

The Connector

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VOLUME XXI NO. IV

SC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FALL 2008

Milestone reached for I-73 Northern segment

By Bob Kudelka

South Carolina Secretary of Transportation H.B. "Buck" Limehouse Jr. and Federal Highway Administration Division Administrator Bob Lee signed the Record of Decision for the northern segment of Interstate 73 on Oct. 22, in Columbia.

"The signing of the ROD is another major milestone for I-73 that is necessary as we work to identify the most viable measures to deliver the project," Limehouse said. "One of the potential methods for funding I-73 involves innovative financing through public/private partnerships. SCDOT is working to solicit interest from the private sector with the intention that we receive a proposal to finance, design, construct and maintain I-73 here in South Carolina. This milestone today would allow us to receive better proposals from the private sector."

The northern segment of Interstate 73 extends from I-95 near Latta, SC, approximately 36 miles to Hamlet, NC. The completion of the Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision represents a major milestone for this \$1 billion project. Because the project crosses state lines a high level of coordination occurred between the SC and NC Departments of Transporta-

tion. Over 25 different state and federal regulatory agencies were also consulted during the process to reach the best overall decision on location of the new interstate.

The signing of the ROD took place in the Commission meeting room with some members of the Commission, the media and project team members in attendance.

Commission Chairman F. Hugh Atkins said he appreciated the work that was behind getting the project ready for the next phase.

"Congratulations to all of you," Atkins said.

Vice Chairman Henry Taylor said, "It is an exciting program, I guess the largest and most exciting program we have going on here at the SC Department of Transportation. I'm just excited to be here and I think it's great for the state of South Carolina."

Commissioner Marvin Stevenson said, "I'm very grateful to see the project move to this point in time."

State Representative Doug Jennings thanked Limehouse and the Commissioners for their vision behind I-73.

"I think every one of us could be proud of today and the accomplishments that led to today," Jennings said. "This is going to be a route that not only is going to connect Myrtle Beach to Michi-



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Patrick Tyndall, Rep. Doug Jennings and Mitchell Metts hold the Record of Decision for the I-73 Northern Route after the document was signed by SCDOT and FHWA on Oct. 22.

gan...but it's also going to be an economic link for the poorest parts of South Carolina, the areas that are struggling with high unemployment and low per capita income.

"We are excited about the future prospects this interstate brings to the rural Pee Dee," he said.

Lee said the national average for processing environmental documents exceeds five years. However, because of the streamlined approach the I-73 project completed the environmental phase from Notice of Intent to Record of Decision in just 39 months. Members of the FHWA and SCDOT project team were to receive the Administrator's Award

for their work in streamlining this project in a ceremony Nov. 5 in Washington.

"This project involved unprecedented levels of agency coordination and public involvement and demonstrates that environmental streamlining, if done correctly, results in a better decision and a shorter time frame," Lee said.

Coupled with approval of the ROD for the southern segment on February 8, 2008, FHWA environment actions are complete on the I-73 corridor in SC leading from Hamlet, NC, to the Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach area allowing this project to move to right of way acquisition and final design as well as possible advancement

as a public/private partnership.

Project Manager Mitchell Metts said next steps in the project include moving forward with a request for qualifications followed by a request for proposals. Consultants are being hired for financial analysis and for a traffic and revenue study.

"It's an exciting time," Metts said.

Other members of the project team are: Wayne Roberts and Amanda Brooks-Queen from the SCDOT Environmental Office; Patrick Tyndall and Shane Belcher from FHWA, Skip Johnson and Heather Robbins from the LPA Group, Inc.; and Michael McGuire and Jennifer Pearson from Wilbur-Smith Associates.

SCDOT

Huger Street sinkhole doesn't become 'chicken curse'

SCDOT crews fix storm drain without impacting USC football traffic

By Bob Kudelka

In football terms, it was third down and long for Tony Magwood, his engineers and crews at Richland Maintenance.

A large sinkhole had opened up a section of Huger Street near Blossom Street, a busy intersection on a typical day and an important route for traffic during USC football games. On average, 25,000 vehicles use the intersection on each day.

The hole, 14 feet deep and 8 feet in diameter, appeared on Aug. 26, just two days before the Gamecocks' season opening home game against NC State.

"The anxiety level was high," said Magwood, Richland County Resident Maintenance Engineer.

Over the next two weeks, employees worked up to 14-hour days and overcame engineering challenges, environmental, archeological issues and another home football game looming at their deadline to finish repairs.

"Emergencies like this are a great example that we are one DOT - it wasn't just Rich-



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

District 1 Engineering Administrator Thad Brunson examines the excavated area where the sinkhole opened on Huger Street in Columbia. SCDOT repaired damaged storm drains located deep beneath the heavily traveled roadway.

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See HUGER on page 12

Saving taxpayer money: SCDOT replaces bridge at lower cost

By Bob Kudelka

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) saved money and time by replacing the bridge crossing Big Wateree Creek in Fairfield County using in-house forces.

The bridge is located on S-20-20 (Camp Welfare Road) approximately 3 miles southwest of Mitford.

The bridge was replaced by SCDOT's District 4 Bridge crew and the agency's Fairfield County Maintenance employees.

"Due the impact to businesses in the area, we felt it was important for our own forces to replace the bridge as quickly as possible," said Stan Bland, District Engineering Administrator for SCDOT's District 4. "This 5-month project probably would have taken double the amount of time to complete had it gone to contract."

Bland said the cost to build the new bridge was \$600,000, which he estimated is \$600,000 below what it would have cost to hire a private contractor.

Bland was among the speakers at a news conference Friday, Dec. 5, at Carolina Adventure World near the new bridge. Other speakers included SCDOT Commissioner Sarah B. Nuckles of the 5th Congressional District; South Carolina State Senator Linda H. Short; South Carolina State Representative Creighton B. Coleman; David Ferguson, Chairman of Fairfield County Council; James McGraw, Chairman of County Transportation Committee; and Tim Antley of the Dennis Corporation.

Construction on the bridge began June 2 and was completed Nov. 4.

"This project illustrates the new way of thinking at the SCDOT – how can we do things faster, better and more economically?" said Commissioner Sarah B. Nuckles of the 5th Congressional District. "I think this project is a great example of that innovation."

The old bridge, built in 1961, was structurally deficient and several of its wooden piles were decayed.

The new bridge has steel support piles on concrete caps with a pre-cast concrete deck. At 210 feet long and 33 feet wide, it is the longest bridge built by SCDOT's District 4 employees in several years.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

The new 210-foot bridge on Camp Welfare Road was replaced by SCDOT employees at a savings estimated at \$600,000.

"This project illustrates the new way of thinking at the SCDOT – how can we do things faster, better and more economically?"

Commissioner Sarah B. Nuckles



Speakers and special guests at the opening ceremony of the Camp Welfare Road project in Fairfield County included, from left: Don Wilburn, owner of Carolina Adventure World; District 4 Engineering Administrator Stan Bland; District 4 Bridge Construction Supervisor Ike McBrayer; Representative Creighton B. Coleman; Senator Linda H. Short; Fairfield County Council Chairman David Ferguson; Fairfield County Transportation Committee Chairman James McGraw; SCDOT Commissioner Sarah B. Nuckles; Tim Antley of Dennis Corporation; and John Edwards, of Site-Prep Inc. of NC.

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H.B. "Buck" Limehouse Jr. is Secretary of Transportation.

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The South Carolina Department of Transportation Commission

		
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THAD BRUNSON/DISTRICT 1

A Learjet 60 taking off from the Columbia Metropolitan Airport crashed Sept. 19 on Highway 302. Four people from California, the pilot Sarah Lemmon, 31, of Anaheim Hills, co-pilot James Bland, 52, of Carlsbad, Chris Baker, 29, of Studio City and Charles Still, 25, of Los Angeles were killed in the crash.



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Shane Williamson of Lexington Maintenance applies a releasing agent to wood forms before concrete is poured. The releasing agent prevents concrete from sticking to the wood.

SCDOT employees have role in crash aftermath

By Bob Kudelka

The fiery crash of a Learjet on Sept. 19 at the Columbia Metropolitan Airport sent SCDOT crews to work in the middle of the night.

The burning jet came to rest on an embankment along SC Highway 302, with the tail section sitting on the road and over the curb and gutter. Jet fuel damaged the roadway surface and seeped through the catch basin and into drainage pipes.

"There was a significant fire that burned the vegetation on the shoulders, and there was a good bit of spilled jet fuel and water to put out the fire," said District 1 Engineering Administrator Thad Brunson.

The crash killed four people and critically injured former Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker and celebrity DJ AM who had performed at a Five Points concert hours earlier.

The night of the crash, District

1 on-call employees set up a detour as a portion of SC Highway 302 was closed. The road would remain closed for four days as federal investigators studied the wreckage and crash site.

Longtime employees say it's the first time they know of when a plane crash at the Columbia airport led to closing a road. The airport is bordered by SC 302 to the south and Platt Springs Road to the north.

Brunson got a call at 3 a.m. from his crew on site, and he notified upper management about the crash.

Pete Poore, Director of Communications, notified the media Saturday about the detour, which included John Hardee Expressway, Platt Springs Road, Emmanuel Church Road and Old Dunbar Road.

Brunson spent Sunday at the site coordinating with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Lexington County Sheriff's Department and the SC

Highway Patrol.

"They were the major players and we met with them daily and supported them with traffic control," Brunson said. "Everything went smoothly."

Brunson said while NTSB was looking for clues to the crash, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control used a contractor to remove the jet fuel from the site.

SC 302 re-opened on the Thursday after the crash. There was minor damage to roadway and curb and gutter, Brunson said.

"About 300 feet of roadway will have to be replaced due to damage to the asphalt," Brunson said. "The spilled jet fuel makes the asphalt real soft, breaks it down to where it will just crumble."

After getting an up-close look at the crashed jet, Brunson said, "It's amazing anybody survived. For those two people to survive, they were blessed."



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

SCDOT Lexington Maintenance employees pour concrete into the curb forms as part of the repair of the crash area. It was the first time any of them had done a repair caused by a plane crash.

All in a day's work: Incident Responder James Williams comes to the rescue

By Bob Kudelka

"You're my hero," Stewart Mungo said, shaking hands with SCDOT employee James Williams.

Williams beamed as Stewart and Steven Mungo, brothers and owners of the Mungo Companies, and a group of their employees thanked him for putting out a fire in front of their Irmo building.

On Friday, Aug. 8, Williams, an Incident Responder, was on his way to a call on I-26 when he saw smoke coming from next to the Mungo building across a frontage road from the interstate.

"I just saw the fire burning and didn't see anybody putting it out," Williams said. "I didn't think it would take much time to jump the fence and put it out."

Williams learned the fire department was on the way. He didn't hear a siren, so he scaled the fence next to the interstate and hustled to the building with his extinguisher.

"It was a lot of flames," Williams said. "The bushes were burning. I got my water extinguisher and I was able to get just about all of it out. It was still smoldering when the fire department got here."

The cause of the fire was unknown but the Mungos suspect a cigarette butt may have ignited the pine straw landscaping.



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

SCDOT Incident Responder James Williams, center, receives a certificate of appreciation on Aug. 28 from Stewart Mungo, left, and Steven Mungo, right, for putting out a fire next to their office building on Aug. 8 in the Irmo area off of Interstate 26. In the background are Mungo Companies employees who came to thank Williams for saving their building.

The Mungo family has been building homes in the Carolinas since 1954, and estimate they've built approximately 10,000 homes. The brick building near the Irmo line is the company's headquarters, and a fire would have been devastating.

"It would have been a disaster for us," Stewart Mungo said. "This is our home office. The

people in the other offices (Raleigh, Charleston, Spartanburg, and Myrtle Beach) are dependent on what goes on here. This is all of our administrative work, accounting and human resources."

The Mungo brothers, who were out of town on business when the fire occurred, presented Williams with a certificate of appreciation for his "random act of kindness."

"Most people would not have taken this much initiative to come over the fence and put the fire out," Steven Mungo said. "They just would have called 911 and let the fire department do it. We're extremely grateful because there's no telling how big the fire could have gotten while we waited for the fire department. Fortunately, they showed up immediately but

you never know. They could have been on another call and the nearest unit might have been 20 miles away.

"We're just very, very, very grateful."

Stewart Mungo said, "We just really appreciate somebody going above and beyond what's expected of them in life and, really, it's very, very commendable."

Helping people is nothing new to Williams, who was the second employee hired in SCDOT's Incident Responder program 12½ years ago. Prior to joining SCDOT, Williams served 30 years in the Army including two tours in Vietnam.

A shift supervisor, Williams lives in Columbia with his wife, Ora.

Over the years of patrolling highways in his blue truck, Williams has helped put out car fires and brush fires but never before put out a fire that threatened a building. To do his job right, he makes sure his equipment – including his fire extinguisher – is ready every time he hits the road.

"I like being able to assist people out on the road and enjoy how they appreciate what we do," Williams said.

Williams could only chuckle when Stewart Mungo had one last bit of thanks before Williams got back in his truck.

"If you ever need a new house, come see us," he said.

Bridge walkway helping people get in shape

By Bob Kudelka

Virginia Huff was a self-described “couch potato” before moving from Maine to Mount Pleasant to live with her son in November 2007. Since then, she’s lost 42 pounds by walking atop the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge five days a week.

Not bad for an 82-year-old grandmother.

“Oh boy, it’s wonderful - just wonderful,” Huff said, pushing her walker on the bridge’s bicycle/pedestrian walkway a recent morning. “Everybody’s enjoying it. It’s a wonderful addition.”

When it’s time to exercise, Elizabeth Ligon chooses either the gym or the bridge.

“On nicer days, I definitely choose the bridge over the gym,” said Ligon, a nurse practitioner student at the Medical University of South Carolina at Charleston. “You end up running a longer distance without realizing it because it’s such a great view.”

Rachael Evans brings her 19-month-old son, Dylan, to the bridge’s walkway twice a week.

“We live in a smaller neighborhood so it’s either walk in a circle constantly, or by coming here we’re out here probably an hour more than we would normally be,” she said, adding that she and her son had just spotted two dolphins in the river below.

An instant landmark and engineering marvel since it opened in 2005, the Cooper River Bridge is also having an impact on the fitness of area residents who use the 12-foot-wide, 2.5-mile bridge

path.

According to a study by the College of Charleston, 67 percent of people surveyed indicated that their activity levels had increased since the opening of the bridge.

The survey included 393 local users of the walkway. It was conducted in accordance with National Institutes of Health guidelines and initiated by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Vonie Gilreath, Senior Planner at the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, said the study was done to determine the health impacts of by adding bike and pedestrian facilities to bridge projects.

“In addition, there are a number of bridges in the Charleston region that are proposed for replacement or retrofitting with bike/ped facilities and an elected official requested data on the effects of adding cantilevers to the existing bridges,” she said.

Gilreath said the survey results indicate the addition of bike/ped facilities to roadway connections will increase health activity as well as provide for more residents to commute to work and recreate without using a car.

Atop the Cooper River Bridge, pedestrians and bicyclists also benefit from the safety behind the 42-inch-high concrete barrier separating zooming traffic

On a fall morning, Danielle Cohen of Mount Pleasant was jogging on the walkway, pushing a stroller that carried her son,



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Danielle Cohen of Mt. Pleasant (originally NJ) pushes her 2 and 1/2 year old son, Maxx, across the bridge. She makes the run four or five times a week and lost 60 pounds of ‘baby fat weight gain’ doing the exercise over the bridge.

