Kansas Department of Transportation

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

Sept. 2, 2020

KDOT hosts ribbon cutting for Cedar Bluff bridge

The new Cedar Bluff reservoir bridge on K-147 in Trego County opened to traffic in mid-August, with a celebration of the new bridge taking place on Sept. 1. Photo by Multimedia Services

By Lisa Mussman
District Three

Officials from KDOT and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism celebrated the reopening of the bridge over the Cedar Bluff reservoir on K-147 in Trego County during a ribbon cutting ceremony on Sept. 1.

Built in conjunction with the construction of the reservoir and dam, the original steel-tied arch bridge was completed in the early 1950s. Although it had been maintained and repaired through the years, public safety concerns about structural deficiencies prompted KDOT to close the bridge in June 2019.

To minimize the closure's impact on the surrounding area, KDOT was able to quickly develop and finalize plans for the replacement bridge. Construction began in February 2020 and was closely coordinated with the Bureau of Reclamation since the structure is attached to the dam walls.

"This project is a good example of various stakeholders working together to accomplish a common goal," said KDOT Area Engineer Kevin Zimmer. "We know how important this bridge is to visitors traveling into the state park and to the farming community, so we are pleased that we could deliver a finished product ahead of the Labor Day holiday and fall harvest."

Wildcat Construction of Wichita was the primary contractor for the $2.2 million project. Ryan Barrett's road squad and Shawn Schwensen's bridge squad designed the project.

Click here to see an aerial view of the new bridge.

Thompson retires from KDOT

By Kim Stich
Headquarters

Larry Thompson

The retirement of Larry Thompson and the loss of all his institutional knowledge is figuratively going to hit KDOT like a tornado. Which is ironic, as Thompson started at KDOT one week after the 1966 tornado hit Topeka.

Thompson began his career in Topeka but had to live in Lawrence as the tornado limited the available housing in town. During the rotational training program, he worked in several offices in Headquarters and did a field construction assignment in Winfield. Thompson liked working in the field and served as a Field Survey Party Chief for three years. He came back to Topeka and worked on Environmental statements for four years, then chose to work for his father's company, Thompson Construction Company, Inc.

In 1988, they decided to sell the company, and he wanted to return to KDOT. Now retired employee Mike Crow told him about positions in District Six and Thompson was selected as the Area Engineer in Dodge City, replacing Rosie Ingram. He became the District Construction and Materials Engineer in 1991, then was named the District Six Engineer in 1996. In 2016, he was thinking about retiring but received a call from State Transportation Engineer Catherine Patrick, asking him to consider the Director of Operations position.

He joked that the only area he didn't like was Bridge Design, "because there was too much math." Thompson appreciated working directly with people, especially in southwest Kansas.

"I liked working in the District to try to solve problems and do good things for our customers," he said.

Employees and retirees are welcome to send Thompson an email message by this Friday, Sept. 4.
Larry.Thompson@ks.gov

One project that stood out was working with employees and locals to add a left-turn lane, a bypass lane and replace a timber bridge structure to a housing development east of Garden City.

"To me, it was KDOT in touch with the locals and a problem that we were able to fix," he said.

During retirement, he and his wife, Kay, plan to spend time with their two children and four grandchildren, three of whom are triplets. He is also restoring a 1970 Corvette.

Thompson said he was going to miss the people at KDOT. "There are a lot of really smart people who work at KDOT and they're fun to interact with," Thompson said. "It's been a really good career and I have enjoyed it immensely."

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

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Troy Whitworth

Intense storm tears through north central Kansas

By Ashley Perez
District Two

***Above**, hail shattered a KDOT vehicle's windshield at the Mankato Subarea office during an Aug. 14 storm. **Below left**, several windows were broken on the Subarea office. **Below right**, the computer near the window was soaked and had broken glass. Photos by Doug Newquist, District Two*

"I've never seen hail go through a roof until now," says Dennis Kennedy, Equipment Operator Senior in Mankato, as he discusses storm damage to the Subarea office. The strong storm blew through the area on the late evening of Aug. 14. With the storm came destructive winds, fist-size hail and heavy rainfall, which caused a large amount of damage in the area.

When Supervisor Rodney Howard went out early in the morning on Aug. 15 to check for any problems with the KDOT facility, he discovered all the windows on the north side of the Subarea building had been shattered, holes in the skylights, roof damage, a work computer was covered in rain, broken windshields on work vehicles, and more.

