

Arkansas HIGHWAYS

SUMMER 2023

A PUBLICATION OF THE
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | MAGAZINE

300 TONS OF FUN Rolls Through Arkansas

**HIGHWAY 10
Corridor Dedication**

**CRAYFISH
Relocation**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH
Commissioner David Haak**

Dear ARDOT Family,

IT IS AN EXCITING TIME AT ARDOT! Did you know that ARDOT and the State Highway System turned 100 years old this year? Both were established by legislation in 1923. That first State Highway System was 6,700 miles. Over the years that number has grown to over 16,400 miles.

The year of our Centennial Anniversary is also the year of many new beginnings.

Beginning on July 1, ARDOT will start receiving additional revenue from the ½ cent sales tax for Arkansas’ roads and bridges. This stable source of revenue was approved by voters in 2020 and will allow ARDOT to begin the Renew Arkansas Highways Program on July 1, as well. This program of projects will invest \$1.2 billion each year to improve the State Highway System with the major focus on pavement and bridge preservation. It also includes some major capitol and congestion relief projects.

Also beginning in 2023 is a new Department Reorganization to better align our workflows to be successful in delivering the Renew Arkansas Highways Program. Our structure has remained relatively the same since the 1960s and much has changed since then.

To coincide with the beginning of the Renew Arkansas Highways Program and the Reorganization, we are beginning a new Strategic Plan. Our new mission statement is “To deliver a modern transportation system to enhance safety and quality of life in Arkansas.” We have branded our new Strategic Plan as “Full STEAM Ahead.” STEAM stands for Safety, Trust, Excellence, Accountability and Modern. Our goals and strategic objectives include a focus on:

- The State Highway System
- Service to the Public
- Partnering with Stakeholders
- Employees

2023 is truly an exciting year for ARDOT and a time to celebrate! We celebrate all the progress that has been made over the past 100 years. We celebrate the future with optimism as we stand at this significant milestone in ARDOT’s history

Thank you all for being a part of the ARDOT family! Together we will continue the progress in delivering a first-class transportation system to Arkansas.

Let’s move ARDOT forward - Full STEAM Ahead!

Lorie

Lorie H. Tudor, P.E., Director



FRONT COVER:
300-ton kiln arrives in Gum Springs.

BACK COVER:
Preparing the kiln for a trip across Arkansas.

EDITOR
David Nilles
David.Nilles@ardot.gov

STAFF WRITERS
Mark Woodall
Mark.Woodall@ardot.gov

Valerie Williams
Valerie.Williams@ardot.gov

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
Marrissa Miller
Marrissa.Miller@ardot.gov

Lamarie Rutelonis
Lamarie.Rutelonis@ardot.gov

Aimee Goode
Aimee.Goode@ardot.gov

PHOTOGRAPHER
Rusty Hubbard
Russell.Hubbard@ardot.gov

Correspondence should be directed to:
David.Nilles@ardot.gov

ARKANSAS HIGHWAYS
Public Information Office
P.O. Box 2261
Little Rock, AR 72203-2261



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SUMMER 2023

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Highway 10 Corridor Dedicated to Former Highway Commission Chairman **THOMAS B. SCHUECK**

BY MARK WOODALL

WHAT BEGAN AS A VISION TO EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION ALONG THE HIGHWAY 10 CORRIDOR BY FORMER ARKANSAS HIGHWAY COMMISSION CHAIRMAN THOMAS B. SCHUECK HAS NOW BECOME A REALITY.

A ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony was held on Wednesday, May 17 to honor the legacy of Thomas Schueck, who passed away in 2020.

A portion of the Highway 10 corridor, which extends from Pleasant Valley Drive westward to Chenal Parkway in West Little Rock, has been officially named the Thomas B. Schueck Highway.

Highway 10/Cantrell Road is a major thoroughfare connecting the northern and western parts of Little Rock and Pulaski County. The project is crucial because the area is traveled by 59,000 drivers each day.

"I am one of those drivers," said Marge Schueck, the widow of Commissioner Schueck. "I know how important this project was to him to get funded and prioritized. He would have been thrilled today, so I am so grateful."

The event was attended by family and friends of Commissioner Schueck, Arkansas Highway Commissioners, ARDOT leadership, and State Representatives Carlton Wing of District 70 and Andrew Collins of District 73.

"We can celebrate today because of the leadership of Commissioner Tom Schueck. From securing the funding and all the way through the design process he was fully engaged," said ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor.



