1. Child in Crash Okay after TTI Safety Event

When Charlot Finnigan came to TTI’s Child Safety Seat “check-up” event Dec. 13, she had no idea it would become perhaps one of the most important decisions of her life. On Jan. 15, as Charlot and her husband were driving south on Texas Avenue, a car pulled out from a parking lot, causing a collision that totaled their 12-year-old automobile. Immediately, Charlot and her husband checked the backseat and the health of their 4-month-old, 11-pound daughter, Jasmine. Inside and secure in her infant child safety seat, she was fine. (Jasmine is small for her age, weighing less than 6 pounds at birth). The family was later checked out at the hospital and released, found to be uninjured. “Before I went to the safety seat “check-up” event, I didn’t know how to install the seat,” Charlot said. “Without knowing how to do it right, Jasmine could have been hurt.”

In fact, the notes from the Dec. 13 inspection of little Jasmine’s seat showed some serious problems. TTI employees Katie Womack and Sandra Schoeneman jotted down these observations: “Harness is not snug,” “Chest clip not at right level,” and “Safety belt not secure.” Child Safety Seat expert Bev Kellner of Texas Cooperative Extension says those problems are typical in the hundreds of child seat inspections they do annually. “These are things that can be devastating for families in crashes,” she said. “Those specific items can be the cause of children being ejected from their seats.”

A 2003 study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows 80 percent of child safety seats were found with serious misuses. “That’s why we applaud parents like Charlot Finnigan who come to...
check-up events for that extra measure of assurance that they are using their car seats correctly, and understand that for the safety of their children the details do matter,” Womack said.

Feb. 12-18 is National Child Passenger Safety Week. (See story 8).

Visit the NHTSA website: http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/

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2. Move Okayed for TTI Administration and Support Groups

Four TTI groups will be leaving the CE/TTI Tower on the Texas A&M campus to make room for additional engineering faculty. In a meeting held Tuesday, it was decided the Research Development Office, Human Resources, Business Office and Administration will move to office space at the Wells Fargo complex located at Briarcrest and Earl Rudder Freeway.

The move will take place beginning in mid-April, with most groups located on the third floor of the Wells Fargo Bank building. TTI Administration will be located on the fifth floor. These four groups will eventually be housed in the new transportation research building, scheduled for occupancy in about three years.

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3. TRB Recap, TTI Awards

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) 85th Annual Meeting broke records for attendance, number of papers presented and, therefore, the amount of information sharing among researchers, policy makers and administrators. The five-day program attracted more than 10,000 people from government, industry, and academic institutions from across the nation and other countries.

“TRB is the premier transportation research venue in the United States,” according to TTI Research Engineer Gerald Ullman, who serves as the Texas A&M University Representative for TRB, a position he’s held since the early 1990’s. “TRB is essential for TTI researchers in sharing information and identifying current and future research needs.”
Prior to the meeting, TTI honored several people during a Sunday reception. The Director’s Research Champion Award was presented to Bill Millar, President of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The Director’s Research Champion Award is sponsored by Trinity Industries and recognizes individuals at the national level who have been strong and effective advocates for transportation research.

During the TRB event Associate Research Engineer Roger Bligh was singled out for his research paper detailing the use of guardrails on lower-speed roadways. “Guardrails-to-Concrete-Bridge-Rail Transition for Low-Speed Roadways” was the recipient of TRB’s K.B. Woods Award Jan. 23. The paper describes the development of a less expensive guardrail-to-concrete-bridge-rail transition which is suitable for use on roads with lower speed limits.

Associate Research Engineer Paul Carlson and Assistant Transportation Researcher Andrew Holick were presented the Fred Burggraf Award, which recognizes excellence in transportation research by researchers 35 years of age and younger. Carlson and Holick co-authored a paper entitled “Maximizing Unlit Freeway Guide Sign Legibility Using Clearview Font and Combinations of Retroreflective Sheeting Materials.”

Research Engineer Connie Dudek was recognized during the TTI reception for his work with the Texas A&M University civil engineering Summer Mentors Program. The plaque he received was inscribed with the names of mentors who participated in the program.

Read TRB news release on Bligh’s award:

Read TRB news release on Carlson, Holick award:

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4. Committee Formed in Director Search

A search committee has been formed and its work is underway throughout the nation to find a replacement for Herb Richardson, who has announced his retirement as director of TTI. Vice Chancellor for Research & Federal Relations, Lee Peddicord is chair of the committee. In a letter sent to TTI employees Jan. 31, Peddicord said the committee will come up with a list of qualified candidates. “This report will be provided to the Chancellor and Dr. Bennett for
their review. The Chancellor in turn will make recommendations to the Board of Regents. The board will make the final decision,” Peddicord wrote.