After quickly taking an inventory of damage, he called Superintendent Doug Newquist to report the issues. Together they got the materials needed and called in David Bixler and Brian Mallory, Equipment Operators in Mankato, to help clean up and make temporary repairs to the building. Final repairs will include replacing several roofs and windows, which could take several months to complete.

The singing (and barking) mechanic in District Five

By Tim Potter
District Five

Shane Thompson is an Equipment Mechanic at KDOT's District Five shop in Hutchinson. So he's a nuts-and-bolts-man.

Thompson grew up around people working on cars. He went to school to learn about automotive and diesel technology.

"Working with my hands" is what he likes about being a mechanic, he says. Whether it's trucks, heavy equipment, cars, mowers, he has that ability to take things apart, diagnose the problem and put it all back together. Correctly reassembling parts can be done, he says, "as long as you pay attention to where it came from."

But he's also "the singing mechanic" and sometimes "the barking mechanic." "He does it all" when it comes to voice and sound imitations, one of Thompson's supervisors, Brent Engelland, deadpans.

Around the District shop and offices, Thompson is known for singing along with the radio. Or he might let loose with a pretty good version of a barking dog.

"He makes up his own lyrics to every song," says his direct supervisor, Equipment Shop Supervisor Nathan Barringer. Thompson can sing in just about any key.

It's Thompson's way of bringing levity.

So it was a relatively quiet shop when Thompson took a new job outside KDOT earlier this year.

But he was gone for only about a month, returning in late March to his welcoming KDOT Equipment Superintendent -- Engelland.

Shane Thompson is an Equipment Mechanic in the District Five shop in Hutchinson. He's not just a fixer – he's the singing mechanic. Photos by Brent Engelland, District Five

Thompson missed KDOT. "The grass is not always greener on the other side," he says. The experience made him appreciate KDOT's benefits.

Terri Kilbride, Human Resource Professional II with District Five, says some of the advantages of working for KDOT include a generous leave plan and retirement program and not having to work nights and weekends except for emergencies.

After Thompson returned to KDOT, he says, laughing, "They told me if I tried to leave, they're going to lock me down."

And in the shop, things are getting fixed. And someone is singing – and barking.

Whitworth selected as Director of Safety

By Kim Stich
Headquarters

With more than 30 years of experience both along the highways and at Headquarters, Troy Whitworth has been selected as the Kansas Department of Transportation's Director of Safety.

"I've been around safety all my career," Whitworth said. "Everything I did out in the field was based on safety. It's an opportunity to change things for our folks in the field."

His focus is on overall accident reduction and, "to be marching towards zero lost time accidents. I want to empower our employees to make safety a priority for themselves," he said.

There are not many positions in the maintenance area that Whitworth hasn't spent time in. He started at KDOT in 1988 as an Equipment Operator I in the Olathe area and promoted to an EO II and then an EO III soon after. He then worked his way up to Area Superintendent in Olathe in 2003. After 20 years in the field, he was promoted to Staff Maintenance Manager at Headquarters. He has been in his current position as Assistant to the Director of Operations since 2013, providing guidance on the Division's budget and policies.

Troy Whitworth

During this time, he served on maintenance study groups and assisted with snow and ice training. Most of his career has been to help develop new employees' skills.

"It's important to get field employees trained because they have very difficult jobs," Whitworth said. "They wear a lot of hats – from controlling traffic, fixing signs, patching potholes and being out in the worst conditions in the winter, our folks have to be flexible in the things they can do. You have to respect them for the jobs they do out there."

Whitworth said it is a different set of challenges now from when he started. "We have better equipment," he said, "but we have less people."

The City of Wichita partners with KDOT on many U.S. 54 projects because they consider it the gateway highway to and through Wichita. They often finance aesthetic improvements to bridges as seen here at the Zelta Street intersection under the new freeway (between Greenwich Road and K-96 on the east side of the city).

Trivia!

Famous people born in 1930 –

1. These two astronauts both flew in the Apollo 11 Lunar Module.

2. His very first movie was “Never Say Goodbye” in 1955 – and he’s made people’s day ever since.

3. He was 007 and Indiana Jones’ dad.

4. She served as an Associate Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States from 1981 to 2006.

5. He was referred to as the 20th century’s most successful investor.

6. He was known as the Godfather of Soul Music and earned 17 Grammy Awards during his career.

7. He starred in the 1968 action film “Bullitt.”

Polyester concrete used on K-23 bridge

A crew behind the paver hand finishes the edge and sides of the bridge deck. The polyester polymer concrete surface can be returned to traffic in as little as two hours.

