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1. First CTS Safety Conference Aims High

The inaugural gathering of traffic safety professionals, policymakers and practitioners was a rousing success, according to John Mounce, director of the Texas Transportation Institute’s Center for Transportation Safety. Mounce moderated the conference.

The 2008 Traffic Safety Conference was held in Houston, Texas, November 17-19. TTI hosted the event in conjunction with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Houston-Galveston Area Council.

“We achieved our primary goal of bringing together various constituencies devoted to reducing fatalities on our highways,” explains Mounce. “Everyone at that conference was, in some way, a problem-solver.”

Full story:  
http://tti.tamu.edu/infofor/media/news.htm?news_id=4967

2. SWUTC Celebrates Milestone, Shared Accomplishments

Since beginning in 1988, the Southwest Region University Transportation Center (SWUTC) has grown into one of the most highly respected University Transportation Centers (UTC) in that U.S. DOT-sponsored program. Dock Burke, SWUTC director, is quick to identify the institutional sources of the center’s accomplishments.

“There are two main reasons why SWUTC has flourished since October of 1988,” Burke notes. “Our strong and continuous support from TTI [SWUTC is headquartered within the Institute] and the robust collegial relationship with our
consortium partners: Texas A&M University, The University of Texas at Austin and its Center for Transportation Research, and Texas Southern University and its Center for Transportation Training and Research.”

Established “to advance U.S. technology and expertise in the many disciplines comprising transportation through the mechanisms of education, research and technology transfer,” SWUTC is one of ten regional UTCs around the country founded with federal grants that must be matched on the state level.

In 1992, the Texas Legislature approved TTI’s request for matching funds from the State of Texas. “That one act did more to stabilize our funding base than anything else,” Burke says. More recently, TxDOT has become an active partner in the research project evaluation and selection process.

Without SWUTC, Burke says, numerous precedent-setting transportation research and education projects conducted at the three universities might never have been conducted. These include multimodal corridor research for Texas, transportation services in colonias neighborhoods, urban neighborhood transit service and research, educational programs for pre-college (K-12) students, seed funding for research and education programs, and supplemental resources for the development of new faculty members.

As for fulfilling the educational goals of SWUTC, Burke points to the various stipends and scholarships awarded to students over the years. “The quality of students that we have been able to attract has increased dramatically because of what we can offer them in terms of program content and financial support,” Burke says.

“With the 20-year anniversary of SWUTC upon us, it’s time to reflect and re-emphasize the unique qualities of the UTC program. Our consortium colleagues on the teaching and research faculties provide the core energy for our enterprise. The students’ educational experiences are greatly enhanced by their SWUTC activities.”

Now that TTI is also home to the University Transportation Center for Mobility (UTCM), SWUTC has another strong partner to continue innovative transportation
3. New Simulator Drives TTI to Modern Age

In the past, evaluating driver behavior at TTI required a little driving of its own. Just a few weeks ago, testing behavior would have required bringing those motorists to College Station to operate the 1995-model driving simulator on the third floor of the Gibb Gilchrist Building. Now, with the recent purchase of a modern desktop driving simulator, Manager of the Human Factors Group Sue Chrysler and her team can take the equipment directly to them.

“Besides the portability of our new simulator, we can design our own roadways and easily collaborate with other research facilities with similar equipment,” Chrysler says. “We have the ability to obtain research projects that we couldn’t do before now.”

The maker of the desktop driving simulator, Realtime Technologies Inc., is known, in part, for its work with the military in training drivers for foreign conditions.

“We already have two research projects lined up for this fiscal year using the new simulator,” Chrysler says.

Kristin Landua, undergraduate research assistant, takes TTI’s new driving simulator for a spin.
4. TTI Anniversaries

10 Years
Edward Brackin, Assistant Research Specialist (DTL)

25 Years
Scott Dobrovolny, Assistant Research Specialist (CPG)

35 Years
Charlene Meier, Assistant Financial Manager (BUS)

5. Hall of Honor Makes Room for Three Pioneers

With long-lasting and pivotal contributions to the betterment of transportation in the Lone Star State and beyond, three Texans were inducted into the Texas Transportation Hall of Honor during ceremonies held in Austin and College Station.

On November 21, Marquis G. Goode, Jr., a 40-year employee of the Texas Highway Department (now the Texas Department of Transportation, or TxDOT) and Louis L. Heil, the former CEO and retired chairman of the board of McDonald Transit Associates, Inc. in Fort Worth—were honored during induction ceremonies at the Greer Building in Austin.
“This is by far the most significant and most meaningful recognition I’ve had in my life,” Heil told the crowd gathered at the event. “I accept this award with a great deal of humility and with a huge amount of gratitude.” Heil was instrumental in bringing public transportation to Fort Worth and supervised the initiation of new public transit systems throughout the United States. He served as CEO for McDonald Transit Associates for 23 years, joining the company as its vice president in 1972.

Goode, who retired from the Texas Highway Department in 1986 after managing the fastest period of growth in road construction in the department’s history, also addressed the crowd in Austin. “Here in Texas, the people of transportation have all worked together. So, thanks to all of you and the part you played in the plaque that has been given to me today.” As engineer-director for the department, Goode initiated a recruiting and training program that opened doors for women and minorities.

