



WINTER 2024

Arkansas HIGHWAYS

A PUBLICATION OF THE
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | MAGAZINE

FOR 2024
**An Emphasis
on Safety**

**NEW LANE BLADE
Devices Improve
Driver Safety**

**QUESTIONS?
Ask ARDOT
Has Answers**

**ARDOT'S
Digital Sign
Database**

Dear ARDOT Family,

ANOTHER TRIP AROUND THE SUN IS COMPLETE AND 2023 HAS GONE DOWN ON THE BOOKS! What a great year at ARDOT! It was a year of milestones, new beginnings, positive changes and progress.

I am optimistic that 2024 will be our best year yet. We have set many goals, the most important of which is to keep working to make our roads, work zones and employees safer.

We will continue buying new equipment to keep our maintenance workers safe – such as Lane Blades and Gator Getters. We will finish installing green lights on our vehicles for better visibility. We will continue to expand and improve training. We will continue promoting policy changes such as our Very Short Duration Operations that list 10 points of Best Practices for debris removal.

Our Slow Down Phone Down Safety Campaign will enter its 3rd year. In 2024, we are targeting a new demographic — we’re focusing on younger, college-age drivers since they tend to have the most distracted driving-related crashes. We’ll be producing new commercials and working with college campuses in Arkansas.

We have had a significant reduction in crashes within the I-30 Saline County work zone since we began using a speed enforcement camera in August 2023. We will be purchasing additional cameras to increase safety and reduce speeding in our interstate work zones across the State.

Another very important goal that we have set for 2024 is to begin a fund raising effort for a fallen ARDOT workers memorial/monument.

Twenty-eight ARDOT employees have been lost in work-related accidents since 1972. They are remembered with a very modest portable memorial of orange cones with a sleeve that shows the name of the employee and date.

In 2024, we want to design, fund and start construction of a permanent monument to honor these fallen workers. As many of you know, I have asked ARDOT employees to help. We need your input on what it should look like, where it should be located. It will be privately funded, so we will work together to raise the funds. I am looking forward to hearing from you all.

Thank you for all you do each day for Arkansas’ road users and transportation system. You are key to the continued success of our agency, and I appreciate you more than ever. I wish you all a safe and blessed new year!

All my best,

Lorie H. Tudor, P.E., Director



FRONT COVER:
Snowfall on Highway 65

BACK COVER:
District 5 salt house holds purple salt.

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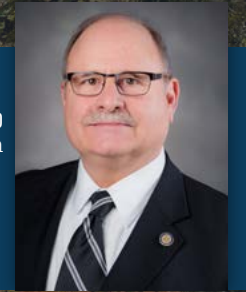


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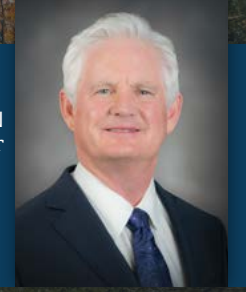
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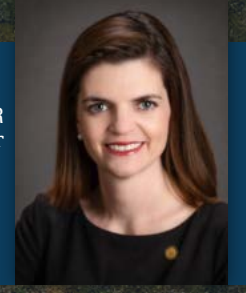
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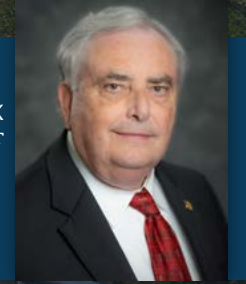
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FOR 2024 AN EMPHASIS ON SAFETY

BY DAVID NILLES

THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S MISSION HAS ALWAYS INCLUDED A FOCUS ON SAFETY. The safety of our roads, work zones and employees is of the greatest concern and priority at ARDOT. Within the last two years, ARDOT has lost three employees and friends. These employees made the ultimate sacrifice while performing their job duties to keep the roads safe for Arkansas motorists.

In December 2021, Kurt Cottier was struck and killed by an errant driver within a construction work zone near Morrilton in Conway County. In January 2022, Winfred Petty was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver while setting up a work zone to repair Interstate 30 in Pulaski County. In May 2023, Timothy Harris was killed when he entered a travel lane along Interstate 430 to remove a shovel in order to prevent a crash from

happening. The shovel had apparently fallen off a vehicle, creating a danger for road users.

Tragedies such as these are devastating. It intensifies the desire in everyone to do even more to ensure our employees are working in the safest environment possible. Director Lorie Tudor stated, "When it comes to employee safety, we will always continue to improve. We will never sit back and say – we've done enough. We will never quit striving to find ways to protect our employees as they work to serve and protect the public."

As part of ARDOT's new Safety Initiative, the Department created a Safety Task Force with representation from across the Department. Beginning in 2023, the task force has implemented new components into its safety program. Those components include work zone safety as well as short-duration operations such as debris removal. ARDOT is working with the contracting industry to improve work zone safety and has implemented some major improvements such as speed enforcement cameras in work zones.

Many efforts to improve debris removal safety have also been implemented. These include:

VERY SHORT-DURATION OPERATIONS WORK ZONE PROCEDURE (VSDO)

"We had a safety task force made up of ARDOT Maintenance and Construction personnel that got together and researched other states' best practices and then we came up with our VSDO," Steve Frisbee, Assistant Chief Engineer of Maintenance, shared. "The policy is in place, and we are training employees as soon as they start in Maintenance."

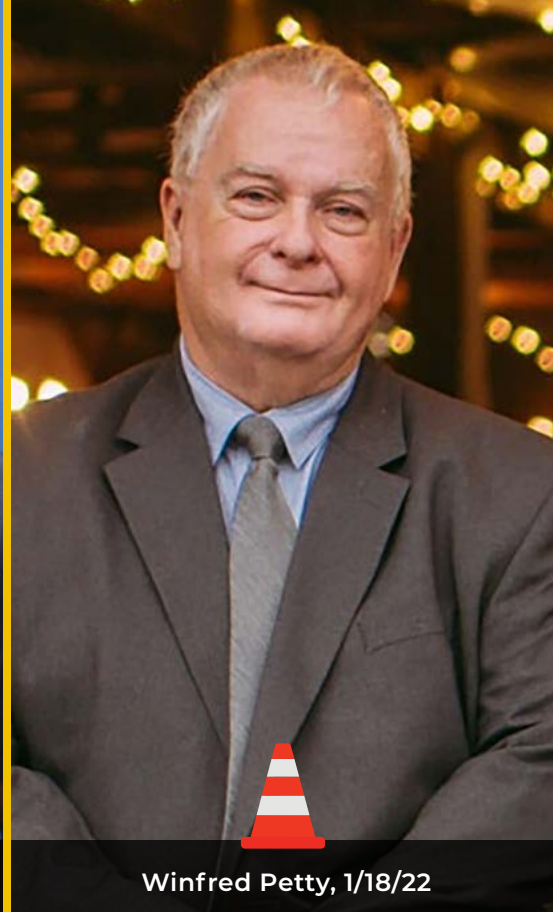
The VSDO procedure is meant for work crew activity that takes no longer than five minutes in the roadway to complete at one specific location. It is intended to decrease the amount of time workers are exposed to traffic. Examples would be removal of debris from the travel lanes, installation or removal of a work zone device, taking a measurement or survey shot and guardrail inspection at a spot location.

The work vehicle on location should

(continued on page 6)



Kurt Cottier, 12/19/21



Winfred Petty, 1/18/22



Timothy Harris, Jr., 5/8/23

Maintenance workers on the roads will have **increased visibility** this year.



have flashing lights on and be placed on the shoulder in advance of the hazard or work operation to act as a shield to the worker. The activity should be performed downstream of the work vehicle whenever possible. Depending on roadway speeds and traffic volume, a spotter (a person other than the one doing the work) shall be used. When high-speed and high-volume traffic exists, workers shall not enter or cross a live lane of traffic for any reason. Very short duration work can only be performed from the shoulder in this case.

“Every District, and every county office has purchased long-reach poles with hooks,” Frisbee noted. The poles will prevent crews from having to step into a travel lane to retrieve debris items.

LANEBLADE UNITS AND GATOR GETTERS

ARDOT has purchased 13 LaneBlade units for Department maintenance trucks and crews that serve our larger interstates. The LaneBlade unit can safely remove debris from live travel lanes while keeping workers safely operating the equipment from the cab

of the service vehicle. The new touch screen controller makes simple work of deploying or stowing the LaneBlade and showing the operator debris that is out of their sight line.

ARDOT is also purchasing Gator Getter debris removal devices for fast-speed highway debris removal. These will be installed on dump trucks across the state. This equipment works by scooping up debris while traveling down the road. At regular speeds, it will push the item up and around the barrel to a collection tray which will hold it until emptied. It offers benefits such as not having personnel on the road to remove debris in a traffic stream, no road shutdowns, and no traffic slowdowns.