The polyester polymer concrete is prepared by mixing the PPC-1121 (binder resin) with small rock and sand. This is applied to the bridge deck using a paver. Photos by Lisa Knoll, District Six

By Lisa Knoll
District Six

Work began on the K-23 bridge south of Cimarron in Gray County in March. The project included the replacement of two expansion joints, repairs and patching to the bridge deck and finally a polyester polymer concrete overlay to preserve and protect the bridge deck.

A polyester polymer concrete overlay begins with an anaerobic high molecular weight methacrylate primer which seeps into all openings in the concrete.

When the polyester concrete is placed over the primer it bonds with the concrete to protect and preserve the concrete from moisture and chemicals like rain, salt and brine for up to 30 years. In addition, the overlay cures quickly with a two-hour cure time.

The list of maintenance projects is endless

By Kelly Kultala
District One

Projects for KDOT maintenance members seem to be endless as they pick up trash, mow roadway shoulders, cut down trees and weeds, repair and install signs, maintain guardrail, patch potholes, place striping pavement and do drainage work. And those are just some of the required tasks.

In the Kansas City Metro area, a huge amount of trash is left along the highways, making it difficult for crews to keep clean. More than 500 work hours a month are spent picking up trash, which is a significant cost.

Olathe Superintendent Drake Jennings said there are roughly 10,000 acres and/or 2,000 lane miles of shoulder in the metro area that need to be mowed at least once a year, probably more, if they had the crew members. “I have 15 tractors for mowing, but I don’t have enough staff to operate each mower,” he said.

Some organizations help KDOT pick up trash by participating in the Adopt-A-Highway program, which KDOT has managed since 1989. Groups agree to pick up litter at least three times a year for a two-year period. Interested groups are encouraged to join and can contact KDOT Area offices.

When it is very hot outside, the supervisors try to schedule work according to the forecast, so the crews are not subject to extreme weather conditions. Crews are very conscious of staying hydrated, taking frequent breaks and looking out for each other.

COVID-19 has added another obstacle to trying to get the work finished. Workers had to stay home for a time while the grass continued to grow and the trash continued to pile up. Currently, they have daily temperature checks and are reminded of social distancing, mask wearing and sanitizing - whether in a vehicle or on a project site. Training efforts also have had delays due to COVID.

Maintenance employees across the state have a long list of duties. Some examples of these duties in District One include mowing steep slope embankments (above), replacing side road culvert pipes (below left) and ongoing trash removal. Photos by Darrin Heuertz, Dale Shirley and Albert Horn, District One.

In many cases the work will never be finished, said Bonner Springs Superintendent Albert Horn, because while they are working on one project, a vehicle crash or another emergency may happen, and the crew is needed for traffic control or an emergency repair. “We are constantly putting out fires,” he said. “We don’t have the numbers of staff needed to keep up with the demand for the work.”

Anderson named Fiscal Bureau Chief

By Kim Stich
Headquarters

Pam Anderson

Pam Anderson has been named the Kansas Department of Transportation's new Fiscal Bureau Chief. Her duties began Aug. 10.

Anderson has been with KDOT for 15 years. She started as an Accountant III in Federal-Aid and was promoted after one year to Federal-Aid Chief Accountant. Anderson has been involved in the implementation of several agency-wide computer processing systems.

Within the Federal-Aid unit, the staff monitors projects with federal funds, processes purchase orders for the construction letting, participates in the state audit and reviews projects with local funding to provide final statements. She is proud of her group's accomplishments.

"I've had a high rate of people who have been promoted and I've been able to watch them grow and develop throughout the years," Anderson said.

In her new role as Bureau Chief, she wants to streamline processes to become paperless and look at future needs for the office.

"COVID has forced all of us to think about staffing needs going forward. We have started rewriting our procedures to show how documents flow electronically," Anderson said. "I also want to focus on what can we do to recruit, how we bring people in and train and also how we can be prepared in case someone leaves."

Anderson and her husband have twin daughters who graduated from Kansas State University this spring. For four years, they had planned a big trip to Europe for early this summer, but it was cancelled. They hope to go in a couple years. "Time will tell," she said.

