TTI to assist in the I-35 Corridor Reconstruction Project

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is widening the existing four-lane I-35 freeway corridor to a six-lane corridor. The length of the proposed improvements within the Waco District along IH-35 is approximately 90 miles from south of City of Salado to north of the City of Hillsboro.

The planned corridor improvements traverse four counties (Bell, Falls, McLennan, and Hill) and numerous cities (Waco, Temple, Hillsboro, Belton, Salado). The planned improvements will be let through 14 smaller construction projects. The economic and mobility importance of the IH-35 corridor requires an unprecedented coordination and travel information system to inform travelers, freight operators and businesses of the potential impacts of travel delay and other travel challenges during construction. TxDOT anticipates that construction of these improvements will be complete by 2015.

In addition, TTI has been asked to develop a unique monitoring and traveler information system that combines prediction with real-time monitoring. It is these high-risk, high-public reward types of problems for which a public-sector research institute such as TTI is best suited to tackle. TTI will integrate proven research tools with the best technology available from the private sector, and in some cases, create new tools to develop and implement this system.

The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) was asked by TxDOT to apply the results of prior research to accomplish some key goals during the reconstruction of the I-35 corridor. TTI has successfully developed the state-of-the-art skills and approaches to serve as a mobility coordinator during individual construction projects. The Mobility Coordinator is responsible for anticipating mobility challenges and ensuring that stakeholder concerns are satisfied in support of timely project completion. This new challenge on IH-35 is to expand the current state-of-the-art approach to multiple projects with multiple contractors in a single corridor with additional rural challenges.
KUDOS

Melisa Finley Elected to TexITE Board

Congratulations to Melisa Finley, on her recent election to the TexITE Board of Directors. Melisa will serve a one year term as secretary-treasurer of the Texas District starting on January 1, 2011.

“I am very excited about this opportunity! Being elected to an officer position within TexITE was one of my career goals,” Melisa said.

Melisa was a critical component of the development of the Brazos Valley Chapter (now a Section). She believed the region needed a chapter to allow TTI staff to meet and interact with staff from other agencies, and to learn more about transportation issues at the local level. In spring of 2000, she was able to recruit others to help her plan an organizational meeting. As a result of her efforts, a Brazos Valley Chapter of TexITE was formed. Melisa was the first president for the Brazos Valley section in 2000-2001 and served as Section representative in 2004-2005.

In college, Melisa found math and science to be fascinating, so engineering seemed to be a natural fit. Her transportation professors Dr. Conrad Dudek and Dr. Neil Rowan helped her make the decision to focus her studies in transportation engineering.

“They (the professors) made traffic operations and traffic control devices exciting and fun,” Melisa said.

“I may be one of the few people in this world that gets excited about work zones, but someone has to.”

Throughout her career in transportation, Melisa has served in numerous leadership positions, including the TexITE Task Force, assigned to review the organizational structure of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) within Texas, she served as chair of the Committee for Future Engineers from 2002 through 2007, and as the District Awards Coordinator.

Melisa’s experience is priceless. Her best advice for new engineers is to learn from the experienced people, communicate effectively and have common sense.

“Above all else, have fun and enjoy what you do. I may be one of the few people in this world that gets excited about work zones, but someone has to!”

Following her term as secretary-treasurer, Melisa plans to run for vice president and then president of the TexITE Board of Directors. “I look forward to serving and I am greatly honored.”

Melisa Finley
Associate Research Engineer
Vichika Iragavarapu Awarded ITE Scholarship

Congratulations to Vichika Iragavarapu, Assistant Transportation Researcher in the Operations and Design Division on being awarded one of the ITE Consultants Council’s Young Professional Scholarships.

Each year, the ITE Consultants Council sponsors a scholarship program for young professionals in the transportation industry. Ten winners of the scholarship are provided $1,000 in travel assistance to attend the ITE Annual Meeting and Exhibit, are recognized at the ITE annual meeting, ITE Consultants Council Newsletter, and in the ITE Journal.

By being awarded this scholarship, Vichika was able to attend the ITE annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia. Vichika serves as the Brazos Valley’s section vice-president.

UPDATE!

Nadeem Chaudhary is settled in and working in Qatar.

Kay Fitzpatrick participated in the Freeway Geometric Design Scan Tour (June 2010) of Spain, Germany, Netherlands, and England that examined geometric design issues related to the implementation of active traffic management strategies.

In September, she attended the reassembly meeting for the scan tour in Washington D.C. Kay also attended the National Committee meeting in Chicago, in July and the Highway Safety Manual Task Force meeting in August, which will now be the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Committee on Highway Safety Performance.

Transportation Consultants Council Young Professionals Scholarship

Ten winners of this scholarship will be provided $1,000 in travel assistance to attend the 2011 ITE Annual Meeting and Exhibit in St. Louis, MO on August 13-16, 2011

Deadline: April 1, 2011

For eligibility and application, visit http://www.ite.org/awards/YoungProfessionals.pdf
Gary Thomas, Research Engineer and Center for Professional Development Director, spent the last couple of months traveling on business to both new and familiar places.

In August, he traveled to Vancouver, British Columbia, for the ITE Board of Directors Meeting and the ITE Annual Meeting. While in Vancouver, he presented a paper for Srini Sunkari (who had to take an unexpected trip to India), and then had a chance to referee the annual street hockey game put on by the Canadian District.

This was Gary’s first time to visit Vancouver and he described the city as “pedestrian friendly and the light rail transit system was efficient and easy to use.”