Maxx.

Cohen said she’s lost about 60 pounds by exercising atop the bridge since her son was born 2 ½ years ago. It’s a good alternative to working out a gym, which would require dropping her son off at a day-care.

“It’s something we can do together,” Cohen said. “I do this all the time - I love it. A lot of people are very friendly.”

Pamela and Michael Murray, of Mount Pleasant, said they like the diversity of users atop the bridge, as well as the challenge of the incline.

“You get a little more of challenge than you would on a regular road,” Pamela Murray said. “I love to the whole strip, there and back. It’s a beautiful walk.”

Michael Murray said: “It’s the best money that was ever spent



The pedestrian/bicycle path on the Cooper River Bridge in Charleston is popular with the public.

by DOT. Not only is it good for Charleston - it’s good for all South Carolinians and it’s good for visitors.”

To read the detailed results

from the bridge study, visit: <http://www.scdot-transfer.org/scdotphotos/CRBBridgeStudy.pdf>

Research and Development Executive Committee

Group selects studies for state planning, research program

By Terry Swygert, Office of Materials and Research

The Research and Development Executive Committee (RDEC) guides and directs the Department’s research program. This Committee has overall responsibility for the operation of the Research Unit, including fiscal accountability; reviewing and prioritizing research topics for development as research projects; monitoring progress of on-going studies and implementation of results from completed studies. The research staff serves as support for the RDEC and makes regular progress reports and presentations at Committee meetings.

Membership is composed of



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

The Research and Development Executive Committee, standing, from left: Director of Preconstruction Robert Pratt, Director of Planning Ron Patton; Director of Construction Danny Shealy; Chief Engineer for Planning, Location and Design John Walsh; Deputy Secretary for Mass Transit Glennith Johnson; Director of Traffic Engineering Richard Werts; FHWA Division Pavement and Materials Engineer David Law; District 5 Engineering Administrator Dennis Townsend and Research Engineer Mike Sanders. Seated, from left: Materials and Research Engineer Milt Fletcher; Deputy Secretary for Engineering Tony Chapman; Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration Debra Rountree; Director of Maintenance Jim Feda and Assistant District 2 Maintenance Engineer Dustin Turner (representing District 2 Engineering Administrator Phillip Brooks). Not pictured: Chief Engineer for Operations Clem Watson.

high-level managers from all major units in Headquarters, a representative from the Office of Materials and Research, two field representatives, and a representative from the FHWA.

On April 22, the committee held a Research Topic Solicitation Meeting to identify research needs to develop a prioritized list of possible research topics for consideration for the State Planning Research (SPR) Program.

An SCDOT contact was iden-

tified as the “champion” for each high priority topic. The champion was responsible for the development of a problem statement.

As a result of the meeting, 42 problem statements were submitted. After all problem statements were received, they were reviewed by the research staff for completeness and to clarify any questions. A brief literature search was conducted for all topics.

A ballot was then prepared

and forwarded to RDEC members along with a copy of each problem statement, any information found on topics through the Research Staff’s literature search, and any comments received concerning particular topics.

Each member rated the topics on a scale of 0-5 (0 no need, 5 great need) then returned the ballot to the Research Unit. The Research staff then averaged the ratings for each topic and prepared a spreadsheet that was for-

warded to the RDEC members prior to their next meeting.

On July 31, the RDEC met to discuss the topics, combine those that were similar, and develop a final prioritized list of topics for inclusion in the SPR Research Program.

To view the prioritized topics recommended for funding as SPR research projects, visit:

<http://www.scdot-transfer.org/scdotphotos/SPRProgram.pdf>

Deadwood, snakes all part of the job 40 feet below I-126 bridge

By Bob Kudelka

With a 75-ton crane atop the I-126 bridge and employees wading below in the Broad River, Richland Maintenance had the arduous task of removing huge pieces of deadwood accumulated at the bridge supports.

"You've got to be careful down there, it can get dangerous," said Jerry Hubbard, Supervisor of Richland Bridge Maintenance, looking over the rails and down 40 feet to co-workers below. "It's slippery on the rocks and sometimes the water running through the river can make it difficult. It's time consuming. I haven't had anyone hurt yet, knock on wood."

Not to mention the snakes.

"Yeah, there are snakes," Hubbard said. "Last night, we had a bunch of snakes. They were moving so much debris, and here come the snakes. You've got to be careful."

Clearing debris below one of the busiest highways carrying Columbia rush hour traffic takes a lot of coordination and 14-hour days. But it's a vital chore to protect the bridge and must be done once a year, said Hubbard, a 28-year veteran.

"All the deadwood comes off the banks and down the river," he said. "The bridge traps them. With two or three days with heavy rain, they'll bank up sometimes 10 feet high. You can get some huge piles down there - it depends on how the water travels and how it brings it in."

While it is dangerous work, Hubbard said there would be consequences if ignored.

"It can be a fire hazard and damage the bridge," he said. "If it caught fire, there's



no easy way to get there. By the time fire rescue could get somebody down there, they'd have some serious damage to the concrete. I'd hate to have to replace this bridge."

Hubbard's crew spent an hour and a half setting up traffic control to close two lanes atop the bridge. To minimize traffic disruption, they worked on the lanes opposite of rush hour: outbound from downtown

during the morning and inbound in the late afternoon.

Jerry Hubbard
Richland Bridge Maintenance

Next it was time to get a four-employee crew to

the river. They took the direct route and were lowered in a basket 40 feet down from the bridge.

"The only way to get into this river is with a man basket," Hubbard said. "You've got deep channels on both sides. I can put two maybe three employees at a time... Most of the guys enjoy the ride."

Wearing hip waders, employees in the river tied the crane's cable to large dead



trees.

"It's all deadwood, you don't see any green trees," Hubbard said.

Some can be as long as 40 feet and weigh as much as 20,000 pounds, he said. The larger pieces were sawed into smaller pieces before lifted to the bridge, where dump trucks hauled them away.

In five days on the job, Hubbard's crew removed 22 tons of deadwood from the base of the I-126 bridge.

SCDOT employees in addition to Hubbard who took part in the debris removal and traffic control were: Jerome Seibles, Chris Luther, Chris Richardson, Art Brown, Westover Brown Jr., Donald Banton, Ada R Gardner, Jackie Cook, Benjamin Youmans Jr., Mark Hunter, Melvin Kelly, Gary Waiters Jr., Travis Hampton, Robbie Gleaton Jr. and John Arrowood.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

LEFT: Mark Hunter of Richland Maintenance attaches a cable to deadwood that has accumulated underneath the I-126 Broad River bridge. **MIDDLE:** A crane lifts the debris out of the river. **RIGHT:** Richland Maintenance crews load the debris to be hauled away.

Tropical storm damages two York County bridges

By Bob Kudelka

The warm sunshine on a late August morning was deceiving.

It was the calm after the storm - in this case Tropical Storm Fay, which had already passed through but left behind swift-moving flood waters.

SCDOT bridge inspectors and foremen across District 4 were busy checking several hundred bridges in parts of Cherokee, Lancaster and York counties. They had already lost one bridge from flood waters carrying large debris and feared more could fall.

Assistant District Maintenance Manager Perry Crocker said the flood conditions - as much as 8

feet above normal - sent about 40 employees into action, checking and re-checking bridges across the District.

"The stress was, 'Are we getting to everything that we need to get to quick enough?' said Crocker, a 21-year veteran. "Are we doing enough? Are we checking fast enough? It can be a little nerve wracking at times.

"We did come through it," he said. "Our employees did fantastic; they knew immediately where to go to. They were up to date as far as what their conditions were and their problem spots and they moved quickly to get the inspection done as promptly as possible."

The hardest hit bridge was on

S-11-209 (Old Chester Road/River Road) over Kings Creek in Cherokee County. The 180-foot-long, two-lane bridge was constructed in 1960.

Flood water levels of 8 feet above normal carried debris that stressed the pile supports system of the two-lane bridge. The main culprit was a large chunk of timber.

"The stream was up real high and moving very swiftly," Crocker said. "There was one great big piece of timber that just caused the buildup, and as it got higher, the pressure broke off the two center pilings and caused the center span to break down."

There was one lane still standing, but the other was gone as the



The Burris Road bridge over Turkey Creek was damaged by high water. District 4 employees repaired the bridge, replacing wooden pilings with steel pilings driven into the creek bed.

two deck slabs had fallen into the stream.

"The only thing really holding the bridge up at that point was the guardrail," he said.

Crocker knew it was just a matter of time before the bridge would totally collapse. The collapse happened days later when maintenance workers began pulling away debris to allow the stream to flow again.

Gov. Mark Sanford issued an Executive Order on Sept. 17 declaring the bridge collapse an emergency and directing SCDOT to take action to obtain emergency relief funds available from the Federal Highway Administration.

In October, the SCDOT Commission gave its approval to move forward with negotiating a contract to replace the bridge as quickly as possible.

State Bridge Maintenance Engineer Lee Floyd said United Contractors Inc. has been hired to replace the bridge.

Another bridge that suffered severe damage from the flooding

was on S-46-59 (Burris Road) over Turkey Creek in York County. The 105-foot-long bridge was constructed in 1974.

Water was running so high that Crocker could see fish swimming past as he looked at the bridge. The deck was still intact but debris had damaged supports.

The bridge was closed as a specialty crew began repairs once flood waters subsided.

Bridges such as the one on Burris Road don't handle a lot of traffic but are important to those who live nearby.

One property owner lived on one side of the detour had horses on the other. "He had to take a detour just to feed his horses," Crocker said.

The bridge on Burris Road was out of service for 21 days. Repairs were done by District 4 employees Robert Burr, Steven Gainey, James Rivers, and Elliot Sellers. The crew used a crane to lift the bridge deck slabs and replace the damaged wood pilings with steel pilings.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Assistant District 4 Maintenance Engineer Perry Crocker stands by the big tree that was mainly responsible for the Old Chester Road / Kings Creek bridge collapse. The 180-foot bridge, which was built in 1960, fell into the stream on Sept. 16 after the initial damage on Aug. 27.

Oversize/Overweight Permit Office

Agency employees permit, coordinate routes for large highway loads

By Bob Kudelka

Ever wonder about the huge loads traveling on our highways?

The people in a basement office at SCDOT Headquarters know all about them.

State law authorizes the SCDOT Oversize/Overweight Permit (OSOW) office to issue permits for vehicles and loads that exceed legal size and/or weight limits. Permits establish routes and size/weight limits for special loads.

These typically weigh more than 80,000 pounds or are over 8 feet 6 inches wide or 13 feet 6 inches high. SCDOT issues about 75,000 OSOW permits a year.

The most common items needing permits are road machinery such as backhoes, trackhoes, bulldozers and cranes. Others include generators, mobile homes, overseas shipping containers and even a caboose on its way to be turned into a Cockaboose near Williams-Brice Stadium.

Customers order permits online, and approval normally takes 2 hours or less, said Mechelle Mabry, Director of the OSOW Permit Office.

"To meet industry's needs, we make sure the permits get out before 3 o'clock," said Mabry. "If

that means us working through lunch or staying late to get those permits out, that's what we do because industry can't move without the permits.

"Our customers, the trucking industry, have customers, too. They have on-demand schedules and products requiring on-time delivery. We have to make sure the permits are approved in a timely manner and they are accurate."

Some loads are as wide as 24 feet. Anything over 16 feet wide requires a police escort.

"We also permit house moves, which can be 28 feet wide," Mabry said. "There are a lot of house moves, you would be surprised." They average 2 per month.

Night moves are coordinated with SCDOT county Resident Maintenance Engineers who ride the route to make sure that road can accommodate the load, Mabry said.

For oversize loads, tree limbs may need trimming and mail boxes pulled up temporarily.

The carrier is responsible for raising and lowering traffic signals if needed, as well as moving utilities. Cable lines placed on the ground must be plated so loads don't crush them.

"Cable is no longer just TV, it's the internet and telephones,

it's people's businesses," Mabry said.

What about damages resulting from unpermitted loads?

"We require truckers to have insurance on file for heavy loads over 180,000 pounds and loads over 16 feet wide or 16 feet high," she said. "They have insurance for us and we're the certificate holder."

Sometimes Mabry will ride along on a big move to better understand what the driver sees.

"It's easy for me to sit here and say, 'You need to go this way,' but to actually see the load, how they make a turn, and what obstacles the driver has to go through, and it helps to occasionally go out there and see it," Mabry said.

Mabry is a third generation DOT employee and has been with the Department for 20 years. Her grandmother worked in accounting and her father, Bobby Vining, worked in office machine repair.

Employees in the OSOW office in addition to Mabry are Delores Davis, Lisa Baker, Pam Hensley, Rosa Slater, Lamonica Jamison and Shane Hekter.

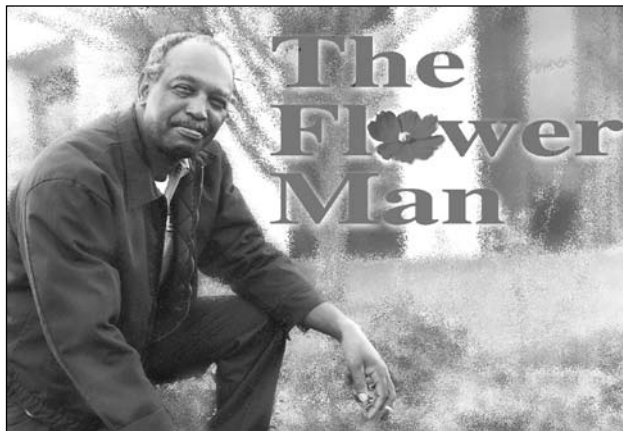


ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

On Sept. 18, a lead truck uses a pole to check clearances on approaching bridges, power lines, traffic signals or any other obstacles for an oversized load traveling down Two Notch Road in Lexington County.



The 95-ton, 130-foot long load makes a turn onto Longs Pond Road with help from two trucks – one pulling and one pushing. The 20-foot high by 22-foot wide vessel took four days to travel from Vance to Irmo.



Hoe, Hoe, Hoe?

No, no, no! It's not hard to keep your holiday plants looking festive

By Ernest Jones

Many holiday gift plants are displayed and enjoyed only during December and a month or so thereafter, then discarded with the dried-out tree. That's a shame, because with grooming and attention, these plants can be enjoyed for many holidays to come.

BASIC CARE.

Many holiday plants come with colorful and festive foil wrapped around a utilitarian plastic pot. Although it's attractive, this wrapping completely covers the drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. If those holes remain covered, the plant will soon turn yellow, drop leaves and die.

To solve the drainage problem and keep the festive wrapping, simply poke holes in the foil.

Feel the bottom of the pot for drainage holes and use a knife or fork to poke through the foil in those spots.

Then set your plant in a saucer or tray to hold the excess water that flows through when you feed and water.

PLACEMENT AND FEEDING

Place holiday plants in a bright, cool location away from drafts. Start feeding your new plant the day after it arrives, and continue to feed it regularly.