The purchase of these two types of devices is part of an initiative to improve safety for removal of debris from interstate lanes.

“The LaneBlade trucks are beginning to show up out on the roads and eventually these will be in every one of our Districts,” Frisbee noted. “It’s the same with the Gator Getters, we already have some of those in place and we have more coming.”

10-POINT BEST PRACTICE PLAN FOR DEBRIS REMOVAL

This plan details a step-by-step process for debris pick up. Large posters featuring the 10-Point Plan have been installed in every county headquarters across the state.

GREEN FLASHING LIGHTS ON MAINTENANCE & CONSTRUCTION VEHICLES

ARDOT has recently received approval from the Arkansas Division of Emergency Management (ADEM) for use of green flashing lights in conjunction with amber and white lights for maintenance and construction vehicles in work zones. The addition of green flashing lights will enhance the visibility of vehicles in these zones, especially during bright daylight and inclement weather.

“We are in the middle of implementing the new green lights,” Frisbee noted.

“There are quite a few out there on the roads already.”

GREEN VESTS

ARDOT is also implementing a new policy that requires all new maintenance employees to wear a green vest for their first six months of employment. This

vest will be worn in lieu of the orange vest that other employees wear. The green vests will provide a regular visual reminder for the crews to recognize newer employees, and to help monitor and ensure their safety as they are learning their jobs. Both vest colors are equally compliant with national safety standards.

CONSPICUITY STICKERS

Maintenance workers on the roads will have increased visibility this year. The Department is adding conspicuity stickers to the back of crew pickup trucks. They consist of red and green striped reflective strips across the tailgates. The stickers enhance the visibility of Department vehicles for motorists approaching the work area.

SPEAK UP: REPORT ANY SAFETY CONCERNS

Another new initiative to improve safety is the development of a “safety concern” reporting tool. For employees that have a safety concern, this tool allows them to speak up by scanning a QR code and reporting any safety concerns directly to the Health and Safety Section. All concerns and recommendations turned in will be reviewed by the Health and

Safety Section Sead and District Safety Teams.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TRAINING FOR NEW EMPLOYEES

“All new construction/maintenance employees will go through a New Employee Orientation (NEO) class the first week they are hired,” Eddie Tanner, Section Head of Workforce Development, shared.

The training will consist of an overview of the following:

1. The ARDOT Safety Manual
2. Bloodborne Pathogens
3. Flagger Training
4. Construction Safety: Working Safely in Work Zones
5. An Overview of the new Very Short-Duration Operations (VSDO) policy and guidelines.

“New employees will also be required to complete and pass the new Basic Flagger and VSDO quiz before working on the roadway,” Tanner added.

“Having worked for many years of my career in the field, I have first-hand experience in standing one foot away from live traffic traveling at high speeds and the dangers involved,” Frisbee

shared. “We are focused on improving safety for our employees involved with debris removal from the interstates. We need to ensure that ARDOT employees are protected as they work to protect the public by removing debris that could cause a crash. We are really excited about these best practices that we’ve come up with and using ‘out of the box’ thinking on how to remove that debris.”

ARDOT is confident that with these additional safety practices in place for maintenance and construction personnel like Timothy Harris, Kurt Cottier and Winfred Petty, we can prevent serious accidents and ensure workers get home safely at the end of the day.

“Timothy was a comedian,” his family shared. “Everybody knew when he was there because he would crack jokes and make his funny little gestures. He was a great father and always enjoyed providing for his children.”

“We hope what happened to Timothy won’t happen to anyone else’s family,” Timothy’s mom Sharon explained.

“Timothy’s life was all about his work and providing for his children at all costs.” ■



ARDOT Purchases New "LaneBlade" Devices to Improve Safety

BY MARK WOODALL

THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HAS PURCHASED MORE THAN A DOZEN NEW SAFETY DEVICES THAT WILL PROTECT THE TRAVELING PUBLIC AND THE ARDOT WORKFORCE.

A simple truck attachment will allow debris to be safely removed from the roadway, which will eliminate the need for maintenance personnel to step into traffic on foot.

"The device allows us to push the debris to a safe location on the shoulder where it can be retrieved," said Hunter Lake, District 6 Maintenance Engineer.

The LaneBlade attachment is manufactured by J-Tech and installed by ARDOT maintenance personnel. Each device costs the department \$36,000, which is a small price to pay when you consider the role it plays in saving lives.

"The employees LOVE it! It's safer, very easy to use and is more efficient," said Dale Johns, Equipment and Procurement Fleet Manager.

Each year ARDOT picks up millions of pieces of trash and debris from state highways and interstates. Items such as furniture, mattresses, tire treads and other debris can create major safety hazards.

Sadly, Timothy Harris, who worked on the West Pulaski County Maintenance Crew, lost his life on May 8 while trying to remove a shovel from Interstate 430. In response, Director Tudor implemented immediate changes to ensure worker safety.

"It truly means a lot that the Department Administration takes safety as our No. 1 priority," added Lake.

ARDOT has purchased 13 LaneBlade devices and has plans to buy additional safety equipment in the coming months. ■

THE J-TECH LaneBlade® IS DESIGNED FOR...

SAFETY

- Remove debris quickly.
- Workers remain in cab and not on foot.
- Potentially reduce injury claims.
- Improve employee morale with a tool to keep them out of harm's way.
- Keep workers out of the weather in the vehicle cab.
- Deployment Limiter – allows deployment only when speed is below 20 mph.
- Reduce danger of ricocheting debris into adjacent lanes.
- Improves control of messy or awkward debris.

TRAFFIC FLOW BENEFITS

- Reduce queuing and slowing of traffic due to debris on roadways.
- Reduce debris damage and hazard to the traveling public.
- Quick reopening of lanes after debris or crash incident.
- Remove debris such as bolts, shattered glass, and minor vehicle parts after crashes.
- Time saving = more scattered debris removal quickly over a larger area.

DUAL-PURPOSE ACTION!

1. Push disabled vehicles out of live lanes.
2. Debris removal:
 - Large objects — mattresses, refrigerators and more.
 - Small, scattered debris.
 - Mixture of large and small cleared at once.

SPECIAL EVENTS AROUND THE STATE



RIBBON CUT ON NEW SPRING RIVER BRIDGE COUNTY ROAD 42

The setting could not have been more perfect. A crowd of approximately 75 people including Highway Commissioners, ARDOT staff, local dignitaries, the Highland High School Band and area residents gathered on a beautiful day, November 29, on the newly completed bridge crossing the crystal-clear waters of the Spring River near Hardy.

The new bridge replaces a low water bridge that was built over 100 years ago.

"Jobs like this are the most important jobs to me because they serve some of the smaller communities here in Arkansas," ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor told the crowd.

"Now, not only do the residents of Fulton and Sharp Counties have a new bridge that will serve them for many decades to come, they also have direct access that won't require an alternative route when the waters of the Spring River get too high."

The old low water bridge was built in 1914 and with heavy rains became impassable. Even on clear days, the bridge could be a challenge.

"I've heard people say no matter how many times they crossed the bridge, they always had a sense of relief when they got to the other side," Highway Commission Chairman Alec Farmer shared.

Those who worked on the design and construction of the bridge overcame several challenges. Among them were acquiring the necessary right of way, securing environmental

clearance and dealing with rainy weather and high waters.

"Today is a historic day for our community," Hardy Mayor Ethan Barnes told the crowd. "After a great effort from many leaders in Fulton and Sharp counties and the state of Arkansas, we finally have a safe and reliable way to cross the Spring River from Hardy into the back side of Cherokee Village. I thank everyone here today that has contributed their time and resources to make this project achievable."

"The synergy between ARDOT, the construction company and the county has been truly remarkable," Fulton County Judge Kenneth Crow commented.

Sharp County Judge Mark Counts shared that for first responders, if the water became too high, it would take another 30 minutes to get to people on the other side of the river.

"What a blessing it is to have this new bridge. It is going to make it safer for people that travel this road every day and for the first responders, a safer route to go when they receive a call," he added.

