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In this issue:

1. TTI Named Lead Agency for SWUTC
2. Perkinson-Zietsman Team Tackles School Bus Emissions
3. Director Nominee List Increases
4. Lancaster Retirement Scheduled
5. Ports and Waterways Conference
6. Aggie Selected for Federal Transportation Office
7. Perry Addresses Economic Forum
8. TTI Building Okayed
9. TTI in the News
10. TTI Researcher Trying to Save D-Day Cliffs
11. TTI Anniversaries
12. Editor’s Corner: Active Voice Speaks Out for Research
13. Reminders/Calendar

1. TTI Named Lead Agency for SWUTC

TTI will again serve as the lead agency for the Southwest Region University Transportation Center (SWUTC) for the next four fiscal years, the United States Department of Transportation announced July 31. Last year’s transportation bill authorizes $2 million annually for SWUTC, twice the funding allocated previously. SWUTC is one of the 10 regional centers of the University Transportation Centers (UTC) program.

Since SWUTC’s inception in 1988, TTI has led the consortium, which is made up of The Texas A&M University System (TTI and Texas A&M University), The University of Texas at Austin and its Center for Transportation Research (CTR), and Texas Southern University’s Center for Transportation Training and Research (CTTR). Senior Research Economist Dock Burke has been the center’s director since 1992.

“We are excited about being selected as the Regional UTC for the next four years,” Burke said. “SWUTC’s grant funding provides opportunities for research, educational and technology transfer initiatives that complement other TTI programs. This encourages our researchers, faculty and students to develop project ideas which typically might not get funded by other contract research entities.” Burke added: “To make this enterprise work, we must now obtain non-federal funds (dollar-for-dollar) to match the yearly $2 million grant from USDOT.”
The current goals of SWUTC include supporting economic growth and trade, enhancing mobility and developing the transportation workforce. A new strategic plan will be prepared to guide SWUTC during the next four years of its operation.

Learn more about SWUTC:
http://swutc.tamu.edu/

top

2. Perkinson-Zietsman Team Tackles School Bus Emissions

TTI will contribute to the scientific debate involving biodiesel fuel emissions when it completes a first-of-its-kind research project on school buses equipped with recently obtained portable emission testing equipment. The study began in late July at the Riverside Campus comparing standard commercial diesel fuel (ultra low sulfur diesel [ULSD]) with two alternative blends of biodiesel (B20).

The test will focus on exhaust levels of oxides of nitrogen (NOx), which is a precursor to ground level smog. Dennis Perkinson, who is managing the study for the Capital Area Council of Govern (CAPCOG), notes “This study should help assess which fuels are better overall for the environment and, of course, school children riding in the buses.”

The study, with support from Oakridge National Laboratories, is using five school buses and drivers supplied by the Caldwell Independent School District. The portable emission measurement equipment is assembled on the buses as they run a course mimicking actual routes. “To have real-world results is great news for the scientific community,” according to Lead Researcher Joe Zietsman, “not only for this study, but for countless other sponsors interested in finding real answers, away from laboratory-only settings.”

Cosponsors of the school bus emission study include the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The fuel was provided by Valero’s Three Rivers Refinery and Austin Bio-Fuels. TTI employees working on the study are Mohamadreza Farzaneh, Ed Brackin, Mark Ojah, Meghan Wieters and A. J. Rand.

Read local coverage:
3. Director Nominee List Increases

The number of candidates who have reached the interview stage for the position of TTI director now includes at least one additional candidate. Hani Mahmassani, the founding Director of the Maryland Transportation Initiative at the University of Maryland, is scheduled for interviews in College Station Aug. 29-30. Dr. Mahmassani received his Ph.D. in Transportation Systems from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1982.

“On the announcement it is stated that the search will continue until the position is filled,” said Lee Peddicord, chair of the search committee. “As a result, the search committee is obligated to receive, review and meet with those candidates who are qualified. We will continue with this practice until the position is filled or we are otherwise directed by the Board of Regents or the chancellor.”