Thank you for your service

The following employees will retire from KDOT on Oct. 1.

Headquarters

Timothy Hatch, Network Service Technician III, Bureau of Maintenance
Larry Thompson, Director, Operations

District Two

David Hastings, Equipment Operator Senior, Mankato
Laurel Miesse, Engineering Technician Midpoint, Marion

District Three

James Driscoll, Equipment Operator, Russell
Rex Winchell, Equipment Mechanic Specialist, Phillipsburg

District Four

George Dockery, Professional Engineer II, Pittsburg
Robert Gudgen, Engineering Associate III, Pittsburg
James Lewis, Equipment Operator, Ottawa
Mary Rockers, Administrative Specialist, Garnett
Roy Widmar, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Fort Scott

District Five

Wendell 'Gene' Watts Jr., Highway Maintenance Superintendent, Pratt

In Memory

Condolences to friends and family of retiree Richard "Dick" Hamlin who passed away on July 29 in Osage City. Hamlin started at KDOT in 1990 and served for 19 years, retiring in 2009. He was an Engineering Technician Senior in Osage City.

Condolences to friends and family of retiree Arthur "Bill" Lange who passed away on July 31 in Mankato. He started at KDOT in 1946 as an Oil and Grading Foreman in Salina. He went to Mankato in 1956 and retired in 1983 as the Superintendent. He celebrated his 100th birthday last November.

Condolences to friends and family of retiree Ralph Burton of Parker who passed away on Aug. 7. He started at KDOT in 1979 and worked for many years in Louisburg. He retired after 33 years as an Equipment Operator Specialist in Iola in 2013.

Coordinating large loads takes teamwork

By Priscilla Petersen
District Four

Gaze far enough into the Kansas skies, and chances are you'll spy wind turbines spinning on the horizon. Southeast Kansas is now home to several wind farms, with more installations planned.

Construction is underway on a wind farm in Neosho County this summer. Semitrucks are hauling wind turbine parts and blades on permitted sections of U.S. 400, U.S. 75, U.S. 169 and K-47 as they make their way to the tower sites. Other sets of wind components, after being delivered to Parsons by train, are being transported over Kansas highways to a wind farm in southwest Missouri.

Each district sets the criteria for the permitted routes, according to Dominique Shannon, Bridge Evaluation Engineer with the KDOT Bureau of Structural and Geotechnical Services. "We include turning maneuvers and width restrictions as the districts see fit," she explained in an email. "For physical restrictions, the district and area staff know the roads much better than some of us in headquarters. We rely on districts heavily."

Semitrucks hauling wind turbine components make slow, careful turns from U.S. 400 east onto northbound U.S. 169 ***(above)****, where waiting flaggers control traffic* ***(below)****. Photos by Priscilla Petersen*

Shannon added that KDOT is working on regulations to help define the requirements further to trucking companies and escort vehicle operators. "The width and type of permit the carrier needs will dictate the number of escort vehicles required," she said. "Escort vehicle drivers are allowed to do flagging if they have been trained to do so based on MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices) requirements," and must pass a required training course to operate as escort vehicle drivers in Kansas.

The Superloads generally adhere to posted speed limits, but they are not nearly as nimble in making turns. Although the trucks are outfitted with pilot cars and flagging operations to help negotiate difficult turns, the resulting delays to traffic sometimes result in frayed citizens calling their local officials and KDOT offices.

Shannon said there is a solution to frustratingly long delays: "If the maneuver requires traffic to be stopped for more than 15 minutes, the escort vehicle operators should be contacting law enforcement or the local KDOT office for assistance. KDOT does not enforce the permits."

"We work in cooperation with law enforcement; they enforce the rules of the road," she said.

Camera pole to bring new view to WICHWay

By Tracy Crockett
District Five

A new camera will enable WICHWay to have a bird's-eye view of traffic on the I-235 Green Project in Wichita.

The pole for the new camera was installed near the Broadway exit on I-235, but installing such a large pole was tricky due to the location. "It is kind of difficult because we couldn't get it from the top side because there's head-to-head traffic and it's pretty hard to close it," said Bryan Grosch, Atlas Electric.

Crews closed the northbound I-235 exit to Broadway as a large truck brought in the 70-foot-tall, 12,500-pound camera pole. A crane was used to unload the pole from the truck. "We had to flip flop the pole a couple of times to get it into place with the crane," said Grosch.