Many plant owners, unfortunately, just don't bother to feed their plants. Most plant owners only water and seldom feed their indoor plants. To avoid that common mistake, do both jobs every time you water.

To control soil insects, add a teaspoon of diazinon per gallon of feeding and watering mixture. Blooming plants shouldn't dry out. Nor should they sit in water. To be economical, pour the excess food/water from one overflow tray into the next pot.

FOLIAGE FUNDAMENTALS

To achieve both bright blossoms and deep green foliage, sprinkle a small amount of Epsom salt into the soil of each pot. Use one teaspoon for each four inches of pot size.

To keep holiday plants looking their best, remove old blossoms and mist spray the foliage three times a week.

TOP HOLIDAY GIFT PLANTS

Here are some plants that make delightful holiday accents and can live in your home and garden year-round. Beyond basic plant care, each variety has special needs – especially if you want to bring it back into bloom next year.

AMARYLLIS: Amaryllis is popular both as a cut flower and a bulb bought for forcing. As a cut flower, it comes in a striking assortment of colors.

As soon as they are brought home, slice off part of the stem and place in clean water with a cut flower food. Remove withered flowers and leaves regularly.

This time of year, many amaryllis lovers buy their bulbs to bloom indoors.

Encouraging these beautiful flowers to blossom is a rather simple procedure.

First, choose bulbs between nine and ten inches in diameter. Use a pot that is a little bit larger than the bulb itself and fill to just beneath the rim with potting compost.

When potting amaryllis, make sure the roots do not get tangled up. Spread them evenly as possible in the pot,

leaving room at the top to make watering easier.

After flowering, cut the flowers from the stalk and continue watering, adding plant food every two weeks.

CHRISTMAS CACTI: These bloom between November and March, but usually in December and January. They are easiest to take care of. They will be sure to bloom, if you follow these simple instructions:

Plant in a pot no larger than five inches. Use a gritty, porous soil composed of garden loam, leaf mold and sand, plus a generous sprinkling of well-rotted or dried cow manure. Avoid using any bone meal or lime.

Put the plants in a permanent place, away from direct sun and drafts. If you carry them outdoors, place them in shade from June to September. Water when necessary and feed them with a weak liquid manure mixture every second or third week.

Around Labor Day, take these plants indoors and place them in an east or west window. If they must be in a south window, the sun should be diffused through a curtain.

If you only have a north window available, protect them from too much cold during severe winter weather. Keep the soil almost dry until the flower buds begin to appear. Strong artificial light should be avoided, particularly when the plants are ready to bud.

The long blooming season continues from the holidays well into late winter.

POINSETTIA: Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without the beautiful poinsettia. As most of us know, the long-lasting "flowers" are actually brightly colored, leaf-like bracts.

If you'd like to keep your poinsettia for a few more years, here's how to do it.

Once the colorful bracts begin to look washed out – usually in mid-spring – cut the plant back to about 6-8 inches tall. Once it's cut back, it will need less water. Make sure you check the soil before watering.

When warm weather arrives, set your poinsettia outside for the summer, giving it a partly shaded site until it gets used to bright light. Then gradually move it into full sun. Continue to keep it fed and watered until fall.

Once September arrives, move your plant back into the house. For the bracts to color up, a poinsettia needs 14 hours of total darkness each night for up to 10 weeks.

130 Tons of Trash removed from highways

By Bob Kudelka

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) conducted its National Public Lands activities Sept. 8-12 with litter clean-ups in each of the state's 46 counties.

South Carolina Secretary of Transportation H.B. "Buck" Limehouse Jr. gave an overview of the activities during a news conference in West Columbia on Monday, Sept. 8.

Each September, SCDOT's statewide maintenance forces demonstrate the agency's support of National Public Lands Day by scheduling a week of litter pick-up along selected highways.

"Our statewide maintenance forces, by scheduling a week of litter pick-up along selected highways, will demonstrate our agency's commitment to keeping South Carolina's roads clean and beautiful," Limehouse said. "This is just one of many ways that we are showing concern for our environment and doing all that we can to preserve and protect it."

Statewide, 1,531 SCDOT employees removed 269,092 pounds of litter from 2,759 miles of highway, said Viola Covington, SCDOT's Community Relations Coordinator.

Limehouse said that in addition to SCDOT employees efforts to clean-up and beautify South Carolina, Adopt-A-Highway Groups in several counties will pick up litter from their adopted sections in September.

"Safety, of course, is a major concern, and we want to remind motorists to watch for our maintenance crews this week as they clean up other people's trash and litter from our highways.

Work zones are hazardous places," Limehouse said.

SCDOT coordinates many cleanup activities throughout the year, including the Public Lands Fall Cleanup and the annual Carolina Spring Clean in April. SCDOT also works with Keep America Beautiful affiliates and the Palmetto Prideways program.

"We will use every opportunity to call attention to critical environmental and natural resources issues, and we call on all South Carolinians to join us in our ongoing efforts to enhance and restore the public lands surrounding our highways for all to enjoy," Limehouse said.

SCDOT has been a part of National Public Lands Day since its inception in 1994, when it began with 700 volunteers. Last year, the National Public Lands Day event inspired over 110,000 public volunteers to work in 1,300 locations in every state. This year 120,000 volunteers are expected to take part in this effort at 1,500 sites across the nation.

SCDOT Commission Chairman F. Hugh Atkins said, "The highways belong to all of us. Just as homeowners must take care of the upkeep of their homes, all of us have a stake in taking care of the roads. Please help us keep South Carolina clean and slow down in all work zones."

Commissioner Henry H. Taylor, representing the 2nd Congressional District, said he is proud to be part of a state agency that is "committed to a clean environment and the effort that is necessary to make it happen."

"Keeping our state and nation clean is everyone's responsibility," Taylor said.



Commission Chairman Hugh Atkins picks up litter along along U.S. 1 after the news conference.

Commissioner Marvin Stevenson, representing the 6th Congressional District, said: "We are fortunate to live in such a beautiful state. It is a pity we have so many people who do not appreciate it. They show their lack of appreciation by trashing and littering our highways."

Stevenson continued, "SCDOT's National Public Lands activity will involve the clean-up of highways in each of the state's 46 counties. This is a tremendous undertaking and I applaud the agency and its employees for supporting this very worthwhile endeavor."

2008 Public Lands Fall Clean-Up Results				
District	County	Employees	Miles	Pounds
1	Aiken	45	91	17,275
	Kershaw	40	167	5,700
	Lee	17	14	1,290
	Lexington	81	46	8,425
	Richland	0	0	0
2	Sumter	54	21	6,685
	Abbeville	9	5	525
	Edgefield	25	15	1,945
	Greenwood	24	20	1,670
	Laurens	39	18	3,175
3	McCormick	18	21	1,785
	Newberry	27	21	2,345
	Saluda	19	504	2,350
	Anderson	58	206	16,976
	Greenville	25	200	10,913
4	Oconee	42	63	8,460
	Pickens	25	24	3,070
	Spartanburg	68	191	30,290
	Cherokee	21	25	2,170
	Chester	39	28	4,790
5	Chesterfield	42	48	9,030
	Fairfield	18	28	2,945
	Lancaster	30	17	6,390
	Union	22	48	2,235
	York	58	79	13,277
6	Darlington	39	19	3,065
	Dillon	0	0	0
	Florence	68	20	4,665
	Georgetown	25	20	3,440
	Horry	27	33	5,320
7	Marion	45	10	3,545
	Marlboro	30	27	1,830
	Williamsburg	39	30	2,190
	Beaufort	3	16	2,370
	Berkeley	37	10	3,816
Total	Charleston	78	89	11,255
	Colleton	43	58	14,160
	Dorchester	16	14	3,500
	Jasper	20	167	7,235
	Allendale	29	40	3,270
Subtotal	Bamberg	25	34	5,850
	Barnwell	24	16	3,165
	Calhoun	24	71	8,160
	Clarendon	34	86	2,400
	Hampton	17	9	2,310
Total	Holly Hill	18	32	7,005
	Orangeburg	44	58	6,826
	Subtotal	685	859	105,376
	Total	1,531	2,759	269,092



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

LEFT: SCDOT started the 2008 Public Lands Observance with a news conference Sept. 8 in West Columbia. Shown from left are: Lexington Maintenance employees Leon Snells, James Amerson, Abraham Salley, Mike McIndoe, Shane Roof, SCDOT Commissioner Henry Taylor, SCDOT Commission Chairman F. Hugh Atkins, Commissioner Marvin Stevenson, Deputy Secretary for Mass Transit Glennith Johnson, Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration Debra Rountree, Deputy Secretary for Engineering Tony Chapman and SC Secretary of Transportation H.B. 'Buck' Limehouse Jr.

Highway improvements saving lives

Transportation Secretary H.B. Limehouse Jr. has announced that safety improvements made by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) at intersections and on rural roads have begun to show results in reducing the crash and fatality rates at those locations in South Carolina. Limehouse made the announcement at the 2008 SC Highway Safety Conference being held in Columbia sponsored by the SC Department of Public Safety.

Limehouse reported that intersection safety improvements projects that included the addition of turn lanes, turn signals, and improved lines of sight for drivers among other measures, have resulted in a 60% decrease

in crashes, and a 90% drop in the fatality rate. Limehouse attributes this success to his "Fix it First" strategy. "When I took office at SCDOT, I immediately shifted the agency's focus to preserving and maintaining the large 41,000 mile state highway system that we already have. Limehouse added, "We cannot afford to expand our highway infrastructure further until we make sure that our existing highways are safe for the people of South Carolina and our visitors, and efficient enough to support economic development." Limehouse noted that intersection improvements can save lives, but they are expensive projects. The average cost of one intersection improvement project ranges between \$600,000 and \$800,000.

Limehouse also had good news about rural roads which have the highest death rates in South Carolina. He noted that SCDOT continues to include paved shoulders in repaving or new construction projects. A recent SCDOT traffic study of over 1,000 sections of roads where paved shoulders have been added shows a decline in the crash rate of over 20%. Many of the state's rural highways were built in the early 20th century with lanes too narrow for modern vehicles, particularly trucks. In addition, these roads were built without paved shoulders and sometimes no shoulders of any kind. "South Carolina has the second highest rural road death rate in the country," said Limehouse. "But this study proves that pro-



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Many interchanges across the state have been improved. The interchange at Flora and Rabon Roads in Columbia was realigned to intersect Rabon at 90 degrees. Turning lanes and a traffic signal were added.

viding paved shoulders can cut down the number of "run-off-the-road crashes," he added.

South Carolina's 41,000-mile highways system, which includes over 8,300 bridges, is the 4th larg-

est state-maintained system in the nation. The state highway system includes 27,000 miles of secondary roads, most of which are in rural areas. Secondary roads do not qualify for federal funding.

The Accidental Bicyclist

Brian Parnell's running regiment switches gears

By Rob Thompson

Although he's never been on a 100-mile ride, and he's not climbing mountain trails, Brian Parnell is still a serious cyclist. And it all started with doctor's orders.

After seeing those around him become more physically active, Parnell, a program manager II in the Director of Construction Office, decided he needed some physical activity in his life.

Running seemed like the natural choice. His wife, Michele, is an avid runner and has run in five marathons. So, to keep up with her, Brian started running three to four times a week.

"It was a great hobby. It was something I wanted to do," Parnell said.

But in March of this year, something in him snapped. Not in his head -- something in his foot. It was a tendon tear and stress fracture in his left ankle.

After a visit to his doctor, Parnell was told that he should never run again.

So after six months of running, he was back without a regular physical activity. But not for long.

Parnell's doctor suggested cycling. It's a low-impact activity

and would not complicate the healing process of his injury.

"I really didn't want to. I couldn't see myself as the typical serious cyclist," Parnell said. "Racing in spandex or trekking up and down a mountain slope didn't seem like something I wanted to do."

He decided to look at his new physical hobby more practically -- as a commuter. He'd had a little experience doing that back when he was a student at the College of Charleston.

Parnell bought a Trek commuter bike. And for a while, he would make the 10-mile ride from his home in Lexington to his office at SCDOT headquarters in Columbia several times a week. The 45- to 50-minute bike trip is only 20 minutes longer than the commute by car.

He says the ride is beautiful with the sunrise in the morning. "You experience the beauty of the outdoors more than if you're riding in a car."

And while he looks at it as an alternative method of transportation, he's indirectly getting a good exercise workout as well. He joined a gym downtown so he can shower after the ride and change before coming in to work.



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Brian Parnell enjoys his 10-mile commute home from work. Biking has replaced his love of running due to a foot arch problem.

In August, Parnell had surgery to correct the tendon tear. That, along with the time change, has put his bike commute on hold temporarily.

Physical therapy after the surgery has strengthened his ankle, and his attitudes on cycling issues have also gotten stronger. The experience has changed the way he looks at cyclists. He understands now why people

want more bike lanes and multi-use paths. His riding has turned into much more than a two-wheeled hobby.

He's joined the Palmetto Cycling Coalition and has purchased the "Share the Road" license tag for his car. He's become a proponent of providing the public with a way to get around without relying on an automobile.

In fact, his whole family goes out on bike rides together. In the next couple of years, he and his family are thinking about moving to the Shandon area of Columbia where bike riding in the neighborhood would be easier.

"I want to see myself going to the store with my family on our bikes and coming back with the broccoli and bread sticking out of the basket," Parnell said.

His riding has turned into much more than a two-wheeled hobby.

Something old, something new

Ben Sawyer Bridge Project will be engineering first for SC

By Bob Kudelka

If you ever had fun with an Erector set as a kid, you may want to check out the rehabilitation of the Ben Sawyer Bridge linking Sullivan's Island with Mount Pleasant.

In what is sure to be a fascinating aspect to the project, the 63-year-old swing span will be lifted by crane onto a barge and a new swing span will be lifted from barge onto the old substructure, which will be left intact.

The result will be replacing the 1945 swing span bridge with a mostly new swing span bridge with the same look as the old one.

"It will be the first time we've seen that type of extensive bridge rehabilitation in the state," said Assistant Construction Engineer Leland Colvin, who is overseeing the design-build project for SCDOT. "This is the first major rehabilitation job of a swing span that we've replaced the entire superstructure."

Program Manager Chris Gossett, who was involved in the pre-construction phase, said: "This is out of the box for most movable bridge projects."

Gossett said local residents wanted SCDOT to preserve the character of the old swing bridge and not replace it with a modern-type fixed span.

"We just pride ourselves on trying to

keep this place as much like it used to be as possible," said Sullivan's Island Mayor Carl Smith. "We like the character of the old bridge and we like the character of our island. It's very family oriented. You don't stop change but we try to manage it."

The SCDOT Commission gave approval to a rehabilitation contract during a meeting in August.

The project will include replacing the approach spans to the bridge, replacing the steel superstructure on the swing span, and replacing the electrical and mechanical systems. The \$40 million project is funded entirely by federal dollars.

The Ben Sawyer Bridge is one of a half-dozen movable span bridges in the state. SCDOT has replaced electrical and mechanical components of some of the bridges, such as the one in Little River, but never before replaced the superstructure as will be done in this case.

Maintenance costs have been high for the Ben Sawyer Bridge due to its condition and age, but surprisingly the foundation remains in good shape, Colvin said.

The new superstructure will be designed with the same geometry as the old bridge.

"Aesthetically, it will look the same only with new components," Colvin said.

