

Arkansas Highways

FALL 2011



Director's Message



I am pleased to write my first letter to you as the Director of the Highway and Transportation Department. I hope all of you share the excitement that I feel as we assess where we are now and where the Department is going in the future.

The recent renewal of the Interstate Rehabilitation Program at the ballot box is a giant step forward and means that there is a tremendous opportunity to accomplish a great deal over the next few years. This program gives us the opportunity to improve approximately 400 miles of Arkansas' Interstate system. We were very successful in

carrying out the 1999 program and I am confident that we will meet the challenge of this new program in the same way. The program will get underway in the coming year and, once complete, will give us one of the best Interstate systems in the country.

The passing of the new Interstate Rehabilitation Program by the voters of Arkansas is more than just the green light to better our Interstates. It is also a vote of confidence placed upon us by the people of our state. With this program, they have entrusted our staff with making the necessary improvements to our Interstate system. As we have done in the past, I have every confidence that we will fulfill their expectations.

This confidence should be shared by each of us as employees of the AHTD. For those of you working outside the office on location, you are the face of the Department. Each day on the front lines is an opportunity for each of you to represent the Department in a positive way and share with the public the excitement we feel as we work to improve our highway system. This positive spirit is something all staff members in each of our ten Districts and the Central Office can share whether on the front lines or behind the scenes. Just remember that each of us has a job to do and that job contributes to our ultimate goal of providing the best transportation system possible for everyone who travels in or through our great state. I have every confidence that we will be successful as this new program gets underway next year.

The year 2012 also means we will be seeing a one-half percent increase in the state sales tax placed on the ballot for the general election. With voter approval, that increase would raise up to \$1.8 billion for our four-lane highway system in Arkansas. It would also create a new City Streets program similar to our State Aid program which helps improve county roads across the state.

Many great things lie ahead for our Department as this year wraps up and a new year begins. Our job is to make sure we seize the opportunity and give the most we can to every challenge that comes our way.



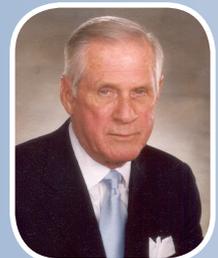
Scott D. Bennett

Director of Highways and Transportation

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Arkansas Highways

Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department - Fall 2011

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Scenic U.S. Highway 65,
Van Buren County

Back Cover:
Highway 123,
Newton County

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Scott Bennett Named New Director



Scott Bennett (r.) is sworn in as Director by Cliff Hoofman, Associate Judge on the Arkansas Court of Appeals (l.).

Scott Bennett has been named as new Director of the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department. Bennett replaces Dan Flowers who retired in September.

Bennett has been working fulltime with the Department since 1989. Prior to being named Director, he served as Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning.

He was sworn in as Director by Cliff Hoofman, Associate Judge on the Arkansas Court of Appeals in a ceremony which took place in Little Rock on September 21st. Hoofman served as a member of the Arkansas Highway Commission from 2007 to 2011.

"It was no accident that the Commission was able to move this swiftly in naming a new Director," stated Madison Murphy, Chairman of the Arkansas Highway Commission.

"This Department does an excellent job at recruiting, training and maintaining quality personnel. Consequently, we have a very strong management team in place. The Commission expects this transition to be seamless."

Bennett is a Registered Professional Engineer with Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Civil Engineering from the University of Arkansas.

He worked in District 10 for four summers as an Engineering Intern. He began working full-time for the Department in 1989 as a Civil Engineer I in the Planning and Research Division and held various titles in the Statewide Planning and Research Sec-

tions until completing his Master's Degree. Bennett became Section Head of Technical Services in 1995 and Assistant Division Head of Planning and Research in 1996. He transferred to Assistant Division Head of Programs and Contracts in 1998 and became Division Head of Planning and Research in 2002. He was promoted to the Department's Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning in April of 2004 with responsibilities that included administration of the Department's highway needs studies, long-range transportation planning, financial planning, policy planning, research programs, traffic safety programs, environmental studies, surveying and construction project scheduling.

Bennett is a member of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Board of Directors, Transportation Futures Policy Committee and Reauthorization Steering Committee. He also is a member of AASHTO's Standing Committees on Planning, Environment, Finance and Administration, Highway Transport, Highway Traffic Safety, Performance Management, Rail Transportation and Public Transportation.

He was named University of Arkansas Young Engineer Alumni of the Year in 2005. He was inducted into the Arkansas Academy of Civil Engineering in 2010.

"It is an honor for me to have been named Director of the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department," Bennett stated. "I look forward to the future opportunities and challenges that the position brings before me."

Voters Approve New Interstate Rehabilitation Program

Voters across the state of Arkansas went to the polls on November 8th and gave their stamp of approval to the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department to begin a new Interstate Rehabilitation Program.