Crews drilled a hole 42 inches wide and 12 feet deep to house the pole, then moved the pole in position and poured concrete around it. The process took about five hours.

A cabinet will be built near the pole to house the electronics, fiber connection, switches and the power for the camera.

Unfortunately, it will be a while before the new camera is functional. The westbound lanes will have to be complete on I-235 before conduits can be poured providing power and connection to the fiber.

The Green Project began in March 2019 and is part of a three-phase project in Wichita where I-135, I-235, K-254 and K-96 meet in north Wichita. It sets up I-235 to function with future phases of the North Junction Project.

WICHWay provides the latest traffic information on Wichita's highways including travel speeds, road conditions, road construction, cameras and signs.

A pole for a new camera is installed along I-235 in Wichita as part of providing traffic information for WICHWay. Photo by Tracy Crockett, District Five

Trivia answers

1. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.
2. Clint Eastwood.
3. Sean Connery.
4. Sandra Day O'Connor.
5. Warren Buffett.
6. Ray Charles.
7. Steve McQueen.

Employees repair damaged erosion control area

By Ashley Perez
District Two

Heavy rains in late August caused flood waters to leave the banks of Asher Creek under U.S. 24, washing out or destroying most of the erosion control, which had been completed on a project there earlier this year.

After the water had receded, KDOT workers from the Beloit and Concordia Subarea office worked together to make repairs by correcting and reinstalling the erosion control.

Jeff Noland, Engineering Technician Specialist in Belleville, was impressed with the employees' quick response and quality workmanship in repairing the damage.

"I appreciate what they did on this project and the work they are doing on other projects," Noland said. "It shows we do have people that take pride in their work and others do notice it."

Work was finished on the erosion repair project on Aug. 20.

Before (above) and after (below) erosion control work. Photos by Ritchie Farrell, District Two, and CJ McChesney, consultant.

KanDrive system being updated

A committee has been working for the past year to replace the current KanRoad data entry system and provide more information in an easy to access format for motorists on the KanDrive.org website.

KDOT employees help keep people moving on the highways and informed on topics that could affect their travel such as maintenance and construction activities, winter highway conditions, flooded roadways, incidents and crashes affecting traffic and, of course, a closed highway through KanDrive.org.

With the new format, users can create personalized My KanDrive accounts to save favorite routes/areas and sign up for regional email and text alerts. It will include several other new features such as a commercial vehicle mode and direct access to WICHway.

The new data entry system will feed a new KanDrive map, so that will be a change, too. Expect the rollout of the new look in mid-to late-September – just in time for snow and ice season.

Employees who enter data in the KanRoad system are receiving training in preparation of the rollout.

If you have questions about the new system, please contact Kevin Hennes or Project Manager Steve Locke.

Testing, testing: Friction truck travels highways

By Tim Potter
District Five

The friction truck on display on Aug. 24 in Topeka. That's Edgar de Leon Izeppi, with Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, leading a tour of the vehicle. Photo by Rick Miller, Headquarters

First glance: It looks like a big orange truck.

But that truck carries a specially designed apparatus with a wheel set at a certain angle and a water spray put down in front of the wheel. As the truck cruises along, that equipment continually gathers data from pavement it rolls over.

The truck and its crew looped around the eastern half of the state the week of Aug. 24.

The ultimate purpose of the truck's work is road safety.

Some call it the friction truck. The technical name is Sideway-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine, or SCRIM.

It measures pavement surface friction -- to determine if there is enough friction for appropriate vehicle tires to stop and turn under control and within normal driving conditions.

In simplest terms, it's a scientific way to see whether pavement is too slippery for normal driving.

It could help KDOT to pinpoint and analyze pavement that might need attention.

The truck offers some advantage over the current equipment KDOT uses, says Rick Miller, KDOT Pavement Management Engineer.

The friction truck starts a test run on Aug. 24, heading onto U.S. 75 in Topeka.

The existing device – a special truck and trailer with a locked-wheel skid measurement system -- doesn't measure around horizontal or vertical curves as well, Miller says. The existing system, dating to the 1970s, "has limitations in what it can do," he says.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provided funds to bring the vehicle to Kansas. Virginia Tech Transportation Institute supplied the expertise in operating the vehicle and collecting the data, Miller notes. It was tested on 1,000 miles of Kansas roadway.