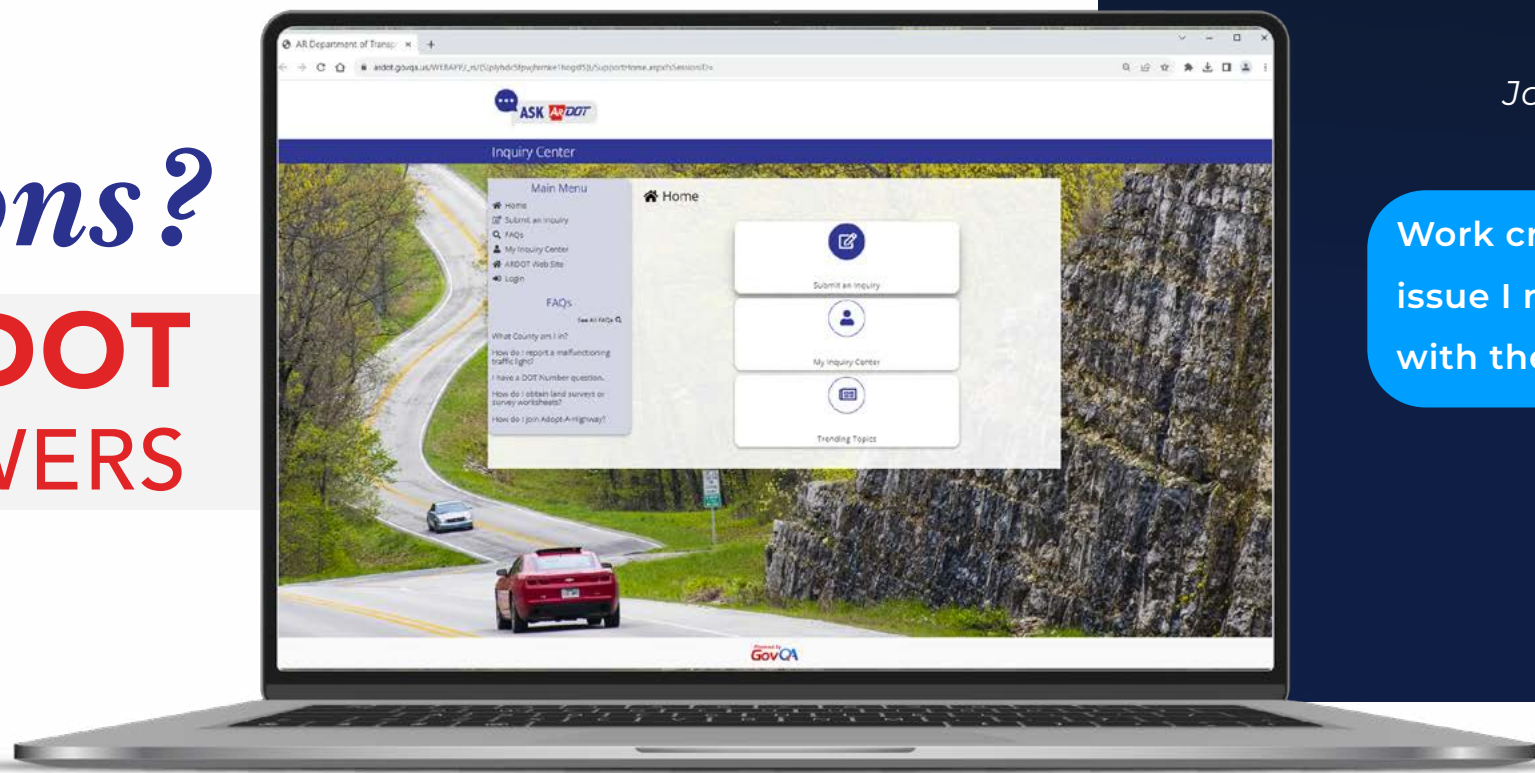
"This new bridge is a symbol of progress, connectivity and the collective efforts of a community determined to build a brighter future," State Representative Trey Steimel told the crowd.

The County Road 42 Bridge project was awarded to West Plains Bridge & Grading, LLC for approximately \$3.5 million in early 2021. ■

Questions?

ASK ARDOT HAS ANSWERS

BY DAVID NILLES



Thanks for addressing the issue I submitted. Also, I like the email that states the problem has been answered. I did notice the repair has already been taken care of. Thanks.

Josh

Work crews were very responsive to the issue I noted on the form. Very pleased with the response and outcome!

Justin

Inquiry was responded to almost immediately which is fantastic!

Linda

BY PHONE, EMAIL, REGULAR MAIL OR IN PERSON, ARDOT FREQUENTLY RECEIVES QUESTIONS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON ANY NUMBER OF TOPICS. Just ask a staff member of the Communications Division and they will tell you the phone inquiries are constant. With so many questions coming into the Department, a system was needed to make sure that everyone who asked a question of ARDOT received an answer.

ASK ARDOT PROVIDES A PERMANENT RECORD

"The Department recognized that we do not have a formal record of the inquiries that we receive," said Holly Butler, Communications Coordinator in the Communications Division. "We all know the staff does a good job of responding to those inquiries and our crews make it a priority to take care of what the concern is, there was just no record of it."

At least until now . . . that's where Ask ARDOT comes in to fill the void. Do you have a question about something ARDOT related? Maybe it's a question on an upcoming road project. Or perhaps you need to know where that construction zone is on Interstate 40. Do you need to speak with Highway Police?

Now there is a way to get that question answered just by going to the ARDOT website at www.ardot.gov. Arriving at the webpage, go to the Contact Us page at the top and click on Ask ARDOT. It is here that questions can be entered, and an answer will be returned.

NEW SYSTEM GETTING POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Ask ARDOT kicked off internally in early February and Butler says it has been well received since going public in October.

"When we kicked off internally, our staff would take the phone or email inquiry from the public and submit a ticket into the new system. It was our pilot phase. Most people were familiar with reporting a pothole or asking about road conditions through IDrive Arkansas. Now, instead of filling out a form through IDrive Arkansas, you will be re-directed to Ask ARDOT to fill out your inquiry. This way, we are still collecting all of those questions and concerns, but we are collecting them all in one place."

From the citizens who have been using the new system, ARDOT has learned that many prefer this new method of contacting the Department rather than having to email or call their question in. Not only is the public comfortable using the

new system, ARDOT is receiving benefits from its use as well.

"Ask ARDOT collects all inquiries related to any topic we may receive," Butler shared. "We can filter inquiries based on subject, location or need. With just a few clicks, staff can filter incoming requests and see how many questions we are getting on that specific topic or specific geographical area. It allows the Department to better assess the state's needs and fulfill what we need to do to address the issue. It gives us a better overall view of the feedback we receive from the public."

The system also retains a history of all inquiries sent in to ARDOT.

"Our users like that they can go back into the system and see previous inquiries they have submitted and the response they received," Butler explained. "You can see the history of communication between you as the customer and the Department."

SURVEY RESPONSES HELP BUILD A BETTER SYSTEM

While ARDOT now has a more efficient way to handle questions, the Department is interested in hearing how the public likes the new system so that any problems encountered can be remedied. Butler explained how significant that is.

"For customers that have used Ask ARDOT, there is a link that provides the opportunity to do a quick satisfaction survey. Questions include . . . how easy was the system to use, did you use an FAQ, were you able to find the topic you needed easily? So far, we've received positive feedback overall. Many users share that they prefer using this way of communicating with the Department over any other form of communication we have had with them in the past."

Staff will continue to take phone calls, emails and letters. This is simply a new tool the public can use to get in touch. It replaces the back and forth of an email and is more efficient than a phone call because it retains communication in one place that is easy to find for both the public and the staff.

"This is a great tool," Butler added. "A great deal of time and effort has gone into the creation of this. The Communications Division has worked hard to bring this to the public and we are very proud of what has been produced. We strongly encourage the public to give the system a try and to provide feedback. The faces behind the system are real people and users will get a quick response because ARDOT values feedback from the citizens of Arkansas." ■



Traffic Cameras



Live Traffic
Exit Numbers
Mile Markers



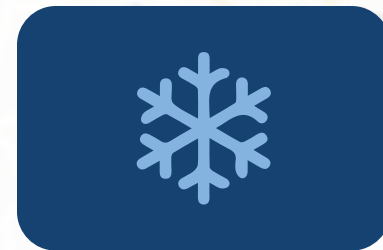
Construction
Current Lane Closures
Future Lane Closures



Highway Closures
Weather Radar
Weather Warnings
Current Weather Conditions



Alternate Routes
Welcome Centers & Rest Areas
Commuter Park & Ride Lots
Weigh Stations
Headquarters
Ferry
Weight Restricted State Highways
Weight Restricted State Bridges
Weight Restricted Local Bridges



Primary Highways
Local Roads

IDRIVEARKANSAS

CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

BY MARK WOODALL

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF IDRIVEARKANSAS.COM. That may not seem like a long time in internet years, but the milestone is important to note because of the role it has played in helping thousands of travelers navigate through the state of Arkansas to avoid construction zones, closures, detours and severe weather events.