In addition to Peddicord, the search committee is made up of TTI employees Dean Albers, Dock Burke, Dallas Little, Ed Seymour, Bill Stockton and Dave Willis.

Other members include:

- Mike Behrens, Texas Department of Transportation Executive Director
- Carol Lewis, Director and Associate Professor at Texas Southern University
- Forster Ndubisi, Professor and Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at TAMU
- Dave Rosowsky, Professor and Head of the Department of Civil Engineering at TAMU
- Arnie Vedlitz, Professor and Director, Institute for Science, Technology and Public Policy, Bush School of Government and Public Service at TAMU.

Although a deadline has not been mentioned, Richardson has said he expects a replacement to be named by September.

5. TTI Included in Research Center Website

Details of TTI’s research centers are now available on a website designed to boost the Texas economy. The Higher Education Research Centers Inventory website was spawned from an economic development strategy called the Texas Industry Cluster Initiative. That program focuses on industries that appear to have the greatest growth potential in the state.

The Research Centers Inventory website allows the user to look up a specific center or find centers which conduct research in a certain field. The site will highlight the work being done in the state and, ideally, increase research opportunities and establish collaborations with those centers. There’s perhaps 500 or more research centers affiliated with higher education institutions in Texas.

The TTI research centers listed on the website include The Center for Transportation Safety, Translink®, The Center of Excellence in Transportation Computational Mechanics, Center for Air Quality Studies, The Southwest Region University Transportation Center (SWUTC), The Center for Ports and Waterways, and Rail Research and AAR Affiliated Laboratory.
6. Regents Formalize El Paso Office

The Texas A&M Board of Regents approved the establishment of the Center for International Intelligent Transportation Research (CIITR) during its Jan. 27 meeting. The El Paso center was authorized by the 79th Texas Legislature with initial funding of $2 million, which was secured by Senator Eliot Shapleigh.

Currently, negotiations are underway to obtain office space for CIITR, which will focus on traffic management, border issues and air quality research.

7. TTI Anniversaries

10 Years

Michelle Benoit, Associate Research Editor (KWE)

15 Years

Steve Roop, Assistant Agency Director (RRI)

8. El Paso Safety Seat Preview

Child safety seats which were purchased with TTI employee donations will be
handed out to needy El Paso families Feb. 15. A total of 24 new seats were purchased from the TTI holiday charity donations. The El Paso event coincides with National Child Passenger Safety Week Feb. 12-18.

Each new seat will bear a TTI sticker to indicate its purchase from donations by institute employees. The El Paso event will be the second child seat give-away event. The first was held in College Station in December, where a total of 22 seats were handed out.

9. Editor’s Corner: The When and How of Project Summary Reports

Project summary reports for TxDOT Research Management Committee projects are published in final form as easy-to-read four-page color documents. The attractive format lends itself to use by many audiences, made up of both technical and nontechnical readers. But the reports don’t begin life looking quite so polished.

The initial draft of a summary report comes to TTI Communications for editing in a standard Microsoft Word® file. Project summary reports (PSRs) follow specific content organization and overall length, which authors can find at http://ttinet.tamu.edu/communications/editing/TxDOT-PSR-template.doc.

Authors don’t need to worry about formatting PSRs in the familiar final format – TTI Communications lays out the report in publishing software following TxDOT approval.

Tips for preparing PSRs:

- Write 1200 to 1800 words (not including the For More Details and Disclaimer sections).
- More text means less room for graphics. If you increase word count, decrease the number of graphics you include.
- Select graphics that effectively present content in a visual format or that create visual interest (charts, graphs, photos, drawings, or other visual media).
- Each graphic should be numbered, have a caption, and be mentioned in
After revising the file based on editorial comments, the author returns the revised Word file for submittal to TxDOT. PSRs must be submitted as the final report on a project, which gives researchers the opportunity to include relevant points from all other deliverables developed under the project contract. Authors should verify that all other deliverables for a project have been submitted prior to sending a PSR to TTI Communications for submittal.

As a result of wide distribution of PSRs, they are significant documents despite their brevity. They set forth research achievements and facilitate implementation of research results in a format easily accessible by a variety of audiences.

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