He explains how it works: The friction truck deploys a small tire that drags along the road at a 20-degree angle to the direction of travel. It measures torque on the tire. That translates to friction. The truck sprays a set amount of water on the pavement in front of the tire to simulate wet-weather conditions. The pavement needs to be consistently wet. It measures how well the pavement grabs the tire.

The data collected gets plotted on a chart with a line revealing precise pavement conditions.

"The beauty of that line," Miller says, "is you can start to see" where friction problems may occur.

"It's an excellent screening tool," Miller says, because it can help engineers to focus on possible issues in a proactive way.

Safety alert - learn from pulling post incident

Safety Alerts are designed to share information about an incident so others can learn ways to improve, which is an important part of Secretary Julie Lorenz's Be Safe initiative. The people involved are not identified.

Two Equipment Operators from a Subarea were pulling a post for a marker on the southeast side of a bridge in December 2019.

The first Equipment Operator was operating the loader while the second Equipment Operator secured the chain onto the post to be removed.

The first Equipment Operator pulled the loader up to the post with the bucket curled down so that the chain could be hooked to the top of the bucket. This person had limited visibility of the second Equipment Operator who was hooking the post to the bucket with the chain.

The Equipment Operator on the loader saw the second Equipment Operator raise his hand in the air with his finger pointed up. Thinking that this was an indicator as they raised the bucket, he started to do so. But the chain had not been hooked to the bucket.

As the bucket rose, it also self-leveled - this extended the bucket out and up in the process. As the bucket continued to rise, the first Equipment Operator heard a yell. He immediately backed the loader and lowered the bucket.

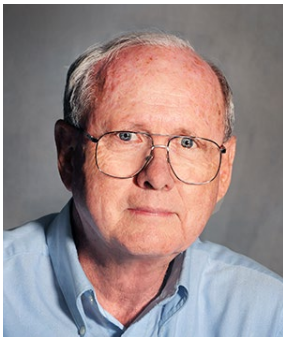
The second Equipment Operator's leg was punctured with a bolt - he was rushed to the hospital and treated for his injuries.

Miscommunication between the Equipment Operators of the hand gesture signal to raise the bucket was a factor in this incident. The second Equipment Operator needed to finish attaching the chain and then move to the other side of the guard rail where there was a four-foot shoulder.

To prevent this from happening in the future, individuals should go over exact hand signals to be used along with clear and concise voice commands before the work begins. Employees should decide ahead of time where each person will perform the work, where they will stand before any equipment is moved and the exact signals to be made during the process. If verbal communication is necessary and noise or distance is a factor, employees should have radios available.

Dockery retires after nearly 54 years at KDOT

By Kim Stich
Headquarters



George Dockery

After nearly 54 years at KDOT, Pittsburg Area Engineer George Dockery has decided it's time to retire.

"I found that I've been working longer than a lot of my Area employees are old," he joked.

He was recruited by KDOT while at the University of Arkansas and started on Feb. 1, 1967. Dockery's first assignment in the training program was in construction at Ft. Scott. He was engaged at the time and didn't want to get married until he got a job and a paycheck. His first paycheck was in March, so Cheri set the date for March 24 and they have been together ever since.

Once he finished the training program, Dockery asked to be assigned in District Four - the District Construction Engineer (James T. Bradley) had impressed him and became a mentor.

After nine years as Projects Engineer in Iola, he was promoted to Resident Engineer in Pittsburg. Soon after, the Area Engineer concept began and he was selected.

Dockery said there is debate on whether he was KDOT's first Area Engineer as several positions were advertised across the state at the same time – but it would be just a matter of days.

Dockery had opportunities for promotion, "but we like Pittsburg and it's close to family in Arkansas." He and Cheri have three kids, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Dockery is proud that during his time in Pittsburg, almost 95 percent of the bridges have been replaced, in addition to the first bridge he was Project Manager on while in Iola. "I'm older than the bridges," he said.

He also has served on the board of advisors for 30 years with Pittsburg State University's construction technology department. "It started with one full-time professor, a part-time instructor and six to eight students, and now it's the largest department at Pitt State," Dockery said. "I like to think I helped it grow."

His last day in the office is Sept. 4, and he has spent the past three weeks cleaning. He even has a closet that was built during remodeling years ago. "They call it George's closet," he said. "They say stuff I put in there hasn't been seen since, so they are waiting to see what treasures are in there."

