safety by upgrading guardrails, extending culverts, constructing concrete pier protection and installing aggregate slope protection from the Oklahoma border to south Wichita on I-35/KTA.

Thank you for your service!



All State of Kansas employees celebrating 40 and 50 years of service in 2023 were recognized by Governor Laura Kelly and others at the Capitol on April 22. Those being honored are six KDOT employees who reached 40 years of service. Pictured with Secretary Calvin Reed, left, and State Transportation Engineer Greg Schieber, right, include, from left, Richard Baker, retired; Howard Reece, District Superintendent in Salina; Jeff Romine, Area Superintendent in Wamego; and Jesse Solorio, Highway Maintenance Supervisor in Ashland. Those unable to attend were Robert Fryatt, Equipment Operator Senior in Leavenworth, and Dave Oelke, Highway Maintenance Supervisor in Hoxie.

Does adding safety devices make us safer?

By Troy Whitworth
Director, Division of Safety

KDOT's safety motto, "Safety First - For Your Family and Mine," reminds us of who we should practice safe behaviors for - our families. But safety should be a value, not just a priority.

Risks are everywhere, and we've known of them since we were young. I remember my mom telling me to stay away from an unshielded fuel oil heater in our drafty old house. "Don't stand so close to the heater - you will get burned," she said. Of course, I pushed the limits and got burned. But it only took one time to make that value-based decision.

Over the years, more things have become value-based decisions for parents, like children wearing helmets when biking or using a car seat in a vehicle. It was rare to see kids using helmets and car seats 40 years ago, and now it's rare if they don't.

But it seems like we take more risks when safety protocols are in place, like KDOT requiring chainsaw chaps. Chainsaw

chaps are protective gear that reduce the chance of accidentally contacting the operator's legs.

Chaps can create a false sense of security, and operators can become more complacent. When using the chainsaws, they tend to brush the chainsaw past their leg more when they have chaps on. They don't do it on purpose, but wearing chaps can end up causing operators to relax in their actions because they believe they are protected from the saw's teeth.

KDOT replaces several chaps each year because employees brush the chainsaw chain across their leg. Imagine what would happen if the chaps hadn't been there.

But even with safety protocols in place, we still see folks who must be reminded to wear chaps. The excuses for not wearing them are many, but that one time you need them makes all the excuses irrelevant.

Wearing chaps every time you run a chainsaw is a value-based decision. One moment of distraction can lead to a lifetime of pain and hardship. For Your Family and Mine.



Month of May brings attention to safety of two-wheeler travelers

Safety for those using two-wheeled modes of transportation is highlighted during May for both Bicycle Safety Month and Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month.

More people tend to ride two-wheeled vehicles as the weather gets warmer. Gary Herman, KDOT Behavior Safety Manager, said to be alert, especially for bicycle traffic along city streets and neighborhoods. For motorcyclists, give them the full width of a lane.

Other tips for riders include:

- Wear protective gear and a helmet.
- Avoid motor vehicles' blind spots.
- Have working reflectors and lights.
- Take safety courses.
- Maintain your bike or motorcycle.

Preliminary data from KDOT for 2023 shows that in Kansas, 41 people were killed and 819 people were injured in crashes involving motorcycles. An additional six people were killed and

272 were injured in crashes involving bicycles.

“Drivers should slow down around cyclists and allow time to stop, if needed,” Herman said. “And all motorists need to pay close attention to the road and their surroundings while following traffic laws.”

Click [here for motorcycle safety information](#) and [here for bicycle safety information](#).

EMPOWERING KANSAS
KDOT paves the way for inclusive transportation planning

By Ames Howard
Public Involvement Specialist

KDOT prioritizes fairness and environmental responsibility in its public involvement efforts. This helps make sure everyone has a voice in shaping the state’s transportation system.

For example, some communities are disproportionately affected by environmental issues. So, public involvement takes necessary steps to make sure all voices are heard. KDOT also offers multilingual materials to assist people in understanding project details.