Replacing the superstructure will require closing the bridge to traffic, of course, but the contractor is only allowed to close the bridge for a total of seven days throughout construction.

Colvin said the closure will take place during the off season, currently scheduled for late fall 2009.

The rehabilitated bridge will have two travel lanes that will be wider, 14 feet, instead of the current 12 feet lanes. The new bridge will have a 5.5-foot-wide sidewalk to connect with the existing bicycle/pedestrian path along SC 703.

The project is expected to take 18 months and to be completed by May 2010.

PCL Constructors, of Tampa, Fla., was awarded the project. The firm has experience in this type of swing span work, Gossett said.

Design work began after the notice to proceed was given in November.

Construction is planned to begin in February.

Early work will include building work trestles on both sides of the waterway. Next, new approach spans will be built on the work trestles. In what's called the "slide off, slide on" technique, the contractor will slide off existing approach spans and slide on the new approach spans onto the temporary work trestles.

The project also includes a new bridge tender's house atop the bridge. The bridge tender, an SCDOT employee, stays busy as the bridge opens for boat traffic an average of 10 to 12 times a day, Gossett said.

The bridge tender's house was once a familiar place for Transportation Secretary H.B. Limehouse Jr.

"The Ben Sawyer Bridge is certainly an important transportation link, but its function as a swing bridge is also part of the tradition and charm of the Lowcountry landscape," said Limehouse. "This project is of particular interest to me since I worked for what was then known as the SC Highway Department during my summer vacations while a cadet at The Citadel. One of my jobs was to serve as a relief bridge operator. The Ben Sawyer Bridge has survived time and major hurricanes, and it's important that we preserve it as a swing bridge."

The Ben Sawyer Bridge drew attention nationwide when Hurricane Hugo came ashore in 1989. The storm essentially collapsed the swing span, leaving it tilted at a 45-degree angle, which created one of the lasting images of the hurricane's devastation. The swing span was lifted back into place on October 5, 1989. One lane of the bridge was re-opened to traffic on October 8, 1989.



Deputy Secretary Glennith Johnson kicks, bounces back after heart attack

By Bob Kudelka

Deputy Secretary for Mass Transit Glennith Johnson was at karate class when he started feeling sick.

It must be heartburn, Johnson thought, but then he felt a pain in his chest and asked his instructor to call his wife, Denine. He soon felt a little better but Denine, a nurse, drove him the emergency room to be sure.

On the way to the hospital, the chest pains returned. Minutes later, Johnson lay on a table surrounded by a team of doctors and nurses, listening as a cardiologist told him he would need a "cardiac catheter" because of "abnormal heart rhythms."

For Johnson, it would take time to come to grips with what was happening. After all, how can it be that a 48-year-old who

spars with 18-year-olds in karate class, does 50 pushups in less than sixty seconds and runs a mile and a half in just over 13 minutes can have a heart attack?

"Anyone who looked at me before the heart attack would not have thought I was at risk," Johnson said. "Because outside I looked healthy, but inside I was an ugly mess."

As he speaks to groups such as the STEP-21 class, Johnson urges co-workers to eat right, exercise regularly and take advantage of programs such as SCDOT's annual health screening.

"The lesson from my heart attack I would want folks to take away is that you always put off our health until tomorrow, and I would want everyone to get started today," Johnson said.

The health screening program

is an ideal way for employees to monitor their health and make sure they have no hidden problems. "I think an excellent

program we have is the health screening program - it's one of the services we provide that employees need to take advantage of," Johnson said. "More employers need to develop an aggressive wellness

been," he said. "Over the years, plaque in my veins built up and a piece blocked an artery to a

had use a defibrillator to re-start his heart.

"I remember a light bulb going off like an old-time camera flash," Johnson said. "I woke up and said, 'What was that?'"

"We had to use the

defrib," a doctor told him.

"OK," Johnson said, and fell back asleep.

When he woke up later, Johnson smelled something burning.

"The paddles must have slipped and singed my skin," Johnson said. "I was smelling my own skin."

Johnson has made lifestyle changes because of the heart attack. He knows he must exercise more regularly and eat a healthy diet - two things that are challenging as he has four children at home ranging from 16 years old to 3 years old.

"Trying to prepare a healthy meal takes planning," he said. "If you don't plan, you're going to eat what's convenient and what's easy to get a hold of. I eat a lot grilled chicken, but I need to eat the chicken without the bread. I need to cut down really drastically.

"We count each day that we can eat healthy as a success, and we don't get too wrapped up in our failures when we don't have a totally healthy meal. We just plan for the next healthy meal."

Johnson said his next goal is to become a vegetarian.

"My goal is to do better and every day I'm trying to do better," Johnson said. "What we need to do is make sure the inside looks as beautiful as our outsides."

As he spoke to his church congregation two weeks after the heart attack, Johnson said he had been given a second life.

"I'm not going to take what has been given to me for granted," he said.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR
Sixth Degree Master Charles Newton, left, gives Glennith Johnson instructions as he practices his taekwondo kicks.



Johnson and classmate Cheyl Hughes do lunges during taekwondo class on Dec. 2. Johnson has returned to the classes that he considers great exercise and way to release stress.

program."

Looking back at his health screening results, which he shared with his doctor, Johnson said the indicators were there: high cholesterol and high blood pressure. He had been taking medication to control both and was attending karate class twice a week to try to stay in shape.

"I thought I was doing all right, but obviously I had not

part of my heart."

Johnson suffered the heart attack on March 1. Fortunately, he said, the attack did not significantly damage his heart. But he underwent procedures that had some scary moments.

While doctors were working to insert the first of two stents, Johnson's heart stopped beating.

Johnson had been asleep and under medication when doctors



ROB THOMPSON/SCDOT

SCDOT recognized for saving money using state procurement cards

South Carolina Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom, second from right, presents the South Carolina Department of Transportation with a rebate check in the amount of \$88,492.88 for the agency's use of the state procurement card. Accepting the check on behalf of SCDOT are, from left, SCDOT Chief Internal Auditor Robin Wilkes, SC Secretary of Transportation H.B. "Buck" Limehouse Jr. and SCDOT Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration Debra Rountree.

Cost Savings Contest

Employees come up with ways to save agency money

By Carl Chase, Assets Manager

Transportation Secretary H.B. "Buck" Limehouse Jr. initiated a Costs Savings contest in early November to engage all SCDOT employees in identifying ways to save money.

Using his own resources he offered the First Place winner \$1,000, the Second Place winner \$500 and the Third place winner \$250. In fewer than 30 days, the contest generated over 300 suggestions, 73 percent of them coming from District employees.

The overall winner was **W. Alan Smith** of Pre-Construction who suggested "As Built Plans" be removed from Bid Specifications. Second Place was awarded to **Penny Phillips**, an Assistant Program Manager based in Greenville, who suggested that the frequency of courier services from the Districts to County Offices be modified. Third Place winner was **Marlene H. Cain** of Darlington Maintenance, who suggested that steel toe boots be repaired, rather than replaced annually.

Most of the 300 suggestions fell into four categories: the use of energy, vehicles, engineering processes and workplace practices.

Energy

The most prominent category involved energy conservation. Suggestions included: Shutting down computers at the end of the business day, installing occupancy sensors to extinguish lighting, installing waterless urinals and low flow toilets, using renewable energy sources for power, and prohibiting the use of space heaters.

Especially noteworthy were suggestions related to the conservation of energy and specifically powering down computers at the end of the day and the use of waterless urinals and low flow flush toilets. Another suggestion was to allow private businesses to operate the Rest Areas and Welcome Centers, and many suggested the use of renewable energy for lighting.

In each instance, the process owner or person responsible for implementing the suggestion was contacted for his or her opinion. By far, the shutting off of computers was tops on the list.

According to the CIO and his staff, desktop computers must remain on to accept updates for the McAfee Virus Protection Package and to allow IT Services to update software. It is not practical to update software while the computer is in use. Installing software may interrupt the processing of a document, therefore software updates are installed during non-business hours.



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

The Cost Savings Contest winners are, from left: First Place - Alan Smith of Preconstruction, Second Place - Penny Phillips of the District 3 Office and Third Place - Marlene H. Cain of Darlington Maintenance.

The next most frequent suggestion concerned the use of energy efficient lighting. The Department is in the process of developing an Energy Performance Contract. Part of the contract is to replace all lights with energy efficient lamps and ballasts. In the meantime, all burned out lights are replaced with energy efficient lamps.

The use of renewable energy was the topic of ten suggestions. SCDOT is currently using solar power in many of its warning light applications and replacing traffic signals with LED technology.

Another frequent suggestion was to prohibit the use of space heaters. People use space heaters because they are cold, which relates to heat retention in an aging facility that requires major renovations. One employee suggested we use energy efficient lighting in the Headquarters Building Passengers Elevators. This suggestion was immediately adopted.

Vehicles

The use of vehicles was a hot topic. Many employees were concerned about employees using state vehicles to commute. An inquiry into each of the cases indicated they were in compliance with agency usage policy.

Several employees were concerned about the rate charged for commuting. A check with the SCDOT Controller indicated commuting rates are set by the United States Internal Revenue Code. Others suggested the use of alternative fuel and electric vehicles. SCDOT lead state government in the number of alternative fuel vehicles in the fleet. The Department has taken an active stance in reducing the number of sedans, sports utility vehicles, and pickups trucks.

Engineering Processes

Several suggestions were made regarding engineering processes to include the printing of plans, and in particular, the size

of plan sheets. Of concern to many employees was travel associated with Certification Training currently conducted at Clemson. One of the Engineering Directors indicated that one of the prevailing issues is the requirement for earning PDH's required for Professional Engineers. An ADME suggested an increase in the planting of Bahia grass to reduce the amount of mowing. As indicated above a frequent suggestion is to privatize the rest areas and welcome centers.

According to a representative of the Federal Highway Administration, Title 23 prohibits the use of federally funded rights of way and the facilities located on them to make a profit. The exception being is the operating of vending facilities by the South Carolina Commission for the Blind.

Workplace Practices

Some of the suggestions involved the use of temporary and TERI employees. Others involved requiring furloughs of employees who make over \$40,000 annually. One employee suggested we reduce the number of copies of the annual benefit publication and place them on-line. Others suggested we eliminate the allowance for steel toe boots and one suggested that we repair them rather than replace the boots.

Many employees were concerned about the creating paper copies and the number of copiers and printers the agency has. Other suggesters said that we could reduce travel to the Headquarters and the District Headquarters for training and meetings. The meetings could be conducted on-line or by Video Conferencing.

Several employees suggested placing publications such as The Connector and Safety Bulletins on-line. Several sugges-

tions involved the use of the 4 day work-week, compressed work hours and the hours of operations of our field offices.

Ideas being adopted

Many of the topics suggested have been adopted or are in the process of being adopted. Some examples are: The Connector and Safety Bulletins are now on-line. However, some are printed because most of our employees do not have access to a computer. A web site location is being developed to identify available excess furniture and office supplies.

Energy efficient lighting is being installed, and we continue to evaluate the optimum number of vehicles and equipment for the mission. Practices recently adopted by Engineering Reproduction Services (ERS), are an example. In an effort to lower the cost, ERS has reduced the number of proposal copies automatically printed at the start of each monthly letting from 40 to 20.

In the past ERS would print 40 copies of proposals and some would not be sold, while some would need to be reprinted. Now we try to limit excessive printing, but not hold up the public or contractors waiting on their letting needs. We now print 20 proposals initially, then we reprint only 5 copies as needed, or print on-demand. This will minimize the cost of papers, toners, and printer clicks which will reduce printing cost at the DOT. According to Steve Knight, ERS Manager, the results are an annual estimated savings of \$14,568.88.

All suggestions have been evaluated and many are being studied for implementation. Each employee who participated will receive a Certificate of Appreciation from Secretary Limehouse.

For those who have additional ideas for costs savings, you may use the Idea Express program located at <http://iwww.dot.state.sc.us/AssetManagement/PDF/ideaexpressform.pdf>



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

STEP-21 Class of 2008

The 2008 Step-21 Class graduated on Aug. 13. The class had a special recognition for Johnney Williamson, a class member who died during their year of training. The class members are, from left, Janie Washington, Lois Williamson, Neci Johnson, Jeffery Smith, Ken Silvers, Paula Morphy, Floyd Sweat, Bonnie Frick, Wendy Bonham, Peggy Hendrix, Katherine Blanton, Gail Barton-Ford, James Cassidy and Justin Cliatt.

Talk about leaving your comfort zone... SCDOT employee sees road building in Africa

By Nancy Redmond,
Human Resources

On Sunday, Sept. 14 at 9:05 am, I flew out of Columbia, SC with five other members of a Mission Team from Swansea First Baptist Church bound for Africa.

We arrived in Kenya on Monday night Sept. 16. We traveled to Kitale on Tuesday where we stayed at the Kitale Country Club for the first week.

During that week we set up two medical clinics (the nurses and doctor saw over 900 people), we conducted a women's conference, hut to hut evangelism and helped plan a church in the town of Machines.

On Monday Sept. 22, we traveled to

Nakuru and spent two days with the children at the Legacy School.

On our trip from Nakuru to Nairobi we found ourselves in the middle of road construction, I felt like I was back home. I was astounded at the mixture of modern day equipment with third world country methodology. They used rocks and boulders for pylons and hand painted signs to direct the traffic. The terrain was so dry and dusty that the visibility was 0 to none in some areas.

On Sept. 26 at 9:50 pm, we flew out of Nairobi for home. The wonders of this experience were not only the innovative ways they used all of the resources, but the big smiles, warm hugs and friendly waves served as a marvelous reward for being part of this team.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANCY REDMOND/HUMAN RESOURCES

While in Nairobi on a mission trip, SCDOT employee Nancy Redmond came upon a road construction project. She was amazed by the mixture of modern equipment and third world methodology. Above, rocks and boulders are used along with pylons to block a lane of traffic.



Retirements

Robert E. Solomon, of Lamar, trades specialist II at Florence Maintenance, retired July 21, after 20 years of service.

Sammy J. Adams, of Rock Hill, trades specialist II at York Maintenance, retired July 29, after 10 years of service.

Harvey L. Collins, of Florence, trades specialist II at Florence Maintenance, retired July 30, after 26 years of service.

Richard C. Catoe Jr., of Liberty Hill, trades specialist II at Lancaster Maintenance, retired July 31, after 11 years of service.

Peter J. Sharpe, of Ruffin, trades specialist III at Colleton Maintenance, retired July 31, after 19 years of service.

Wayne D. Ward, of Georgetown, environmental health manager at Georgetown Maintenance, retired July 31, after 11 years of service.

Mack Washington, of Fairfax, trades specialist II at Allendale Maintenance, retired Aug. 1, after seven years of service.

William E. Russ Jr., of Lexington, senior geodetic technician in Traffic Engineering, retired Aug. 1, after 35 years of service.

Lula M. Grant, of St. George, trades specialist III at Dorchester Maintenance, retired Aug. 8, after 16 years of service.

Glenn W. Messer, of Easley, trades specialist IV at Greenville Maintenance, retired Aug. 14, after 25 years of service.

Zane P. Currier, of North Charleston, senior geodetic technician in pavement management-secondary roads, retired Aug. 14, after 13 years of service.