Governor Mike Beebe announced last summer the issuance of a proclamation calling for the special election on highway bonds for the new program. The vote passed 75,914 to 18,138 and authorizes the Arkansas Highway Commission to issue up to \$575 million in Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) Bonds financed by future federal funds and the existing state 4-cent diesel tax passed in 1999 for this purpose.

"Arkansans will soon see the dividends from this investment in Arkansas," Governor Beebe stated on election night. "Better Interstates and the jobs created to modernize them will help both our economy and our prospects for the future."

"With the support of voters at the polls, the new Interstate Rehabilitation Program will allow us to continue the improvements started by the successful 1999 program," AHTD Director Scott Bennett stated. "Approving these bonds will create thousands of jobs, rehabilitate 400 miles of Interstate highways, and do it without raising taxes."

The key elements of the program will be to use GARVEE bonds financed by future federal funds, the existing 4-cent diesel tax and state highway matching funds to create a \$1 billion construction program, without any new taxes or raising any existing taxes. Work may begin in late 2012 or early 2013.

"With this program in place, it will speed Interstate repairs that would have taken far longer and proved more costly if spread over a greater number of years when you take inflation into account," Highway Commission Chairman Madison Murphy added.

Murphy thanked the Move Arkansas Forward Committee for their work on the promotion campaign. Made up of organizations including the State Chamber of Commerce, Municipal League, Association of Arkansas Counties, Arkansas Trucking Association, Arkansas Chapter of the Associated General Contractors and the Arkansas Good Roads/Transportation Council, the Move Arkansas Forward Committee carried out a statewide information and education campaign.

"This is a chance to make our Interstates smoother and safer for motorists traveling the state of Arkansas," Murphy added.



Governor Mike Beebe signs a proclamation at the State Capitol, calling for a special election on highway bonds.

Tudor Is Named New Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning

Lorie Tudor has been named Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning effective September 22, 2011. She replaced Scott Bennett who was named AHTD Director this past summer.

Tudor was Division Head of Programs and Contracts prior to being named Assistant Chief Engineer. She has a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Memphis. She is a Registered Professional Engineer.

Tudor began her career with the Department in 1981 as a Clerk Typist. In 1983, she was promoted to Statistical Assistant in Programs & Contracts, and became a Programming Analyst in 1984. In 1987, she was promoted to DBE Program Specialist and transferred to Fiscal Clerk/Federal Aid one year later. Tudor advanced to Program & Scheduling Specialist in 1990.

In 1995, she resigned from the Department to return to school and obtain a degree in Civil Engineering. She was re-employed in 1998 as a Civil Engineer I in the Planning & Research Division. Later that year, she was promoted to Engineer II and advanced to Programs & Contracts Engineer I in 1999. Tudor was promoted to Federal Aid Project Coordinator in 2000, and became a Civil Engineer IV in 2001. She obtained the position of Assistant Division Head of Programs & Contracts in 2002 and became Division Head in the summer of 2011.



Lorie Tudor is the new Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning.

Annual Auction a Success



An employee with Blackmon Auctions supervises the bidding at this year's auction of surplus equipment.

Sunny skies greeted participants at the annual AHTD auction held at Central Office on October 25th. The good weather made it a perfect day to find good deals on any number of items up for bids.

As is the case each year, participants could find the usual items on the auction block, such as a variety of vehicles ranging from four-door sedans to vans to pickup trucks. Over one hundred were lined up and being inspected by potential buyers. Even an old ARAN (Automatic Road Analyzer) vehicle was awaiting a new home. There were other items on wheels ready for the highest bidder. Among those were forklifts, road graders and dump trucks. There were also a number of bulldozers available.

For those participants not in need of the entire vehicle, there were also individual parts up for grabs including tailgates, hoods and engines.

One of the most interesting things about attending the auction is to look over the miscellaneous items that are available. This year bidders could find old water fountains, air conditioning window units, gas pumps, pressure washers and a 3-ton floor jack.

As in years past, Blackmon Auctions served as auctioneers. Final net proceeds from the event totaled \$1,031,836 on 456 items/ lots sold.

AHTD Team Travels to Asheville for Regional Roadeo

One of the benefits of doing well in the AHTD's annual Equipment Operators Roadeo is the opportunity to be part of the team that makes the trip to the Regional Roadeo. The trip provides an opportunity to compete against Roadeo finalists from other member states of the Southeastern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (SASHTO).

This year's Arkansas team made a trip to Asheville, North Carolina, to be part of the Regional Equipment Operators Roadeo, now in its ninth year. Also participating were teams from Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

The regional event was the largest one to take place since the competition began in 2003 and featured approximately 300 participants. And as in years past, the AHTD team came away with another "Top Three" finish. This year's title of Roadeo Champions went to the Tennessee Department of Transportation. The AHTD's

team finished second and Mississippi took third place. Only two points separated the AHTD from the winning Tennessee team.

"Our operators have earned the respect of operators from all over the Southeast and represented the Department well again this year," stated Lynn Caple, Training Specialist in the Human Resources Division, who helps coordinate the regional trip each year.