“Our state is blessed to have an outstanding transportation system that has helped to attract economic growth and offered Texans a high quality of life,” Dennis Christiansen, TTI director and chair of the Texas Transportation Hall of Honor, said at the ceremony. “The individuals we are recognizing today clearly deserve this honor.”

In College Station in October, the family of the late Charles J. “Jack” Keese gathered for his induction ceremony into the Hall of Honor and participated in a barbeque with employees of TTI. Keese served as the agency’s first full-time director from 1962 through 1976. Under Keese’s leadership, TTI became a recognized center for excellence.

All three inductees served as officers in the U.S. military.

The Texas Transportation Hall of Honor was established in 2000 by TTI. Each inductee is honored with a plaque that bears their likeness. A similar plaque remains on permanent display at TTI in the Gilchrist Building in College Station.
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.

Intersection crash study *(Houston Chronicle)* Nov. 28

Safety belt use *(Del Rio News-Herald)* Nov. 25

Easy-to-read signs *(Wisconsin State Journal)* Nov. 24

Light rail collisions *(Houston Chronicle)* Nov. 23

Crash cleanup and commute times *(Akron Beacon Journal)* Nov. 20

Rumble strips *(The News Review)* Nov. 18

Light rail for San Antonio? *(San Antonio Express-News)* Nov. 9

Deer-vehicle fatalities highest in Texas *(Beaumont Enterprise)* Nov. 7

Teaching teens to drive *(The Graham Leader)* Nov. 7

Crosswalk safety *(Deseret News)* Nov. 5

Gas prices and driving habits *(Statesman Journal)* Nov. 3

Katy Freeway survey *(Houston Chronicle)* Nov. 2

Truck lane ban *(South Florida Sun-Sentinel)* Nov. 2

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7. “Best of” Editor’s Corner Debuts on TTINet

There is now a one-stop shop for writing assistance on TTINet. The location, [http://ttinet.tamu.edu/communications/editing/best_of_editors_corner.stm](http://ttinet.tamu.edu/communications/editing/best_of_editors_corner.stm), provides links to the most requested and applauded “Editor’s Corner” articles appearing in CenterLine.

“I get a lot of calls from TTI researchers and assistants who would like me to send them a particular ‘Editor’s Corner’ article,” says Rhonda Brinkmann, author of the standing feature section. “CenterLine’s Rick Davenport and I thought that providing a list of the most popular past articles would help create a useful resource page all year long.”

If there are “Editor’s Corner” articles that you would like linked on this page, contact Brinkmann or CenterLine.
8. TTI State Headquarters Building “Topped Out”

The final, top-floor steel beam of the TTI State Headquarters and Research Building was put in place by construction workers November 13, and the celebration began. The “topping out” ceremony is a common practice in the construction industry and is commemorated with the placement of a tree on the top level of the building.

The live oak tree, provided by Vaughn Construction, will be planted on the grounds of the headquarters building when it’s completed next fall. It was hoisted in place by a crane with the smell of beef and chicken fajitas being grilled nearby. The workers, architects, contractor employees, as well as invited guests then sat down for a full-course, hot meal hosted by Vaughn.

“It is very exciting to reach this milestone in the project,” says Holly Crenshaw, manager of Facilities, Safety and Support Services. “In many ways, this event signals the beginning of the countdown toward project completion and TTI occupancy. Construction is going well and staying on schedule. We have an excellent team of professionals that works together really well. The donation of the live oak by Vaughn was a very thoughtful gesture that I’m certain will be appreciated by all that enjoy the shade and beauty it will provide.”

Supervisors for Vaughn Construction and BRW Architects said they were extremely pleased with the progress of the TTI State Headquarters project.

9. TDS Makes Big Impact in Connecticut

With its roots firmly in Texas, TTI’s Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) is spreading to school districts in other states, most recently to Connecticut—a state particularly hard-hit by recent teen traffic deaths. In November, rival high-school students in the city of Bristol joined forces at a news conference announcing the initiation of TDS.

“The students are committed to lessening teen crashes and deaths,” says TDS Director Russell Henk. “Like high school students in Texas, they have been overwhelmed with the deaths of friends and classmates, and they are looking to TDS for help. We are proud that they turned to us and are happy that these two high schools have come together to make a difference.” TTI staff members Clyde Hance and Bernie Fette also assisted in the New England area’s first launch of the TDS program.

TDS is a peer-to-peer driver awareness program that began in San Antonio five years ago. Since then, 206 Texas schools have initiated the program. It’s also been launched in Georgia. Funding for the expansion of TDS outside Texas comes from a federal appropriation secured by U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez of San Antonio. Program administrators at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will soon select the state (probably in the western U.S.) where the TDS staff will go to work next.

One of the Connecticut TDS student leaders told a local newspaper that “a lot of my friends have made bad choices. I’m trying to hammer home to them that you can either choose to be safe or you can choose to kill yourself.”