Thomas E. Lucas, of Blythewood, trades specialist II at Richland Maintenance, retired Aug. 18, after 11 years of service.

Abraham Favor Jr., of West Columbia, trades specialist III at Lexington Maintenance, retired Aug. 18, after 24 years of service.

Belinda Dixon-Killius, of Columbia, trades specialist II at Lexington Maintenance, retired Aug. 18, after two years of service.

Everett L. Crosby, of Early Branch, trades specialist V at Hampton Maintenance, retired Aug. 21 after 27 years of state service.

Leroy Richardson, of Sumter, trades specialist II at Sumter Maintenance, retired Aug.

29, after 15 years of service.

Ralph L. Crank, of Chester, trades specialist II at Chester Maintenance, retired Sept. 15, after 20 years of service.

James Johnson, of North Charleston, trades specialist III at Charleston Maintenance, retired Sept. 16, after 29 years of service.

Albert D. Harris, of St. Stephen, trades specialist II at Berkeley Maintenance, retired Sept. 24, after 15 years of state service.

Jeff L. Byrum, of Hickory Grove, trades specialist III at York Maintenance, retired Sept. 29, after 22 years of service.

Jimmy D. Lawson, of Woodruff, mechanic I at Spartanburg Maintenance, retired Sept. 30, after 20 years of service.

Wayne D. Grubbs, of Barnwell, trades specialist III at Barnwell Maintenance, retired Sept. 30, after 33 years of service.

Steven C. Lindler, of Irmo, supply manager II at the supply depot, retired Sept. 30, after 33 years of service.

Leslie Boykin, of Cassatt, trades specialist III at Kershaw Maintenance, retired Oct. 1, after 28 years of service.

William J. Osborne, of Sumter, associate geodetic technician at Kershaw Maintenance, retired Oct. 1, after 28 years of state service.

Willie Coates, of Abbeville, trades specialist II at Abbeville Maintenance, retired Oct. 1 after 33 years of state service.

Robert O. Jamison, of Rock Hill, trades specialist IV at York Maintenance, retired Oct. 2, after 17 years of service.

Patricia P. Martin, of Columbia, associate geodetic technician in road date services, retired Oct. 9, after 32 years of service.

Bennie J. Warnock, of Aiken, trades specialist II at Aiken Maintenance, retired Oct. 21, after 18 years of service.

Lettie C. Fralick, of Neeses, human resources manager I at District 7 Office, retired Oct. 31, after 40 years of state service.

Patricia A. Howard, of Gray Court, trades specialist II at Laurens Maintenance, retired Oct. 31, after 13 years of service.

Holly L. Moody, of Dillon, right of way agent II at Right of Way - Florence, retired Oct. 31, after 13 years of service.

Moving Up

Kenneth V. Silvers, of Lexington, from Trades Specialist III to Trades Specialist IV at Lee Maintenance.

Kevin L. Gantt, of Lexington, Engineer/Associate Engineer III to Engr./Engineering Associate IV at RPG 3 - Midlands.

Lonniesha N. Hart, of Columbia, from Associate Geodetic Technician to Senior Geodetic Technician in Research & Materials Engineering.

Mary A. Alexander, of Coward, from Assistant Geodetic Technician to Senior Geodetic Technician in Research & Materials Engineering.

Robert A. Camp, of Pickens, from Right-Of-Way Agent II to Right-Of-Way Agent III at Rights of Way - Greenville.

Tammy L. Quick, of Wallace, from Right-Of-Way Agent II to Right-Of-Way Agent III at Rights of Way.

Jason A. Byrd, of Lexington, from Engineer/Associate Engineer I to Engr./Engineering Associate II in Traffic Engineering.

William K. Riddle, of Columbia, from Engineer/Associate Engineer II to Engr./Engineering Associate III in Traffic Engineering.

Freddie J. Copeland, of Aiken, from Trades Specialist III to Trades Specialist IV at Aiken Maintenance.

Joseph D. Tidwell, of Bishopville,

from Trades Specialist III to Trades Specialist IV at Lee Maintenance.

Tina V. Walker, of Bishopville, from Trades Specialist III to Trades Specialist IV at Lee Maintenance.

Christopher L. Geter, of Sumter, from Trades Specialist III to Trades Specialist IV at Sumter Maintenance.

Steven L. Altman, of Lexington, from Engineer/Associate Engineer I to Engr./Engineering Associate II at Lexington Construction.

Carroll E. Collins, of Pickens, from Assistant Geodetic Technician to Associate Geodetic Technician at Greenville Maintenance.

Christopher W. Madden, of Pickens, from Assistant Geodetic Technician to Associate Geodetic Technician at Greenville Maintenance.

Alexander P. Butts, of Westminster, from Trades Specialist II to Trades Specialist III at Oconee Maintenance.

James T. Harvey, of Westminster, from Trades Specialist III to Trades Specialist IV at Oconee Maintenance.

Brandon K. Moore, of Bishopville, from Assistant Geodetic Technician to Associate Geodetic Technician at Florence Construction.

Deaths

William H. Pelzer, of Bowman, trades specialist II at Holly Hill Maintenance, died July 28, after three years of state service.

Thomas D. Harvey, of Gray Court, trades specialist II at Laurens Maintenance, died Aug. 6, after two years of service.

Allan L. Sheely, of Little Mountain, engineer/associate engineer in the Office of Materials and

Research, died Aug. 31, after 22 years of state service.

David H. Bridwell, of Greenville, trades specialist II at Greenville Maintenance, died Sept. 6, after 13 years of service.

Charles A. Lange, of Woodruff, electronics technician II in District 3-Traffic Signals, died Sept. 24 after a year of service.

HUGER from page 1

Maintenance-District 1, it was truly a team effort," Magwood said. "Environmental Office, Research and Materials Lab, Preconstruction, Traffic Engineering, Procurement Office, and SCDOT top management all played an integral part."

The sinkhole occurred when a 20 foot section of an underground storm drain collapsed – something that unfortunately may become more common.

"Infrastructure, not just in Columbia but all across South Carolina, is reaching 60 to 80 years old and signs of the age of the system are going to show. Unfortunately, sink holes are how it tends to show its age," Magwood said.

Before Richland Maintenance could begin the repair work, the first challenge was inconveniencing motorists as little as possible for the NC State game, Magwood said. Huger Street is one of four major routes used by stadium traffic. That meant working out a lane reversal plan with Traffic Engineering and coordinating efforts with the SC Highway Patrol and City of Columbia Police.

With the two northbound lanes closed, the Department had to first make sure the two southbound lanes could remain open and had not been impacted by the sinkhole.

Magwood said an on-call contractor was used to employ ground-penetrating radar to examine soil conditions under the southbound lanes.

"Basically it was a sub-surface survey of soil conditions without any type of excavation," Magwood said. The report produced provided the Department a 3-D picture of the roadway's base.

The tests showed there was no significant cavity under the southbound lanes and the reversal plans went forward. Richland Maintenance set up hundreds of cones, barricades, signs, and changeable message boards.

Traffic was allowed southbound on Huger Street before the game. At about 10 p.m., or the beginning of the third quarter, crews had to scramble to reverse traffic to allow northbound, post-game motorists to use the southbound lanes.

"We had 12 employees working to install traffic control," Magwood said. "The City of Columbia provided extra police officers to encourage traffic in lane transitions and made sure our personnel were protected."

With the lanes reversed, post-game traffic flowed as it would normally following a home game, Magwood said.

By 1:30 a.m., crews again had to change barricades and cones to completely close down the sinkhole section of Huger Street at Assembly Street. SCDOT employees clocked out around 3 a.m. that morning.

"With one major headache over, we got the green light to start repairs," Magwood said. "The first step was to excavate and expose the

line of storm drain to further assess the damage. The repairs were done by Richland Maintenance, which had from 13–20 employees on site at any given time. The employees labored for 16 early and late days straight after being faced with a September 12th deadline.

"As excavation began, the crew was challenged with benching the walls of this area adequately between two large water lines that could not be disturbed, but most of all meeting the OSHA requirements," Magwood said.

The excavated area was more than 18 feet deep and covered 4 travel lanes. Because of the depth of the excavated area and the danger it represented, a contractor specializing in trenching and shoring was brought in to design a solution to protect personnel while repairs were in progress.

The crew installed a total of 132 linear feet of reinforced concrete pipe to include 18-inch, 30-inch and 36-inch diameters. "They constructed two catch basins and a man hole, along with the installation of two specially designed 60-inch diameter drainage structures that had to be set with the use of a crane," Magwood said.

One potential problem arose when oil material was found in the trench during repairs. The State Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) was called in to test the soil, Magwood said.

"DHEC was very good and responded very quickly with their mobile testing lab," Magwood said. Working on site, DHEC gave the go ahead to continue repairs within six hours after determining samples to be consistent with a release of petroleum from several years ago that had been trapped underground.

As repairs continued, Magwood and his crews faced a deadline of September 12 to have the work completed in time for the USC-Georgia football game. The last thing anyone wanted was another lane reversal.

But with minimal weather delays, Richland Maintenance completed the repairs a day early, and the only problem on game day was that the Bulldogs got lucky and beat the Gamecocks.

The Huger Street repair work also included:

- installed curb, gutter and sidewalk
- the excavated area required over 1,000 cubic yards of fill material
- resurfacing the street required 725 tons of asphalt, with new pavement markings and line striping.

Traffic was restored to normal operations Sept. 11, at 3:24 pm. Richland Maintenance supervisors involved in the planning, logistics, repairs and traffic control for this project were: Sandra Riley, Assistant Resident Maintenance Engineer; Donald Blizzard, Assistant Resident Maintenance Engineer; James Hubbard, Foreman; Brett Pearson, Foreman; Bill Kilpatrick, Foreman; Tommy Jennings, Foreman; James Alston, Foreman; Timothy Stone, Foreman; and Jerome Cunningham, Foreman.



9:02 a.m.



9:46 a.m.



1:34 p.m.



9:10 a.m.



1:30 p.m.



1:35 p.m.



9:17 a.m.



9:26 a.m.



2:25 p.m.



1:42 p.m.



2:26 p.m.



1:54 p.m.



9:32 a.m.



2:29 p.m.

Opening Day . . . 'Runs Like Clockwork'

Photographs by Rob Thompson

Sept. 11, 2008

Like a well-oiled machine, SCDOT workers complete the final touches on the sinkhole repair project on Huger Street.

9:02 a.m. Camilo Martinez of Walker Brothers, Inc., a traffic system specialist, cuts the pavement to install traffic sensors in the roadway.

9:10 a.m. Contractors use water pressure to clean out the cuts in the asphalt before traffic sensor wiring is installed.

9:17 a.m. SCDOT traffic engineers Curtis Singleton and Sam Timms work with City of Columbia traffic engineers Billy Langley and Ernest Jones to find the junction boxes for the traffic sensors.

9:26 a.m. Raul Soto of Walker Brothers, Inc., a traffic system contractor, installs the wiring for traffic sensors in the roadway.

9:32 a.m. Richland RME Tony Magwood, right, talks with the SC Highway Patrol and Columbia Traffic Unit Police about the logistics of opening the roadway in the afternoon. The police, from left, are: City of Columbia Traffic Unit Sgt. Michael Modica, Highway Patrol Captain Leroy Taylor and Highway Patrol Corporal J.R. Cribb.

9:46 a.m. A crew from Richland Maintenance does finishing work on the staging area of the project. The employees are, from left, Anthony Belton, Brandon Woodard and Henry Robertson.

1:30 p.m. Crews put down the thermoplastic stop line as one of the finishing tasks on the project. The crew had to use a blow torch to dry the pavement due to the rainy weather that day.

1:34 p.m. Richland RME Tony Magwood gives instructions to the crew to coordinate removing the barricades that afternoon.

1:35 p.m. Sandra Riley, left, watches as Chris Richardson, center, and Anthony Belton remove sidewalk barricades.

1:42 p.m. A street sweeper cleans up the freshly laid asphalt prior painting new lane markers.

1:54 p.m. Richland Maintenance employees use a blower to clear and dry the pavement, paint the lines and spread glass beads on the wet paint. Joe Derrick paints new lines as Mark B. Hunter applies the reflective glass beads over the wet paint.

2:25 p.m. Richland Maintenance prepares to pick up and collect the orange cones on the opposite side of the intersection at the same time crews remove the barricades.

2:26 p.m. Richland Maintenance crews remove the final barricades to open Huger Street.

2:29 p.m. District 1 Engineering Administrator Thad Brunson and Richland RME Tony Magwood watch as the roadway opens and traffic starts to use the newly repaired roadway.

It's a dirty job, but SCDOT's ahead of schedule on Palmetto Parkway

By Bob Kudelka

A big story behind building the Palmetto Parkway Phase II project is the dirt.

Or more specifically, how much dirt was moved to level the terrain for the new highway project in Aiken County: 4.5 million cubic yards.

That's enough dirt to pile eight stories high on 30 football fields, each 100 yards long and 50 yards wide.

"One of the most impressive parts of the project is that you can go 300 or 400 feet and there's a change of 70 or 80 feet in elevation from one side of the right of way to the other," Claude Ipock, SCDOT Project Manager, said of the sloping terrain.

With the excavation completed, the I-520 Phase II of the Palmetto Parkway in Aiken County reached the halfway point this summer with the project ahead of schedule and on budget.

In early November, concrete paving began. Thirteen of the 16 bridges were complete and the major earthwork and drainage was finished.

"Overall, everything's going fairly smoothly - it's been a good project," Ipock said.

Ipock said the project was 5 percent to 7 percent ahead of schedule. Work began January 2007 and is scheduled for completion Dec. 31, 2009.

The project consists of the completion of I-520 from US Route 1 to I-20 along a new location for approximately 6.5 miles. This will provide a controlled-access route linking Augusta and North Augusta.

It will be a four-lane divided interstate including three interchanges and 16 bridges.

The interstate will have two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction, a 10-foot outside shoulder and 4-foot inside shoulder, making it 38 feet of pavement. The 24-foot wide mainline will be concrete; the shoulders asphalt.

The project includes roadway improvements to the ramps at the US Route 25/I-20 interchanges, SC Route 126 (Clearwater Road), Road S-33 (Ascauga Lake Road), and various secondary and local roads to accommodate the I-520 alignment.

A connector road will be constructed from US Route 25 to I-520 to link the two.

Improvements are being made to the existing intersection of US Highway 25 and Interstate 20

(Exit 5). A new eight lane bridge is being constructed to replace the two existing two lane bridges, new on and off ramps will be built, and the frontage roads will be realigned to improve the functioning of the interstate interchange with Highway 25.

In addition, Highway 25 from I-20 to the 520 connector road (approximately one-half mile to the south of Interstate 20) will be widened to six lanes.

The project got a big boost in February when the SCDOT Commission approved changes to the Palmetto Parkway construction project to benefit motorists and save money.

The changes involved items that had been originally proposed but were not included due to lack of funding. However, due to additional funding approved by the South Carolina Infrastructure Bank, as requested by Aiken County, and costs savings by SCDOT and the contractor, the SCDOT Commission approved the additional work.

This included widening Clearwater Road from 3 to 5 lanes; widening US 25; a complete reconstruction of interchange at I-20 and US 25 to include a new US 25 bridge over I-20; and a bicycle and pedestrian path adjacent to I-520.