(L. to R.) Patrick Schueck, Whitten Crowson, Jessica Schueck, Hayden Schueck, Ava Schueck, Marge Schueck and Mason Schueck

The family was presented with a proclamation by the City of Little Rock Chief of Staff Kendra Pruitt on behalf of Mayor Frank Scott. Mayor Scott previously served on the Highway Commission with Mr. Schueck. "Tom was a dear friend who taught me a lot about business and civic life," Scott shared. "That is why I want to declare this day as 'Thomas B. Schueck Day' in the City of Little Rock."

The design plan started in 2018 and construction began in 2020. ARDOT served as the lead designer for the overall project that was constructed by Kiewit Infrastructure South Company at a cost of \$88 million.

"We are also celebrating the State Legislature for giving us the authority to use the Construction Manager General Contractor Delivery Method (CM-GC) for this project," added Director Tudor.

CM-GC is a two-phase project delivery method where a selected contractor acts as the Construction Manager during the preconstruction phase of a project. This method promotes collaboration and fosters innovation amongst industry partners in an effort to improve cost-effectiveness and maximize efficiency for selected projects. The Construction Manager can then serve as the General Contractor for the construction of the project, upon successful negotiation of a fair market value construction cost.

"I want to say thank you to Kiewit Infrastructure South Company, who served as contractors on this project. Not only did they do the construction on site – they also assisted ARDOT in the two-year pre-construction process," said Arkansas Highway Commissioner Marie Holder.

The dedication ceremony and ribbon-cutting event can be viewed by visiting the ARDOT Facebook page. ■



WANTED:

Jefferson County Crayfish (*Creaserinus gilpini*)

The Jefferson County Crayfish, also known by its scientific name *Creaserinus gilpini*, can only be found in roadside ditches and wetlands near the right-of-way along a roughly fifteen-mile stretch of Highway 79 in Jefferson and Cleveland counties between the cities of Pine Bluff and Rison.



NOTICE OF PETITION to Join the Endangered Species List

According to Matthew Schrum, Aquatic Biologist at the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), "the Department has signed a Voluntary Pre-listing Species Conservation Program agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. That document covers seven invertebrate species (two butterflies and five crayfish) that have been petitioned for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act. This means that they are not yet officially listed as federally threatened or endangered, but their populations are under threat or have declined. As an extra measure of caution, we are taking conservation actions to potentially prevent the need for federal listing." The Jefferson County Crayfish is one of the species listed in the petition.

BY VALERIE WILLIAMS

On May 18, 2023, a group of volunteers from multiple agencies such as the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Central Arkansas Water (CAWS), and University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff (UAPB) met together to collaborate on the relocation of a crayfish species that would be affected by an upcoming construction job.

We asked Matthew Schrum to give us the inside scoop on all things crayfish related. According to him, "the Jefferson County Crayfish, and many other burrowing crayfish species, tend to occur on the margins of wetlands where the water table is high enough that the crayfish can access water inside their burrows throughout the year, but far enough from the wetlands that their burrow entrance is infrequently, or never, under water. Many areas within ARDOT's right-of-way duplicate the conditions of these natural wetlands."

The conservation efforts of these agencies did not go to waste, either! Maxwell Hartman, a Crayfish Conservation Ecologist with the AGFC, helped create a starter tunnel for

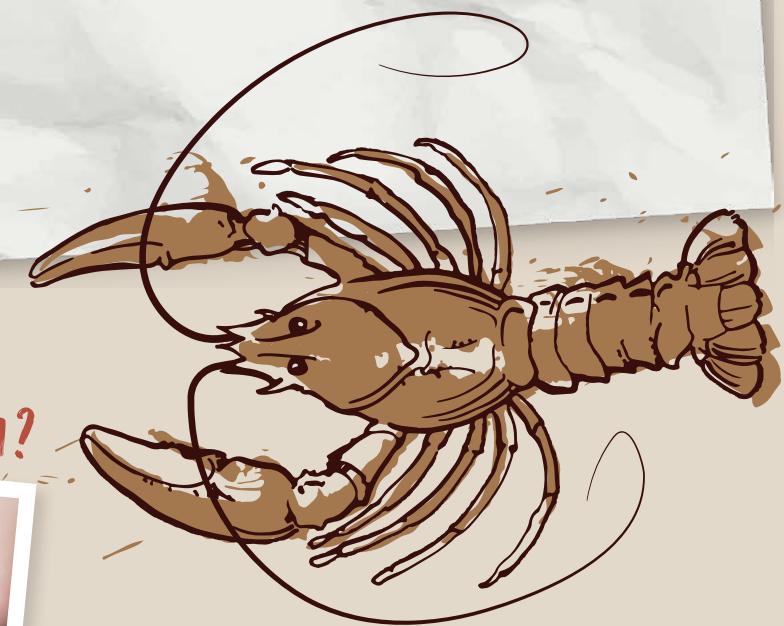
the crayfish by driving a large, steel rod into the ground until he reached the water table. Once the crayfish were collected, each one was given its own man-made tunnel to build its home out of. The Jefferson County Crayfish were moved to the old Highway 79 rest stop between Pine Bluff and Rison, and all other species of crayfish were moved to a suitable property adjacent to the construction project.

