

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

June 3, 2020

Celebrating more than a century of service



Catherine Patrick



Rhonda Seitz



Ron Seitz

Patrick retires after 30 years at the agency

Both stories by Kim Stich
Headquarters

After 30 years at KDOT, Catherine Patrick is retiring and starting a new career at the Federal Highway Administration office in Topeka as the Transportation Engineer.

“Change is scary, but it’s good,” Patrick said. “It will be a nice opportunity to try something new. And I’ll still get to see a lot of familiar faces across the state.”

Patrick began at KDOT in 1989 and has spent about half her career in the field and half at Headquarters. She served in several positions including Assistant Bureau Chief in Construction and Maintenance, Topeka and Kansas City Metro Engineer, District Engineer, Director of Operations and State Transportation Engineer.

She currently serves as the Director of Safety and said dealing with the coronavirus has been unique.

“It’s been a whole new side of safety. Our focus has

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Rhonda, Ron Seitz to retire from KDOT

A couple of employees with nearly 80 years of service to the state are retiring from KDOT as of July 1. They are also a couple – the upcoming retirees include Fiscal Services Bureau Chief Rhonda Seitz and Engineering and Design Director Ron Seitz.

Rhonda spent four years at Social & Rehabilitation Services before coming to KDOT in 1980. She has spent her entire KDOT career in Fiscal. She served in several accounting positions before being named Bureau Chief in 2009, succeeding Dale Jost.

Ron started at KDOT in 1986 and spent his entire KDOT career in the Division of Engineering and Design. He worked in Design’s Road section and Local Projects before being named the Director in 2016, succeeding Jim Kowach.

Rhonda said if she hadn’t started working at KDOT, Ron may not have become an engineer. He was a teacher and looking to make a career change. He

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Patrick retires

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dealt with equipment and traffic, versus something you can't see," Patrick said. "We've learned a lot and worked on policies and guidelines that hopefully don't ever have to be used again, but they will be there for the agency."

Patrick was selected as the Government Engineer of the Year for 2018-19 by both the Topeka and Kansas chapters of the Kansas Society of Professional Engineers.

She said she is sad to not have a retirement party but appreciates the email responses.

"I received a big explosion of emails," Patrick said. "It was fun reading them and sharing memories. People took the time to respond, which was really cool."

Patrick's last day at KDOT is June 5.

Rhonda, Ron Seitz retire

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considered architecture, but Rhonda said engineering looked like a great field from her short time at KDOT. After getting his degree at Kansas State University and working for a consultant in Kansas City, he came to KDOT thinking it would be a short-term job.

"Turns out transportation was more exciting than I ever thought it could be," he said. "You never know where life is going to take you. It turned out to be pretty good careers for us."

Ron said they had been thinking about retiring for a while and had hoped to do a lot of traveling, including a trip to Germany this summer, which has been postponed. The new plan is to work on various home renovation projects. Rhonda likes to design and plan the projects, while Ron takes care of the construction.

"It's a hobby - we love doing that kind of work," Ron said. "We always have a project going and like helping the kids with their houses."

The Seitz's have four grown sons and eight grandchildren. Their last day at the agency is June 12 and would like to thank everyone that they have worked with throughout the years.

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Safety
Catherine Patrick

Forty projects selected for IKE development

Gov. Laura Kelly and KDOT Secretary Julie Lorenz announced virtually on May 14 that preliminary engineering work will begin on 40 highway modernization and expansion projects.

These are the first projects to move forward under the Eisenhower Transportation Legacy Program (IKE), which was created in March.

“These transportation investments come at a critical time for our state’s economy. A robust development pipeline will help jumpstart our economic recovery by creating jobs and allowing the state to take advantage of potential federal stimulus dollars,” said Gov. Kelly. “I’m thankful to the Legislature for passing IKE, a critical employment tool that will help put more Kansans back to work.”

“A modern transportation system moves people,



Gov. Laura Kelly announces the first projects included as part of KDOT’s recently-passed new Eisenhower Transportation Legacy Program.

freight and technology and these 40 projects will allow us to do all those things better in every region of the state,” Secretary Lorenz said. “We’ve selected smaller projects, which can advance to construction quickly, and larger projects that will employ many people in all phases of development or construction.”