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the summer of 2011 brought historic high levels of flooding to Arkansas. In addition to record water levels, heavy rainfall caused backwater flooding and levee failure along the Black and White rivers. As water levels grew, the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) acted quickly to close a portion of Interstate 40.

ARDOT leadership took swift action to communicate with the traveling public using recorded messages, maps, detour signage and even a “flood hotline” that was staffed by Department employees ready to talk live with the public about

road closures and detours.

In the weeks that followed, the Department began looking to surrounding states to evaluate how messages can be sent faster using an interactive website.

“The iDriveArkansas website was a team effort to ensure travelers would know what is happening across the state in real-time,” said Sharon Hawkins, ARDOT Staff Graphic Information System (GIS) and Mapping Administrator. Hawkins also credits Greg Cullum with the GIS and Mapping Division for making the website a reality.

“We worked with the Planning and the Construction Division’s System Administration Section, led by Jamey Wilhite, to keep up with the latest information,” she added.

The end goal has always been to provide a user-friendly “know before you go” platform for drivers. iDrive administrators work closely with the Traffic Management Center (TMC) to ensure road closures and construction projects are properly placed on the website. Each weekday, a report is created from the Construction Division’s System Administration Section with any

added, completed or informational changes to the construction areas that are displayed on iDrive.

This team effort ensures that travelers know when, where and what is happening with work zones across the state.

Additionally, they maintain the winter weather reportable information so that District personnel can populate what’s happening during a severe weather event. They make sure that information can be located and posted correctly on the site.

All these pieces moving in the background are a testament to how key staff across the Department play a vital role in ensuring that data is available in a timely manner on the iDrive website.

According to Denise Powell, ARDOT Digital Content Coordinator, the iDrive website received 1.7 million hits during its first year alone. That number has grown to just over 12 million views as of 2022.

The number of highway cameras visitors to the site can view has grown as well, now totaling 360. Drivers can click on the camera icon and view the flow of traffic in real-time.

In addition to the site, the iDrive app can be downloaded on smartphone devices, which adds another avenue of convenience for travelers as they travel the highways of Arkansas. ■

Drivers can access iDriveArkansas.com and easily view live traffic cameras and information as seen in the images to the right.

Traffic Camera

Mile Marker 106

Camera View: ● 6101
Temperature: 60° Elevation: 440 ft.

Incident

Saline County

Incident Type: Accident
Location: Mile Marker 112.3
Nearest City: 0.4 Miles Northeast of Haskell

Travel Direction: Eastbound
Lane(s) Impacted: All

Reported By: ARDOT
Date / Time: November 16, 2023 at 5:24 AM CST
Last Update: November 16, 2023 at 6:29 AM CST
Note: All information is the latest available and presented in real-time.

Description
Rollover accident involving a spill of motor oil on the roadway... Traffic is being diverted at Exit 106.

ARDOT INTRODUCES UPDATED POTHOLE POLICY

BY MARK WOODALL



REPORT A POTHOLE

THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (ARDOT) HAS RELEASED NEW GUIDANCE FOR MOTORISTS WHO ENCOUNTER POTHoles WHILE TRAVELING ON ARKANSAS' INTERSTATES AND HIGHWAYS.

If you are traveling and you hit a pothole, the two main questions to ask are:

1) Was there damage to the car? and 2) Were you in a construction zone?

If a motorist received damage to their vehicle and they were in a construction zone, they should contact the contractor for the construction project and file a claim. To find the contractor's name, simply look up the project on IDriveArkansas.com under the "Work Zones" layer, or call ARDOT at 501-569-2000 for assistance.

If a motorist received damage to their vehicle and they were not in a construction zone, they should contact the Arkansas Claims Commission at 501-682-1619 to file a claim.

If it is not known whether they were in a construction zone, or there are additional questions, they can contact ARDOT at 501-569-2000 for assistance.

In any instance, ARDOT encourages all motorists to report potholes so Department crews are alerted to repair them. You can report a pothole through IDriveArkansas.com. ARDOT has created a flow chart explaining what to do if you hit a pothole. The graphic is included on this page.

Spring is pothole season and it is usually brought on by a harsh winter. Here's why:

1. Potholes form when water seeps through the pavement.
2. In cold weather, that water freezes and expands, pushing the pavement upward.
3. When the temperature gets above freezing, that frozen water thaws and creates an air pocket in the pavement.

IF YOU HIT A POTHOLE

Report the pothole on IDriveArkansas.com so our crews know to fix it.

Was there damage to your car?

Yes No

Were you in a construction zone?

Yes No I don't know

Contact the contractor.

Contact the Arkansas Claims Commission.

Contact ARDOT & we'll help.

4. When vehicles drive over the air pocket, it collapses, and potholes form.

"On average, we use approximately 15,000 cubic yards of asphalt each year to fill potholes," Deric Wyatt, State Maintenance Engineer, shared. "We classify our pothole repairs as either temporary or permanent and it is around a 50/50 split between the two. The permanent repairs are typically made using hot mix asphalt during times with better weather conditions and the temporary patching is done using high-performance cold mix."

With the updated pothole policy in place, ARDOT crews will now be able to know what areas to address and be able to get them repaired sooner. ■

SALT STORAGE FACILITY IS ARDOT'S LARGEST

BY DAVID NILLES

COLD WEATHER IS NOW UPON US, AND YOU CAN BE GUARANTEED THAT ARDOT'S ROAD CREWS ARE PREPARED TO TACKLE ANY FROZEN PRECIPITATION THAT FALLS ON ARKANSAS' HIGHWAYS.

The use of sand and salt are two major components in the Department's battle to keep the roads safe for motorists. Crews in District 6 are preparing for the future as they construct what will be ARDOT's largest salt storage building to date.

The new house is located on Highway 70 in North Little Rock.

"This new facility will be able to hold approximately 4,000 tons of salt," Alan Kumpe, District 6 Bridge Job Superintendent shared. "Most of our current facilities hold 450 tons each."

Just as impressive is the fact that the District is doing most of the construction at the new location themselves.

"The new salt house is being primarily constructed by the District 6 Bridge Crew, with the exception of the roof structure," Kumpe added. "The roof structure has been contracted out to Bell Construction Company, Inc."

When fully completed, there will also be a brine-making station on location with 6 storage tanks. Four tanks will be used for brine, one for calcium chloride and one for beet juice. Each tank will hold 6,300 gallons of liquid treatment.

The new salt house will serve as a central hub for District 6. The existing salt houses throughout the District will still be in full use, but the new larger facility will allow the District to store enough salt to either be transported to our other facilities when they are running low on supply or go directly to the roads during winter weather events.

"We anticipate this new facility will be used by Statewide Strike Team forces as a primary location to get salt during winter weather events and even possibly to assist other Districts across the state if they run low on supply," Kumpe stated.

The facility will be cost effective for ARDOT.

"Having this large capacity salt storage house will be a huge benefit, as it will hopefully keep us from having to purchase and haul additional salt during or after a large weather event," Kumpe explained. "That is usually when demand and prices are extremely high and region-wide supply is low or non-existent. Being able to ensure we have plenty on hand when needed not only allows us to more effectively treat the roads but also saves time, resources and tax dollars in the process."

Without a doubt, ARDOT road crews are constantly improving their strategies for keeping Arkansas' highways clear of ice and snow, and this new salt storage house will up the game even more. ■



The sign database stays as in-sync with the real world as possible across the entire state.

ARDOT'S DIGITAL SIGN DATABASE IS A GAME CHANGER

BY JOSEPH JORDAN, ADVANCED GEOSPATIAL SPECIALIST, PLANNING DIVISION, AND DAVID NILLES

ONE OF THE FIRST STEPS TO MANAGING ANY RESOURCE, IS TO TAKE AN INVENTORY. It's very difficult to effectively steward a group of assets if you don't know how many you have, what kind they are and where those assets are located. Through the years that inventory, and the information it contains, forms the baselines for evaluating performance measures. How else can we know if we are achieving what we set out to do as an organization? Peter Drucker, who wrote much on business management in his lifetime said it well: "What gets measured, gets managed."

AN INVENTORY OF ARDOT'S ASSETS

At ARDOT, we have many assets to manage across the state. The first that comes to mind is the 16,400+ miles of highway and 7,300+ highway bridges that we work tirelessly to maintain to the highest standards. Combined, these form the core foundation of the state's highway system—so it's no wonder they get so much attention. But from traffic signals, to cameras, to message boards, to guardrails, there are many more components that work together to make that system safe and efficient.

Possibly the largest most dynamic asset group out of all of these is our signs. Even with advances in technology, signs are still the number one way to quickly communicate information

and hazards to drivers on the road. Currently, we have nearly 600,000 documented signs, and over 300 individual types of signs categorized.

