1. **TTI Internet Site Launches Today**

For the first time in almost a decade, TTI’s internet site has been completely revamped and is available to the public starting today at [http://tti.tamu.edu/](http://tti.tamu.edu/). “This website represents months of full-time work from dozens of people who have brought our organization into the 21st century,” says TTI’s Chief Information Officer and Internet Project Manager **Kassandra Agee-Letton**. “It is truly a state-of-the-art site that is interactive, dynamic and can be updated minute-by-minute.”

The site features news articles, a vast selection of research reports and projects, a licensed Google® search engine, and a weekly selection of featured TTI researchers. “We think the new site is crisp, clean and easy to navigate,” says **Richard Cole**, who led the project for Communications. “We are most proud of its dynamic characteristics; meaning that its content is connected to numerous databases which allows information to be distributed throughout the site. And the searches are lightning fast….much better than before.”

As part of the website redesign, students, employees and outside professionals offered feedback on the site including ease of navigation, overall look and other factors.

Although the site is available today, some fine-tuning and other improvements will continue as needed.

Some of the key employees in the website development project include **Chris Pourteau**, **Mark Coppock**, **Kelly West**, **Michelle Benoit**, **Wesley Duffard**, **Diana Lin**, **Alexis Maldonado**, **Cliff Murphy**, **Rochelle Patterson** and **Cash Williams**.

Under the direction of TTI Public Affairs Manager **Bernie Fette**, site content will be developed and maintained much like a news magazine might cover TTI.
2. Director Candidates Address TTI

Five people with diverse styles and transportation backgrounds stood before TTI employees in separate open forums, presenting their ideas on the future of the Institute if they were selected as the next director. The candidates are seeking the position that has been held by only four individuals in the 56-year history of TTI. The open forums were held between July 13 and Aug 29 in the Translink® Lab and transmitted live to the urban offices around the state.

All five TTI director candidates possess remarkable biographies and were selected for second interviews before making their appearances before employees. Some candidates had prepared PowerPoint® presentations, while others read from notes or simply spoke extemporaneously. All of the candidates shared similar comments about TTI’s stellar reputation in the transportation research and education community. As one candidate put it, TTI is “the largest, and without a doubt the finest, university-affiliated transportation organization anywhere.”

Here’s a brief synopsis of the candidates, in order of their open forum appearances:

- **Dr. Oliver McGee**—University professor at Ohio State University. According to his biography, he was the first African-American to hold a professorship and departmental chair leadership in OSU’s 125-year history. In outlining some of the challenges that may face the Institute, Dr. McGee told employees, “What we want to do is make TTI more productive—reacting to existing needs as well as anticipating those in the future.”

- **Dr. Kenneth J. Button**—Professor at George Mason University’s School of Public Policy. He was educated in the United Kingdom and has been living in the United States for the last 8 years. Dr. Button told employees he would have two major goals as director. “I’d like to see us enhance our global image and make sure the people here are happy. Perhaps I should have said that last thing first.”

- **Dr. Jon Epps**—Engineering Services manager of Granite Construction, Inc., in California. Dr. Epps was a research engineer for TTI from 1968-1982. He told employees that TTI is “much better now,” and as part of his vision for the Institute in the field of human resources, Epps said, “Make sure you hire very, very well. Retain them, develop them and mentor them and provide them resources, and you will have a successful program.”

- **Dr. Dennis Christiansen**—Agency deputy director of TTI and the only current employee among the director candidates. Dr. Christiansen has spent most of his career employed with the Institute. He told employees that TTI has had the good fortune of hiring the right leaders at the right time. In looking ahead, Christiansen said, “If we can maintain the TTI culture and continue to attract the kind of people that we do, we will be able to execute all of our plans.”
Dr. Hani Mahmassani—Director of the Maryland Transportation Initiative and the holder of various other positions at the University of Maryland. Dr. Mahmassani previously spent 20 years at The University of Texas at Austin as a civil engineering professor. As part of his vision for TTI, he told employees he would like to “promote the growth of our international role, visibility and recognition; to promote TTI as America’s transportation institute.”

The chair of the TTI Director Search Committee is urging employees to submit comments about the candidates through Sept. 6. In an email, Lee Peddicord said, “The on-campus interview phase of the search for the TTI director has come to a close. The committee will now be moving on the next step, which is to submit a recommended short list of candidates to Chancellor Robert McTeer and Vice Chancellor for Engineering Kem Bennett.”