In addition to Mahmassani, the names of the nominees include Dennis Christiansen (whose interviews are scheduled for Aug. 17-18), Jon Epps, Oliver McGee and Kenneth J. Button.

4. Lancaster Retirement Scheduled

After 24 years of service, a retirement reception for the former longtime director of the Information and Technology Exchange Center (ITEC) (now TTI Communications), Susan Lancaster, has been scheduled for Aug 31, at the Gilchrist Building in room 102.

“Sue was the driving force behind the growth and prominence of TTI Communications for many years,” says Associate TTI Director Bill Stockton. “Many of the incredibly gifted people who make their talents available to TTI were recruited by Sue. The relationships that Sue developed continue to grow and strengthen, and are serving as a base for exciting opportunities.”

The Friday reception will begin at 2:00 p.m. and last until 4:00 p.m. A presentation is planned to begin at 3:15.
5. Ports and Waterways Conference

The two-day 2006 Texas Ports and Waterways Conference sponsored by TTI wrapped up July 28 in Beaumont with more than 90 professionals in attendance. The conference focused on providing practical information for port authorities, engineers, consultants, government officials and others who deal with the development and management of port facilities in Texas.

“The feedback I got from the attendees was that they appreciated the opportunity to hear from experts and fellow transportation managers about the issues that impact them on a daily basis,” said Jim Kruse, the director of TTI’s Center for Ports and Waterways (CPW).

The conference included presentations about the environment, regulations and disaster preparation as they relate to ports and waterways. Also, Assistant Agency Director Steve Roop presented information about his Freight Shuttle project.

Read an article about the conference:  

6. Aggie Selected for Federal Transportation Office

An Aggie has been named to a recently created office within the Transportation Security Administration. In 1977, John P. Sammon graduated with a Master of Science in economics from Texas A&M University.

Read more:  
7. Perry Addresses Economic Forum

Gov. Rick Perry spent much of his keynote speech at The Texas A&M University System Regional Economic Opportunity Forum Aug. 3, bragging about the state of Texas and his alma mater. The forum was the third in a series of regional forums held in conjunction with small business summits that Perry is hosting around the state. “Small businesses represent the best of what’s great about America,” Perry told more than 600 people who attended the one-day summit, which was geared for small, minority-owned and women-owned businesses.

Employees of TTI’s Business Office who are responsible for the administration of TTI’s Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) program attended the forum. “All state agencies are required by law to make a good-faith effort to include HUB vendors in procurement opportunities,” according to Kathy Cowen, who served as this year’s chairperson for the statewide HUB Discussion Workgroup Outreach Committee. “We want all employees of TTI to be aware that TTI is firmly committed to the State of Texas HUB program and encourages the solicitation of diverse, minority-owned businesses for all procurement opportunities.”

For additional information about the HUB program, contact Kathy Cowen, Anna Jo Mitchell, Marie Ethridge or one of the members of the TTI HUB Advisory Committee: Cheryl Burt, Mary Cearley, Tommy Clement, Bonnie Duke, Pam Kopf, Brian Long, Nancy Stratta, Michelle Wright, and Shanna Yates.

Read an article about the forum:

top

8. TTI Building Okayed

The Texas A&M Board of Regents approved plans for construction of a new $11.6 million research facility for TTI. The TTI State Headquarters and Research Building will be located next to the Gibb Gilchrist Building at Research Park. The 45,500 square foot facility should be ready for occupancy in the Spring of 2009.

top
9. TTI in the News

There have been numerous mentions of TTI and our experts in recent media reports. Here are links to some of the stories.