More than 2,000 Kansans participated in local consult discussions that shaped the IKE program and modernized how transportation should be delivered in Kansas. Here are a few notable features:

- IKE is a rolling program, which means major highway modernization and expansion projects will be selected every two years rather than once a decade as previous programs did. This ensures the state can address the most pressing needs and adjust to fluctuating revenues.
- Emphasis on right-sized, practical improvements. For example, utilizing passing lanes rather than four-lane expressways where applicable.
- New partnership programs (Cost Share, Local Bridge).
- Investments in broadband and new technologies.



Secretary Julie Lorenz, right, talks during the webinar news conference while Deputy Secretary Maggie Doll gathers questions from the media. Photo by Denise Petet, Headquarters

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Forty projects selected in program

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- Continued commitment to multimodal transportation.

Previously, the only projects in KDOT's development pipeline were the remaining T-WORKS projects. The development pipeline includes all the phases of work prior to construction such as design, acquiring right-of-way or moving utilities. KDOT is not committing to constructing these 40 projects, but this will allow the necessary advance work to begin.

"I've directed KDOT to explore all options for accelerating project delivery for these 40 projects and for the delayed T-WORKS projects, which we remain committed to constructing," the Governor said. "Transportation investments provide short-term and long-term economic benefits to communities and we're committed to capturing as many of those opportunities as we can."

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the last stimulus for transportation infrastructure, prioritized shovel-ready projects. Currently, discussions are underway for a new federal stimulus bill for infrastructure, which will likely have similar requirements. The May 14 announcement will allow KDOT to get more projects shovel-ready.

"Thanks to Gov. Kelly, the Legislature and Kansans, IKE was tailor made for this moment," Lorenz said. "It



Kansas Sen. Carolyn McGinn speaks during the news conference about the importance of the new IKE Transportation Legacy Program.

provides us the flexibility we need now and in the future. Today's announcement is only the beginning. We know we have much more work to do."

More information about IKE, including the list of 40 projects selected, is available at <http://www.ksdot.org/IKE.asp>



New logo selected for IKE

The new logo for the Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program was unveiled at the May 14 news conference. More than 800 people voted and selected the one paying tribute to the Ad Astra statue on the Capitol.

"I can't think of a more fitting time to honor our state motto of "to the stars through difficulties," said Secretary Julie Lorenz. "And I would be remiss not to acknowledge our program's namesake President Eisenhower. His vision for an interstate system revolutionized transportation in our country. And today, I find myself struck by a famous saying of his, 'plans are worthless, but planning is everything.'"

Trivia!

35th anniversary of the film *Back to the Future*

1. What year does Marty McFly travel back to?
2. What kind of car is the time machine?
3. Michael J. Fox was the first choice to play Marty McFly but he was committed to this TV show.
4. Who was then selected and then fired after just four weeks of filming?
5. What other name was suggested for the movie?
6. Who loved the movie because he was mentioned?
7. What band sang the movie's theme song?

Microsoft Teams will replace Skype

Microsoft will no longer be supporting its Skype application as of July 2021. As a result, KDOT plans to move all personnel to Microsoft Teams by the end of 2020.

Teams is a tool that combines chat, file storage and sharing, video calls and another tool for video event streaming for things like public meetings or webinars. Another benefit is that the cost is already included as part of each employee's Microsoft Office 365 license.

Teleworking is more important than ever, and it will continue to have lasting value beyond the COVID-19 outbreak.

Other ways to use Microsoft Teams on a computer or mobile device include:

- Pull together a team and work together using chat

instead of email, have a voice conversation or video meeting, and use channels instead of file folders to keep your projects moving

Upcoming Microsoft Teams training:

- ♦ June 23, 10 a.m.
- ♦ June 24, 2 p.m.
- ♦ June 25, 2 p.m.
- ♦ June 29, 10 a.m.
- ♦ June 30, 2 p.m.

Click [here](#) to register

- Create a shared workspace where you and your team can securely edit files at the same time and see likes, mentions and replies
- Track the progress of a work plan as well as individual tasks
- Customize your projects by adding meeting notes, shared files and deadlines

Teams should be installed on KDOT computers, but if not, please contact the ServiceDesk at EBITSM@ks.gov.

Go to the bottom of the KDOT Intranet page, <http://kdotweb/>, and under IT Service News and Updates are two links to learn more about Teams.