"We've essentially added a project within itself," Ipock said.

The multi-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists that will be parallel to the new interstate highway. It will be a paved pathway 10 feet wide and five miles long.

"The interesting fact regarding the pathway along the Parkway is that it marks the first time a bicycle/pedestrian facility was constructed parallel to a freeway in South Carolina within the same right of way," said Tom

Dodds, SCDOT's Pedestrian and Bicycle Engineer.

The request for the pedestrian/bicycle accommodations came from Aiken County and North Augusta, said Mark Lester, Upstate Regional Production Engineer who was involved early in the project development.

"It was an unusual request," Lester said. "We had to discuss it with FHWA, and we determined there was nothing that prevented us from doing it, as long as there was distinct separation between mainline travel and the path."

Leland Colvin, Assistant Construction Engineer, said the multi-use path will be from 50 to 200 feet away from the interstate.

"Most of it is on a different elevation than the interstate and, at a minimum, you're going to have drainage feature between the interstate and the path," Colvin said.

The path will only be accessible from side roads and there will be no access points from the interstate, Colvin said.

Multi-use paths have become popular at such projects as the Cooper River Bridge in Charles-

ton and the SC 6/60 highway across Lake Murray in Lexington County. SCDOT routinely looks at ways to include multi-use paths along new projects.

In overseeing the expansive project, Ipock holds monthly meetings and receives weekly updates with the contractors to discuss short- and long-term goals as well as safety.

Ipock joined SCDOT nearly 3 years ago after a background in highway construction in the private sector and working with NCDOT.

"You've got to spend time out here," Ipock said, maneuvering his Jeep through the project. "I've got enough background in the work that I can spend some time out here every day and get a handle on where they're at and where they're going, and dealing with issues that pop up day to day."

Contractors include United Contractors, Inc., U.S. Constructors, Inc., R.E. Goodson, Triplett-King & Associates, Inc., Coleman-Snow Consultants, Inc., Florence & Hutcheson, Inc., F&ME Consultants, Inc.,

S&F Engineering, Inc., Palmetto Safety Solutions, Inc., and Public Strategy, LLC.

By The Numbers

Length of I-520 mainline:
5.3 miles

Total length of project including I-520, bridges and side roads:
24.1 miles

More than 475 acres of clearing and grubbing

53,650 linear feet of storm drain pipe

4.5 million cubic yards of excavation

7 Reinforced Box culverts

2 concrete retaining walls

20 MSE walls

16 bridges

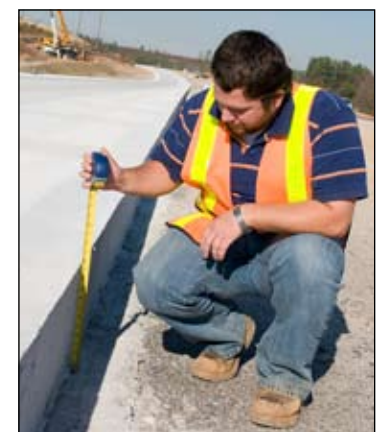
160,000 tons of graded aggregate base course

237,000 tons of hot mix asphalt

200,000 square yards of concrete paving



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR
Dump trucks haul 27 cubic yards of fill with every trip. Large quantities of fill is required due to the changes in elevation along the roadway.



Chris Kelly, of Richland Construction, checks the thickness of the concrete roadway. The concrete measures a little over 11 inches deep.



In July, so much dirt was being hauled, the project area looked like a desert of clay.



In November, concrete paving began on the project. Here, contractors pave a section of the highway using a series of machinery that pours, forms and smooths the wet concrete.



The I-520 and I-20 interchange will be the new exit 6 on I-20.



Project Manager Claude Ipock shows road plans of the I-520 project in South Carolina.

Engineering News

SCDOT Commission approves realignment of engineering districts

District 2 adds Anderson County, District 7 adds Aiken County

At its October meeting, the SCDOT Commission approved the realignment of four engineering districts. Based on a committee study and the recommendation of Secretary H.B. Limehouse Jr. and Deputy Secretary for Engineering Tony Chapman, the Commission voted to move Aiken County to District 7 and Anderson County to District 2. Transition teams have already begun reviewing the steps necessary to implement this change with minimal disruptions to the impacted district and county staffs. This realignment will be effective July 1, 2009.

Clem Watson, Chief Engineer for Operations, is leading the transition teams. Watson worked with the committee throughout the review process and presented the final recommendations to the Commission.

"We felt like this would be a good start in trying to balance the workloads in the Districts," Watson said. "The Districts are going to gain resources and developmental opportunities that they may not currently have and the counties are going to likewise gain resources from the new districts at the level that they may not have now. I think it's a win-win for the counties and the Districts – a good opportunity for both."

The decennial review of SCDOT's highway districts has been required since the passage of Act No. 181 in 1993. Every ten years, SCDOT is required to review the number and territory embraced by each district. The first review was performed by a consulting firm in 1998 at a cost of approximately \$300,000. In October 2005, the SCDOT Commission directed that SCDOT staff perform this review. A committee of employees from across SCDOT was formed utilizing members from administration, auditing, engineering, and the districts, as well as the FHWA. The review finalized in October cost less than \$50,000.

To begin the review process, the committee first looked at the history of how the engineering districts were aligned, next the requirements of the statute, and finally established an evaluation methodology based on their collective experience and the original review conducted in 1998. From this information, the committee evaluated multiple alternatives and developed recommendations for the Commission.

The initial highway district structure was established in 1920 and divided the state into four sections. This structure was utilized until 1955 when the current seven district alignment was established.

To address the statute, the committee sought to establish a definition for "proper and effi-

cient performance" and focused on obtaining equality among the districts as it relates to work load. This will aid efficiency through improved internal and external

Aiken and Anderson will officially become a part of their new districts on July 1, 2009.

customer service.

The committee collected data on many items that impact the work load in a district. These factors were used to develop a work load score for each district:

- Lane miles per county,
- Population by county,
- Vehicle miles traveled,
- Employee positions by county,
- District outsourcing,
- Southeast states comparison,
- Work requests per county,
- Customer opinion,
- Level of service of system,
- Equipment per county,
- Anticipated construction,
- Population growth.

Next, the committee developed several scenarios to evaluate. These scenarios included maintaining the existing seven balanced districts based on work load scores, establishing an eighth district, and shifting two counties within the existing alignment. The committee also studied two alternatives that reduced the number of districts, but these were eliminated because of the impacts on customer service and the growing population served by SCDOT.

Each of the four options provides the Department opportunities to improve and grow. The option for an eighth district provides a more evenly distributed work load and additional opportunities for interfacing with our customers in the low country. However, it was the costliest alternative identified. The balanced approach evenly distributes the work load

but required shifting of over a dozen counties and some district offices would no longer be centrally located. The option of shifting two counties would more effectively allocate the work load within the seven established district offices and be the least disruptive to our current workflow. This shift also falls within the proposed alignment for establishing an eighth district along the southern coast should the Department decide to establish an additional district office.

After studying each of the options developed by the committee, Secretary Limehouse and Deputy Secretary for Engineering Chapman recommended to the Commission that shifting Anderson County to District 2 and Aiken County to District 7 provided the best approach for realignment. This alternative can be implemented with limited disruption to SCDOT's current work flow and has negligible costs. This reduces the work load for two large urban district offices and offers increased opportunities in SCDOT's two most rural district offices.

Following the Commission's

decision, Deputy Secretary Chapman appointed Chief Engineer for Operations Watson to lead a transition team to implement the new alignment. Watson has already conducted meetings with District and County staffs to begin the transition process.

District 2 DEA Phillip Brooks has also participated in the transition meetings. Brooks said his staff has been meeting with its counterparts in District 3 to discuss the transition and develop plans to make the handoff as smooth as possible.

"We look forward, as a Dis-

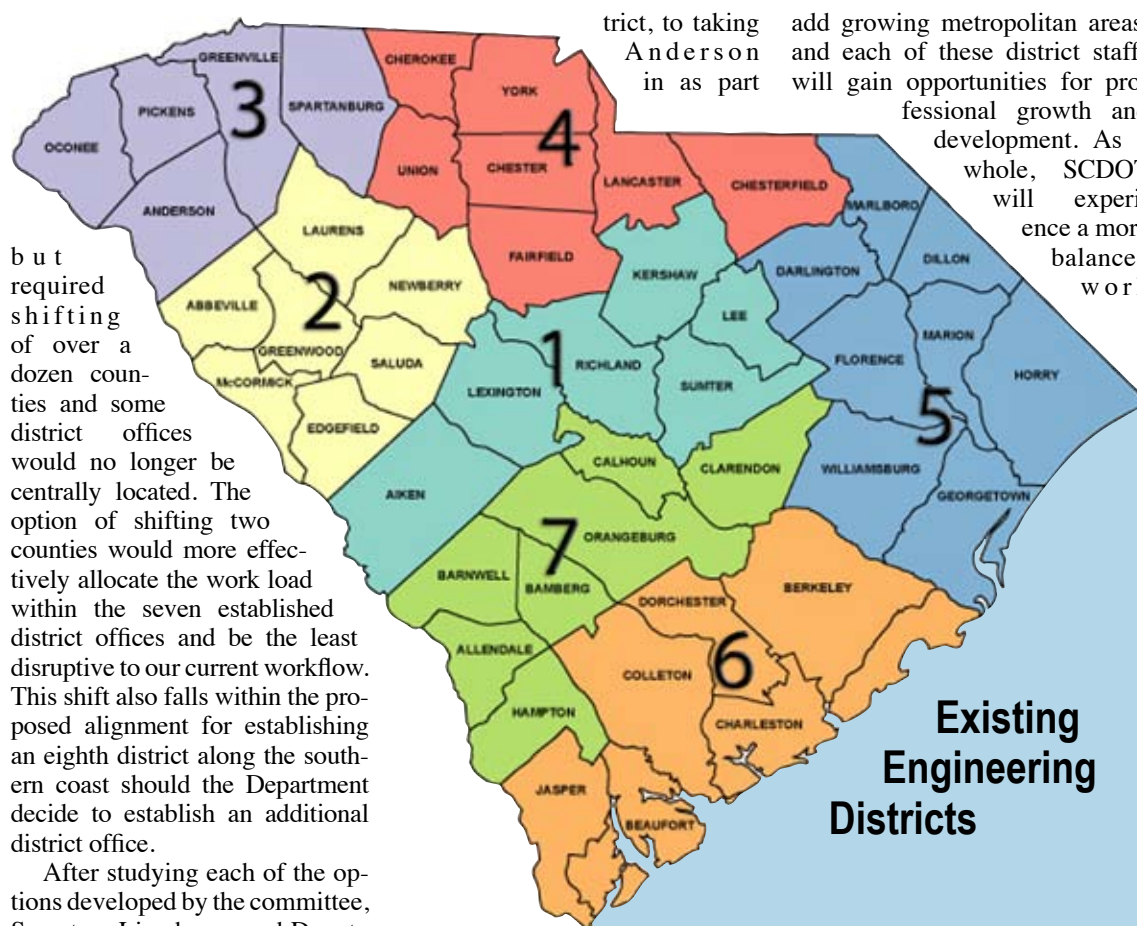
Got engineering news?

Contact Andy Leaphart at: 803-737-1994 or email him at Leaphart@scdot.org



Andy Leaphart

trict, to taking Anderson in as part add growing metropolitan areas, and each of these district staffs will gain opportunities for professional growth and development. As a whole, SCDOT will experience a more balanced work



Existing Engineering Districts

of our District oversight and we look forward to working with their county staff to continue to improve and maintain the existing road system," Brooks said.

Operations in Aiken and Anderson will remain largely unchanged, with no adjustments in staffing or resources. The benefits derived from this plan will be most apparent in the District Offices of the four impacted districts. District 1 and District 3 will benefit from concentrating their respective resources on a smaller geographic area. At the

same time, Dis-

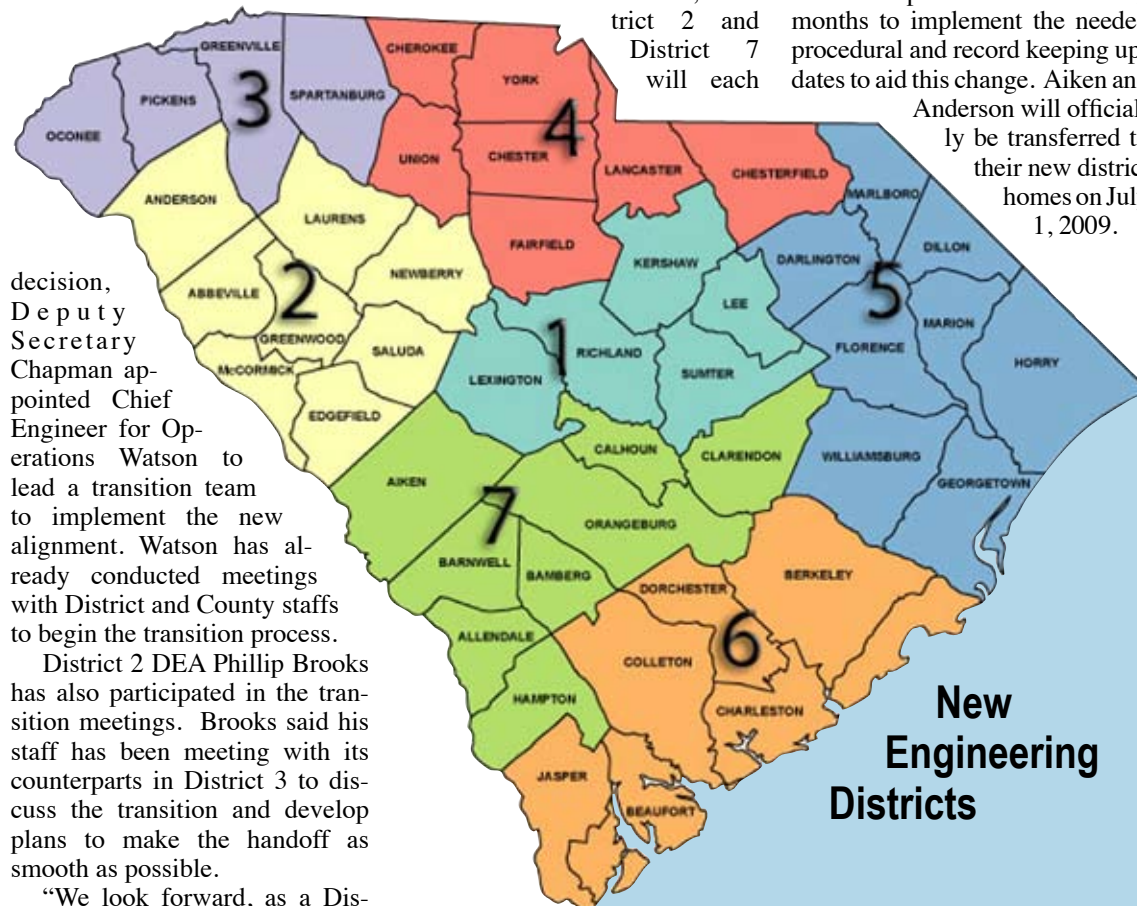
trict 2 and District 7 will each

load between the large urban districts and smaller rural districts.

