1. TTI-TxDOT Partnership Highlighted at Short Course

The historic relationship between TTI and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) was the focus of Agency Director Dennis Christiansen’s remarks to the 82nd Annual Transportation Short Course, October 14-15, held at Texas A&M University.

“The universities in this state take great pride in the relationship we have with TxDOT,” Christiansen, the Short Course co-chair, told this year’s 2,200 attendees. “The vision expressed by Mr. Greer [longtime engineer-director of the department] in the 1940s — that the universities should be valued partners with TxDOT in building the best and safest system of roadways in the country — has long become a reality.”

Christiansen cited the 1948 cooperative agreement between TxDOT and the universities, which established the longtime research relationship. “This document, now celebrating its 60th anniversary, remains the envy of the nation,” he said. “It created a research program that,
According to TxDOT statistics, produces results with a benefit/cost ratio well in excess of 5 to 1.”

Christiansen told the crowd that having the TxDOT family as guests on campus “is one of the high points of our year.”

The opening session of Short Course has traditionally honored the accomplishments of TxDOT employees and motivated the department to move forward. Although this year was no exception in that regard, the 82nd Annual Short Course was held amidst transition at TxDOT.

“Change has come,” TxDOT Executive Director and Short Course Co-chair Amadeo Saenz told the 2,200 attendees. “An organization that does not change outlives its usefulness.”

Referring to budget shortfalls, the Texas Legislature’s Sunset Review of TxDOT, the death last December of Transportation Commission Chairman Ric Williamson and recent lively town hall meetings over proposed road projects, Saenz told the crowd, “It’s been a ride.” But Saenz, and the Texas Transportation Commission members who followed him, embraced the upcoming challenges and transformations. “Changing for the better is always good,” Saenz said. Regarding the TTI-TxDOT partnership, Saenz told the crowd, it’s “a partnership worth boasting about. It’s unusual for state agencies to have such a bond.”

The opening session began with an uplifting, team-spirited video of TxDOT’s work during Hurricane Ike, which hit the Texas coast September 12. The video chronicled the massive TxDOT preparation and cleanup efforts by employees in dealing with the challenges of the third-most expensive hurricane in the nation’s history. The video was followed by a campus welcome from Dr. Brett Giroir, vice chancellor for research for The Texas A&M University System.

In her first comments to a Transportation Short Course, newly appointed Chair of the Texas Transportation Commission Deirdre Delisi spoke to the crowd in a video message. “We are on the precipice of a new era in transportation,” she said. “We cannot only keep up with, but we must exceed expectations. Transportation is integral to the economy.” Referring to recent high rankings by publications about Texas infrastructure, Delisi...
acknowledged that TxDOT has been receiving some national recognition.

At the end of the session, TxDOT honored three employees with its annual “Extra Mile Award,” which is given to workers who risk their own lives to save the lives of others. The employees received standing ovations after details of their heroic efforts were featured. All TxDOT award winners were honored at a luncheon following the opening session. Among the special guests participating in the luncheon were Texas A&M University System Chancellor Mike McKinney and his wife, Lou Ann, and Kem Bennett, vice chancellor and dean of engineering.

2. Keese Inducted into Texas Transportation Hall of Honor

Charles J. “Jack” Keese was inducted into the Texas Transportation Hall of Honor October 22. Keese served as the first full-time director of TTI from 1962 to 1976.

Friends and family joined TTI staff to celebrate Keese’s contributions to transportation at the Gibb Gilchrist Building in the Texas A&M University Research Park. Following the induction ceremony, TTI staff were treated to a casual barbecue luncheon.

Several visiting dignitaries spoke about the life, achievements and legacy of Keese, noting how ably led TTI during its crucial adolescent years. Created in 1950 to help the Texas Highway Department improve the state’s transportation system through research, TTI became a nationally recognized center for research excellence under Keese’s leadership.

Full story:
http://tti.tamu.edu/infofor/media/archive.htm?news_id=4901
3. TDS Summit Showcases Teen Driver Safety

Like the Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) program itself, the inaugural TDS Summit October 24-25 in San Antonio put teenagers on center stage. With 200 attendees representing 48 different schools from 35 cities, the summit highlighted students and their accomplishments in presentations, breakout sessions and video interviews.

“I think the summit hit a home run,” TDS Director Russell Henk said afterward. “Many of the teenagers said they were grateful that the event and the TDS program gave them a voice on this issue…something they say they are not used to, but are excited about and very much welcome.”