KDOT works to minimize negative impacts on communities such as noise pollution, potential displacement due to construction and access to essential services like healthcare and first responder routes.

Public involvement goes beyond just checking a box. KDOT adheres to key principles:

- Fairness for all: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act confirms non-discrimination in federally funded projects.
- Environmental justice: Recognizing that some communities face a heavier burden of environmental issues, KDOT actively seeks input to avoid worsening problems with transportation projects.
- Considering the environment: The National Environmental Policy Act mandates that KDOT considers the environmental impact of projects and gathers public feedback.

By following these principles, KDOT works to minimize disruptions in the community when planning a project. And citizens have the opportunity to contribute and help shape the state’s transportation network.



Manhattan crews assist in Burklund/Axelton wildfire

By Kate Craft

High winds and dry conditions caused a grass fire in Pottawatomie County to grow into a wildfire on Friday, April 5. The fire quickly spread into neighboring Riley County and would go on to burn for the next several days.

Later that day, Governor Laura Kelly issued a verbal state of disaster emergency proclamation. By Saturday afternoon, Riley County issued a declaration for local disaster emergency, which allowed local emergency services to request additional aid from state resources.

Support from across the state arrived, including crews from as far as Pittsburg and Garden City. Several agencies also assisted, including the Kansas Forest Service, Kansas City Wildland Task Force and Kansas National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. By Tuesday, April 9, the fire was considered 90% contained.

The area continued to be closely monitored through the week. On Friday, April 12, the Kansas Division of Emergency Management requested KDOT's assistance. The subarea crew from Manhattan soon arrived with a tracker loader and skid steers. Crews worked through the weekend and into Tuesday clearing debris and moving brush and trees from the fire line, which created a buffer for homes and structures that would be in danger should the fires start up again.

The Burklund/Axelton fire is estimated to have burned more than 8,300 acres in Riley and Pottawatomie counties. One house was destroyed, and several structures were damaged. However, there were no injuries reported.



KDOT employees from the Manhattan Subarea helped in clearing debris and moving brush after grass fires burned more than 8,300 acres in Riley and Pottawatomie counties. Photos by Denis Smith, Manhattan

Severe weather returns to Kansas



Severe storms rolled across Kansas again over the last weekend in April. Eastbound I-70 in Riley County was closed on April 27 for several hours after high winds caused three semitrucks to tip and crash. The Alma Subarea crew helped with traffic control. Another semitruck rolled near Chapman that day, closing I-70 for a time. In addition, numerous highways were closed in District Four due to flooding on April 28. Photos by Brian Varnadone, Alma and Riley County Emergency Management



Pavement replacement continues on I-70 in Geary County

By Ashley Perez

Construction is in full swing across Kansas, including a multi-phase pavement replacement project on I-70 through Junction City.

Last year during Phase One, crossovers carried one lane of traffic through construction on the eastbound lanes as pavement was replaced on the westbound lanes. This year during Phase Two, crossovers will carry one lane of traffic through construction on the westbound lanes as pavement is being replaced on the eastbound lanes.

Phase Two is scheduled for completion in November 2024, with work resuming for Phase Three in March 2025. All three phases are scheduled for completion in November 2025.

The project has created some delays, especially during high-traffic times. Motorists are encouraged to use alternative routes when possible. Wildcat Construction Co. of Wichita is the prime contractor.



Westbound traffic is reduced to one lane at the entrance of the work zone for the I-70 pavement replacement project at Junction City. Photo by Ashley Perez



Go Orange for work zone awareness

Every day is a great day to promote work zone safety, but especially during National Work Zone Awareness Week. Employees helped raise awareness for the public by participating in interviews, sharing the blog/video series, hanging orange lights and banners at KDOT offices across the state and submitting Go Orange photos, which were posted on the KDOT website. Some of the groups participating from District Two included (clockwise from top left) employees from the Junction City office, the Ellsworth Subarea and Concordia Subarea. Submitted photos



