

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

Feb. 1, 2023

Conditions cause I-70 to close twice in January

By Lisa Mussman
District Three

Winter weather has been keeping crews busy in District Three and caused the closure on I-70 on two separate occasions. Westbound I-70 was closed at Goodland the evening of Jan. 18 because of adverse conditions and vehicle crashes blocking the travelway in Colorado.

That closure would eventually extend east to Hays, and the interstate would not reopen until around 8:30 a.m. the next morning. The second storm, which hit on Saturday, Jan. 21, caused more issues on Kansas roads and prompted the closure of I-70 in both directions between WaKeeney and the Colorado border for a time.

The Goodland National Weather Service said snow fell at rates of about 1 to 2 inches per hour during the Saturday storm. Snow totals included 5.5 inches in Goodland, 5.6 inches in Colby and 3.4 inches in Norton, on top of what had fallen earlier that week.



Goodland Subarea Supervisor Tim Micek pulled over in his pickup truck to take a photo of another round of snow falling on I-70 in Sherman County on Jan. 24.

I-70 at Hays Exit 159 - Southeast



This KanDrive screen capture shows KDOT crews and the Kansas Highway Patrol working together to lower the snow gates on westbound I-70 at Hays as conditions made it necessary to close the Interstate on Jan. 18.



District Three Construction Engineer Jim Riener (left) explains details of the K-383 modernization project in Norton County to participants during the pre-construction open house held on Jan. 30 in Almena. Photo by Lisa Mussman, District Three

Second phase of K-383 project discussed at public meeting

By Lisa Mussman
District Three

A public open house took place in Almena on Jan. 30 to share information on the upcoming reconstruction and closure of K-383 in Norton County.

The project is the second phase of the modernization of 26 miles of K-383 in Norton and Phillips counties. Phase I, which covered 6 miles in Phillips County, was completed late last year. Phase II will cover 6 miles in Norton County starting at the east U.S. 36 junction and ending near Almena.

Project work includes widening the highway on existing alignment into a 24-foot mainline surface with 6-foot paved shoulders. KDOT will also decrease side slopes and level hills and valleys. This will help improve visibility and increase passing opportunities.

KDOT expects to close the highway on March 13 and complete the project by the end of 2023, weather permitting. Greg Gonzales' road squad and Shawn Schwensen's bridge squad designed the project.

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

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Troy Whitworth

Fulghum selected as Chief of Fiscal Services

Ami Fulghum has been selected as the Bureau Chief of Fiscal Services for KDOT.

After graduating from Emporia State University in 2007, Fulghum started at KDOT as an Accountant I.

"I like being in public service," she said. "You get to see our tax dollars put to good use."



Ami Fulghum

Fulghum was promoted through the Federal Aid Section, then was the Inventory Accountant for two years. She went to the Operations Division in 2015 as the Crew Card System Administrator, and two years later, she came back to Federal Aid. She was named the Federal Review and Audit Manager in 2021, where she served until her recent promotion.

"In every position, I've gotten to meet and work with

new people, which I really enjoy," she said.

Fulghum will oversee three sections in Fiscal - Procurement (where processes get set up for purchasing needs), General Accounting (where all the regular bills get paid) and Federal Aid (where any project with funding dollars outside of state resources is reviewed).

"We've seen a lot of technology changes over the years," Fulghum said. "Several major project systems we use have come off the mainframe, which has then required new systems to be implemented."

Fulghum said the bureau is on a good path and is glad to be following a great leader. "I look forward to being part of the process and helping the agency move forward," she said.

Fulghum and her husband have two children, and she loves watching college basketball.

Maintenance repairs are year-round efforts

Employees from the Salina Subarea take advantage of the clear skies and highways to perform guardrail repair. The work took place on southbound I-135 at the Mentor/Smolan exit in Saline County on Jan. 19. Photo by Ashley Perez, District Two



Employee spotlight: Drake Jennings, Olathe Area Office

What's your job title?

Area Superintendent.

What sort of duties do you have at work?

Overseeing road maintenance in Johnson County.

What kind of music do you like?

Early 80s and 90s country.

What's the most exciting part of your job?

Managing snow removal.

What's something you're proud of?

The 37 years that I've worked with the same company. I'm also proud I have been married to my best friend for 27 years. And I am proud of my two kids, my son Dalton graduated from K-State in 2019, and my daughter Makenna graduated from Pittsburg State in 2022.

What's your favorite food?

Mexican food.

What's your favorite movie?

"Smokey and the Bandit."

Do you have any hidden talents or hobbies?