TDS is a TTI-developed peer-to-peer education and outreach program that pinpoints the causes of most teen car crashes. The in-school program has grown across Texas and is now being started in Georgia and Connecticut, with two other states considering the program for its schools.

Prior to the event, U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez held a press conference to announce a 27 percent decline in fatal accidents involving teen drivers in Texas from 2002 to 2006, a decline that is more than twice the pace of the national average. “Effective laws and parental involvement are essential,” said Rodriguez. “But laws and parents will never be enough. We need teenagers to drive the message — just as they’re doing through Teens in the Driver Seat.”

Rodriguez and Maria Teresa Cerqueira of the World Health Organization, both strong supporters of TDS, were among the speakers at the summit, which was held at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

The summit’s breakout sessions included both adult and teenager “tracks,” all specifically geared to them. HEB grocery stores and Fiesta Texas sponsored door prizes, which included iPods and tickets to the Fiesta Texas theme park.

“A 30-year educator told me that our summit was the best she had attended during her career,” Henk said. “To me, that said a lot. We are very pleased with how it turned out. We have an incredibly wonderful and talented team of
staff that continue to dedicate themselves to this initiative. It’s very exciting to achieve another major benchmark (like this summit) based upon this team’s efforts.”

The second annual TDS Summit will be held next year in El Paso.

Read more: http://tti.tamu.edu/infofor/media/archive.htm?news_id=4902

top

4. TTI Anniversaries

5 Years

Paul Krugler, Research Engineer (BDV)
Michelle Young, Senior Office Associate (AMA)

15 Years

Susan Lee, Editorial Assistant (KWE)

40 Years

Walter Winkelmann, Senior Financial Accountant (BUS)

top
5. Visiting Scholar Brings China to TTI

From her home in Beijing, China, Jianping Sun travels the 8.5 kilometers to her office every day to the Beijing Transportation Research Center (BTRC) where she’s worked as a mobility expert for four years. She’s one of about 50 employees at the center, which was established in 2001. Her 5-mile commute takes nearly an hour each way. “The mobility in College Station is much better,” she laughs.

In her first trip to the United States, Jianping arrived at TTI September 6, as a visiting scholar working in the Mobility Analysis Program alongside Shawn Turner and Teresa Qu. According to Turner, Sun is one of the first visiting scholars at TTI, “but because of our international efforts, I think we need to do this more often. These one-on-one personal interactions do a lot to foster our relationships with experts in other countries.”

Agreeing, Sun says, “At BTRC, we all know of TTI. Actually being here is impressive because you have so many employees and so many fields of study.”

TTI first worked with BTRC in 2006 on a congestion evaluation project, but the collaboration on several topics has continued since then. Sun hopes to work with the Institute again. “In the future, I think BTRC will be better known because of our work with TTI.” She finishes her work in College Station and travels home to Beijing at the end of November.

6. 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.

Georgia and U.S. driving less (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution) Oct 25

Parents urged to buckle up children (Jacksboro Gazette-News) Oct. 23
Teen dies close to home (San Antonio Express-News) Oct. 22

Road and bridge funding (Pittsburgh Tribune-Review) Oct. 17

Better signs (The Plain Dealer) Oct. 12

Traffic fears (Seattle Post-Intelligencer) Oct. 10

Calls to improve infrastructure (Logistics Management) Oct. 7

Bastrop County transportation plan (Elgin Courier) October

top

7. Bryan Sophomores “Shadow” TTI Experts

Four students from Bryan Collegiate High School met Debbie Jasek at the front door of the Gibb Gilchrist Building on the morning of October 17, to begin their day of shadowing TTI experts in various professional fields.

The Job Shadow Day program allows high school students to get a taste of what it’s like to work in professions they may pursue. “Introducing students to transportation-related professions is an honor,” said Jasek, who has been instrumental in organizing programs that introduce youngsters to engineering-related fields. “There’s no question that engineering jobs are in need of talented and dedicated young people, so we hope we created some interest.”

A total of 72 of Bryan Collegiate High School’s 93 sophomores volunteered for the program. TTI was one of dozens of area businesses that participated in the event. Collegiate is in its second year of operation. The charter school targets at-risk, first-generation college-bound students. The students have the opportunity to receive 60 hours of college credits during the four-year program.