Following the signs

On another windy day in Kansas, several workers from the Minneapolis Subarea worked together to replace signs along U.S. 81 in Ottawa County in mid-April. Photos by Ashley Perez



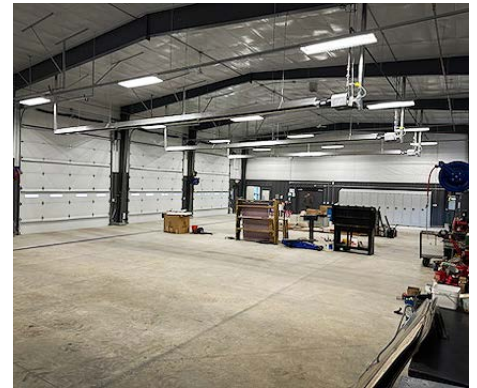
Around the district

Left, Beloit Subarea Supervisor Roger Simoneau (left) and Equipment Operator Senior Mike Jones (center) celebrated their retirements during a reception held at the Concordia area office on April 11. Pictured with them is James Roudybush, District Two Maintenance Engineer. Photo by Ashley Perez

Below left, the district office held a cookout/potluck lunch to kick off another busy construction and maintenance season. Photo by Chris Younger, Salina

Below, representatives from each district met in Salina on April 10 to review snow and ice policies and procedures. Districts shared experiences from the past winter, lessons learned and what processes worked well. Photo by Ashley Perez





Sharon Springs Subarea rebuilds after tornado damage from April 2022

By Lisa Mussman

On April 22, 2022, a tornado ripped through Sharon Springs, significantly damaging several businesses and homes.

The KDOT subarea was one of the hardest hit. The equipment bays and storage shed were destroyed, and the office and break room building - while still standing - were also damaged. KDOT already had the subarea on its radar for updating, however that process would now have to be expedited.

Reconstruction began in the spring of 2023 and was completed in early 2024. Updates include larger equipment bays that can accommodate up to four trucks, expanded office and break room facilities and a new equipment shed.



Pictured at top, the new buildings and equipment bays at the Sharon Springs Subarea. Above, a bird's-eye view of the damage caused by the tornado on April 22, 2022. Courtesy photos

MILESTONES



John "J.R." Hutchison (left), Equipment Operator Specialist, WaKeeney Subarea, receives his 35-year state service certificate from Area Three Engineer Kevin Zimmer. Courtesy photo



Construction in full swing
Above, Daryl Dougherty (right), Engineering Technician Supervisor, Phillipsburg, inspects the overlay on the U.S. 283 project in Norton. Left, crews mill on U.S. 281 north of Russell in preparation for the new pavement. Photos by Lisa Mussman and Dean Jay, Hays



Revving up the fun



Employees from the Columbus Subarea schooled Park Elementary students on work zone safety practices during the school's Touch a Truck Career Day on April 19. The students also took turns climbing into a KDOT dump truck and other heavy equipment. Other participating agencies included the Cherokee County Road and Bridge Department, Cherokee County Emergency Medical Services, Columbus Fire Rescue, Crossland Construction and the Kansas Army National Guard. Photos by Columbus KDOT



U.S. 169 pavement reconstruction
As northbound traffic breezes by, work continues on the southbound lanes of a U.S. 169 pavement reconstruction project at Coffeyville. The road work is taking place between U.S. 166 and the Kansas-Oklahoma border. Northbound U.S. 169 traffic is detouring on city streets. J. Graham Construction, of Coffeyville, is contractor on the \$1.2 million City Connecting Link Improvement Project. Photo by Priscilla Petersen

KDOT engineer inducted into honor society

Bukola Oni, an Engineering Associate II at the Pittsburg construction office, was recently initiated into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society at Iowa State University (ISU).

Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines.

Oni, who began work for KDOT in early 2024, has a Ph.D. in civil engineering from ISU. She holds two master's degrees in civil engineering focused on sustainable construction and construction engineering. She lives in Pittsburg.