I make steam pipe lamps. It's a hobby I picked up after I saw one online. I purchase most of my parts for them at Home Depot. Depending on the type of lamp, it usually takes me about three days to complete one. I also make a lamp with a switch and a plug in; I can make one of them in a day. Another hobby is camping - my wife and I own a camper and a boat, and we enjoy our weekends at the lake.

Do you have any pets?

We have two dogs, terrier mixes - Zoey is 10 years old and Raven is 7.

Are you a sports fan?

Who are your favorite teams?

Yes - Royals and the Chiefs.

Are you a morning person or a night owl?

Night owl.



From right to left, Drake Jennings with his wife, Shelly, and children, Makenna and Dalton, celebrate Makenna's college graduation.

GETTING TO KNOW

OUR KDOT CO-WORKERS

Featuring an employee each month from different offices throughout KDOT.

Are you a coffee, tea or pop person?
Coffee.

What's something you enjoy at your job?

The employees.

What's your favorite season?
Spring.

What three items would you take with you to a deserted island?

Coffee, food and alcohol.

Old 169 Neosho River bridge awarded funding

By Priscilla Petersen
District Four

An aging steel bridge that continues to carry a significant amount of traffic has been selected for a \$5.4 million replacement project under the Kansas Local Bridge Improvement Program.

The Neosho River bridge on Old 169 highway north of Chanute is a through truss structure built in 1930. The massive bridge has a deck width of 23 feet and is almost 654 feet long. In spite of being bypassed by the new U.S. 169 highway years ago and also being posted for weight limits, an average of 3,350 vehicles continue to cross the bridge on each day.

Governor Laura Kelly and former Transportation Secretary Julie Lorenz announced funding for the bridge replacement in December 2022. Thirty-three bridges throughout the state were selected for projects under KDOT's Off-System Bridge Program and the KLBIP. Both programs target city and county bridges that are not on the state highway system and need repairs or replacement. Funding was awarded through an application process, and in most cases local matching funds were required.

In addition to the Old 169 Neosho River bridge, four bridges in southeast Kansas will be replaced under the OSB Program. Among them is the Pumpkin Creek



Two of the bridges that will be replaced under the revamped local bridge improvement programs are the Neosho River bridge on old 169 highway north of Chanute (above) and the bridge over Pumpkin Creek on Montgomery County Road 1800 (old 166 highway) east of Coffeyville (below). Photos by Priscilla Petersen, District Four

bridge on Old 166 highway, now designated as 1800 Road, east of Coffeyville. The steel stringer bridge was constructed in 1919, has a 20-foot-wide deck, and is rated in fair condition.

Both bridge programs have been reshaped to take advantage of new revenue streams from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. OSB program funding has expanded from \$8 million to \$20.5 million each year, and KLBIP funds have increased from \$5 million to \$20 million annually.



New Newton shop will aid highway maintenance

By Tim Potter
District Five

The new Newton Subarea shop, which will serve some of the state's busiest highways, is getting closer to being completed.

On Jan. 17, KDOT and architectural staff joined for a final inspection of the new facility. Supervisors expect to completely move in to the facility and to have it fully operational by May.

During the inspection, Newton Subarea Supervisor Bobby Jones noted a major benefit: Jones estimated the new shop will enable crews to start treating highways for snow and ice 15 to 30 minutes faster than with the old shop. He explained that with much larger, heated bays at the new shop, all the snow-and-ice trucks can be set up and remain inside at night, making them ready to roll to treat highways during winter weather. The old shop isn't large enough to allow even one of the new, larger snow-and-ice trucks inside so they can stay warm and protected from the weather. With the old shop, all equipment maintenance and repair had to be done outside, in all seasons, or in the single wash bay when it was available.

Another key benefit, Jones noted: The new location – on the southwest side of Newton off U.S. 50 at Anderson Road – provides easier, more direct access to



District Five staff inspected the new facility on Jan. 17. Photos by Tim Potter

the highways they maintain.

The seven-person Newton crew maintains I-135, U.S. 50, K-196, K-89 and K-15.

"The trucks will be housed in these bays, out of the weather, when not in use," Jones said, as he stood on the new concrete floor, looking at the four drive-through bays and two drive-through wash bays during the inspection. "We're all excited."

The 8,600-square-foot shop will be aided by a new salt bunker and new equipment shed.

The Kansas Highway Patrol will also use office space at the shop.

Harman Huffman Construction Group, of Kechi, is the general contractor for the new \$2.57 million subarea complex.



The new Newton Subarea shop is expected to be fully operational by May.