A SIGN INVENTORY USING ESRI QUICK CAPTURE

While the concept of a "sign inventory" is nothing new, a centralized digital database, outside of handwritten paper logs, has been a long time coming.

The current handwritten inventory system has done the job for years; however, it hasn't been a system where information can be gathered quickly. The challenge of not just collecting this vast number of highly varied assets, but also validating them, and keeping them up to date as signs are constantly installed, removed or replaced all over the state is a daunting one, to say the least.

In 2020, the decision was made to move forward with collecting images and basic attributes for all highway signs on the state highway system. In a partnership between the Maintenance and Planning divisions, a plan was devised to use imagery captured by the Department's Automatic Road Analyzer (ARAN) to get an initial sign inventory from the images. After that, a digital application called Esri Quick Capture was developed to log images of sign installations, removals and replacements occurring across the state.

In late 2022, the District 7 Sign Crew was the first to test the new system that currently provides real-time images of all sign work in the region.

Sign crews now use an iPad while on location to capture data. They simply click a button on the iPad to correspond with the work they are doing whether it be sign installation, sign replacement, sign removal or several other choices.

"Safety is the key," stated Sharon Hawkins, Staff Graphic Information System (GIS) and Mapping Administrator. "We don't want crews out on the road any longer than they have to be. They hit the appropriate button on the iPad, then back up and take a picture of the sign. All of this can be done in 5 to 10 seconds."

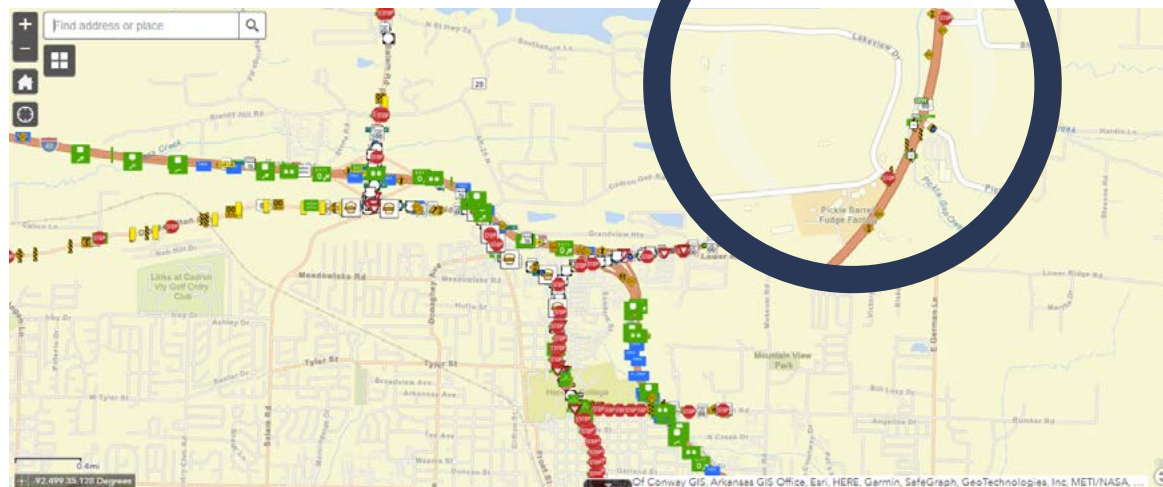
Chase Arnold, District 7 Sign Crew Supervisor, has been impressed with the new system's performance out in the field.

"Capturing the data is really easy and simple," he shared. "It only takes a few seconds per sign, and we've had no problems using the program."

Once the data is loaded into Esri, it rolls into a staging area. Joseph Jordan, Advanced Geospatial Specialist, Planning Division, oversees the database. With the help of ARDOT Geospatial Specialist Mark Jaeger, they look at the information, verify it and post it to the database.

"District 7 has been using the system for over a year," stated Hawkins. "There have been over 1,500 sign changes in District 7 in that time, so just imagine what that means as Districts across the state begin collecting. The Statewide Sign Crews and District Sign Crews are going to be a big part of this process and their work is how this new digital inventory is going to work and be successful."

(continued on page 18)



DISTRICT 7 SIGN CREW 2023 SIGN COUNT

Over 1,500 signs were installed or replaced including:

10 Adopt-A-Highway

31 Speed Limit

8 Yield

114 Stop

9 Bridge Ices Before Road

366 Chevron



Top: Statewide Sign Crew (Back Row L. to R.) Landon Wells, Jimmy Skinner, Kris Trout, Blake Caudell (Middle Row L. to R.) Graylon Macon, Jason Sims, Winston Skinner (Front Row L. to R.) Wesley Sylar, Chad Ring, Luther Wells.

Bottom: District 7 Sign Crew (L. to R.) Lane Brian, Chase Arnold, and Kelvin Ford (Not pictured: Jon Lindsey and Sylvester Jackson)

Right: (L. to R.) Mark Jaeger and Joseph Jordan are part of the database team.

PUTTING THE DATA TO WORK

“While it has been an enormous undertaking to collect, process and plan maintenance for, the return from the sign database has been incredibly valuable,” Jordan shared. “The database can be accessible online to everyone at ARDOT from entry level planners to executive level decision makers, in a format where they can visualize, filter and draw insights to make the best data-driven decisions possible at the time.”

And while sign locations themselves are valuable, this is only the beginning of how the sign data can be used.

“The speed limit signs are now used to maintain a statewide speed zone dataset that aids in decisions where speed limit is

a critical factor,” Jordan shared. “We use it for all kinds of analysis. For example, where can centerline rumble strips go within these parameters? We are also able to see where interstate mile markers align or deviate from their intended locations. We can even plot out stretches of highways that have been adopted for volunteer litter cleanup through the state’s Adopt-A-Highway program and pinpoint locations that still need volunteers.

Though we are not there yet, a digital sign database could one day help us move beyond hand-written paper logs and provide us with a foundation for a full-life-cycle sign management system. These are just a few ways we are putting



the sign database to work for us in practical and meaningful ways.”

As ARDOT discovers new ways to put the sign database to work, other Departments of Transportation (DOT) are watching.

“We’re excited to compare notes and lessons learned,” Hawkins shared.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that ARDOT’s most valuable asset is its highways, bridges, signs or even its impressive library of data. ARDOT’s most valuable assets will and always will be its people. While the sign database has great potential to revolutionize the way we manage sign assets and make decisions, it’s not perfect. Even after much investment — the sign database will only be as good as its contributors make it. Ultimately, success to the greatest potential lies in folks across many divisions and work groups coming together with a shared vision. Not just to comply with directives, but to truly see the value in the effort and prioritize stewarding our organization’s digital data repositories with the same vigor we do our physical, tangible assets. And not so that it can just sit there, but so that we can consistently utilize it to empower and equip our leadership at all levels to make the best judgment calls they can. ■



ARDOT MAINTENANCE SUPERVISORS CONVENE AT DEGRAY LAKE LODGE

BY DAVID NILLES

THE SETTING COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE IDEAL AS 200 ARDOT MAINTENANCE SUPERVISORS CAME TOGETHER FOR THE 2023 MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR CONFERENCE AT DEGRAY LAKE RESORT STATE PARK THE FIRST WEEK OF OCTOBER.

Participants arriving at the conference had an opportunity to check out a specialty equipment showcase set up in the parking lot that featured a long row of machinery used in road construction. Arriving in the lobby, attendees were invited to take a turn at the Department’s new Vortex “Edge Max.” The simulator offers six different training options for heavy equipment.

The conference itself kicked off with a luncheon where ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor praised the work of maintenance crews across the state’s 10 Districts.

“Our crews are the backbone of the Department,” Tudor shared. “The work they perform is so important to motorists, our maintenance crews are truly the unsung heroes of ARDOT.”

The focus of this year’s conference was on safety.

“Many of our sessions are focusing on safety,” State Maintenance Engineer Deric Wyatt stated. “Safety is first in everything we do.”

The luncheon’s featured speaker was Isaac Rodriguez, Vice President of Safety, Health and Environment for CRH Americas Materials West.

“Safety always should come first as we work to make sure everyone gets home at the end of the day.”

Rodriguez shared CRH’s safety program which features 14 life-saving rules and policies.

“It’s important for our company to be in compliance but we

wanted to go beyond compliance,” he told the crowd. “We started the initiative of ‘See, Stop, Do.’ Every employee has a right to stop and do something if they see an unsafe hazard or condition. We all have that ownership to do that. Once a month, we have a ‘See Stop Do Day’ where we meet and talk about safety issues.”

Many of the breakout sessions at the conference also focused on safety including “Chain Saw Safety – Train the Trainer,” “Safety and Accident Review,” “Safety – The Legal Factor” and “Safety Calls.”