Milestones

District Four Maintenance Engineer John Hrenak, second from left, recently presented service awards to the following Chanute employees, from left: Equipment Mechanic Senior Shane Drybread, 10 years; Equipment Operator Senior Jay Jackman, five years; Equipment Operator Senior Tom Reaves, 15 years; and Equipment Operator Jeff Brown, five years. Photo by Chanute KDOT



\$36 million Kingman County project coming to U.S. 54

By Tim Potter

The pavement on U.S. 54/400 in Kingman County from the K-14 junction to the Sedgwick County line is about 50 years old. It has been requiring more and more maintenance, said Area One Engineer Scott Mullen. On that same section, the two bridge decks over the K-14 interchange need replacing.

So, it's time to reconstruct the pavement. It also made sense to build the new pavement on the entire 7-mile stretch and replace the bridge decks at the same time, Mullen said.

KDOT recently approved a bid for the project, so that section will get addressed soon with pavement reconstruction and bridge deck replacement on the same alignment. The stretch is east of the city of Kingman – and just west of populous Sedgwick County.



Eastbound U.S. 54/400 over the interchange at K-14. The bridge decks are part of a \$36 million project. Photos by Tim Potter



Westbound U.S. 54 traffic at the K-14 interchange.

Mullen explained the full-depth pavement reconstruction: “We’re taking out all the existing pavement down to dirt” -- to a depth of more than 1 foot. Crews will re-compact the soil, then build new concrete pavement on the four-lane stretch.

When it’s completed, he said, “It will be a new highway.”

During the work, traffic on the four-lane highway will be restricted to one lane each way, and traffic will be shifted to the same side of the highway. At the K-14 interchange, a ramp could be closed at times, and traffic will be redirected to another interchange.

The work is tentatively expected to start in late May and be completed in November of 2025.

The primary contractor for the \$36 million project is Emery Sapp & Sons Inc. of Columbia, Mo.



Getting schooled

The Winfield Subarea hosted a field day for students from Holy Name Catholic School in Winfield on April 19. The students learned about highway maintenance, equipment and construction. Photos by AJ Wilson, Winfield



North Junction project in Wichita to bridge horizons



A new pier (above) and dirt work (right) are in progress as part of the westbound K-96 to southbound I-135 two-lane flyover being constructed in this phase of the North Junction project in Wichita. Photos by J.B. Wilson

By J.B. Wilson

Massive piers are currently being erected during Phase 2B of the North Junction project in Wichita. This is part of the two-lane flyover connection that will replace the loop ramp from westbound K-96 to southbound I-135, which will improve traffic flow and enhance safety.



The new flyover is one portion of the third phase taking place on the North Junction project. Other parts of the project include:

- A new two-lane connection from northbound I-235 to eastbound K-96.
- A new two-lane ramp from westbound K-96 to northbound I-135.
- A new two-lane direct connection from northbound I-235 to eastbound K-96.
- Widening southbound I-135 south of K-96.

These new structures will help reduce congestion by lessening the morning bottleneck during morning peak travel times.

Bergkamp King, A Joint Venture, is the contractor on the approximately \$141 million project. Construction began on this phase of the project early this spring and is estimated to be complete in 2026.



DISTRICT SIX
SOUTHWEST KANSAS

District Engineer: Ron Hall
Public Information Officer: Yazmin Moreno



Inspiring the next generation to join KDOT's mission

Ken Bowden, District Six Training Coordinator, participated in a Career Day for a local 6th grade class and shared valuable insights on opportunities at KDOT and why it's a great place to work.

Bowden spoke about how KDOT builds and maintains the state's transportation infrastructure. He explained how KDOT's work, from designing and maintaining roads to managing traffic flow, plays a crucial role in making transportation in Kansas efficient and accessible.

Bowden also highlighted the diverse range of jobs at KDOT, including engineering, construction, planning and administrative positions.

"It was great to talk to the students about KDOT," he said. "They learned about career options available in the transportation industry and how they can contribute to making a difference in their community."