Trivia answers

1. 1955.
2. DeLorean.
3. Family Ties.
4. Eric Stoltz. (They waited for Fox's schedule to open.)
5. "Spaceman from Pluto."
6. President Ronald Reagan.
7. Huey Lewis and the News.

Pothole problem in I-70 work zone quickly resolved

By Lisa Mussman
District Three

A large pothole in a single-lane work zone in Trego County caused westbound I-70 to temporarily close at WaKeeney on May 28.

The pothole developed near the bridge repair project located approximately 6 miles east of Collyer. An initial fix was completed the week before, however further work was required after the repairs were unable to sustain traffic.

The WaKeeney Subarea crew, along with assistance from Colby and Hill City, led the repair efforts. The Kansas Highway Patrol and Trego County law enforcement provided traffic control at exit 127 to detour motorists around the work zone to make the project flow as smoothly as possible.



KDOT crews quickly repair a pothole that formed in an I-70 work zone. Photo by Max Dirks, District Three



In spite of frequent rains, progress continues on the new interchange at the intersection of U.S. 169/U.S. 160 in Montgomery County. The U.S. 160 bridge and ramps are mostly complete. According to project manager Kelly Wilson of the KDOT Independence office, more work on paving, approaches and the light towers remains before traffic can be placed on the interchange later this summer. Kings Construction of Oskaloosa is the primary contractor on the \$12 million project. Stephen Bass' road squad and Brad Rognlie's bridge squad designed the project. Photo by Priscilla Petersen, District Four

A tool that KDOT uses to check pavement health

By Tim Potter
District Five

It's called "FWD" for short – "falling weight deflectometer" for long.

It's a piece of equipment on a trailer pulled behind a pickup truck. It measures how much load a given section of highway can support. On May 28, for example, KDOT operated an FWD on K-61 between Pratt and the Reno County line.

Rick Miller – Pavement Management Engineer – explains how it works: Every tenth of a mile, the FWD stops with the help of a traffic control crew.

The device drops a load simulating 9,000 pounds – representing one side of an 18,000-pound axle load on a semi. The FWD load lifts and drops four times at each stop. With sensors, it measures how far the pavement gets pushed down.



An FWD is pulled by a KDOT truck and stops and takes measurements every tenth of a mile. Photo by Rick Miller, Headquarters

So it's calculating the strength and where weaknesses could lie, Miller explains.

"This device is one of the ways we get a better assessment of pavement health," he says. That data will help decide how a section of highway should be rehabilitated.

The FWD is now being deployed to KDOT districts that can provide traffic control, including on U.S. 54 in Pratt and Kiowa counties and recently on I-70 in Lincoln and Ellsworth counties.

The FWD typically collects between 900 and 1,300 miles of data per calendar year, Miller says. The device is deployed usually from May through October. It can't be used if the ground is frozen.



The underside of an FWD. Photo by Curtis Eichman, Headquarters

Turkeys can be both delicious and dangerous

By Tracy Crockett
District Five

Duane Petty, Engineering Technician Senior in Wamego, was heading back to the office one afternoon before the Memorial Day weekend when a turkey hit his windshield.

“I think the turkey was up on the ridge because I really didn’t see it. It was pretty much, ‘BANG,’ there it was. It was coming off the ridge gliding down,” Petty said. “I checked my rearview mirror before I started braking and I could see the feathers. I’ve seen a lot of turkeys over the years, but that’s the first one I’ve had contact with.”

Luckily, Petty wasn’t injured. The only damage to the vehicle was the windshield, but it serves as a reminder to always pay attention.

“There wasn’t a whole lot of time to react - bang, keep the vehicle going straight down the road and maintain your lane,” Petty said.

Safety Coordinator Mark Johnson said while these type of incidents aren’t common in KDOT, they do happen. They’ve had reports of vehicles hitting deer, pheasants and turkeys. They’ve even had animals run into vehicles.

Johnson reminds all drivers to, “Concentrate on what you’re doing, keep control of your vehicle and don’t ever get distracted.”

He said if you do come upon an animal in the road don’t screech on your brakes. Slow down cautiously and see what they’re



KDOT employee Duane Petty didn’t have much time to react when a turkey hit his work truck’s windshield and shattered it. Photo by Multimedia Services

doing, then determine what the safest step is based on where you’re at. Knowing where the traffic is and what the situation is around you is important.