District 7 DEA Jo Ann Woodrum said she has received positive feedback during meetings with the maintenance and construction personnel from Aiken County who will be joining District 7.

"I think Aiken County is going to be a good fit with our District," Woodrum said. "There is a good part of the county that is rural and they already adjoin our District. I think it's going to work out just fine."

Transition teams will continue to review operations in the coming months to implement the needed procedural and record keeping updates to aid this change. Aiken and Anderson will officially be transferred to their new district homes on July 1, 2009.



New Engineering Districts

District 1 News



Teresa Harley

Aiken, Kershaw, Lee, Lexington, Richland and Sumter counties

District Engineer: **Thad Brunson** (803) 737-6660
 FAX (803) 737-6401

Got news?

Contact Teresa Harley at:
 803-737-6715 or email
 her at HarleyTL@scdot.org

Lee Maintenance employees recognized for excellent safety record

By Garnet McKalsen,
 Lee Maintenance

The success of our safety program at Lee Maintenance can be attributed to several factors.

We are pretty much like one big family here at Lee Maintenance. We have a low employee turn over rate which helps with everyone knowing their job and familiarity with their coworkers.

A lot of our employees grew up together in Lee County or are related. That really helps in the long run. As a Safety Officer, one of the biggest challenges I have had to face is getting people to change their attitude about safety and the rules and regulations we have to follow.

I want our employees to be safe because that's what they want to be, not because they are just told to follow a "safety rule." Each crew has a "crew safety rep." They keep up with MSDS books that their crew carries and check fire extinguishers, lifting chains, etc. that their crew uses. Everyone on the crew gets to be the "crew

safety rep" for a 3 month period. This gives every one a chance to get involved with safety.

A successful program can not be successful with out the support of management. At Lee Maintenance, we are fortunate to have the full support of the RME, the District Office, and Headquarters. Support and recognition of the safety program from management has been instrumental in our success.

In this day of financially difficult times, recognition is a good cost effective way to reward employees for work safely done.

Our employees are proud to have achieved our level of safety and work to improve on our safety record. Everyone works hard to be safe so they will not be the one to break our safety record.

I am proud to work with everyone at Lee Maintenance. Working with everyone here is a pleasure and they are all really great people.

With everyone's support, hard work and some fun mixed in we have made great strides in our safety program.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CODY CROUCH/THE CONNECTOR

ABOVE: Lee Maintenance was recognized for their consecutive days without a workplace injury.



RIGHT: From Left: Lee Safety Officer Garnet McKalsen, District 1 Engineering Administrator Thad Brunson, Lee RME Wayne Keeys, District 1 Safety Officer Aaron Williams and SCDOT Director of Occupational Safety John Gaither.



Boss's Day

The senior office staff at Richland Maintenance enjoyed an elegant meal on Boss's Day after the employees converted an area of the office into the 'La Richland' restaurant on Oct. 23.



Enjoying the meal by candlelight and sipping on apple cider is, from left, Brian Motley, Don Blizzard, Molly Alson, RME Tony Magwood and Sandra Riley.

Scooterpooling?



District 1 employees Brett McCutchan and Jason Rauch test out the idea of 'scooterpooling' to help save their money on fuel consumption. McCutchan drove while Rauch played passenger in back.



Meet Frank Thomas

Name: Frank Thomas
Title: Resident Maintenance Foreman
Unit: Lee Maintenance
Started with SCDOT: 1987

Frank Thomas started his career with SCDOT on January 12, 1987 with the shoulder crew.

He was promoted to maintenance foreman on October 2, 1999 and to Resident Maintenance Foreman

on March 17, 2008.

Thomas and his wife, Ann, have two sons, Dante (17) and Chad (12). He is a member of the South Carolina National Guard, with 20 years of service.

He is also a volunteer firefighter with the Lee County Fire Department, in the Red Hill community.

He is a member of the Mt. Olive AME church, located in the Woodrow community. His hobbies are playing basketball, softball, weightlifting, and spending time with his boys playing video games.

District 2 News

Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry and Saluda counties

District Engineer: Phillip M. Brooks (864) 227-6971
FAX (864) 227-6567

Got news?

Contact Dwayne Scott at 864-227-6222 or email him at ScottDE@scdot.org.



Dwayne Scott

Adopt-A-Highway

Jeff Davis is named new Greenwood AAH Coordinator

The statewide Adopt-A-Highway program has a new coordinator in Greenwood County, and he needs your help. Jeff Davis of SCDOT is the new AAH coordinator and he has plenty of open sections of roadway waiting for your group, church, or business to adopt.

You can take pride in keeping an area of our county free of litter and you can have your group's name on a sign, letting everyone else know that you're doing your part (in hopes that they will do their part too).

The AAH program is a volunteer program that gives citizens a chance to get actively involved in their community and make a

conscious effort to improve the appearance and cleanliness of the community in which they live. The roads that are involved in the program must be state maintained roads. The minimum section of road is 2 miles and the maximum section is 4 miles.

Davis' advice is, "We all need to do our part to keep Greenwood 'green.' Don't litter and if you see any litter, pick it up. Chances are that wherever you're going, your next stop will have a trash can. Use it." A little effort makes a big difference.

If you're interested in adopting a section of highway in Greenwood County, call Jeff at 864-227-6701 for details.



Jeff Davis wants your help in removing litter from the highways in Greenwood County.

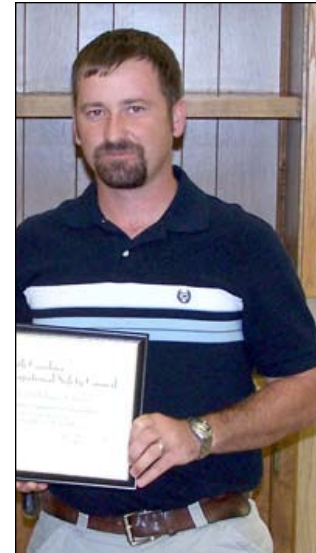
District 2 collects safety awards



Accepting the award for District 2 is, from left, Kevin McLaughlin, Karen Kesler, Lee Neighbors and Mark DeZurik.



Saluda Construction
Jimmie Boland



McCormick Maintenance
Clifton White



Greenwood Construction
Pat Koone

The South Carolina Occupational Safety Council awarded District 2 Engineering, Greenwood Construction, McCormick Maintenance, and Saluda Construction for on

the job safety.

District 2 Safety Coordinator Karen Kesler, was there to hand out the awards at the District 2 Staff Meeting.

Meet Johnny Horne



Johnny Horne is a mechanic for the Saluda Maintenance shop and has been employed with SCDOT for about 25 years.

His hobbies include building street rods and singing southern gospel music. He has 14 street rods, ranging from 1931 to 1936 Ford and Chevy coupes that he has completed or is working on.

He also has a rare 1963 split window Corvette in his collection.



District 3 News

Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg counties

District Engineer: Steve Gwinn (864) 241-1010
FAX (864) 241-1115



Got news?

Please contact
Joyce Gardner
at 864-241-1010
or by emailing her at
GardnerJR@scdot.org

Joyce Gardner

Pickens Maintenance repairs bridge



Chris Napoli and Craig Kyle replacing the support on Glenwood Road bridge.



Craig Kyle, of Pickens Maintenance, is welding a new I-beam support under the bridge at SC 135 and Glenwood Road.



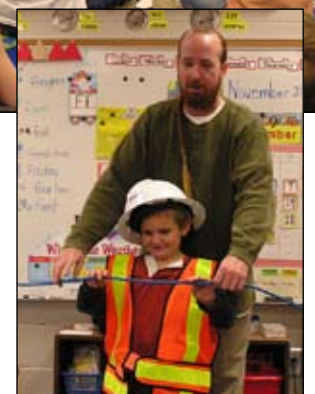
Pickens Maintenance employees are repairing support beams under the bridges. On the ground, the old wooden support has been cut away. Water rushing under it has caused erosion.



SCDOT in the classroom



Jeff Jordan of the District 3 Office visits with students of Mountain View Elementary School during their Career Day. Jordan used visual aids as well as hands on tasks to teach the students about SCDOT.



District 4 News

*Cherokee, Chester, Chesterfield,
Fairfield, Lancaster, Union and
York counties*

*District Engineer: Stan Bland
(803) 377-4155
FAX (803) 581-2088*

Got news?

Contact Edward Moore with your ideas at 803-377-4155 or by emailing him at MooreEO@scdot.org



Edward Moore

Meet Chester Maintenance

Here are the people who keep the roads maintained in Chester County



Office Staff, Left to right: Laura Boyd, Resident Maintenance Engineer Mike Rector, Angela Cabaniss, Reuben Guy and Myrtle Morrison.



The bridge crew is, left to right: Ike McBrayer, Chuckie Stuart, Jeremy Davis, Amanda Molina and Russia Holley.



Byron Chambers left, and Gene Hicklin participate in First Aid Training.



The sign crew is, from left: Rodney Orr, Jonathan Lucas, Barbara Johnson and Richard Hunter.



Ditching Crew members James "Big Red" McCullough and David Kindle operate Athey loader.



The ditching crew foreman is Mack Young.



Right-of-way crew members Buck Taylor left, and Ricky Michau trim vegetation on SC route 97.



Trades Specialist III Charlie Ray Brown conducts equipment inspection on motor grader.



Driveway Crew is, left to right: Wesley McInville, Woody Moser and Jeffery Stroud install a driveway on US 321 in Chester



Bridge Repair Foreman Buddy Bell left, and lead man Cody McAbee keep their eyes on bridges in Chester County.



The capital improvement crew is, left to right: Adam Wesley, Jerome Sinclair, Zeddie Darby, Edison Darby and Terry Taylor.



Sylvester 'Smokey' Terry prepares to flag for a ditching operation in Chester County.



Trades Specialist III Harry Williams inspects backhoe.



Harold Boulware of Chester Shop repairs sand spreader.

District 5 News

Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg counties

*District Engineer: Dennis Townsend (843) 661-4710
FAX (843) 661-4704*

Got news?

Contact Michael Miller at 843-661-4710 or by emailing him at MillerMW@scdot.org



Michael Miller

North Myrtle Beach Connector Bridge

Here are pictures of the current construction of the North Myrtle Beach Connector, a bridge project that Marion Construction is managing.

The bridge crosses the Intercoastal Waterway, and the project will connect Highways 17, 31, and 90 to improve traffic conditions in the North Myrtle Beach area.



Meet Marion Construction



Marion Construction is managing the North Myrtle Beach project. Shown, from left, are: Ben James, Nancy Fipps, Phil McMillan, Jerry Lane, Ken Hayes, Brad Cannon, Chris Cannon and James Graves. Not pictured, but featured at right, is Robert Bean.

Meet Robert Bean



Name: Robert Bean
Title: Senior Geodetic Technician
Unit: Marion Construction

Robert Bean has been with the SCDOT since 1994. He is a Senior Geodetic Technician for Marion County Maintenance. Bean graduated from Florence Darlington Technical College with an Associate Degree in Civil Engineering

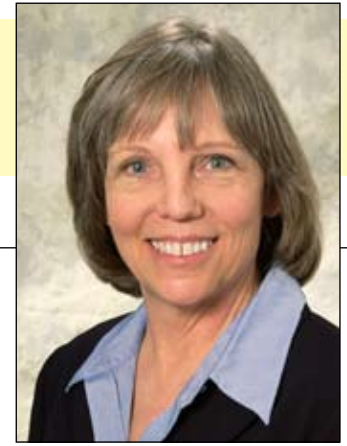
Robert and his wife of 8½ years have two girls, and he is very active in the Masons.

He is the son of former SCDOT employee Bob Bean.

District 6 News

Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester and Jasper counties

District Engineer: Robert Clark (843) 740-1665
FAX (843) 740-1663



Janet Hendrix

Got news?

Contact Janet Hendrix at :
843-740-1667 ext. 128 or
by emailing her at
HendrixJL@scdot.org

Meet Charleston Maintenance

In the last issue, we introduced you to half of Charleston County Maintenance's 114 employees who maintain 1,200 miles of roadways.

Here are the rest of the hard-working folks who keep the highways in Charleston County maintained for the motoring public.



The inmate crew is, from left: Kenneth Spann, Rodney Gadsden, Tommie Joyner, Anquenne Gordon and Richard Gaillard. (Not pictured: James Fludd)



RMFs Joey Harris and Ricky Stroble, thank you for taking me around to meet the Charleston crews.



The driveway/concrete crew is: Leon Adams, John Gethers, Dennis Maxwell and Kenneth Bradley.



The thermoplastic line installers are: Spencer Martin, Stanley Perry, Sam Anderson and John Jenkins.



The shoulder crew is: Jonathan Scarbrough, Lindsey Cobb, Robert Fabian, Arthur Rogers, Sage Timmons and Jesse Perrigo.



The driveway crew is: Doug Jackson, Emil Walker, Ervin Green, Daryle Bunton, Lethaniel Gathers and Bryant Richardson.



The patching crew is made up of, from left, Michael Robinson, Vera Cohen, Quashonda Felder, Isaac Smalls, Anthony Fobbs and James Johnson.



Legree Alston is also part of the patching crew.



Ditching crew members Jason White, Devin Brown, Eric Smith and Georgia Infinger pose by a backhoe.



The vac truck operators are: Harold Fender, Matt Sanford, Chad McMillan and Frank Morrison.



The ditching crew studies for the CDL licensing test. From left are: Frank Heyward, Bernard Smalls, Herbie Barron, Terrence Logan, and Tommy Rivers.



Also on the ditching crew is: Timothy Bunton, Frank Gathers, Terry Grant, Solomon Morrison, Louis White and Nathaniel Jenkins.

District 7 News

Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Clarendon, Hampton and Orangeburg counties

District Engineer: **Jo Ann Woodrum** (803) 531-6850
 FAX (803) 531-6854



Got news?

Contact Deborah Berry at:
 803-531-6850 or
 by emailing her at
 BerryDS@scdot.org

Deborah Berry

2007 SC Occupational Safety Council safety awards

District Mechanical Engineer Charles Jones presented Safety Awards to District 7 Engineering, County Maintenance and Construction units.

Resident Maintenance Engineer Stanley Holladay accepted the Safety Performance Certificate for Barnwell Maintenance. District Maintenance Engineer Efre Dantzler of District 7 Engineering, Resident Construction Engineer Brian Heape of Bamberg Construction, and Resident Construction Engineer Darryl Kennerly of Orangeburg Construction accepted Safety Achievement Certificates on behalf of their employees and supervisors.

Congratulations to employees and supervisors who maintain excellent safety records.



From left, Darryl Kennerly, Efre Dantzler, Charles Jones, Brian Heape, and Stanley Holladay pose with safety awards won by District 7 units.

PHOTO BY CECELIA JENNINGS/DISTRICT 7



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBBIE BERRY/DISTRICT 7

Employees get demonstration of power line hazards

LEFT: Claud Wessinger of Training and Development; Everette Wright, a retired line technician; and John Cook of the Orangeburg line crew of Santee-Cooper Electric demonstrate power line hazards to Orangeburg, Bamberg and Calhoun area SCDOT employees in October and November. Hazard scenarios included underground power lines, downed power lines, and heavy equipment use around overhead power lines. 'This is the best educational demonstration our employees have ever had' said an Orangeburg Maintenance foreman.