Members of Arkansas' team were Phyllis Ashby, District 10; Neil Austin, Maintenance: Lance Baker, District 9; Darrell Canion, District 9; Keith Carpenter, District 9; Heath Eubanks, District 10; John Harvey, District 2; Jeremiah Jackson, District 4; Jimmie Jetton, District 4; David Pruitt, District 8; Kenny Riley; District 9 and Steve Sutton; District 5.

The AHTD team had several members who took first place in their category. John Harvey took first place in the Tractor/Lowboy event, David Pruitt placed first in Tandem Axle Dump Truck and Lance Baker won the Motor Grader event.

Next year's event will be held in West Virginia.



(l. to r.) John Harvey of District 2 was Lowboy Champion; Lance Baker of District 9 was Motor Grader Champion, and David Pruitt of District 8 was Tandem Axle Champion.

Interstate 69 Begins with Monticello Bypass Ground Breaking



The first construction contract for Interstate 69 in Arkansas was recently celebrated as a large crowd participated in a traditional ground breaking ceremony near Monticello.

“Interstate 69 has officially begun in Arkansas,” proclaimed U.S. Congressman Mike Ross, on November 9, 2011, as people throughout south Arkansas gathered in Monticello for a ground breaking ceremony.”

Highway Commission Chairman Madison Murphy reflected, “I already have many fond memories leading up to this day. It truly is a historic day in Arkansas.”

Future Interstate 69 is an approximate 2,730-mile long roadway connecting Port Huron, in northern Michigan, to the southern border of Texas, below Laredo. Approximately 185 miles of Interstate 69 in Arkansas are estimated to cost \$3.6 billion – including the Interstate 530 connector and the Great River Bridge.

“This might be the beginning of Interstate 69 for us,” said AHTD Director Scott Bennett, “but let’s not forget that we are also beginning what will be the Monticello Bypass.”

Before the traditional ground breaking, Commissioner Murphy acknowledged many people that have worked for years to see this day become a reality. He also noted that 38.5 miles of the Interstate 530 connector road (from Pine Bluff to near Wilmar) are either completed or under construction.

This first Interstate 69 project is for the grading and structures work on the 8.2-mile section from Highway 425 south to Highway 278 East. It was let in September 2011 for \$13,159,488 to Southern Industrial Contractors of Rayville, Louisiana. A contract for the base and surfacing, plus another section from Highway 278 west to the Highway 425 location will complete the Monticello Bypass.



(l. to r.) United States Congressman Mike Ross speaks with former Highway Commissioner John Lipton and current Commissioner John Burkhalter.



The beginning of Interstate 69 in Arkansas is big news for our state. AHTD Director Scott Bennett (center) explains the project during a television interview.



Arkansas Speaker of the House Robert Moore (left) visits with Commission Chairman Madison Murphy during the ground-breaking ceremony. Monticello Mayor Allen Maxwell (center) hosted a luncheon after the event.

Transportation Secretary Visits Arkansas Tours Bella Vista Bypass Project

United States Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood was in Arkansas on Friday, July 8, as part of a week-long journey to visit construction sites in several states. An event to honor his visit was held on the project site of the Bella Vista Bypass near Hiwassee.

Joining Arkansas Highway Commissioner Dick Trammel and former AHTD Director Dan Flowers on the stage were Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe and Arkansas' senior U.S. Senator Mark Pryor. About 150 people attended.

The Secretary touted three projects underway in Arkansas: The Two Rivers Bridge in Little Rock, the Razorback Greenway and the Bella Vista Bypass. The Greenway is a 36-mile bicycle and pedestrian corridor linking Bentonville, Rogers, Lowell, Springdale, Johnson and Fayetteville.

The Bella Vista Bypass is a multi-state project (Arkansas and Missouri) that will become part of future Interstate 49. Total cost of the bypass is expected to be \$350 million, with Arkansas' portion at \$280 million. A Federal Grant of \$10 million got the project kick-started.

The first phase is the \$20 million project with APAC-Central for a three-mile segment between Highway 72 north of Hiwassee and Highway 72 south of Hiwassee. Work on this project began in March 2011 and is about 20 percent complete going into the winter season. Estimated completion for this phase is mid-2014.



Arkansas Division Administrator – FHWA Sandra Otto (left-right) and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood listen to former AHTD Director Dan Flowers explain the first phase of the Bella Vista Bypass.



Former Highway Commissioners Rodney Slater (left) and Bobby Hopper (right) visit with current Commissioner Dick Trammel during the Bella Vista Bypass site visit.



Posing for the camera are (left-right) District 4 Engineer Joe Shipman, Deputy Director and Chief Engineer Frank Vozel, District 9 Engineer Steve Lawrence, former AHTD Director Dan Flowers, former Highway Commissioner Rep. Jonathan Barnett, Commissioner John Burkhalter, Commissioner Dick Trammel, AHTD Director Scott Bennett, former Highway Commissioner and Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater and former Highway Commissioner Bobby Hopper.