View TDS media coverage:
Hartford Courant
WTIC-TV

Students from rival Connecticut high schools conduct a news conference signifying the start of TDS at their schools.
10. Tips to Navigate New TxDOT Website

The Texas Department of Transportation’s (TxDOT) website has a new look and feel. For many of us, visiting the TxDOT site is a daily necessity for contacts, research information and important updates.

You can access TxDOT’s webpages using two addresses:


The search feature in the upper right corner of the home page helps you locate all your familiar pages. Here are a few you might want to bookmark:

Organizational chart with active group links:
http://www.txdot.gov/about_us/org_chart.htm

Research and Technology Implementation Office:
http://www.txdot.gov/about_us/administration/offices/rti.htm

Research publications:

Transportation publications:

TxDOT glossary:
http://onlinemanuals.txdot.gov/txdotmanuals/glo/index.htm

TxDOT online manuals:
http://onlinemanuals.txdot.gov/manuals/
11. Shunk Remembered for Professionalism, Caring

The former manager of the Urban Analysis Program at TTI, Gordon A. Shunk, died November 5, 2008, after a lengthy struggle with frontal temporal lobe dementia.

Shunk’s career in transportation forecasting and modeling spanned 35 years after he received his Ph.D. from Purdue University. His work included duties with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in Berkeley, California, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (where he was director of transportation), and 13 years with TTI before retiring in 2003.

“Gordon was known for his professionalism and his ability to communicate on a very human level despite his precise, technical work,” says Montie Wade, a colleague of Shunk. “Even during the time of his illness, he expressed concern about his co-workers and their well-being.”

A memorial for Shunk will be held January 12 at the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., highlighting his engineering career.

Read more about Shunk’s contributions to transportation:
http://www.star-telegram.com/235/story/1035731.html

The upgrade to Microsoft Office 2007 is now available, and TTI’s Network and Information Services group is rolling out installation in phases. After you install Microsoft Office 2007, your Word screen will look considerably different from the Word 2003 screen. Here are a few tips to help you get started and find common commands.

**Help features**
The Help selection in Word 2007 is tucked away under a small “?” located at the right-hand side of the ribbon tabs. But the easiest way I’ve found to access Help features is to press the F1 function key on my keyboard. It will try to bring up a help screen with features related to whatever function you are in when you press F1. Sometimes it guesses right, sometimes you have to do a little searching.

**Office button**
Many common commands are located under the Office button – the multicolored Windows icon in the very upper left corner of your screen. There you can find Open File, Close File, Save File, Save As, Print File, and Exit. You’ll also see your recently opened document files listed there.

Check out the Word Options choice at the bottom of the Office button screen. That’s where you set your user options.

**Quick reference command line**
Next to the Office button is your quick reference command line. I recommend that you place icons on it for the commands you use most often. That way you can find
them quickly until you get used to the new look of your Word screen. Once you get comfortable with the location of each specific icon, you might want to remove them from the quick reference line to keep it uncluttered.

To place an icon on the quick reference line, click the drop-down arrow at the right side of the quick reference line and choose “More Commands.” The resulting dialog box gives you a chance to move commands to and from the quick reference command line. The other way you can place an icon on the quick reference line is to right-click the command icon and choose “Add to Quick Access Toolbar.” The first icon I placed on my quick reference line was the one to close a file. Notice that there is no “X” for closing a file in the upper right corner—the current “X” exits Word.

**Ribbons versus menu bars**

Word 2007 uses “ribbons” instead of the familiar menu bars from Word 2003. While the features and functions have been rearranged, they are all there somewhere, as are some enhanced features in 2007 that weren’t in 2003—especially related to graphics, tables, and interaction with other Office programs. Microsoft has created an interactive guide that might be helpful: [http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word/HA100744321033.aspx](http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word/HA100744321033.aspx).

Don’t overlook the tiny diagonal arrows located at the bottom of ribbon sections. They will often bring up dialog boxes that look similar to—or exactly like—dialog boxes used in Word 2003.

**Filenames**

Document files created in Microsoft Word 2007 show the extension “.docx” instead of the extension “.doc” normally associated with earlier versions of Word. Most of the time, the default setting on Word 2007 saves files in the version that was opened. For example, if you open a “.doc” file, it will save it as Word 2003 without asking. If you start a new file, it will save it as a “.docx” file without asking.

If you are sharing a file with someone who uses Word 2003, be sure to save your file as a Word 2003 file before sending it. Remember that if you save files as 2003, you lose any features that are unsupported in 2007.
Spellcheck
The Spelling & Grammar function is located on the Review ribbon. It took me a while to find that one.

Protected files
If you use protected files, such as form files, you might not easily decipher how to lock and unlock them. To unlock a protected file, go to the Review ribbon and choose Protect Document located at the far right. Check the Restrict Formatting and Editing choice, and it will bring up a screen with a button at the bottom of the screen that says “Stop Protection.” Click that button to unprotect your document.

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

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13. Reminders/Calendar

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

January 11-15 — Transportation Research Board 88th Annual Meeting
Washington, D.C.

January 19 — Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
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