Bridge demolished for Gold Project

Bridge rail demolition work took place on westbound K-254 to southbound I-235 in Wichita on Jan. 28. This made it necessary to close southbound I-135 at the interchange and send traffic onto southbound I-235 for a short detour. Reconstructing the bridge rail is included in the accelerated part (Phase 2A) of the Gold Project at Wichita's North Junction. This phase will be completed in late 2023, and the rest of the Gold Project (Phase 2B) begins Feb. 6. Photos by Samuel Wingert, District Five

Crash closes K-156

K-156 in Garden City closed for about six hours on Jan. 18 due to a crash involving two semi-trucks loaded with cattle. KDOT crews assisted with routing traffic during this time. KHP Trooper Mike Racy reported dense fog in the area at the time of the crash. Photos by Hector Terrones, District Six





Snowplow struck while clearing U.S. 24

By Kate Craft
District One

District One crews were busy clearing roadways on the morning of Jan. 12 after winter weather had moved through the area.

While working a few miles east of Topeka on U.S. 24 in Jefferson County, a pickup damaged and disabled a snowplow from the Oakland Subarea shop when it hit the snowplow from behind.



The photos above and at right show a pickup pinned under KDOT's snowplow after it crashed into the back. Photos courtesy of the District One, Area Four office

The Equipment Operator was clearing the westbound shoulder when the collision occurred, which caused the other vehicle to become pinned under the plow's spreader and back axle. The pickup's driver was



extricated by emergency responders and taken to the hospital, but neither driver was seriously injured in the crash.



Traffic hazard removed

At left, KDOT employees from the Dighton Subarea office responded and removed a large bale of hay that was dropped on K-4 in Lane County on Jan. 11 (below). Photos courtesy of Lane County Sheriff's Department



KanDrive, 511 see significant increases in usage

By Kim Stich
Headquarters

KDOT's webpage, Kandrive.org, has been relied on for years to provide current highway condition information across the state. Now, the number of people taking advantage of the new KanDrive App and the Kansas 511 phone system is soaring.

From November through December 2022, KanDrive App sessions went from 6,919 to 44,118 - a 538% increase. During that same two-month timeframe, the number of 511 calls received rose 368% - from 3,356 up to 15,723.



Several factors contributed to the dramatic increase. In October 2022, the KanDrive App became available, and the 511 phone system was updated. Then the Christmas holiday storm that brought record low temperatures and wind chills prompted people to give the new app and improved 511 a try.

"Impacts to traffic – whether snow, ice, flooding, construction activities or a major crash – are updated around the clock on KanDrive to assist the public in making informed travel decisions," said Kevin Hennes, KanDrive Administrator. "Providing options to receive this timely information is a huge benefit for motorists."

The KanDrive App contains all account features available on KanDrive, and it also includes a hands-

free/eye-free feature that announces upcoming traffic events while traveling. The 511 system's voice quality and speech recognition features have been improved, allowing motorists to ask for reports on a specific route, in a city or between two cities.

The main connection of these systems is the KanDrive road condition website, created by KDOT in 2009. It has been upgraded several times to include additional features, such as real-time streaming of camera views along state roadways, a truckers' mode for commercial vehicle operators, traffic

speeds, reports, incident alerts and more. The upgrades also connected KanDrive to traffic management systems in Wichita (WICHway) and Kansas City (KC Scout).

KanDrive website usage decreases in the summer and greatly increases in the winter, with motorists using it to learn how much and how long storms are impacting highways. In 2022, traffic to the website averaged more than 141,000 site hits per month. But from November to December, traffic to the KanDrive website escalated from 65,674 to 407,398 - a 520% increase.

For more information on all KanDrive services, go to www.KanDrive.org.



KanDrive

I-70 at Kanorado MP 5 - Northwest



Those viewing KanDrive cameras before traveling on the morning of Sunday, Jan. 29, could see that while there was still snow on the right of way, I-70 just 5 miles east of the Kansas/Colorado border was clear. Camera views available on KanDrive show either a current image or video of the highways' existing conditions - no images or video are recorded.

Some choices can alter lives forever

By Troy Whitworth
Director of Safety

Past experiences help shape our lives and give us information for making future decisions. All of these life experiences are learning moments, and they provide decision points, or choices.

This is something we all experience from the earliest age. You may not personally remember the Terrible 2s, but I am sure you see it or have seen the behavior in other children. They seem to get into everything. Touching, pulling, pushing, climbing and running all over the place. These activities may seem a bit annoying to adults, but this is an important part of how a child learns boundaries and creates a foundation for making choices.

This isn't the only way a child learns limiting boundaries. They learn by watching parents, siblings or friends. They also can learn by hearing stories about close calls. You probably can remember your parents explaining the hazards of acting a certain way or doing a certain behavior. You may also remember choosing to disregard their warning and doing it anyway.