Ken Bowden speaks to a group of 6th grade students during a local career day. Courtesy photo

STAFF NOTES

Valdez promoted to Construction Manager

Joel (Simon) Valdez was promoted to Construction Manager for the KDOT Area Two office Ulysses. He will be responsible for overseeing the construction inspection of several transportation projects in the area.



Simon Valdez

Valdez received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from New Mexico State University. He worked for the Oklahoma DOT for about four years, where he was a Project Manager and handled audits and inspections.

He started his KDOT career as an Engineering Associate in 2022 at the Ulysses office.

Phelps retires from KDOT after 27 years

After 27 years of dedicated service to the public and to KDOT, Willie Phelps, Highway Maintenance Supervisor in Dodge City, retired in March.



Willie Phelps

He started his career with KDOT at the Dodge City Subarea in 1997 as an Equipment Operator Trainee and worked his way up the ranks. In 1998, he was promoted to Equipment Operator, and in 2001, he became an Equipment Operator Specialist.

In 2011, Phelps was promoted to his current position. During his time in this role, Phelps oversaw the efforts to maintain the highways in the area for the traveling public.

Work begins early on U.S. 50 repairs in Ford County

By Yazmin Moreno

Many motorists are glad to see a resurfacing project currently underway along U.S. 50 from just east of Spearville to the Ford/Edwards county line near Offerle.

The project, which is primarily in Ford County, was originally scheduled to begin this summer, but Venture Corp., of Great Bend, was able to start it ahead of schedule. Milling, overlaying and striping work are close to being finished, and the shoulders will be sealed in July.

"KDOT appreciates the contractor expediting the process and bringing these much-needed improvements to the traveling public," said District Six Construction and Materials Engineer Mike Pittman. "By starting early, we've been able to minimize the inconvenience to all who use this highway. A lot of progress was made, and we look forward to completing the project successfully."



Mill and overlay work started early on a stretch of U.S. 50. Photo by Multimedia Services



National Work Zone Awareness Week

Employees from District Six attending bucket truck training "Go Orange" to promote work zone safety. Photo by Kenneth Bowden, Garden City



Sharing KDOT's commitment to improving transportation

District Six Public Information Officer Yazmin Moreno recently briefed the Liberal Women's Club on the latest transportation infrastructure improvements affecting Seward County. She also gave insight on upcoming projects in southwest Kansas. "In sharing about current transportation projects and future plans for projects in the area, attendees could see that KDOT is committed to improving transportation," Moreno said.

Milestones – May

The following employees will celebrate service anniversaries in May:

40 years

Sherry Petrie-Fitzgerald, Organizational Development Manager, Topeka

30 years

Lynn Berges, Professional Civil Engineer I, Holton

William Schmidt, Equipment Mechanic, Overland Park

25 years

Matthew Bleier, Engineering Technician Specialist, Topeka

James Feters, Equipment Operator Senior, Council Grove

Steven Schmidt, Highway Shop Superintendent, Salina

20 years

Timothy Hays, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Ellsworth

Adam Wright, Engineering Technician Senior, Haven

15 years

Scott Leonard, Right of Way Property Appraiser Supervisor, Topeka

10 years

Kristie Eakes, Administrative Specialist, Eskridge

Beth James, Applications Developer III, Topeka

William Lee, Technical Support Consultant II, Arlington

Cavan Schmeidler, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Mayfield

Caleb Wasson, Public Service Executive I, Topeka

Retirees


The following employees retired on May 1:

Headquarters

Marcella Larrabee, State Auditor II, Inspector General

District Five

Charles Thimesch, Equipment Operator Senior, Pratt



KDOT retirees invited

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

For information contact Rich McReynolds at rlm4017@gmail.com.