Happy places (Corpus Christi Caller-Times) Aug. 11
http://www.caller.com/ccct/local_news/article/0,1641,CCCT_811_4910388,00.html

Hurricane evacuation (Star-Telegram) Aug. 9

Herb Richardson’s retirement (A&M Systemwide) July/August
http://tamusystem.tamu.edu/systemwide/06/07/spotlight/index.html

Red light cameras (Sun-Sentinel) Aug. 6
http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/columnists/sfl-proads06aug06,0,3979572.column

Adjusting work schedules to ease traffic (Houston Chronicle) Aug. 7

Parents letting unlicensed children drive (Houston Chronicle) August 5
http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/front/4095994.html (no longer working)

Flirting in traffic (Star-Telegram) Aug. 2

Accident procedures (Miami Herald) July 31
http://www.miami.com/ml/miamiherald/15161030.htm

Trans Texas Corridor hearings (KERA Radio) July 27
http://publicbroadcasting.net/kera/news.newsmain?action=article&ARTICLE_ID=947346

Transportation bond (North County Times) July 29
http://www.ncbi.com/articles/2006/07/30/opinion/editorials/16_48_567_29_06.txt

Cable barriers saving lives (WRAL-TV) July 25

Speed limits increasing (Wall Street Journal) July 20

Shifting freight from road to rail (Seattle Post-Intelligencer) July 20
http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/278115_transit20.html

Cable barriers saving lives (USA Today) July 19
**10. TTI Researcher Trying to Save D-Day Cliffs**

The historically significant Pointe du Hoc cliff side near Normandy, France, is in danger of eroding into the English Channel without help from TTI Research Engineer Jean-Louis Briaud and his team of geotechnical experts. The site was the scene of the June 6, 1944, D-Day battle where Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder and a Ranger Battalion scaled the cliffs to secure a German stronghold. More than half of the 225 rangers died in the fighting. Rudder survived and became president of Texas A&M University from 1959 to 1970.

The American Battle Monument Commission selected a team from Texas A&M University including Briaud to save the cliffs. With the help of U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards, $430,000 has been secured so far for the project.

Read more:
[http://our-news.tamu.edu/newsmanager/templates/?a=3084&z=15](http://our-news.tamu.edu/newsmanager/templates/?a=3084&z=15)

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**11. TTI Anniversaries**

5 years
Edits performed by TTI Communications encourage the use of active voice grammatical construction. At early stages of manuscript preparation, editors mark occurrences of passive voice in a document and suggest alternative wording.

Active voice means that the subject in a sentence takes the action described by the verb. In a passive voice sentence the subject is acted upon. For example:

Passive voice: Data were collected at the intersection.
Active voice: Cameras located at the intersection collected data.

While the two sentences are similar, the second sentence provides clearer content because it specifies who or what performed the task. Readers assimilate information more quickly in active voice than passive voice. Simple, active sentences produce clear and meaningful writing, and editors recommend that you aim for at least half active voice throughout documents. To write in active voice:

12. Editor's Corner: Active Voice Speaks Out for Research
Choose verbs that show action.
Identify the subject of your sentence and confirm that it is the actor.

Clarity of content is one of the big advantages of active voice. Instructional documents such as manuals, guidelines, and handbooks particularly benefit from active voice because in some passive voice sentences a reader has difficulty determining the meaning of a sentence. For example, a software manual might include the sentence “The total is calculated and entered at the prompt.” Does that sentence mean that the software program automatically calculates and enters the total based on earlier entries, or does it mean the user needs to perform the calculation and entry? A clearer way to write the instruction would be “The user totals results from all districts. The program prompts the user to enter the calculated total.”

When you send a document to TTI Communications for edit, feel free to ask for extra attention to passive/active voice. For assistance in converting passive voice to active voice, contact Rhonda Brinkmann.

13. Reminders/Calendar

(Please contact CenterLine with items for this section)

**Researchers** — Remember to check your TxDOT Research Management Committee contracts or the My Stuff section of TTINet for upcoming deliverable due dates. Many deliverables are due by the sponsor or to TTI Communications on Aug. 31.

**Energy Policy Act Conference** — Aug. 31
http://www.tamus.edu/energy/

**74th Annual IBTTA Meeting** — Sept. 16-20
http://www.ibtta.org/Events/eventdetail.cfm?ItemNumber=1791

**2006 Transportation Short Course** — Oct. 9-11
http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tsc06/

**Herb Richardson Retirement Reception** — Oct. 12
CenterLine is a production of TTI Communications. We encourage your comments and suggestions for articles about TTI people and research efforts. Please send email to news@ttimail.tamu.edu or call Rick Davenport at (979) 862-3763.