(l. to r.) Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, U.S. Senator Mark Pryor and Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe listen to remarks by Highway Commissioner Dick Trammel.

Vilonia Bypass Opens

The cheerleaders were there, the band was there, the elementary choir was there and the Mayor was there. It seemed like everybody in Vilonia was there on Tuesday, September 27 as the new Vilonia Bypass was officially dedicated.

Commissioner John Burkhalter and AHTD Director Scott Bennett were also there to signify the near completion of the 10-mile new location of Highway 64 around the south end of Vilonia.

"I bet you've never sat on a \$42 million road before," Bennett joked with the huge crowd of Vilonia School District students in attendance.

The project was completed under three contracts. The first two were a 2007 award to McGeorge Contracting for \$7.3 million for grading and structures on the eastern side, and a 2008 grading and structures job for \$9 million to Chancellor and Sons for the western end. A final \$26 million base and surface contract was awarded to Interstate Highway Construction in 2010. Federal Stimulus money was used for the final stage.



AHTD Director Scott Bennett (left) and Highway Commissioner John Burkhalter are mobbed by students wanting a historic piece of the ribbon used to dedicate the new Vilonia Bypass.



Department Hosts First Meeting To Discuss Broadway Bridge Project

The AHTD hosted a meeting at its Central Office in July for stakeholders to begin discussions on the planned replacement of the Broadway Bridge (U.S. Highway 70) over the Arkansas River between Little Rock and North Little Rock.

Approximately 30 people attended the meeting, the first of several that will take place prior to construction getting underway in 2013. Among those attending were representatives from Garver Engineers and HNTB, who are designing the project; and Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola. Also present were representatives from North Little Rock Mayor Patrick Hays' office, Pulaski County Judge Buddy Villines' office, Metroplan, the Little Rock Advertising and Promotion Commission, Dickey-Stephens Ballpark, the Arkansas Travelers and Sandy Otto of the Federal Highway Administration's Arkansas Division.

"We want you to be a part of this and express your ideas," proclaimed Phil McConnell, Assistant Chief Engineer for Design and host of the meeting. "This is the beginning of this project and we have a great deal of opportunity for input. We will take our comments today into the development of the project and progress from there."

Among the items of discussion during the meeting were the possibilities for bike lanes and rails for trolley lines, ramp configuration, pedestrian access, access to adjacent facilities such as Robinson Center and the ballpark in North Little Rock and bridge aesthetics.

"Aesthetics and how this bridge looks will be a major part of the effort," McConnell stated. "But keep in mind, different ones cost more than others."

Garver Engineers and HNTB representatives took the opportunity to share three early possible designs including a plate-girder design, a cable-stayed design and a steel tied arch design. Those



Phil McConnell, Assistant Chief Engineer for Design, welcomes community leaders to a meeting regarding the planned Broadway Bridge replacement in Little Rock.

designs were used in the presentation Garver Engineers made to AHTD to show what it could do. Suggestions from this first meeting will help guide the eventual design of the structure. Several more designs will be presented in the coming months.

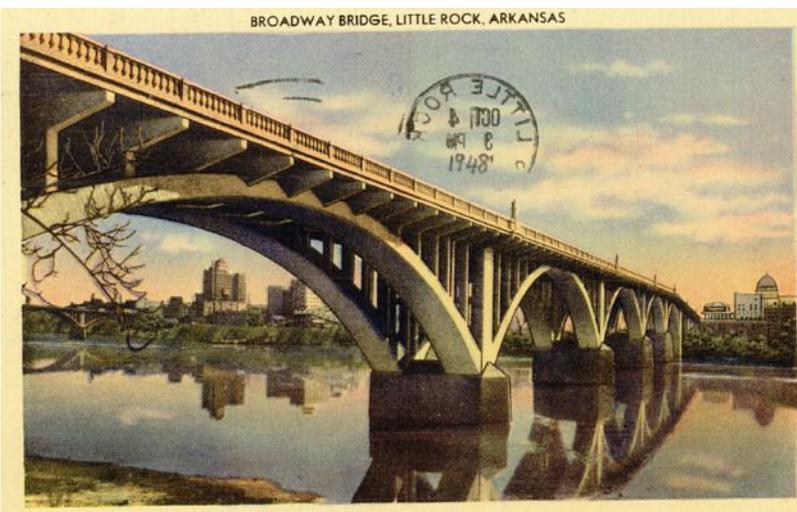
The meeting closed with a discussion about how to handle traffic when the existing bridge is closed to traffic. The bridge carries approximately 21,000 vehicles per day. Once the old bridge is removed, the new one could take 18 to 24 months to construct.

On September 1st, area civic leaders hosted an invitation-only meeting to collect more ideas on the design of the future bridge.

"There's phenomenal interest in the bridge," said Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola, who helped organize the September meeting along with North Little Rock Mayor Pat Hays and Pulaski County Judge Buddy Villines.