KTA briefs:

♦Preservation and modernization projects continued along the Turnpike with pavement resurfacing, drainage capacity improvements, bridge reconstruction and more. Follow the progress in August's Construction Report here.

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Sign highlights 50th anniversary of I-70 in Kansas

Secretary Julie Lorenz and others celebrated the 50th anniversary of I-70's completion in Kansas at the Kanorado weigh station on Aug. 20 by unveiling a replica of signs located on eastbound I-70.

"In the past 20 years, the people of Kansas have invested around $1.2 billion in I-70's expansion, repair and maintenance," Secretary Lorenz said. "We will continue to focus on preservation and maintenance of our state's interstates. I am proud to say that preservation is specifically called-out as a top priority in the new Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program. At KDOT, we are committed to fulfilling our responsibility."

On Nov. 14, 1956, Kansas completed the first section of Interstate in the U.S. under the new Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. This eight-mile section of I-70 is just west of Topeka. Celebrations of completed sections of I-70 continued for the next 14 years until the final section was opened on June 17, 1970.

I-70 is the direct east-west route through Kansas. It originally cost $155.6 million (an average of $420,000 per mile) to construct the 370 miles of I-70, not including the Kansas Turnpike portion. At the time I-70 opened, it was the longest continuous segment of Interstate highway to be completed by any state in the nation.

Mary Eisenhower, granddaughter of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Secretary Julie Lorenz unveil the replica of the signs at the event. Photos by Lisa Mussman, District Three

From left to right, Kansas Sen. Rick Billinger; Mary Eisenhower; Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Secretary Brad Loveless; and Secretary Julie Lorenz participated in I-70's 50th anniversary celebration.

Today, Kansas has a total of 875 miles of Interstate, which is .62% (less than 1%) of all roads in Kansas. These roadways carry 24.6% of the traffic, nearly one-fourth of all travel in the state.

"I-70 is our connection to the world. It is an economic lifeline for Kansas," said Kansas Sen. Rick Billinger. "My district extends from the Colorado border all the way to mile marker 175."

Click here to see the video from the event on KDOT's YouTube page.

So, what does the Bridge Crew do?

By Tim Potter
District Five

Bridge Crew Supervisor Darren Bailey, in the derrick truck basket, and Craig Kenyon, Bridge Crew Equipment Operator Senior, repair barrier wall on U.S. 54 in Wichita. Photo by Dustin Covert, District Five

Like so many jobs, patching a bridge deck is all about preparation – jackhammering and cutting down into a pothole, trimming, washing and blowing out debris so new concrete will bond and support traffic for years.

It's what the District Five Bridge Crew does almost daily, April to October.

The crew does other kinds of bridge work, building forms and pouring replacement concrete rail, for example. They received an Example of Excellence award earlier this year for one such emergency bridge repair at Larned. "On the Larned job, as with many jobs, the District Bridge Crew completed the work quicker and cheaper than if we had contracted out. The crew gives us a lot of flexibility and efficiencies," said District Maintenance Engineer Dave Bohnenblust.

But patching is their routine. The work starts with "chaining" a bridge deck. They drag chain over the deck surface, listening for that hollow sound signaling a void beneath the surface. They mark the spots where they will cut down.

"You make sure you got good sound concrete, is what you want to get to," says Bridge Crew Supervisor Darren Bailey, with KDOT about 21 years. The other Bridge Crew members are Bridge Crew Specialist Dustin Covert and Equipment Operator Senior Craig Kenyon.

They're working against time because they want to get the bridge back open. They're working against the heat and the relentless forces of the jackhammer, which wears on muscles and forces them to stay bent over, on their knees as they chip down. "It's pounding on your wrists, your elbows, your back. Eventually it starts tensing up," Bailey says.

They chip down to the first layer of rebar, sometimes deeper, then clean debris out with an air blower and inspect for more loose bits. They do other prep work, then mix up a relatively quick-setting cement to fill the void and smooth it over with a screed board, by hand, or with a power screed with larger holes. There's a minimum two-hour cure time.

A closer view of bridge deck work, on K-156 in Barton County. Photo by Darren Bailey, District Five

As they work on multi-lane highways, vehicles whiz by. "And they're not slowing down," Bailey says. "I just deal with it. I'm used to it."

Covert says he learned to endure the heat by wearing a moisture-wicking T-shirt, a full-brim hat and sun shades. "You just try to create your own shade, pretty much, while you're out there jackhammering," Covert says.