The selection of the next director of TTI is expected to be made by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents within the next six weeks.

Read more about the candidates:
http://ttinet.tamu.edu/news/#news3974

3. Seat Belt Use Reaches Milestone

For the first time in two decades of tracking seat belt use in Texas, TTI researchers have found that more than 90 percent of motorists are buckling up. “The 90 percent figure represents a significant accomplishment on the part of many traffic safety professionals who have worked to bring seat belt use up,” says Katie Womack, project manager of the statewide safety belt survey. “By reaching that mark we think we can say that seat belt use has actually become part of the Texas driving culture, helped along by enforcement and campaigns like ‘Click-it or Ticket’.”

Womack and her team have been monitoring safety belt use since before the mandatory seat belt law went into effect in 1985. At that time, only about 15 percent of drivers were using them. After the law, seat belt use jumped to 67 percent and has been inching up since then. “In 2002, when the ‘Click-it or Ticket’ campaign got underway, the usage rate got another upward push. Reaching 90 percent this year is a real milestone,” Womack says.

The report indicating a 90.4 percent safety belt use by drivers and front seat passengers has been turned over to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).
4. Automated Speed Enforcement Needed in U.S?

Carlos Lopez, director of TxDOT Traffic Operations, told members of the Texas A&M University Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) student chapter that the magnitude of 43,000 traffic deaths each year in the U.S. is unacceptable, and part of the solution could lie overseas where progress is being made thanks to technology and improvements.

In 2004 and 2005, Lopez was part of what’s called a scan tour, in which transportation professionals travel abroad to see first hand what other countries are doing to tackle traffic problems. “While congestion is commonplace in large cities within the United States, it is not to the same degree and duration as that seen in Japan and Europe,” Lopez said. “They have to build elevated roadways that are literally only a few feet away from skyscrapers.”

While visiting France, Lopez was introduced to Automated Speed Enforcement, which was implemented at the urging of the prime minister to do something about the “out of control” number of accidents and fatalities on a congested roadway near Paris. In Automated Speed Enforcement, cameras take photos of the license plates of speeding cars, and tickets are sent in the mail to violators. “We were told that the number of deaths decreased by 50 percent after the cameras were installed,” Lopez told the young engineering students.

Lopez believes that similar use of automated enforcement in the United States can save lives, but knows it is a controversial issue. “I think it’s going to have to hurt first before anything is done on a blanket-basis nationwide. But, I think it is starting to hurt. Populations the size of Lufkin are wiped out every year in the United States because of traffic deaths.”

5. Lancaster Retirement Reception Revisits Past

Dozens of friends and co-workers of Susan Lancaster wished her well during her retirement reception Aug 31, and highlighted some of the humorous and touching moments they experienced with the former director of the Information and Technology Exchange Center (ITEC) (now TTI Communications).

Many of the people Lancaster hired or worked with during her 24 years of service spoke at her reception. Although many of the stories prompted laughter from the crowd, most of the comments acknowledged her caring attitude, work ethic and ability to juggle numerous tasks. “We accomplished a lot of great things, but without you I am certain most of it would not have happened,” said Bill Stockton, associate agency director.
6. Sunkari Recognized at ITE Annual Meeting

Srinivasa Sunkari’s research entitled *Benefits of Retiming Traffic Signals* earned the associate research engineer a Traffic Engineering Council Award for Outstanding Council Project during the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Annual Meeting and Exhibit Aug 6-9 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Visit ITE website: www.ite.org

7. New Border Inspection Method Announced at CIITR

State Sen. Eliot Shapleigh used TTI’s Center for Intelligent International Transportation Research (CIITR) office in El Paso as the backdrop for a major announcement detailing an innovative method for minimizing redundant security checks at border crossings and therefore reducing congestion. The news conference concerned a project using intelligent software agents and its $4.5 million funding by the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The project includes the use of video cameras at Mexican factories that will monitor the loading of tractor-trailer rigs. Global Positioning System devices then monitor the trucks to make sure they do not deviate from their planned routes to the border. The system would eliminate the need for each truck to be searched by custom agents, which is a major contributor to congestion problems at the border.