Invitees included representatives from Central Arkansas Water, chambers of commerce on both sides of the river, Entergy Arkansas, architects and developers among others.

Jim McKenzie, Executive Director of Metroplan, said the September meeting helped bring ideas into focus he and other civic leaders had. Those were presented to the AHTD and will augment the state bridge building process. Design ideas from the general public are also being accepted.



This old postcard featuring the Broadway Bridge shows a post date of 1948.

ROADCHECK 2011



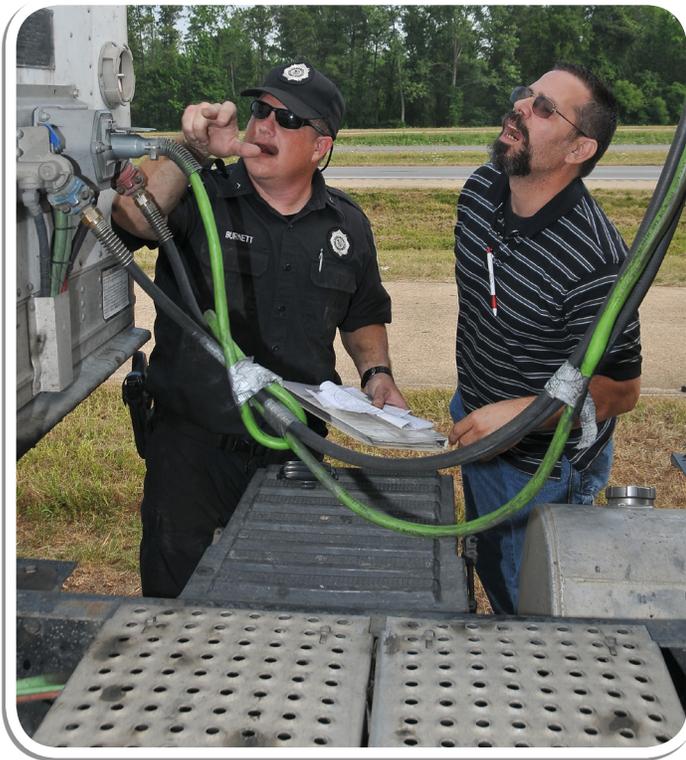
Safety Checks Conducted During Roadcheck 2011

Truck and bus safety inspectors were on the job night and day in Arkansas and across the nation during the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's (CVSA) 72-hour International Roadcheck held June 7th – 9th. The inspectors checked vehicles and their drivers at inspection sites set up along major highways across North America. In addition, roving patrols inspected vehicles and drivers traveling other roadways.

"Commercial motor vehicle inspectors work diligently every day to ensure that the commercial vehicles using our highways do so as safely as possible," said Stephen A. Keppler, CVSA's executive director. "While a significant majority of vehicle operators are highly responsible, conscientious and safe, a few in the minority are less so."

That's where Roadcheck comes in. It provides a vital service to check driver and vehicle safety fitness to help keep our roads safe and clear from preventable crashes, backups and a needless loss of lives.

In Arkansas, inspection sites were set up on Interstate 30 near Benton and on Highway 270 near Sheridan. A total of 269 inspections were carried out. Of those, 139 vehicles passed inspection with no violations and received a CVSA decal.



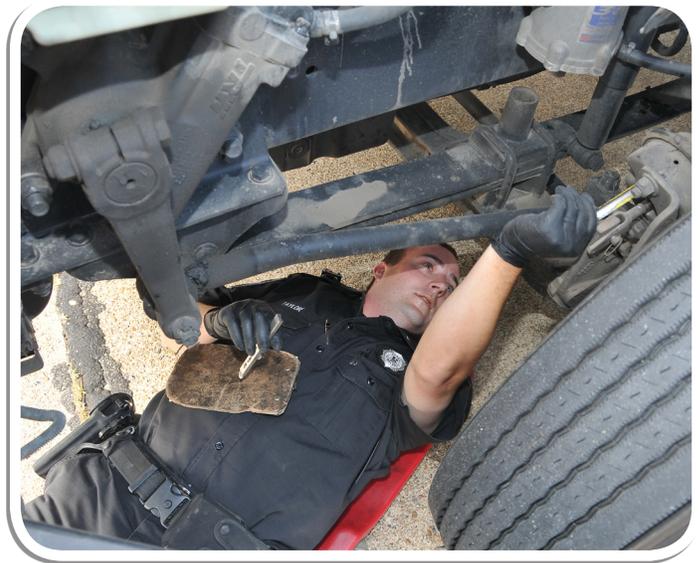
PFC Ron Burnett inspects connections with a commercial vehicle driver.

Although actual percentage estimates vary, it is widely acknowledged that driver fatigue is a factor in many commercial truck and bus crashes. For this reason, Federal regulations limit the number of hours a commercial driver may operate his or her vehicle without an off-duty rest period. Enforcement of these limits is essential to ensuring compliance and combating driver fatigue. This year's Roadcheck emphasized checking driver logbooks and underscored to drivers the importance of maintaining their logbooks, taking breaks, preventing fatigue and driving without distractions.