Sometimes, you may have thrown caution to the wind and gotten away with disregarding their warning. Other times, you may have wished you had listened to them.

Over the course of our lives, some choices can carry life altering consequences. I remember in the mid-1990s when choices my nephew made changed his life. My nephew was in his early 20s at the time. He decided to ride with his friend to a nearby town to meet a girl who had sparked his interest. The two boys had planned to make the trip before my nephew had to be at work later that evening. So, he decided to nap during the half hour drive so he wouldn't be quite as tired for his work shift.

This is where the story of choices comes into play. My nephew's friend had chosen to drink that evening. He then made another choice to get behind the wheel of a car. My nephew hadn't been drinking because he was scheduled to work. My guess would be that he figured his buddy was OK to drive, especially if it allowed him to catch some shut-eye. So, he chose to crawl into the passenger side of the car and put the seat back for his nap. Then, they made their way down the road. I am sure this was a well-traveled route for the boys. They probably thought it was a short trip and nothing bad could happen to them.

About mid-way into the trip, my nephew's friend fell asleep at the wheel. He went off an embankment and crashed. This is where another choice the boys made changed their lives - they weren't wearing seat belts. The force of the impact was extensive. My nephew went through the windshield of the car and landed in the bottom of a ditch. His friend sustained injuries from hitting the steering wheel. My nephew suffered severe head

trauma from the crash. He spent two weeks in a coma before he finally died from his injuries. The choices made that night forever changed everything for the boys, as well as their families and friends.

In the wintertime, many of our co-workers spend time plowing snow. They are sometimes out in the worst conditions imaginable. And every year, I hear stories about someone being involved in a rollover crash while out plowing. Several of these folks made the choice not to buckle up. In 2019, this choice cost a young man his life. So, the next time you operate anything with a seat belt, buckle up. It is a proven fact that seat belts save lives. Don't make your life a cautionary tale. Choose to improve your chances of making it home to your family. For your family and mine.



Trivia!

More Greek Mythology

1. When Zeus was angry, what happened?
2. What are Centaurs?
3. Who was the goddess of agriculture and grain?
4. Who are known as the Titans?
5. What was the Greek view of the world at that time?
6. Most Greek Olympians had Roman names. Who was the god of science and invention, and what was his Roman name?
7. Where did Poseidon live? What happened if he was angry?

STEP BACK IN TIME ...

This 1966 photo shows KDOT's Engineers In Training group.



Trivia answers

1. Zeus threw thunderbolts made for him by the Cyclops when he lost his temper.
2. Centaurs are half-man, half horse creatures that inhabited the mountains and forests of Thessaly (homeland of Achilles).
3. Demeter, also known as Ceres.
4. Titans presided over the earth before the Olympians were born and are considered their ancestors. The Titans were overthrown when Zeus led the Olympians to revolt against their leader, Cronus.
5. It was thought that the world was flat, but circular, and at the center of the universe was Greece.
6. Hermes – he is said to have invented the alphabet. His Roman name is Mercury.
7. Poseidon lived in a palace under the sea. His temper caused earthquakes.



Reviewing traffic control in work zones

Employees engage in maintenance traffic control training in Salina that took place several days in early January. Training was led by Vance Donahue, District Two Safety Specialist; Phil Nelson, District Two Equipment Training Coordinator (center, in yellow shirt); and Paul Thomas, District Five Safety Specialist. The training gave employees an opportunity to review the use of proper traffic control in work zones. Photo by Vance Donahue, District Two

In Memory

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Scot Keil**, who passed away Jan. 20 in Topeka. Keil started at KDOT in 1990. He was an Engineering Technician Senior in the Bureau of Transportation Planning. Keil served the agency for more than 32 years, retiring in 2022.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Lonnie Riley**, who passed away on Jan. 15. He was from Chanute. Riley served as Storekeeper Specialist at the District Four office. He started in 1989 and retired in 2011, serving more than 21 years.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Frank Coufal**, who passed away Jan. 13 in Topeka. Coufal served at KDOT for more than 45 years, starting in the Bureau of Design. He retired in 2016 as a Project Management Engineer in Program and Project Management.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Joseph Oldham**, who passed away Jan. 1. He was from Fontana. Oldham started at KDOT in 1987, and he was an Equipment Operator Specialist at the KDOT office in Mound City. He retired in 2020, after more than 33 years of service.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Richard (Mert) Myres**, who passed away on Dec. 31 in Chanute. Myres started at KDOT in 1955 and worked for nearly 40 years, retiring in 1995. He was a Highway Maintenance Supervisor at the Garnett office.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree **Rocky Indiek**, who passed away on Dec. 30 in Kinsley. Indiek began at KDOT in 1979 and served for more than 32 years, retiring in 2011. He was a Highway Maintenance Supervisor at the Dodge City office.