The Mexican government has agreed to the use of Secure Manufacturing Zones and the use of intelligent software agents. The senator from the Mexican state of Chihuahua, Jeffrey Jones, joined Shapleigh for the announcement.

An El Paso company developed the intelligent software agents software that will be used in the project.

8. 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.
9. Holiday Schedule and TTI Day Date Revealed

TTI Day is moving to the month of May next year, mainly to avoid any problems with winter ice storms that forced postponements in 2000 and 2006. Next year’s TTI Day is planned for May 2.

The TTI Day Planning Chair for 2007 is Susan Chrysler, who says volunteers are needed. If you can help, please contact sub-committee chairs. They are:

Activities / Speakers—Gary Thomas  
Audio / Visual—Brian Long  
Charitable Contributions—Beverly Kuhn  
Decorations—Tina Collier and Brenda Manak  
Food and Beverage—Linda Chatham and Becca Simons  
Door Prizes—Jessica Franklin  
Employee Gifts—Michelle Hoelscher  
Publicity—Chris Sasser  
Registration —Mary Cearley and Michelle Young

The 2006-2007 holiday schedule for TTI is as follows:

- Nov 23-24, 2006: Thanksgiving
- Jan 15, 2007: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Mar 14-16, 2007: Spring Break
- May 28, 2007: Memorial Day
- July 4, 2007: Independence Day
10. TTI Anniversaries

5 Years

Diane Fischer, Lead Office Assistant (DTL)
Clyde Hance, Audio Visual Specialist (KAC)

15 Years

David Dennis, Coordinator of Electronic Media (KAC)
Shawn Turner, Associate Research Engineer (AMA)

11. New Head of Pavements and Materials

A pavement engineer with the Texas Department of Transportation will become the new division head of TTI’s Pavement and Materials Division (BDV) Sept 6. Dr. Andrew Wimsatt will take over the leadership role from the semi-retired Joe Button, who has held the position for 11 years.

Dr. Wimsatt is coming from the Fort Worth District of TxDOT. He received his Ph.D. in civil engineering from The University of Texas and considers Austin his hometown.

12. Editor’s Corner: Abstract Thoughts – Writing Useful Document Abstracts

Many technical reports and papers require an abstract that gives an overview of the material in the document. An abstract should provide enough information for the reader to decide whether to read the document or not, depending on the reader’s purpose.
A document abstract relates to a single document only. It is not a duplicate of the project statement or abstracts from other reports – although abstracts for reports about a single project might include much of the same information. Abstracts are sometimes written in present tense and sometimes in past tense, but should not be written in future tense.

Abstracts have traditionally been read in hardcopy, but an increasingly standard use for abstracts is in electronic form for library and online access. Therefore authors need to incorporate applicable keywords within the abstract’s text that will be picked up by online searches.

Abstracts are classified as either descriptive or informative – although most abstracts include traits of both types. To differentiate between the two:

- **A descriptive abstract** introduces readers to the subject and gives an overview of the document’s content, but it does not provide specifics presented in the document. If publication guidelines call for an abstract within a journal, for example, it will probably be a descriptive abstract. Check examples from the journal’s archives or review author guidelines to see the type of abstract to use for a particular publication.

- **An informative abstract** communicates specific information from the document – such as findings, methodology, or key points. This is the type of abstract preferred by most online databases and on the technical report documentation page of Texas Department of Transportation reports written for Research Management Committee projects.

While abstracts do not address all components covered in a document, they do include overall impacts and/or significant outcomes reported in the document. Abstracts generally have strict length limits, so put your most important content first. That way, if your abstract has to be truncated for length you will still convey the fundamentals of the report.

For more information on writing abstracts, contact Rhonda Brinkmann.

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### 13. Reminders/Calendar

(Please contact CenterLine with items for this section)

**Researchers** — For those of you working on TxDOT Research Management Committee projects, remember that project summary reports (PSRs) have new requirements. See the update on TTInet at: [http://ttinet.tamu.edu/communications/editing/txdot_report_development.stm](http://ttinet.tamu.edu/communications/editing/txdot_report_development.stm).

**74th Annual IBTTA Meeting** — Sept 16-20
2006 Transportation Short Course — Oct 9-11
http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tsc06/

TTI Blood Drive — Oct 24, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Gilchrist Rm. 103
Contact Nancy Stratta, Mary Cearley, Linda Chatham or Lance Bullard

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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.