In light of recent, highly-publicized fatal bus crashes, CVSA inspectors also emphasized inspection of passenger carrying vehicles.

According to CVSA, since Road Check's inception in 1988, the roadside inspections conducted during the annual Roadcheck have numbered over one million, resulting in more than 234 lives saved and 4,293 injuries avoided. It has also provided for the distribution of countless pieces of educational literature and safety events to educate industry and the general public about the importance of safe commercial vehicle operations and the roadside inspection program.

"As a long standing member of CVSA, the Arkansas Highway Police looks forward to participating in this 72-hour safety inspection blitz with our enforcement partners from across the United States, Canada and Mexico," stated Ron Burks, Arkansas Highway Police Chief. "These inspections go a long way in making our highways safer for all motorists."



PFC Kreston Taylor works from below to complete an inspection on this commercial vehicle.

public hearings

Highway 5 – Mountain View

A Public Involvement Meeting was held in Mountain View on March 3rd to share plans for reconstruction on Highway 5 in Stone County. A group of 57 people saw plans for road reconstruction, climbing lanes and a new bridge over Little Raccoon Creek. The highway improvements will be located southeast of the town of Mountain View. The meeting was held at Arbanna Baptist Church.

Highway 10 – Little Rock

First Christian Church, on Mississippi Avenue in Little Rock, was the scene of a Public Involvement Meeting on July 21st. The subject of the meeting was the widening of Cantrell Road (Highway 10), extending from Mississippi Avenue eastward to Perryville Road. A total of 109 people attended to see plans and share opinions on the project.

Highway 82 – South Arkansas

The Department has begun a study that will identify improvements to address congestion and other issues on Highway 82, between Texarkana and Lake Village. A series of meetings was held on May 10th, 11th and 12th in Texarkana, El Dorado and Crossett, respectively, as part of the planning study. A total of 130 people attended the meetings to share information and learn more about proposed plans.

Highway 326 – Russellville

A proposed plan to widen approximately one-half mile of Weir Road (Highway 326) in Russellville was the subject of a Public Meeting held on July 26th. The meeting was held at Calvary Temple Assembly of God Church in Russellville and was attended by 89 people. The work will either be done on existing location or on new location and will extend from Hob Nob Road northward to Highway 124.

Highway 63 – Mammoth Spring

Plans to replace three bridges on Highway 63, near Mammoth Spring, were the subject of a Public Involvement Meeting held on June 9th. A total of 36 people gathered at Mammoth Spring High School to learn more about the improvements. The new bridges will be located between Highway 49 and Highway 342, in and near the city of Mammoth Spring.

Highway 12 – Bentonville

A Public Involvement Meeting was held on July 28th in Bentonville to discuss plans for improvements to Highway 12. Thirty people attended the meeting held at Central Park Elementary School. Plans call for widening Highway 12 from Highway 71B westward to Shell Road.

Highway 7 – Ola

A total of 21 people gathered at the Two Rivers High School in Ola on June 30th to learn more about plans to replace a bridge on Highway 7. The bridge is located over the Little Rock & Western Railroad in Ola.

Highway 65 – Bee Branch

A crowd of 45 people attended a Public Involvement Meeting in Bee Branch on July 28th to learn more about plans to widen Highway 65 to five lanes. The improvements would begin at County Road 28, south of Bee Branch, and continue northward for 3.6 miles. The meeting was held at South Side Bee Branch School.

Highway 5 – Norfolk

The Norfolk Community Center was the site of a Public Involvement Meeting on August 4th. Participants learned more about plans to replace a bridge on Highway 5 over the North Fork River at Norfolk. A total of 45 people were in attendance.

Highway 25 – Conway

A total of approximately 100 people gathered at the Conway Parks & Recreation Center in Conway on September 13th to hear more about plans for Highway 25. The proposed project will relocate 1.2 miles of Highway 25 to the west of its present location in order to connect with a recently completed interchange with Interstate 40.

Highway 1 – Marianna

A Public Involvement Meeting was held in Marianna on August 11th to discuss plans for improvements to Highway 1. A total of 44 people learned more about a project that would widen approximately five miles of Highway 1, beginning at Cypress Corner and continuing northward. The meeting was held at the Lon Mann Cotton Research Station.

Highway 264 – Springdale

On September 15th, a crowd of 54 people gathered at The Jones Center in Springdale to hear about plans to widen Highway 264 to five lanes. The project will extend from Highway 71B eastward to Highway 265 in Springdale.

Highway 71 – Texarkana

The Department held a Public Involvement Meeting in Texarkana on September 1st to discuss plans for improvements to Hickory Street (Highway 71). The meeting was held at Beech Street First Baptist Church and was attended by 56 people. It focused on a project that will replace an existing bridge on Hickory Street.