“You never know when these things are going to come up. The last thing you want to do is overreact,” Johnson said.

If you hit an animal while in a KDOT vehicle you should notify your supervisor. Based on the severity, you

may need to call the Kansas Highway Patrol or other law enforcement in the area.

“Pay attention to what you’re doing. Always err on the side of caution. Be as safe of a driver as you possibly can,” Johnson said.



Kudos

Email sent to District One -
I just want to thank KDOT for the resurfacing that was recently done to the intersection of Metcalf (traveling north), 56th St. & Foxridge Dr. It was

a hot mess for years and now is a beautiful new road that won’t pop a tire or ruin your alignment.

Thanks, it is greatly appreciated.

Mary Gunter, Mission Resident



Rain caused Stranger Creek to go out of its banks next to K-192 in Easton (above and middle left) as well as on K-92 west of Leavenworth (middle right) on May 27, making it necessary for KDOT crews to flag traffic in northeast Kansas. Photos by Cody Hilt, District One



Roadways in District Two also dealt with partial flooding during and after the Memorial Day holiday. They included K-4 south of Gypsum in Saline County (seen at left), south K-57 just southeast of Junction City in Geary County, K-14 in Ellsworth County at mile post 162, K-106 just south of Minneapolis in Ottawa County and K-18 at mile post 130 in Ottawa County. Where water was partially covering the roadway and it was safe to drive on another part of the road, KDOT crews worked to direct vehicles around the high water. Photo by Brad Anderson, District Two



Above and left, blasting operations have kicked up plenty of earth and rock on the U.S. 169 reconstruction between Welda and Garnett north of the U.S. 169/160 interchange project. The highway was closed at Welda in April, with traffic placed on a state route detour using U.S. 54 and U.S. 59. Bettis Asphalt & Construction of Topeka is the contractor on the \$21 million project. Greg Gonzales' road squad and Shawn Schwensen's bridge squad designed the project. Photos by Donna Schmit, District Four

Districts work together to aid Kansas travelers

By Kelly Kultala and Ashley Perez
District One and District Two

Mark Schlotzhauer, Equipment Operator from the Manhattan Subarea office, was driving his 'surveillance' route on May 11 on U.S. 77 west of Manhattan, picking up trash and straightening signs. He came across a woman, her son and their dog, who were on the side of the road with a flat tire. Schlotzhauer gave the woman his jacket so she could stay warm while he worked to change her tire, looking for the right-size wrench for a bolt on the tire that was different than all the rest.

About that time Leonard Fishburn, Equipment Operator Senior on the Specials Crew in Salina, was driving northbound on U.S. 77, going to Clay Center to help load a truck. He came across Schlotzhauer's KDOT

dump truck parked on the side of the road. Fishburn said he saw the highway traffic not paying attention, so he turned on his truck's strobe lights and pulled up behind the dump truck to alert motorists and if needed, to assist. Fishburn was able to find the right-size wrench in his pickup and change the tire, allowing the motorists to continue on their way.

Fishburn wants everyone to know, "that he was proud to see that Mark went the extra mile to help a stranded motorist."

When asked why he gave the woman his jacket, Schlotzhauer stated, "My wife would have been very upset with me, when I told her my story, if I did not see that the lady stayed warm." He went on to say, "I'm glad Leonard stopped by with the supervisor's truck since they usually have more tools."

Blenn goes the extra mile at the office

By Tracy Crockett
District Five

During the pandemic KDOT Mechanic Don Blenn was asked to come in and work on things as needed like oil changes and other repairs. But with much of the office staff working from home, he stepped in and took on extra responsibilities.

“He is helping Staci Weeks and I in so many ways,” said Vicki Ludlum, Administrative Assistant, Wamego Area Office. “He’s helping with the stock orders, unloading stock, putting stock away, scanning me info that I need, sticking the fuel tanks, pulling the vendor root tickets and putting them on my desk and so many more things - I could go on and on. He’s amazing.”

Blenn said he is happy to help. “It takes a little bit of extra time, but we’re all part of the same team. I’m glad I’ve been able to pitch in and help,” he said.

Blenn has been working on equipment since he was 16 years old. He began working for a construction company, then later worked for Pottawatomie County where he retired after 35 years. But after a year of being retired, Blenn said he was spending too much money and looking to get back in the workforce.