Other sessions included a review of new digital sign logging presented by Staff Graphic Information System (GIS) and Mapping Administrator Sharon Hawkins and vegetation management updates featuring moderators Charlie Flowers, ARDOT’s lead agronomist, and Brenden Perdue, agronomist.

Participants also spent a morning discussing best practices that focused on bridge operations, snow and ice removal, mowing, work zone traffic control, and signing.

Staff Engineer Michael Kelly addressed upcoming events as he discussed planning for 2024’s solar eclipse and the Department’s winter weather preparation for this year.

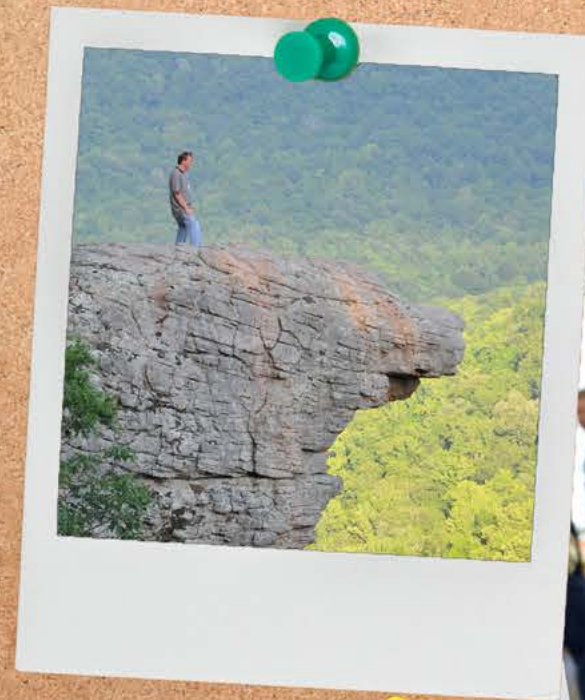
“This was an amazing conference with lots of positive feedback,” Wyatt shared in the days following the conference.

“Sessions provided opportunities for our maintenance supervisors to share ideas, success stories and other learning experiences from around the state. Everyone’s participation was an indication of their commitment to ARDOT. We are always looking for ways to improve and welcome everyone’s feedback on how to further advance our maintenance operations to remain one of the top ranked Departments of Transportation in the country.” ■

ARKANSAS HIGHWAYS

Magazine Editor set to Retire

BY MARK WOODALL



A FAMOUS MOVIE QUOTE IN THE WIZARD OF OZ SAYS, "PAY NO ATTENTION TO THAT MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN!" In the 1939 film the "Wizard" is pulling the levers of power in a seemingly clever way to fool the residents of Oz into thinking he is a magical being.

Similarly, there has been a writer/editor on staff at ARDOT for over 20 years who has been quietly pulling the strings behind the scenes to ensure that *Arkansas Highways* magazine and the *Centerline* newsletter are on time, accurate and creative.

Unlike the Wizard, David Nilles is very real and unfortunately for us, he just signed his retirement paperwork after 22 years of faithful service.

I had the opportunity to sit down with him to discuss his time at ARDOT. Clearly, he was unaccustomed to being the subject of an interview. Nilles is both humble and friendly, and it was obvious from our discussion that he would rather be writing about someone else. He also has very firm beliefs about one particular rule of grammar.

[Q] Tell me about your background a bit before you started working here.

[A] I went to college at Memphis State University (now the

University of Memphis), graduated with a degree in advertising, and then got my first job with KTHV in the production department. While there, I got into writing a bit and editing. I left and sold radio advertising for a while, which is one of the hardest jobs in the world. It was a real learning experience, but I left to get back into public relations and advertising. Then I went to work for the Arkansas Arts Center as the Director of Public Relations, and I was in charge of promoting its galleries, Children's Theatre and Decorative Arts Museum.

[Q] So, here is where I'd like to pick up. How did you end up at ARDOT?

[A] I saw the job opening and applied for it. I remember my dad asking me, "David, how are you going to get that job – you don't know anything about highways?" I told him an education on Arkansas' highway system would come on the job, I just needed to use my public relations skills in order to promote them. I got the job as a writer and started working for Randy Ort when he was the Public Information Officer. He was a great boss and a walking encyclopedia of knowledge. I began writing lots of news releases. We didn't have social media back then. We could email releases out, but we also sent many through the regular postal service.

[Q] But you weren't just a writer. You worked on other projects

in Public Information, right?

[A] Yes, I think my title may have been Communications Specialist back then. We wrote speeches and we attended public environmental meetings. Those were always interesting because I got to learn about new projects before they even started. But one day Randy sat me down and said "David, I'd like you to be in charge of the magazine. I want that to be your main focus." That was an exciting challenge for me because that was about the same time *Arkansas Highways* went to full color.

[Q] During your time here does any one story stick out in your mind as a favorite?

[A] There are so many that were so much fun to cover. I liked doing the stories that you had to do a great deal of research on. I enjoyed learning about the historical stuff. I did an article on the railroad depots of Arkansas. Those are not the big transportation centers they used to be back in the day but many of them are still standing today. Another story I did was about retro architecture along the highways. Places such as hotels, and tiny cafeterias with the old bar stools were always interesting to research. We also did a regular magazine series called "Weekend Road Trip." Ellen Hill, our photographer John Jackson, and I would just pick a highway in Arkansas, and

we would write stories about what motorists could see while traveling around the state. We would just get in the car and GO!

[Q] You did this on your own time, off the clock?

[A] Oh, no, no, no. (laughter) We would do it during the week. Sometimes we would have an overnight stay if we were way up in Northwest Arkansas, and it was great fun. We went to Blanchard Springs Caverns and told them what we were doing, and they introduced a forest ranger who gave us our own private tour of the caves. I remember our photographer really wanted a sunset shot of the Highway 82 Bridge at Lake Village. We arranged for the Lake Village Fire Department to take us out in its fire and rescue boat underneath the bridge to capture that sunset, and that was exciting. That photo ended up as the cover picture for one of our magazines. I've always enjoyed the employee spotlight stories. We see people Monday through Friday, but we don't always know what they do after 5 o'clock and it is a lot of fun to focus on their hobbies. We featured artists, beekeepers, bladesmiths and any number of people who enjoy their hobbies after hours.

[Q] Speaking of hobbies, what do you like to do in your spare time?

(continued on page 22)



David Nilles received his 5-year Service Award from Randy Ort, Former Deputy Director, in 2006.

[A] I'm an outdoor guy. I do a lot of kayaking, hiking and riding my Sea-doo on Lake Hamilton. I love jumping in my Jeep and discovering dirt roads out in the deep woods.

[Q] Your job works out well for you then because you've probably gotten to see lots of projects evolve during your time here, right?

[A] Yes, it was exciting to see the Bella Vista Bypass get completed, the opening of the Big Rock Interchange and watching what we're doing right now with 30 Crossing. I saw some of these from start to finish. It was also exciting to see some of our funding campaigns develop, such as Issue 1. We've also had road improvement programs that were fun to cover like the Connecting Arkansas Program and the Interstate Rehabilitation Program, so those were interesting because not only are you writing about them, but you're also learning a lot.

[Q] Can you think of other stories that are somewhat difficult for you to write about?

[A] When we lose a Highway Commissioner, we always do a memorial page about them. Many of them were before my time here, but some are people who were here during my time, and I had a chance to work with. Other stories were a learning experience and technical, for example, writing about new types of asphalt or the recycling of asphalt.

[Q] I know it's always sad to lose one of our ARDOT employees.

[A] I'm glad to see that we have stepped up safety awareness. Each year we do the Work Zone Awareness program and it's so important because our fellow employees are out there all day every day working and there are thousands of cars passing by just an arm's length away, so it's dangerous out there. Safety is going to be a big promotion for ARDOT in 2024.

[Q] What's one of the silliest editorial debates you would encounter while proofreading the magazine? This is a loaded question because I know that you and former ARDOT writer Britni Padilla-Dumas would often have lengthy debates about the Oxford comma. [The Oxford comma is a comma used before the conjunction in a list of three or more items in a sentence.]

[A] (laughter) That's the most controversial debate I've had in my career here. In my day in high school and college, we learned you don't need that Oxford comma all the time because there is that little conjunction (and, but, so, etc.) that serves as a bridge between the next to last item and the last item. I know I'm the only one in the Communications Division that feels that way. All these other people will put that extra comma in there and when I'm proofreading, I take every one of them out. (more laughter)

*When reached for comment Britni Padilla-Dumas said, "The Oxford comma is absolutely vital, necessary, and relevant to all written works."

The debate continues...

