TDS part of the Distracted Driving Summit

When national leaders got together in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 to address the deadly trend of distracted driving, Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) was an active player in the discussion.

TDS Director Russell Henk was among an exclusive group of transportation leaders and national safety experts who came together for the first-ever National Summit on Distracted Driving.

Henk said, “This was a huge opportunity for TDS and one more example that peer-to-peer influence is an essential part of reducing the frequency of teen driver crashes.”

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said, “Safety is our number one priority. As we become a more mobile and wireless nation, we can’t afford to ignore new technology’s impact on roadway safety.”

Other participants included senior transportation officials, elected officials, safety advocates, law enforcement representatives and academics.

TDS collected feedback on awareness of driving dangers and driving behavior from more than 20,000 teen drivers and passengers.

“We were able to share a lot of valuable knowledge about how distractions such as cell phones, texting and other teen passengers can create dangers for young drivers and passengers. It was also nice to share information about our innovative TDS program.”

New Transit Signal Priority System expected to ease train congestion

With the expansion and addition to DART’s light rail network, the Green Line opened on September 14 and a 33 percent increase in train volume is expected to impact operations through the Dallas downtown transit mall. To handle the increase in train traffic, a new Transit Signal Priority System (TSP) was deployed to make train travel more efficient by reducing train stops between stations, reducing travel time through downtown and by giving advance warning of station departure times (via countdown timers) to train operators.

TTI served as a liaison between the City of Dallas and DART. Roberto Macias assisted DART with managing the project and keeping track of the schedule and budget while also providing technical assistance. TTI also helped develop a micro simulation model in VISSIM to simulate the light rail network in downtown Dallas.

Macias said, “Our biggest worry for the last 18 months was that the project was not going to be completed on time, but we pulled through.”

The opening date of the first section of the Green Line was concurrent with the initiation of the Transit Signal Priority System.

According to preliminary data and input from DART operations, the TSP system is accomplishing all its goals. TTI is conducting a pre/post opening study to measure the impact of the TSP system before and after its implementation.

TTI has been doing work with DART for over two decades. The green line expansion has 3 of the 28 miles open, extending southeast of downtown Dallas to Fair Park, with daily service to Victory Station. The remaining 25 miles will be open by December 2010.
**Travel**

**Christopher Poe** presented on the “US 75 Integrated Corridor Management Project” at the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) meeting in San Antonio, Texas on August 12.

**Kay Fitzpatrick, Marcus Brewer and Christopher Poe** attended the summer meeting of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) geometric design committees in Woods Hole, Massachusetts on July 8-10.

**Beverly Kuhn, Ed Seymour, Marcus Brewer, Melissa Finley, Brooke Ullman, Bob DeRoche, Dan Middleton, Christopher Poe, Jack Antebi, Kay Fitzpatrick, Gene Hawkins and Nick Koncz** attended the ITE Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas.

**Gary Thomas** was in Nashville, Tennessee on June 22-24 to teach “Designing and Operating Intersections for Safety” to the Tennessee Department of Transportation. From August 31 to September 4, Gary Thomas was in Sacramento, California to teach the same course to CalTrans. On September 10, Gary traveled to Houston to teach a seminar with **Robert Benz** called, “Transportation Safety for Elected Officials” at HGAC.

**Marcus Brewer** traveled to Dallas August 3-6 for data collection on NCHRP 15-31A, “Design Guidance for Freeway Mainline Ramp Terminals”. He teamed up there with staff from Midwest Research Institute, who is the lead agency for the project and with **Diana Wallace** and others from the Arlington office, who coordinated with the Texas Department of Transportation to install counters at study sites on I-635.

**Robert Benz** traveled to Honolulu, Hawaii on June 21-26 to attend and participate in the 2nd International Symposium on Freeway to Tollway Operations. Rob made a presentation on “HOV to HOT the Houston Experience.” After the symposium ended, Rob and Karen Benz enjoyed visiting many sites on the islands.

**Beverly Kuhn** also traveled to Honolulu, Hawaii on June 21-26 to attend and participate in the 2nd International Symposium on Freeway to Tollway Operations. She chaired the mid-year meeting of the TRB Joint Subcommittee on Active Traffic Management and gave five presentations.

**Marsha Bomar and Christie Madsen** exhibited for Teens in the Driver Seat at the Governor’s Highway Safety Association Safety Conference in Savannah, Georgia on August 30 – September 1.

**Marsha Bomar, Carol Walters and Scott Cooner** delivered the Roundabout Workshop to 40 Georgia Department of Transportation and County Department of Transportation staff members in Georgia on August 25.
A special note from Gary Thomas

TTI played host to the ITE International Board of Directors on August 6-8 prior to the ITE Annual Meeting in San Antonio. It was a time for celebrating the long-standing partnership that has existed between our two organizations for 60 years. In addition to the business of the board, the Directors were treated to some of the best that TTI and the Brazos Valley have to offer including a wonderful Tex-Mex dinner at Papa Perez in downtown Bryan, an exciting vehicle crash test out at Riverside, delicious barbeque at C&J’s, and fantastic entertainment from the Singing Cadets and recording artist Granger Smith at the Bush Library.