At TTI, Susan Adams, Beverly Kuhn, John Tucker, Lori Navejar and Jasek volunteered to help the students

Debbie Jasek conducts a tour of TTI as part of Collegiate High School’s Job Shadow Day in which four students spent time with Institute experts.
8. Traffic Safety Conference Attracts Dignitaries, Experts

In a unique gathering of safety professionals, the Deputy Secretary of Transportation, Vice Admiral Thomas J. Barrett, will address the 2008 Statewide Traffic Safety Conference in Houston November 17-19. The conference is being organized by TTI’s Center for Transportation Safety (CTS).

Barrett will be joined by traffic safety and planning experts, law enforcement, medical professionals and legislators to discuss the wide-ranging issues related to traffic deaths and injuries. This first-of-its-kind conference is co-hosted by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

“It’s an honor to have the deputy secretary speak at this event,” says CTS Director John Mounce. “Officials from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and National Transportation Safety Board, Houston area officials including Harris County Judge Ed Emmett and legislators like Senator John Carona of the Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee are also speaking.”

The conference’s breakout sessions include topics related to impaired driving, motorcycle safety, young driver safety, law enforcement, red-light camera enforcement, the safety and mobility of older road users, state legislative issues, emerging traffic safety and bicycle-pedestrian safety.

“We really wanted a conference that addresses the wide range of topics surrounding traffic deaths and injuries,” Mounce says. “I think we’ve accomplished that goal thanks to all the dedicated professionals who are sharing their expertise.”

For registration information:
http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/traffic_safety/
9. SECC Culminates with Two $1,000-Plus Fundraisers

TTI’s State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC) ended this week with bake sale and silent auction fundraisers raising more than $1,000 each. TTI’s “progressive” bake sale — held at four TTI locations on four separate days — earned $1,099.60 for the agency’s campaign. SECC committee members organized the sales at Gilchrist, Wells Fargo, CE/TTI and Riverside. Healthy competition developed as organizers at each location tried to exceed the previous sale’s proceeds.

TTI’s SECC Tbay online silent auction was held October 30-November 3 and brought in $1,736.50 for the campaign. Auction bidders had 50 items to choose from, all donated by TTI staff members and Bryan/College Station businesses. Among the more popular items were gift certificates for homemade baked goods donated by TTI culinary artists, team-autographed soccer and basketballs donated by the Texas A&M University athletic department, two golf packages donated by Katie Turnbull, and Raider Red and friends, who are now back in the hands of their owner, Texas Tech University Alumna Mary Cearley.

“I have been honored to serve with my TTI colleagues who graciously agreed to be on the SECC committee this year,” said Terri Parker, 2008 SECC chair. “We have had a lot of fun, while helping some great organizations in our community and surpassing our $20,000 campaign goal. I would like to thank everyone in TTI for the great support and team spirit throughout the campaign.”

Parker said that the final results of the campaign will be available next week and she will share them with TTI staff. In addition to the many individual contributions to the campaign, TTI’s collective fundraising activities benefited Habitat for Humanity, the Brazos Food Bank and Voices for Children, all Bryan/College Station non-
profit organizations.

The members of this year’s SECC were Chris Sasser (vice chair), Stacey Alejandro, Teresa Borski, Susie Catalina, Linda Chatham, Bonnie Duke, Glenda Evans, Kerry Fillip, Jessica Franklin, Rebecca Haug, Liz Holick, Maria Medrano, Becca Simons and Nancy Stratta. John Hobbs provided graphics support for the campaign. Helping with the Thay auction were Cash Williams, Jim Lyle and Chris Pourteau.

10. UTCM Presentation Bridges Architecture and Transportation

It’s clear that Jorge Vanegas approaches life’s problems and solutions on a much different level than most people. He believes that we are all connected through the complexity of our environment. The interim dean of Texas A&M University’s College of Architecture presented the latest Mobility Colloquium for the University Transportation Center for Mobility (UTCM). The September 29 presentation was entitled “Transportation and Mobility in Architecture: Research Challenges and Opportunities.”

Vanegas, who is also the director of the Center for Housing and Urban Development, said that we are all bound together by — and products of — what he called the “built environment,” which he explained as our man-made surroundings and our activities within those surroundings.

“At first glance, the world of architecture is not relevant to the world of transportation, but it is very relevant,” Vanegas told the lunchtime gathering. “From urban planning and design through transportation infrastructure to individual facilities, mobility is a common thread.”