[Q] I don't want to put you on the spot but who are some of your favorite people you've worked with over the years?

[A] There is a long list of people I've enjoyed working with and many are still here. Of course, Britni was a fun writer to work with and so was Randy Ort. He was a good leader, and he knows so much about ARDOT and how the entire department operates. I could just go down the line and mention so many others. I've got to mention our layout staff. Marrison Miller, Lmarie Rutelonis and Aimee Goode are all so good at what they do and they're always in high demand. I can sit here and write all day, but they know how to really bring our stories to life with their impressive visuals.

[Q] What are some of the biggest changes you've seen during your time here?

[A] When I started, we didn't have Facebook or Twitter. Social media is the biggest thing I've seen happen in the past 10-15 years. That's just an entirely new way of communicating and reaching our audience. I got to see the birth of IDriveArkansas.com and that's a huge tool that motorists use now. It used to be that when there was winter weather outside, our department would get nonstop phone calls. Now we don't have that problem. People can access information online now and that just makes it better for everyone.

[Q] What would you advise new people and future generations of communicators or even ARDOT employees in other areas?

[A] I would say just bring your skills. As I said, I didn't know much about highways or how they were planned and constructed. Just be willing to absorb and learn as much as you can. We do so many things here and there are so many different areas of ARDOT. It's just such a great place to work and learn new things.

[Q] Okay, so this brings me to my sad question. What do you plan to do after you sign those papers and finally retire? What will you do when you ride off into the sunset?

[A] I have to sign papers? (laughter) Well, I just bought a new house, so I'll probably spend time enjoying it and I'd like to do more traveling. My sister-in-law's sister asked me the same thing, "Dave, what are you going to do when you retire?" I said I really don't know. She replied "I have three words of advice for you . . . Just have fun!" So that is my goal. But before I do that, can I remove all of the Oxford commas from this story?

The main characters of The Wizard of Oz followed a yellow brick road as the film progressed. While we were not able to write a song to observe the retirement of our favorite longtime editor, we hope that Nilles will follow the yellow striping along the centerline of the road to drop in and pay us a visit from time to time. ■

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Sequestered on the second floor of the Central Office in Little Rock is what we in the Communications Division like to call the "magazine archives." Sitting on the shelves of the archives is a copy of almost every *Arkansas Highways* magazine printed, dating all the way back to 1925. The first issue came out in 1924 but a copy of that magazine is hard to find.

With almost a century of issues sent out to readers, just imagine how many articles have been written over the years telling ARDOT's story. Serving as editor in these modern times, I feel lucky to have been able to contribute to the wealth of Department knowledge shared in those pages.

I've been fortunate to have covered events such as the reopening of the new Broadway Bridge in Little Rock, the opening of the Bella Vista Bypass, construction of the state's first roundabouts and witnessed the Department's first Interstate Rehabilitation Program.

There have also been opportunities to meet a number of ARDOT staff members whose after-hours hobbies were a story to be told. Beekeeping, blade smithing or boxing anyone?

There was also exploring to be done whether the subject was caves in north Arkansas, archeological sites off the beaten path or the behind the scenes areas deep within the Bobby Hopper Tunnel.

No matter the subject, it has been a pleasure to learn and write about the workings of our Department. As I walk away from my trusty keyboard, I look forward to becoming a reader of *Arkansas Highways* and learning about what the future holds for ARDOT. Signing off, I wish everyone great success in the years ahead!

David Nilles

ARDOT TAKES CENTER STAGE AT 2023 TRANSPORTATION PLANNING CONFERENCE

BY MARK WOODALL

THE 2023 ARKANSAS TRANSPORTATION PLANNING CONFERENCE (ATPC) IS NOW IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR. The event was held September 19 – 21 at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in North Little Rock.

The ATPC event brings ARDOT leadership and staff together with private industry contractors to explain how we plan for projects, how data is evaluated and how our organizational business is conducted.

“The biggest benefit of the conference is that it allows us to share information with our stakeholders to keep them informed about how we operate,” said Brad McCaleb, Planning Division Head, and the conference moderator.

ARDOT presenters covered a wide range of topics during the three-day event. Topics included future plans for the 2024 solar eclipse, the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment (EVID) update and increasing driver safety plans.

Sharon Hawkins, Graphic Information System (GIS) and Mapping Administrator said the meeting is extremely valuable to all involved. “The conference is a wonderful way to showcase new technology and forward-thinking programs and to receive immediate feedback from our partners and vendors that are participating with us.”

Director Lorie Tudor highlighted information about ARDOT’s reorganization plans, new funding and improved technology while innovating for the future. “We’ve established and rolled out our new Strategic Plan which has gained momentum throughout the Department. We are as focused as ever on accomplishing our objectives,” she said.

The Director also discussed important milestones and celebrations during 2023. This year ARDOT celebrates its 100th anniversary and the 70th year for the Arkansas Highway Commission.

The planning conference had not been held since 2019 due to COVID-19 concerns. ■

PREPPING FOR THE SOLAR ECLIPSE

BY DAVID NILLES

ON APRIL 8 OF THIS YEAR, A TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE WILL CROSS NORTH AMERICA PASSING OVER MEXICO, THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA. The eclipse’s path will cross the eastern half of the United States entering in Texas, and traveling across Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and states to the east.

During the eclipse, the state will be in what is called the “Path of Totality,” an angle from the earth where the moon appears to entirely block the sun. Darkness similar to that seen at dawn or dusk will be experienced for approximately three minutes in the early afternoon.

WATCHING THE SKIES IN ARKANSAS

The last total solar eclipse passed over the United States in 2017. It was a massive event with millions of travelers flocking to the path of totality. What does that mean for Arkansas in 2024? We can expect visitors coming to the Natural State from across the country and possibly beyond to witness the event.

With such an influx, ARDOT is planning ahead to ensure that highway congestion is kept to a minimum.

“One of the first steps we took in preparing for the eclipse was to look at the 2017 eclipse,” ARDOT’s Assistant Chief of Maintenance Steve Frisbee shared. “We have the benefit of learning from that event. We talked to Departments of Transportation across the country and learned there is a heavy flow of traffic leading into the best viewing states, but nothing outrageous. The problem comes when everyone wants to leave for home at the same

time after the eclipse. It was the six to 12 hours following the event that caused the unexpected headaches.”

Learning what took place in those states in 2017 is how ARDOT began preparations for 2024.

FORMULATING A GAME PLAN

ARDOT began eclipse planning this past year by preparing a Traffic Management Plan.

“We put a team together and also hired a couple of consultants to assist us with this effort,” Frisbee explained. “We are working with a few engineering firms to create some travel modeling.”

The first step is to determine where traffic will be coming into Arkansas from, and their destination once they get here.

“We will study possible traffic patterns and the information we obtain will go into a computer program that will create a travel demand model.”

This travel information helps ARDOT strategize where our staff needs to be positioned the day of the event. Expected bottlenecks can be determined and travel demand reduction strategies and other mitigation efforts can be put into place.

“This will be a multi-agency effort,” Frisbee added. “We will work with Arkansas Highway Police, Arkansas State Police, the Department of Emergency Management and the Department of Health to ensure emergency services are in place and hospitals have ramped up their emergency rooms and capacities.”

Bringing an expected half million visitors into the area of totality requires that ARDOT coordinate strategically to position officers, maintenance personnel, and even staff from our Resident

Engineer offices.

“We call it pre-positioning and it enables us to more quickly respond to incidents,” Frisbee added. “Prepositioning allows us to check on stranded motorists, assist in getting them turned around or finding alternate routes and then clearing the roadway to get traffic moving again.”