Promotions/transfers – March

Headquarters

Wesley Crouch, Engineering Associate III, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

Christopher Daugherty, Engineering Associate III, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

District One

Vernon Cain, Equipment Operator Midpoint, Marysville

Heath Clayton, Professional Civil Engineer I, Olathe

Michael Durkin, Equipment Operator, Atchison

Victoria Goodwin, Engineering Technician, Olathe

Andrew Langston, Equipment Operator, Topeka

Liam McCoy, Equipment Operator Midpoint, Manhattan

Randall Sherman, Engineering Technician, Topeka

District Two

Kirstin Carpentier, Office Coordinator, Concordia

Zachary Owen, Equipment Operator, Council Grove

District Three

Blake Jackson, Equipment Operator, Norton

Aidan Moraru, Equipment Operator, Hoxie

District Four

Shawn Butell, Equipment Operator, Ottawa

Chad Hare, Equipment Operator, Eureka

Michael O’Laughlin, Equipment Operator Senior, Fort Scott

Zachary Reagan, Equipment Operator Specialist, Mound City

Nicholas Snavely, Engineering Technician, Garnett

Billy Stewart, Equipment Operator, Sedan

Jesse Wilson, Engineering Technician, Pittsburg

District Five

Matthew Hermreck, Engineering Technician, El Dorado

Otto Mueller, Engineering Technician, El Dorado

Timothy Skellenger, Equipment Operator, Hutchinson

District Six

Johnathan McGinn, Equipment Operator, Ness City

Joel Valdez, Construction Manager, Liberal

New hires – March

Headquarters

Jesse Boyer, Engineering Associate I, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

Emily De La Cruz, Administrative Specialist, Bureau of Human Resources

Cameron Ferrell, Engineering Technician Associate, Bureau of Structures and Geotechnical Services

Deborah Ramberg, Assistant Bureau Chief, Bureau of Human Resources

District One

Gabriel Escobar, Engineering Technician Associate, Topeka

Paul Filbert, Equipment Operator, Bonner Springs

District Two

Brandy Hanson, Construction Inspector Trainee, Marion

Anthony Sonnenburg, Engineering Associate I, Salina

William White Jr., Equipment Operator Trainee, Concordia

District Three

Michael Haro, Equipment Operator, Russell

District Four

Troy Heslop, Equipment Operator Trainee, Yates Center

Matthew Taylor, Equipment Operator Trainee, Waverly

District Five

Alexander Corimanya, Engineering Associate I, Wichita

Rhett Johnson, Equipment Operator, Hutchinson

Lorance Kammerer, Equipment Operator Trainee, Wellington

Kevin Mazzanti, Equipment Operator, Pratt

Scott Watkins, Engineering Technician Associate, El Dorado

J.B. Wilson, Public Information Officer I, Wichita

District Six

Tommy Ly Ho, Engineering Technician Associate, Liberal

Emeny Olivares, Engineering Technician Associate, Syracuse

Lukus Thomas, Equipment Operator Trainee, Ashland

Condolences



Stewart Graves

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT employee **Stewart Graves**, who passed away on April 12 in Salina. He started at KDOT in 2017 and served the agency for nearly seven years. He was an Equipment Mechanic Senior at the Salina District office. Graves enjoyed spending time riding his motorcycle. He is survived by his daughter, granddaughter and brother, all of Salina.



Dustin Kenny

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT employee **Glenn "Dustin" Kenny**, who passed away on April 5. Originally from California, Kenny moved to Kansas in 2015 and joined KDOT in April 2023, where he worked as an Equipment Operator at the Goodland Subarea. He also worked at Brewster USD 314. Kenny enjoyed cooking and spending time with family and friends.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Larry D. Stephenson**, who passed away on April 7 in Dodge City. Stephenson started at KDOT in 1997. He was an Engineering Technician in the Dodge City office. Stephenson retired in 2014, after 16 years of service.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Johnnie W. "John" Babcock**, who passed away on April 22 in Topeka. Babcock started at KDOT in 1956 and served nearly 47 years. He retired in 2002 as a Highway Maintenance Superintendent at the Gage office in Topeka. Babcock also was an Army Veteran, retiring after 35 years as a Sgt. Major.