Highway 36/Highway 67 Connector – Searcy

Plans for a highway on new location to connect Highway 36 and Highway 67 on the north side of Searcy drew a crowd to a Public Involvement Meeting on September 20th. A total of 105 people attended the meeting which was held at Searcy High School.

Highway 62 – Green Forest

The Green Forest School Alumni Center was the location of a Public Involvement Meeting on September 8th. A total of 176 people gathered to hear more about plans to either improve existing Highway 62 through Green Forest, or to relocate Highway 62 north or south of Green Forest.

Highway 13 Extension – Searcy

A Design Public Hearing was held in Searcy on October 4th to discuss plans for the extension of Highway 13. Plans call for constructing an extension southwest of Searcy that would extend from Highway 267 northward to Highway 36. The meeting was held at Valley Baptist Church and was attended by 90 people.

DEPARTMENT

Work Zone

Work Zone Safety Promoted At News Conference

Little Rock area construction officials gathered on April 5, 2011, at the busy Interstate 430/630 interchange construction site to announce the 2011 theme for Work Zone Safety Week as "Whose Life is on the Line?"

AHTD Assistant Chief Engineer for Operations Emanuel Banks addressed the crowd and noted that nearly 100,000 vehicles a day travel on both Interstate 430 and Interstate 630 near the interchange.

"None of us can ever forget that a construction zone is also the home office for a contractor and for many highway department employees," said Banks.

"The AHTD takes work zone safety very serious. We train, we study and we strictly adhere to all the safest methods."



Emanuel Banks, AHTD Assistant Chief Engineer for Operations, speaks about work zone safety during a news conference on the Interstate 430/630 interchange construction site.

Jonesboro Area Highway Gets Purple Heart Trail Designation

Several local officials joined former Director Dan Flowers and a large group of Purple Heart recipients to unveil a new Purple Heart Trail sign on June 14 near Jonesboro. Signs were erected at two locations in the Jonesboro area to add Highway 63 to the trail.

In 2004, the Highway Commission approved installation of the Purple Heart Trail signs in the state. They are located along Interstate 430 in Little Rock, along Interstate 540 between Alma and the Missouri state line and also along Interstate 40.

The Purple Heart Trail was established in 1992 to create a symbolic and honorary system of roads, highways, bridges and other monuments that give tribute to the men and women who have been awarded the Purple Heart.



Highway 63 is now officially part of the Purple Heart Trail. Two new signs near Jonesboro were recently added to the system during a ceremonial sign unveiling.

EVENTS

Grassy Lake Bridge Gets New Road Connection

Grassy Lake is an area of Pulaski County accessed through Faulkner County. It is landlocked by United States Army property, a state Game and Fish operated lake and an Interstate. So, it took a lot of coordination among a lot of people to build a bridge and extend a frontage road for the area.

On September 16, 2011, Highway Commissioner John Burkhalter and AHTD Director Scott Bennett joined many of those involved to dedicate the completion of the frontage road extension.

It was December 2004 when the Grassy Lake Bridge was completed, but the road was still prone to flooding and it was impossible to raise the grade due to the Interstate.

The new road extends the existing frontage road on the east side of Interstate 40 from Highway 89 at Mayflower to the bridge.



Director Scott Bennett (pink shirt) and Commissioner John Burkhalter (second from right) were joined by several local officials to dedicate the newly completed extension of the frontage road from Highway 89, at Mayflower, to the Grassy Lake Bridge.

Tug Boats

New Tug Boats Dedicated at Peel Ferry

There is only one ferry still operating in Arkansas, and with two new tugs in tow it should be in good shape for a long time. June 22, 2011, was a beautiful summer day to dedicate the new tugs in traditional "champagne bottle" style. Commissioner Dick Trammel had the honor to break what was really a green-colored block of ice.

Located about 30 miles north of Yellville, the Peel Ferry is part of Highway 125 in Marion County – which connects Arkansas, across Bull Shoals Lake, to Missouri.

Operation of the ferry began with a private group before Marion County took over the "Little Joe" tug and "Lady Marion" barge in 1968. The charge to cross by ferry was one dollar until the AHTD took over operations in December 1969 and made it a free trip across the lake. The ferry averages about 85 vehicles a day.

"It is estimated to cost \$27-30 million to replace the ferry with a bridge," noted Commissioner Trammel. "I don't know about the rest of you, but I'd rather preserve this ferry. It's unique."

The two new tugs, named Peel 1 and Peel 2, cost \$388,114. Federal Stimulus Money covered \$350,000. They feature 300-horsepower John Deere engines. The barges are also scheduled for replacement.

In an ironic move, one of the two decommissioned tugs (the Spring Bank) was purchased by the City of Doddridge for a museum display. Doddridge was the location of the Spring Bank ferry.



Commissioner Dick Trammel dedicated the new tugs at Peel Ferry with a traditional christening (actually a frozen block of green colored dye) on June 22.