Every life saved is a success, but more can be done

The good news - KDOT preliminary crash notifications for 2022 show Kansas experienced a 3% decrease in fatalities compared to 2021. The bad news - vehicle crashes continue to be one of the state's main causes of preventable deaths.

"We hardly can celebrate 413 lives lost in 2022 compared to a total of 424 lives in 2021, because even one death is one too many," said Vanessa Spartan, KDOT Transportation Safety Bureau Chief. "That said, while many states in the nation are experiencing an increase in fatal crashes, Kansas experienced a decrease. Behind those numbers are the families and friends we must remember. But it is positive that 11 more families were able to continue with their daily lives and enjoy last year in comparison to 2021."

No life lost is the goal, and 413 lives lost in vehicle

crashes is 413 too many. Loss of life and serious injury not only leaves families and friends grieving emotionally, but results in economic stress for families, employers and communities.

"We are in this together," Spartan said. "Everyone sets the tone by example by building a community intolerance toward dangerous driving behaviors that can lead to a vehicle crash. Far too often, loss of life and serious injury could be avoided by wearing a seat belt, slowing down and following traffic laws."

The public will soon see more information about Drive to Zero Kansas, a new

educational traffic safety campaign KDOT is promoting in conjunction with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The goal is to reduce crashes, death and serious injury through education, enforcement, emergency response and engineering.



KTA briefs:

- In its "Year in Review" video, the KTA looks back at the challenges and accomplishments of 2022. Watch the video [here](#).
- KTA awarded three contracts for the 2023 construction season. These include bridge redecking and widening at mile markers 125 and 155, as well as placement of high friction surfacing at mile markers 103 and 105. Read the full news release [here](#).

Meeting outlines K-96 corridor plans

KDOT, FHWA and the City of Wichita are hosting a public meeting from 5 to 7 p.m. on Feb. 2 to unveil design concepts for the K-96 corridor between I-135 and I-35. It will be held at the National Center for Aviation Training (Building 300), 4004 N. Webb Road in Wichita (at Colonel James Jabara Airport, WSU Tech).



More details and a video about the K-96 corridor are available [here](#).

Expanding this portion of K-96 to six lanes will help ease congestion - up to 100,000 vehicles a day are expected by 2050. This project is currently in the IKE development pipeline.

Milestones

KDOT employees celebrating state service anniversaries in February.

45 years

Frank Finan, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Blaine

35 years

Troy Whitworth, Director of Safety, Meriden

30 years

Stephen Baalman, Topeka Metro Engineer, Topeka

Kevin Dolton, Engineering Technician Supervisor, Salina

Heather Salerno, Public Service Administrator II, Topeka

25 years

James Masters, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Harveyville

20 years

Daniel Gentry, Refrigeration and AC Service Technician Senior, Salina

Gerald Konrade Jr., Equipment Operator Specialist, Merriam

Rachel Shanholtzer, Engineering Technician Specialist, Topeka

Karri Sisk, Storekeeper Specialist, Norton

Christopher Smith, Engineering Technician Senior, Topeka

15 years

Jose Calvillo-Fuerte, Engineering Technician Midpoint, Salina

10 years

Justin Lacy, Equipment Operator, Cimarron

Jacob Woerner, Equipment Operator Specialist, Topeka

KDOT employees celebrating state service anniversaries in January.

40 years

Michael Daniel, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Ozawkie

35 years

Richard Miller, Professional Civil Engineer II, Wakarusa

James Shelton, Engineering Technician Senior, Tecumseh

30 years

Robert Perry, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Sawyer

Amy Rockers, Road Support Engineer, Lawrence

Kim Stich, Public Service Executive II, Topeka

25 years

Kevin Crain, Field Maintenance Coordinator, Cherryvale

Natalie Durkin, Senior Administrative Assistant, Ozawkie

Edi Logan, Senior Administrative Assistant, El Dorado

20 years

Ida Kirmse, Public Service Executive I, Topeka

Nicholas Squires, District Engineer, Pratt

15 years

Robert Bartron, Engineering Technician Specialist, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Richard Donohoe, Applications Developer III, Topeka

Jamie Reimer, Equipment Operator Senior, Phillipsburg

Tabitha Taylor, Engineering Technician Supervisor, Topeka

Mark Wendt, Environmental Program Administrator, Topeka

Starting in 2023, KDOT will now highlight employees for every five years of service (beginning with 10 years) in milestones and statewide news releases.