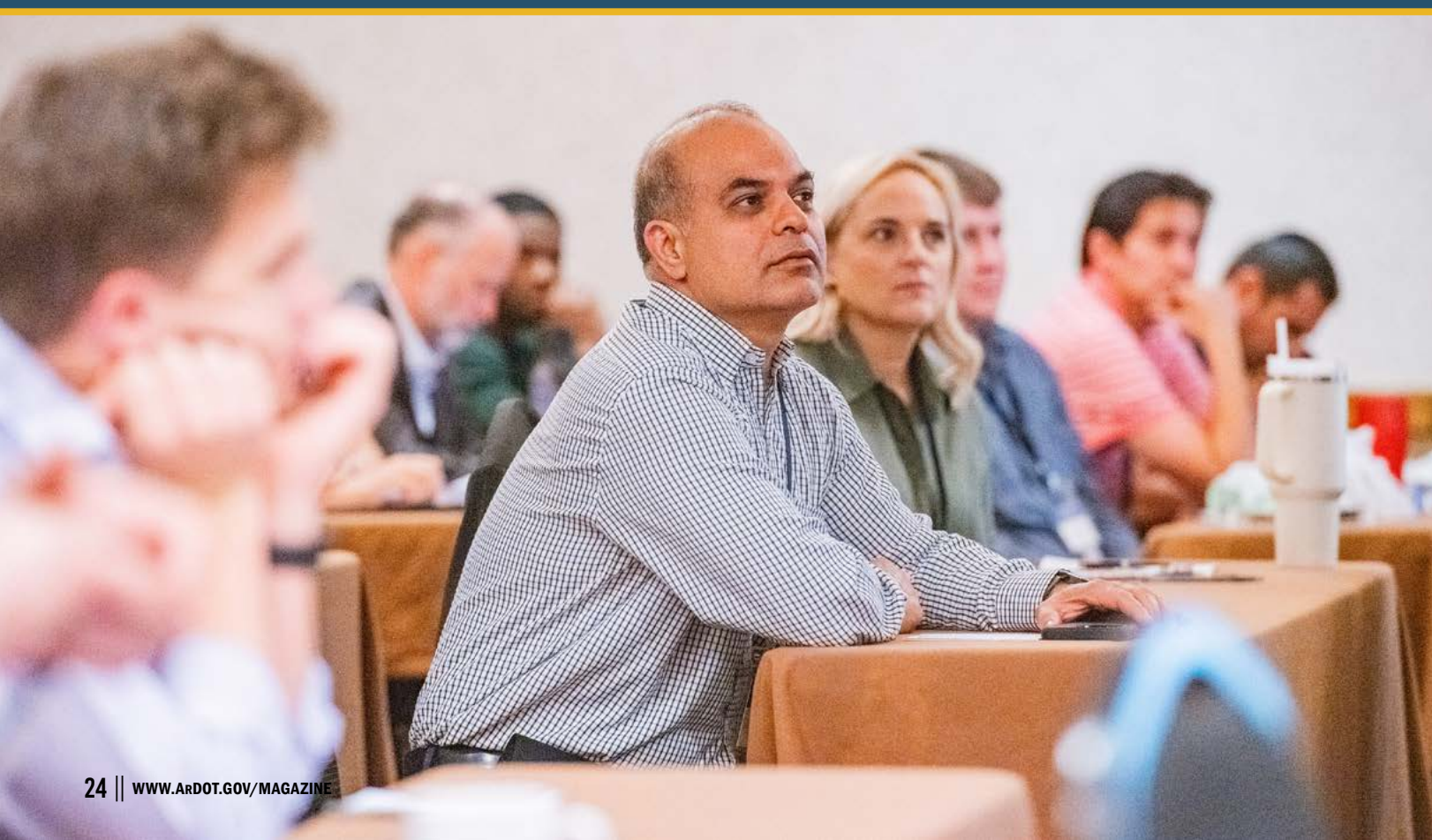
MEDIA PREPARATIONS

Another key component of the Department’s game plan will be getting word to the public. ARDOT’s Communications Division has been discussing the eclipse and getting information to travelers for over two years.

At the 100-day mark, ARDOT will ramp up awareness of the eclipse through social media, explainer videos and fun facts. The more informed people are of what’s coming and potential problems we may encounter, the smoother it may go.

“We want people to visit Arkansas and enjoy this historical event,” Dave Parker, Division Head of Communications, stated. “We also want people to be able to get around safely and have a good time. However, with millions of visitors predicted to come here, our traffic system will be put to the test.”

After the solar eclipse on April 8, the next total solar eclipse visible from the United States will be in 2044. The path of totality for that eclipse will begin in Greenland, sweep through Canada, and end as the sun sets in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. For Arkansas, the 2024 eclipse will be our time to shine. Oops, no pun intended. ■



OUT & ABOUT

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AROUND THE STATE

Action/Abstraction Redefined:
Modern Native Art, 1940s to 1970s

As you travel Arkansas over the next few months, consider checking out some of these listed events. Our state is full of interesting things to do, no matter what highway you take. For additional event listings, check out [Arkansas.com/events](https://www.arkansas.com/events)

* "LITTLE WOMEN – THE BROADWAY MUSICAL": Based on Louisa May Alcott's life, "Little Women" follows the adventures of sisters Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy March, each determined to live life on her own terms. "Little Women" embodies the complete theatrical experience, leaving audiences filled with a sense of adventure, joy, heartache and a lifting of the spirit. The powerful score soars with the sounds of personal discovery, heartbreak, hope and everlasting love – the sounds of a young America finding its voice. • FEBRUARY 16

* LITTLE ROCK MARATHON: Named as one of Runner's World's "Bucket List: 10 Great Marathons for First-Timers" in 2017, come fill your bucket at the annual Little Rock Marathon, Half Marathon, 10K, 5K, and Little Rockers Kids Marathon. A race with personality, loads of southern hospitality, tons of caring volunteers, a running or walking tour through the scenic streets of Arkansas' capital city and an impressive finisher's medal. We are a race for every pace. • MARCH 2 & 3

* U. S. NAVY BAND SEA CHANTERS: The Navy Band Sea Chanters are the United States Navy's official chorus and they're coming to Arkansas. The ensemble performs a variety of music including traditional choral music, sea chanteys, patriotic fare, opera, Broadway and contemporary music. The Sea Chanters regularly perform for the public in the Washington, D.C. area and throughout the United States while on national tours. At home in Washington, they perform for the president, vice president and numerous congressional, military and foreign dignitaries. • MARCH 13

* "LAUGHS IN SPANISH": Art Basel is about to begin and Mariana, the director of a swanky modern art gallery, has a problem: her showroom is an active crime scene. Part caper comedy and part telenovela, "Laughs in Spanish" shows how far Mariana will go to save the show — even if it means accepting help from her mother, a larger-than-life film-and-television star who always steals the spotlight. • MARCH 27 – MAY 5

* ACTION/ABSTRACTION REDEFINED: MODERN NATIVE ART, 1940s TO 1970s: The first major traveling exhibition to analyze modern Native American art in relation to Abstract Expressionism, Color Field, and Hard-Edge Painting. Based on the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, where revolutionary approaches encouraged experimentation and risk-taking, "Action/Abstraction Redefined" explores how IAIA's artists combined New York School art influences with Native art traditions and challenged stereotypical expectations of American Indian art at midcentury. • THROUGH MAY 26

FEBRUARY 16 *

LITTLE WOMEN – THE BROADWAY MUSICAL
UCA – Reynolds Performance Hall
Conway, AR

MARCH 2 & 3 *

LITTLE ROCK MARATHON
Downtown
Little Rock, AR

MARCH 13 *

U.S. NAVY BAND SEA CHANTERS
East Arkansas Community College
Forrest City, AR

MARCH 17

FIRST EVER 21ST ANNUAL
WORLD'S SHORTEST ST. PATRICK'S
DAY PARADE
Bridge Street
Hot Springs, AR

MARCH 27 – MAY 5 *

LAUGHS IN SPANISH
Theatre Squared
Fayetteville, AR

THROUGH MAY 26 *

ACTION/ABSTRACTION
REDEFINED: MODERN NATIVE ART,
1940S TO 1970S
Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts
Little Rock, AR

DISTRICT 2

CONSTRUCTION

CORNER



CONSTRUCTION CREWS WITH MOBLEY CONTRACTORS, INC. ARE AT WORK IN MONTICELLO ON A HIGHWAY 83 SPUR CONNECTOR THAT WILL SERVE AS A NORTH-SOUTH CONNECTION BETWEEN HIGHWAY 83 AND HIGHWAY 278.

The connector is being constructed on location and begins on the southern end at the intersection of Highway 83 and Jordan Drive. The new construction will continue northward for just over one and a half miles where it will connect with Highway 278.

Portions of the new roadway will be three lanes and the remainder will be two lanes.

The improvements will also include two roundabouts. One will be located at Highway 83 and Jordan Drive, and the second one will be located just to the north at Scogin Drive and Old Warren Road. The job will also provide improvements for a railroad overpass on the north end.

"One reason why this project is so important to the city of Monticello is that the overpass will provide quicker, more reliable access to the schools and to medical care," Commissioner Marie Holder told a crowd gathered at a groundbreaking ceremony. "The overpass guarantees that cars and emergency vehicles won't have to stop for a passing train."

The project was made possible through a partnership with the city of Monticello and Drew County. The city contributed \$2.5 million. Drew County provided \$505,000. In addition to the financial contributions, portions of Highway 83 and the 83 Spur will be removed from the State Highway System and transferred to the city and county upon completion of the project.

Mobley Contractors, Inc. was awarded the project for \$30 million. ■





Arkansas Department of Transportation
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Little Rock, AR 72203-2261

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