In addition, as another relationship between architecture and transportation, Vanegas pointed to one of the building blocks of transportation infrastructure: concrete. “Concrete on its own is non-aesthetic,” he says. “So how do we make it beautiful? It’s time for us to challenge ourselves.”
Vanegas urged the researchers and students attending the presentation to realize the numerous research opportunities that are available connecting architecture and transportation. “Challenges create opportunities,” Vanegas explained. “Once you realize the interconnected, complex nature of our world, you can open the door to just about any kind of research you may want to do.”

11. Take a Picture, It Lasts Longer

TTI Communications has a digital camera available for your business-related use. If you would like to reserve the camera or check on its availability, contact Brenda Lichti.

The only stipulation about its use is that we may want to use a photo or two for CenterLine or the TTI website.

12. Largest Ever TTI Blood Drive

TTI’s second blood drive of the year turned out to be the “best ever,” with 46 people donating the gift of life October 30. The Halloween-eve blood drive included eight first-time donors.

“We were all very impressed with the turnout,” says blood drive Co-Chair Linda Chatham. “I don’t know if Halloween helped out or not, but we are so thankful to everyone that decided to give.”

TTI has been conducting blood drives since 2003. The next one is tentatively scheduled for February.
13. Editor's Corner: Common Commas

Commas are small little critters, but where you place them in a sentence can change the sentence’s meaning entirely:

- The road curved right, and left a struggling motorist outside its boundaries. The road curved right and left, a struggling motorist outside its boundaries.
- Smith believes Jones is wrong. Smith, believes Jones, is wrong.

As with many types of punctuation, correct use of commas depends as much on the editorial style you follow and your writing style as on unbendable rules. The current trend is away from using commas where feasible, but sometimes you just need one. A comma indicates a pause, so reading a sentence out loud might help you determine whether to include one.

I’ve listed a few tips in this column for using commas correctly in most common instances. For more information about comma use, check your editorial style guidelines (which might include TTI’s Guidelines for Preparing, Editing, and Submitting TxDOT RMC Reports).

Lists of more than two items
For technical reports, the final comma in a series (just before the conjunction) is usually used. However, it’s a matter of choice. Some editorial styles, such as the Associated Press, omit the final serial comma. No matter what the style, it’s acceptable to include the comma if leaving it out would confuse your reader.

Compound sentences
When you have two closely related sentences, you might want to combine them. Sentences with combined verb phrases don’t use a comma, while a compound sentence does. *(That sentence is an example of a compound sentence that needs a comma.)* The key is to make sure both parts contain a complete sentence and have a subject and verb. *(That sentence is an example of a combined verb phrase with no comma.)*
Introductory phrases
Long introductory phrases need a comma, but short introductory phrases can do without one. Your best guidance on whether to include a comma after an introductory phrase is your own ear.

Internal expressions or nonessential information
Nonessential phrases, often called parenthetical clauses, provide additional information or simply break up long strings of words. *(That sentence contains an example.)* There are lots of ways to add nonessential information, including with “which” and “that.” Phrases that begin with “which,” which provide nonessential information, are preceded by a comma, but phrases that begin with “that” provide information that restricts the noun and therefore don’t use a comma. *(That sentence gives an example of both.)*

Grammatical rules
Sometimes a comma goes into a sentence just because the rules call for it. For example:

- before and after state names when used with a city name,
- before and after years when used with specific dates (but not when used only with a month and year),
- before quotation marks for a direct, complete quote (unless you use a colon to introduce the quote, which is okay too), and
- after introductory phrases that end in a year.

To avoid confusion
You might need a comma to keep readers from having to reread and reread a sentence. For example, you would need a comma in these sentences to make sure readers understand them easily:

- Whatever you do, do it well.
- Exactly what the situation is, is not certain.

*Editor’s Corner is written by Rhonda Brinkmann, research editor in TTI Communications. Rhonda is happy to respond to requests for column topics.*

top
14. Reminders/Calendar

**November 17-19** — Traffic Safety Conference
   Houston, Texas
   [http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/traffic_safety/](http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/traffic_safety/)

**November 27-28** — Thanksgiving Holiday

**December 24-January 2** — Christmas and New Year’s Day Holiday

**January 5-7** — Fourth Annual Texas Transportation Forum
   Austin, Texas
   [http://www.dot.state.tx.us/ttf/Registration.htm](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/ttf/Registration.htm)

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