A hot dog, simulating a finger, bursts into flames when it touches a high voltage line.

Meet Robin Herron

Name: Robin Herron
Title: Trades Spec. IV
Unit: Bamberg Maintenance
Service: 20 years

Robin Herron supervises a ditch and driveway crew of eight employees.

Herron and his wife, Rhonda, have two children, Corey, 18, and Kali, 14.

Herron enjoys golfing, fishing, hunting, and he is an avid USC Gamecocks fan. The Herrons attend Bamberg First Baptist Church.



PHOTO BY JILL MCDONALD/BAMBERG MAINTENANCE

Lettie Fralick, Van Walters retire

Human Resources Manager **Lettie Fralick** retired on Oct. 31 with 40 years of service and Bridge Inspector **Van Walters** retired Dec. 1 with 30 years of service. Thank you for your many years of dedicated service. Congratulations and best wishes on your retirements!



Lettie Fralick



Van Walters

VIEWPOINTS

Employees suggestions help cut agency costs

By H.B. 'Buck' Limehouse Jr.
Secretary of Transportation

As we come to the close of 2008, the term "cost savings" should by now be a part of the SCDOT fabric. When

I began my administration in May of 2007, changing the way this agency does business for the better was at the top of my list of things to get done quickly. My goal was to improve efficiency in our processes, eliminate spending that was not contributing to the purpose and the success of the agency and using our resources more wisely. All



H.B. 'Buck' Limehouse Jr.

of these items add up to cost savings. Some of the savings have been one-time corrections, and others have created recurring savings for the long haul.

I have been proud of the work done by SCDOT's employees from the first day I took the reins of this agency in 2007. I am very pleased with how many of you have embraced the concept of cost savings, so as to make it a part of your thinking and part of your jobs.

Many of you have come to understand why we place such a high priority on saving money. We are not here to put cash in the bank and build a big account. Our job as an agency is to spend as many of our dollars improving and preserving the roads and bridges in our large highway system as we possibly can. We now prioritize our projects in terms of need, safety, etc. We have many projects that are worthy of completing now, but the funds are not always available. Obviously the more money we can save, the sooner these needed projects will get done to serve the people of our state and the safer our roads will become.

Many of you have also come to grasp the idea that there is more to our story than maintaining the highway system. SCDOT plays a major role in protecting the environment in South Carolina. We are present in all 46 counties. That gives us the opportunity to help protect the environment all across the state through the preservation of wetlands, historical sites and green space, litter control, recycling and many other measures that save money and make South Carolina a healthier and better place to live.

The contest that we held this fall to seek cost saving measures at SCDOT was a great success. Several good ideas were presented and I was very pleased at the number of entries that were submitted. That tells me that many of you had been thinking of ways to cut our costs.

Congratulations go out to **W. Allen Smith, Penny Phillips** and **Marlene Cain** who were the three winners in the contest. These employees were the top three winners, but there were many other good ideas that are worthy of being looked at further as possible improvements. So let me extend my congratulations to everyone who took part.

A compete wrap-up of the winning ideas and a summary of the entire contest can be found on page 10.

A by-product of this contest is that it demonstrates that SCDOT employees not only work hard, but work smart too. I am very proud to work with all of you. This year has been very productive and we've made great strides together. We have a long way to go, but I know that we're moving in the right direction, and I believe that the people of South Carolina are beginning to see that SCDOT is now working in their best interests.

As the end of 2008 draws near and we prepare for the New Year, let me take this opportunity to wish each of you and your families a safe and happy holiday season and best wishes for 2009.



ZOE COOK/SCDOT COMMUNICATIONS

Time to fix our broken highway system

By Jim DeMint, US Senator, South Carolina

In January, Congress will begin the process of writing a new highway reauthorization bill. Unfortunately for motorists in South Carolina, the bill will probably look a lot like that last 800-page bill that funded thousands of pet project rather than investing in true national priorities. Yet again, politics will override principle in our nation's capital.

The current highway system is failing taxpayers. We need a highway program that addresses infrastructure needs while returning dollars and decisions to the states and local communities where they belong. I believe that our state officials are better suited to address local infrastructure needs than bureaucrats or politicians in Washington.

I have introduced a bill that gives states the authority and flexibility to control their own highway funding, instead of having to come to Congress and have Washington politicians' rewrite their priorities. My bill returns control of the majority of federal highway programs to South Carolina, starting in 2010 when the current highway program expires. Federal gas taxes would be reduced from 18.3 cents to 3.7 cents in order to fund only a limited number of programs that serve a clear national purpose. States would then adjust their state gas taxes to replace the federal taxes and meet their transportation funding needs.

Our highway program has fallen victim to special interest carve-outs, known as earmarks, leaving the program with scattered priorities that lack a clear, unified mission. From earmarks for "bridges to nowhere" to bike paths and walking trails, few funds are actually spent on critical infrastructure.

For example, the Heritage Foundation studied the direct spending from the last highway bill and found that one-third of gasoline tax revenues are diverted from highway funding to programs that do not meet the needs of typical motorists and are concentrated in a few large cities and only serve the needs of that locality. To list a few: \$9.8 billion for trolleys, buses and commuter corridors; \$80 million for recreational trails; and millions more for roadside beautification and museums. These programs do nothing to improve our nation's aging roads and bridges, nor do they benefit the motorists who paid the gasoline taxes at the pump.

The current system robs many states of their gas tax dollars so a few committee chairmen can fund pork projects in their own states and swell

their state's highway fund coffers. South Carolina has suffered from this archaic system. As a

"donor" state we had to fight during the last reauthorization to increase our rate of return on federal gas tax dollars from 78 cents to 92 cents. Northern and Western states continue to reap a disproportionate share of funding -- enjoying anywhere from 100 to 600 percent rate of return on the same money.

Oftentimes, transportation earmarks force states to fund projects that are low on their list of priorities.

While federal funding may help get projects started, continued federal funding can be unreliable, forcing local officials to take funds from high-priority projects to pay for low-priority earmarks.

A 2007 Department of Transportation Inspector General Report stated that earmarks increased in number by 1,150 percent from 1996 to 2005, with the value of earmarks in the same time frame jumping 314 percent. More alarming: the report revealed that 99 percent of transportation earmarks were not subject to the federal review and selection processes or they bypassed the states' normal planning and programming process.

Congress has been too busy running the earmark favor factory to actually sit down and listen to their states transportation and congestion needs. This led Transportation Secretary Mary Peters to call for an end to earmarks in highway bills so funds can be used for critical infrastructure.

This program, which is driven by politics rather than merit, over-promises and under-delivers. While I supported the original 2005 highway bill because the initial price tag was lowered to meet the president's funding requests, I've come to realize that the program is fundamentally broken and can no longer be run from Washington. Not long after the bill's passage, reports surfaced that promised projects would exceed revenue in the highway trust fund. Unfortunately, Congress bailed out the highway trust fund this past summer to the tune of \$8 billion without eliminating a single one of the wasteful projects that put the program in the hole.

It is time that Congress take a time out and examine what is working and what is not. We need a national debate about the best ways to empower states to meet their transportation needs without have to go to Washington begging for what is rightfully theirs.



U.S. Senator Jim DeMint

Assets Management

Question: How many gallons of gas has to be sold to pave a mile of highway?

Answer: A lot.

By Carl Chase,
Assets Manager

16¢ Most of the revenue for the South Carolina Department of Transportation comes from the 16 cents a gallon state gasoline tax. Some of the money goes to the County Transportation Committees, Department of Natural Resources, and the Budget and Control Board. The rest funds the daily operations of SCDOT and maintenance of roads and bridges.

This becomes food for thought. Every-time you fuel your personal vehicle, think about how many increments of the 16 cents provides for your salary and benefits.

The electric bill for the Headquarters Building is about \$1,000 per day. Divide this by 16 cents, and you can see how many gallons of gasoline must be purchased to provide electricity. A typical modular office costs approximately \$7,000, and the average ball point is approximately \$1.60. The purchase of the ball point pen takes 10 gallons of gasoline. SCDOT has several major initiatives underway to reduce the cost of operations.

Our core mission is to build and maintain roads and bridges and enable funding for public transit. Some costs associated with the core mission:

Cost of widening a road – average from 2 to 5 lanes, \$930,000 per lane mile. Cost per mile/lane of resurfacing – average for all types of resurfacing \$115,000-\$120,000 per lane mile. The average cost of bridge replacement - \$144 per square foot of deck

These are all average costs based on the most recently available figures.

Cost Savings Contest: The most prominent way to involve the employees to save money was the Cost Savings contest recently sponsored by Secretary of Transportation H.B. "Buck" Limehouse Jr.. The people submitting the best costs savings idea were given a cash award paid from the Secretary's personal resources. All suggestions are being considered for possible implementation.

SCDOT Strategic Plan

Another major initiative underway is incorporated as an objective in the SCDOT Strategic Plan to Conserve Resources. The objective is to identify 25 new areas where resources can be measured and streamlined annually to save costs agency-wide. A Committee co-chaired by Dipak Patel, Andy Leaphart, and Carl Chase has been established to develop and follow-up on the 25 Ideas submitted by a diverse group of employees from throughout SCDOT.

Some of those ideas include:

- Charging for Encroachment Permits
- Installing solar power flashers
- Installing LED Signal heads state-wide
- Charging fees for event support
- Determine the appropriate number of FTE's required to perform the mission.

- Determine the appropriate mix of vehicles needed to perform the mission
- Using solar and other alternative energy sources for heating and lighting.

Idea Express

The third is the Idea Express Program. The Idea Express Program is available for all employees and can be accessed at <http://iwwwwww.dot.state.sc.us/AssetManagement/idea.shtml>

Ongoing Programs to reduce costs: Currently the agency is in the process of selecting an Energy Savings Construction Contractor to apply energy savings improvements to our aging infrastructure. The contract is expected to be awarded in early 2009.

Some of the improvements already in place include the increase in the use of Video Conferencing, the installation of occupancy sensors to reduce the use of lighting when unnecessary. We have increased the amount of paper being recycled and are one of the top state agencies in this area. We are studying the use of solar power and telecommuting.

There are 53 leased copiers in the Headquarters Building. Central copy rooms are being established and one is already in use on the second floor. The Department is looking at all aspects of the way we do business. We recently concluded the 10 year District Study required by state law and in July of 2009 there will be a realignment taking place affecting Districts One, Two, Three and Seven. The Office of Pre-Construction has aligned its organization by the establishment of Regional Production Groups.

What can you do to reduce costs?

- If you are in a modular office shut off the lights when you are not in the cube.
- Is a Suburban or an Excursion necessary for a trip or will a Ford Focus or Taurus be better?
- Is the trip necessary? Can a meeting be performed by Video Conference or conference call?
- Do you need to print copies? Can a copy be provided on-line?
- Employees can place their PC monitor in the sleep mode when not in use.
- If you are in a field office, when was the last time preventative maintenance was done on your heating and air conditioning system? When was the last time the filter was changed?

Keep in mind 16 cents does not buy the same goods and services today we got yesterday, but what is the same is our mission of providing a safe transportation system.

Determine your cost and divide it by 16 cents.

Legal Division

By Linda McDonald, Chief Counsel

We welcome F. Hartselle "Hart" Baker as Assistant Chief Counsel. He has been working part time with us since February 2008 and has now become a full time member of our staff.

Baker served as Chief Counsel of SCDOT from 1997-1999. We are grateful to have him back with us. He brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in litigation and business matters.

We regret that Basil Duncan, former SCDOT Claims Agent, has accepted a position in the private sector. We appreciate his service to SCDOT over the last year.

Amanda Taylor has taken over the supervision of the Claims Office in addition to her other duties as Assistant Chief Counsel. She has gained expertise in handling claims matters after many years of representing SCDOT in collection matters. We welcome her to this new position.



Hart Baker



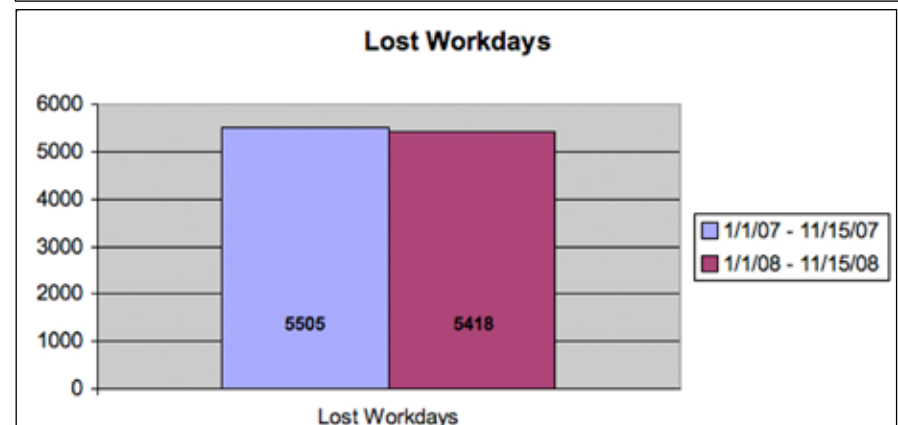
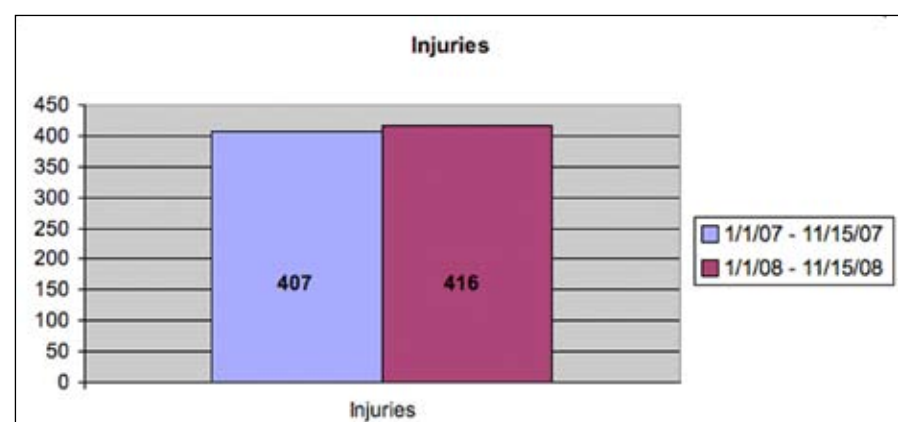
Amanda Taylor

Dana Ammer of the SCDOT Legal Office won a Merit Award in the Fine Arts Section at the State Fair for one of her face jugs this year. Ammer has been making the unique pottery items over the past several years, and her artwork has won three times at the State Fair. Ammer has sold more than 250 of the jugs and has placed them in homes in the U.S., Canada and South America!



ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Injuries up slightly, lost workdays down



One of the objectives in SCDOT's new strategic plan is to reduce lost workdays by 5 percent annually. A comparison of injuries and lost workdays in 2007 and 2008 is featured here in each edition of The Connector. The trend for both had been continuing upward; however, for the January 1 through November 15 period, SCDOT's lost workdays are down 1.6 percent overall. In Districts One through Seven, SCDOT's lost workdays are down 6.1 percent. The districts are to be commended for their efforts to reduce time lost due to accidents and injuries.