Peel Ferry Maintenance Supervisor and Ferry Pilot Mark Grozis (left) speaks with Commissioner Trammel and former AHTD Director Dan Flowers (right) during the ceremony.

Letters to the Department

[Former] Director Dan Flowers:

Congratulations on your 43 years of service to the people of Arkansas and the nation! Your extraordinary tenure as Director of the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) is proof of your excellent leadership. Since 1994, you have led the AHTD through changing times.

The AHTD was one of the nation's first to implement GARVEE bonds to expedite improvement of Arkansas' Interstate System. Because of this work, it rose to one of the best in the nation according to the American Trucking Association.

You also led the AHTD during one of the most challenging economic periods in our nation's history. I want to personally thank you for your leadership in implementing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Recovery Act projects helped strengthen the State's economy, improve transportation safety, and enhance the infrastructure needed for growth. I also appreciate your support in implementing FHWA's "Every Day Counts" initiative.

The transportation industry has recognized your success at the AHTD with some of its top rewards, both within Arkansas and nationally. You have been an excellent partner with FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) because you combine technical knowledge and leadership with a truly admirable personal and professional ethic.

I have greatly enjoyed working with you, both in my role as Director of the Arizona Department of Transportation and as the FHWA Administrator. Please accept my best wishes to you and Sara as you move on to the next phase of your life.

Sincerely,
Victor M. Mendez
Administrator,
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

To Whom It May Concern:

One recent morning, Arkansas Highway Police received a request for assistance from the Arkansas State Police in reference to a hit-and-run driver going eastbound on Interstate 30. I left the station to check and was told that the vehicle had stopped at the 12 mile marker eastbound. When I got to the location, the vehicle in question was sitting in the traffic lane and two AHTD vehicles were stopped behind him, and employees were directing traffic.

State Police unit G-20 was also with the driver, who appeared to be in some type of medical distress. The trooper and myself got the driver out of his vehicle and into my unit until EMS arrived. The AHTD employees continued to direct traffic as well as move the vehicle from the roadway.

I believe the actions of Lonnie Hazel, Area Maintenance Supervisor; Willie Caton, Distributor/ Roller Operator (Miller County) and Stephen Pickering, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator (Miller County) not only saved the life of the subject driving the car, but also prevented an accident, which could have resulted in other loss of life and property damage.

AHP Sergeant Steve Woods

NOTE:

This letter was written by Sgt. Steve Woods who works for the Arkansas Highway Police at the Guernsey scales. This fellow employee is recognizing the work performed by others to help a stranger in need of medical attention. The efforts of all those involved helped to prevent any further incidents on the scene.

Don Donaldson,
District 3 Engineer

To Whom It May Concern:

About a month ago, I was traveling through Arkansas on my way to Colorado when I got a flat tire. Normally, this would've only been a minor setback, but I soon discovered that my spare was also flat. So there I was, stranded. Then, out of the blue, comes T.J. Brown. Not only did Mr. Brown take time out of his day off, he took me in his personal vehicle to the next town and sat with me while I got a new tire. Then he took me back and insisted on changing the tire, all while refusing payment.

This man should be commended. The world needs more T.J. Browns. He is a caring, generous, selfless man who put a total stranger above himself. I am truly humbled and grateful. Please thank Mr. Brown again for me.

Mark Taylor
Motorist

Mr. Dan Flowers:

On June 2, 2011, we were involved in investigating an accident involving the tragic loss of one of your employees, Anderson Williams.

I need to tell you of the very professional manner your work crew, led by Ronnie Womack, handled themselves and worked with my officers to render aid to Mr. Williams. Then they helped us with a major traffic problem on Highway 79 at the location of occurrence. Though your men were distraught, they set up traffic cones, helped direct traffic and asked us what else they could do to help.

You should be very proud of their efforts and composure, along with their hard work during this tragic event.

If I may ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,
Lt. Terry Hopson
Pine Bluff Police Department

Dear Mr. Flowers:

I would like to commend the AHTD for recent improvements in the rest areas in Arkansas. On a recent trip, we stopped at the new welcome center on Interstate 55, north of Blytheville. What a modern, clean and friendly facility! The gentleman behind the counter was professional in appearance and knowledgeable in area offerings. I overheard a family asking if there were any sights worth seeing on their way to Memphis, and he seemed to have helpful information for them.

A stop at the rest area off Interstate 40 at Crowley's Ridge was equally impressive. Although I didn't go inside the building, I enjoyed a refreshing walk, looking at the beautiful flowers. As I was doing so, a couple was taking pictures of the flower beds. Another traveler and I engaged in a conversation about the flower varieties.

In both instances, I was proud to be from Arkansas. I applaud those in charge of the rest areas as they convey a positive image of Arkansas to both out-of-state travelers and residents.

Sincerely,
Kay Bauer
Cabot, AR

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for your efforts to add beauty to our highways. Highway 62/412 looks better and better. The wildflowers are appreciated. Please keep up the plantings!

Jackie Leatherman
Mountain Home, AR



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