In late August, Gary was off to his old stomping grounds, Minong, Wisconsin to participate in a project meeting and focus group for an ITS evaluation study (with a stop off in Minneapolis first). The evaluation study is part of a larger project that is looking at several rural ITS safety projects around the county. The project in Wisconsin is using display boards to dynamically alert drivers on the side streets of adequate gaps in traffic on the mainline divided highway.

After a couple weeks break, he headed over to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to teach the National Highway Institute (NHI) course Traffic Signal Design and Operations. Gary has been an instructor for this course since 2005. His class typically consists of 20-24 students, and while it is billed as a basic class, there is usually a wide variety of experienced professionals that register (from recent grads to soon to be retirees).

“I like this because I can draw on the experiences of others and use their examples in the class,” Gary said. “I often find that I learn just as much from teaching the class as I hope the students do from taking the class.”

While in Baton Rouge, Gary had a chance to indulge on delicious cajun food.

Next up was a trip to Chicago to teach the NHI Instructor Development Course in late September into early October. This was the first time Gary taught this course. “The most important thing I like for students to take from the course is that everyone has a unique style of teaching. The key is in how you can take your style and use it to your advantage.”

After a couple days home, it was out to Washington, D.C., for the fall ITE Board of Directors Meeting. On this trip, Gary was happy to bring his wife, Sheila, and sons Nathan and Cameron. His family took some time to visit the National Air & Space Museum Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles Airport.

“Leadership isn’t a title bestowed on people. It is something that emerges from within,” Gary Thomas said.
In the Walker household, Saturday’s aren’t your typical day of house chores or leisurely catching up on a book, you haven’t had time to finish. That’s because the Walkers are out traveling to watch their son Hart race his all-terrain vehicle (ATV) also, known as a quad bike.

Dan Walker, Assistant Research Specialist in the Operations and Design Division couldn’t be prouder as he watched his son Hart, take off at the national race at Loretta Lynn’s property in Tennessee. Hart Walker, was undefeated this season in the 300cc division of ATV racing.

“He (Hart) makes me proud, he puts 100 percent in every lap.”

At only 14-years-old, Hart has won a championship five years in a row. This is the first year that Hart went undefeated. When asked about his son’s latest season and win, Dan said, “He makes me proud, he puts 100 percent in every lap.”

Typically riders in the 300cc division range between 13- and 16-years-old. But when Hart races in the 450 cc division, he is racing against much older competitors.

Dan’s passion for racing and motorcycles rubbed off on his son at a young age. “I always had motorcycles, three wheelers, and go carts,” Dan said, “and Hart liked all this action at a young age.”

Hart Walker (#14) at the starting line at Loretta Lynn’s property in Tennessee. National races have the fastest racers in the nation.

Hart’s interest in the sport started when Dan purchased a four wheeler for his son on Hart’s fourth birthday. Once Hart grew out of his first four wheeler, they purchased a larger one from a dealer in Magnolia, Texas, who told them about Quad racing in the Houston area.

By age seven, Hart started to race, and since then has earned about 125 trophies and some prize money. Dan built Hart a practice track on their land. Hart’s natural ability and frequent practice is what makes him stand out amongst his fellow racers.

The season lasts from February to October and consists of 12 races, in addition to national races and races in Waco, Texas once a month.

“Quad racing is an extreme sport, very exciting, and very competitive,” Dan said. “But most of all I get to spend quality time with Hart and his younger sister Haley.

It’s a family thing; we all go race on the weekends.”

Hart looks forward to next season, and aspires to be as good as his role model, pro racer John Natalie.
November and December Birthdays to Celebrate

November
1 - Ivan Lorenz
6 - Roberto Macias
10 - Paul Carlson
13 - Jon Williams
28 - Hancheng Ge

December
7 - Debbie Jasek
11 - Pamela Gutierrez
12 - Travis Gilbert
12 - Adam Pike
13 - Daren Mieles
15 - Tony Voigt
16 - Jodi Carson
26 - LuAnn Theiss

Upcoming Birthdays in January and February

January
1 - Edward Seymour
17 - Edward Brackin
19 - Melisa Finley
20 - Michael Vickich
31 - Andrea Chacon

February
6 - Michael Pratt
9 - Nadeem Chaudhary
9 - Lisa Patke
10 - Hidi Wood
11 - Brice Nichols
12 - Kathy Tran
15 - Jerry Ullman
22 - Nada Trout
23 - Paul Adamson
26 - Bryan Miller
28 - Ivan Liu
CALENDAR

Brazos Valley TexITE Annual Business Meeting
December 9, 2010
College Station, Texas

Transpo2010
December 12-15, 2010
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

Texas Transportation Institute Holiday Break
December 24-31, 2010

2011 Texas Transportation Forum
January 3-5, 2011
Austin, Texas

TRB 90th Annual Meeting
January 23-27, 2011
Washington D.C.

TDS Fest
March 5, 2011
Carrollton, Texas

13th International Conference on Modern Trends in Activation Analysis
March 13-18, 2011
College Station, Texas

2011 Traffic Safety Conference
March 21-23, 2011
Austin, Texas

TexITE Winter Meeting
March 24, 2011
Ft. Worth, Texas

2011 AASHTO Spring Meeting
May 2-6, 2011
Las Vegas, Nevada

29th Annual Texas Aviation Conference
May 25-27, 2011
Austin, Texas

LASTING QUOTE

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”
--Steve Jobs, American Entrepreneur, Apple co-founder

The Transportation Operations Group at the Texas Transportation Institute conducts research, transfers technology, and educates future leaders of the transportation profession. Our vision is to be recognized as a premier group in transportation system operations research.

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TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS GROUP
The mission of the Transportation Operations Group is to facilitate innovations in transportation system operations through leadership in research, education, and technology transfer.