As the Texas District Director, it was a special privilege to have my fellow board members here to learn more about TTI and Texas A&M. I heard nothing but praise for our organization from the other directors. They truly appreciated all of the Aggie hospitality that was bestowed upon them. One of them is even encouraging his son to consider A&M after he graduates.

My sincere thanks to everyone that helped in some way, shape, or form during their time here.

Thank you Research Implementation Offices

The last couple of months Nada Trout, Sandra Schoeneman and Sarah Young were busy traveling around Texas conducting computer surveys for Brooke Ullman’s project freeway pavement markings at interchanges and Sue Chrysler’s project on toll road signing. They conducted approximately 200 surveys in Dallas, El Paso, Houston and San Antonio. In addition, Katie Connell with the Safety Center traveled to Dallas to help administer the surveys. Nada, Sandra, Sarah and Katie would like to express their appreciation to the implementation offices in each of these cities.

The use of these offices made setting-up and recruiting much more cost-effective. The Research Implementation staff all showed “that good southern hospitality” in screening and setting-up potential participants and assisting with posting notices and recruiting. “The offices all demonstrated the win-win concept and definitely confirmed that they are all team players” said Nada Trout.

Additional recognition and thanks go to Lisa Palmer and Christie Madsen in the TTI Dallas office; Lupe Ramos in the El Paso TTI office; Lisa Patke in the Houston TTI office; Kandis Salazar and Linda Castillo in the One Castle Hills San Antonio TTI office.

Kudos

“Country Lifestyle Magazine” recently pictured Russell Henk and his son Christian in the June/July 2009 issue in the article titled Red, White and Green displaying the harvest from their garden in Bandera, Texas. Read the article at http://www.countrylifestyle.net/category/home-garden/red-white-and-green.
Top 10 TTI developers of non-TxDOT research

Paul Carlson, Jerry Ullman, Rafael Aldrete-Sanchez, Cesar Quiroga, and Jim Bonneson received $2,500 as part of TTI’s new Research Diversity Bonus Awards Program. Although not eligible for the cash award as a member of the Leadership Team, Chris Poe is also a member of this high producing group. TTI’s non-TxDOT research expenditures this year will be at least 25 percent greater than they were two years ago. These people and others who are bringing in substantial new sponsor work are the reasons this progress has been made.

Welcome to TTI!

Please welcome Vichika Iragavarapu as the newest member of the Roadway Design Program. Vichika previously worked in the Safety Center for Sue Chrysler during her time as a graduate student at A&M. She is an Assistant Transportation Researcher and has returned to TTI after working in Houston for a couple of years as a consultant.

You will be missed

Lisa Palmer, Senior Office Associate in the Dallas TTI Office has accepted a new position within the A&M System: Office Coordinator for the Vice Chancellor and Dean for Agriculture and Life Sciences, Dr. Mark Hussey. Lisa began her new position in College Station on September 1. Her service to TTI has been invaluable and she will surely be missed.

The Houston TTI Office says good bye to Brian Jones, Mario Martinez and Nicole Rice. All three completed their work terms and are returning to college. Brian returns to the University of Southern California, Mario to the University of Houston and Nicole to Vanderbilt.

We Bleed Maroon

Summer is over and school is back in session, it can only mean one thing – time for a TTI blood drive (oh yeah, and some Aggie football).

Date: Thursday, October 29, 2009
Time: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Where: Gilchrist Building, Room 103

Call or e-mail to make an appointment:
Nancy Stratta – 845-9955 or n-stratta@tamu.edu
Mary Cearley – 847-8719 or m-cearley@tamu.edu
Linda Chatham – 845-6150 or l-chatham@tamu.edu
Lance Bullard – 845-6153 or l-bullard@tamu.edu

Happy birthday to you...

August
3 – Yunlong Zhang
5 – Arturo Bujanda
8 – Ivan Calzada
8 – Brittainy Helton
9 – Marcella Chavez
11 – Bernie Fette
16 – Herlinda Castillo
17 – Sue James
19 – Luis Galicia
24 – Dan Middleton
26 – Cesar Quiroga
28 – Sarah Young

September
2 – Johnathan Re
4 – Christopher Poe
8 – Nancy Stratta
10 – Sandra Schoeneman
14 – Rafael Aldrete
19 – Mehdi Azimi
19 – Robert Benz
20 – Stacey Alejandro
21 – Sonia Chapa
24 – Carlos Duran
24 – Swampnil Samant
28 – Michael Davis
30 – Chi-Leung Chu
30 – Leonard Ruback

October
1 – Dan Walker
1 – Nicholas Koncz
3 – Geza Pesti
4 – Jennifer Ross
11 – Omar Mata
17 – Stephanie Bradley
19 – Gene Hawkins
20 – Brenda Manak
23 – Jack Antebi