Now he spends his days working on equipment and trucks for the area shop in Wamego. “When I came here everyone just welcomed me with open arms and I’ve never regretted a minute of it coming to work here. They just kind of make you feel like family,” Blenn said.

Ludlum appreciates Blenn going the extra mile at the office. “I just think he’s fantastic and I just wish we had a bunch more of him,” Ludlum said.



Mechanic Don Blenn usually spends his time fixing equipment, as seen below. But he’s also pitching in on office duties, helping wherever necessary. Photos by KDOT Multimedia



Thank you for your service

The following employees will retire from KDOT on July 1.

District One

Terry Daniels, Engineering Technician Senior, Horton
Ronald Schwindamann, Equipment Operator Senior, Marysville

Headquarters

Catherine Patrick, Director, Division of Safety
Rhonda Seitz, Bureau Chief, Fiscal
Ronald Seitz, Director, Division of Engineering & Design
Dean Teal, Engineering Associate III, Bureau of Structures & Geotechnical Services

In Memory

Condolences to the family and friends of retiree Ivan Hill, age 90, of Garnett, who passed away on May 19 at his home. He retired from KDOT from the road department.

Lakin prepares for new building

By Lisa Knoll
District Six

Built in 1968, the Lakin Subarea building was 3,043-square-foot and housed a four-bay shop, office and breakroom. That building was demolished on May 26 and will be replaced with a 6,064-square-foot facility that includes two heated drive-thru bays, two KDOT offices and a KHP office, new bathrooms, break area and new lockers.

“It was interesting just watching it come down,” said Lakin Subarea Supervisor Ken Bowden. “The excavator separated everything as it came down so it could go to the landfill. He separated the shingles from the tin and so on.”

According to Bowden, employees are looking forward to the heated drive-thru bays, which will make working during snow and ice season as well as repairs easier.

Cedar Ridge of Woodward, Okla., is the contractor on the project, which is expected to be ready for move-in by Oct. 1. The crew is currently working out of a small portable unit.



The old Lakin Subarea office was demolished and the new building should be completed this fall. Photos by Ken Bowden, District Six



Why KDOT builds roundabouts - two key benefits



View of the new roundabout at U.S. 50 and U.S. 281, south of St. John. Photo by Doug Coates, District Five

By Tim Potter
District Five

The newly opened roundabout at U.S. 50 and U.S. 281 in Stafford County is a reminder of two key benefits of roundabouts.

The state highway system now has 22 completed roundabouts, and several more are in construction or planning phases, according to a recent count.

The benefits:

No. 1: They decrease the chance of severe, high-impact collisions because they are designed to slow down and funnel traffic in a smooth circular route.

No. 2: They allow traffic to keep moving unless a motorist must yield for a gap in traffic.

“We don’t put them everywhere,” says Brian Gower, KDOT Bureau Chief of Transportation Safety and Technology. Roundabouts are built at spots with “a chronic crash issue or at a high-crash location where we have not been successful addressing crashes with other treatments,” Gower says.

That was the case at U.S. 50 and U.S. 281 before the roundabout was built, says Carla Anderson, State Traffic Engineer.

Despite good visibility in a wide-open spot in rural Stafford County, that intersection had a relatively high

number of crashes, Anderson says.

And it is on a major truck route. Some of the wide loads in that area carry huge windmill parts, for example, and those loads have a tough time getting through a typical highway intersection.

So KDOT opted to build a roundabout there with a circular inner road for regular traffic and a diamond-shaped outer road for oversize loads. The roundabout near Marion has a similar configuration, Anderson says.

Regarding crashes, with roundabouts the chance of a severe crash “has been minimized tremendously,” Gower says. If vehicles do collide at a roundabout, it will generally be a glancing sideswipe, not an angle or “T-bone” impact, he explains.

Roundabouts feature rumble strips and additional signage to help motorists recognize and prepare for something other than a typical intersection. Also, Anderson notes, “We have a lot of street lighting at roundabouts so that the drivers can see in the dark conditions.”

Gower and Anderson acknowledge that it might take some drivers a little time to get accustomed to a roundabout.

All motorists need to remember, they say, is to slow down, yield to the left before entering the circle and look for a gap in traffic.