After a few days of hard work, the 24 volunteers were able to relocate 83 Jefferson County Crayfish. Matthew was able to share a few interesting facts with us in regards to the relocation:

- This is more than have been cumulatively observed by scientists since the species was discovered!
- Large numbers of juveniles were found in several of the burrows accompanied by adult female crayfish. It is believed that this is something that has never been observed in this species.

Volunteers were also able to relocate an additional 176 crayfish of other species, including the Painted Devil Crayfish, Digger Crayfish, Ditch Fencing Crayfish, Western Painted Crayfish and White River Crayfish.

Have You Seen This Crayfish?



◀ Giant Painted Devil Crayfish

SPECIAL EVENTS AROUND THE STATE



JONESBORO EASTERN BYPASS GROUNDBREAKING

Approximately 75 people came out on a chilly day in Jonesboro on February 24 to take part in a ceremonial groundbreaking for the Jonesboro Eastern Bypass and the extension of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive.

"For those of us who live in northeast Arkansas, this is an exciting day," Highway Commission Chairman Alec Farmer shared with the crowd. "We are about to begin a construction project that is going to greatly improve how we get around town."

Looking at the future bypass on a map, the extension project will give motorists a new north-south roadway on the east side of town.

A majority of the project will be constructed on new location beginning at Highway 49 near Farville as a divided 4-lane roadway. The bypass will extend southward for 4.5-miles to Interstate 555. The southern end of the project will widen Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive to five lanes with a continuous left turn lane.

"This project is going to alleviate the traffic congestion that we currently have on Red Wolf Boulevard," Farmer added. "Traffic that is now using that route will be able to use the new bypass," Farmer added.

Red Wolf Boulevard carries approximately 38,000 vehicles per day.

"This new bypass is going to be good for the people of Jonesboro and Paragould," Jonesboro Mayor Harold Copenhaver stated. "This project is a big step in the right direction."

The \$61 million contract was awarded to White River Materials, Inc. in November 2022. Completion of the project is estimated for mid-2026.

Before community leaders picked up shovels to break ground, ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor told the crowd, "Better roads lead to a better economy, which leads to a better life for everyone. I look forward to the day that we are gathered again in Jonesboro to cut a ribbon on this project." ■

ALLEVIATING THE NATIONAL TRUCK PARKING SHORTAGE - INTERSTATE 40

According to the American Trucking Association, "there are currently more than eleven truck drivers looking for overnight rest for every one parking space available."¹

ARDOT is doing its share to solve that problem. The Department hosted a ribbon cutting event on May 30 to commemorate the opening of a new commercial truck parking lot along Interstate 40 on the west edge of West Memphis, at mile marker 275. While it may not seem like much to most, this new parking area is desperately needed and well deserved.

The lack of overnight parking is a major problem for drivers that are delivering goods to communities that rely on them. Many truck drivers are faced with a decision: to end their workday early to find adequate parking, or to finish their normal work hours and hope they find a spot when they stop.

Shannon Newton, President of the Arkansas Trucking Association, spoke more in depth about this issue during the ribbon cutting ceremony.

"These spaces will provide a safe and convenient place to rest for the more than 20,000 dedicated truck drivers that pass through West Memphis on Interstate 40 each and every day. For the truck drivers in Arkansas, this parking lot is their break room, and the lack of availability of lots such as this one currently communicates to them either the lack of their importance or the lack of our awareness of the importance of their break areas."

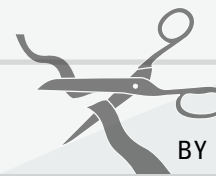
"This site previously housed an Arkansas Welcome Center," ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor shared with the crowd. "That Center closed in 2013 when we opened our Arkansas Welcome Center just east of here. The need for facilities like this is tremendous. This lot will provide safer travel on our Interstates in the future as more truckers find a safe place to park and get the rest they need."

Weaver-Bailey Contractors, Inc. was awarded the contract on the improvements for just over \$6 million. A future ARDOT construction project will add restrooms and an Arkansas Highway Police substation to the new facility.

Arkansas is not the only state that is focusing on this national issue. U.S. Senator John Boozman from Arkansas has partnered with other Senators from Wyoming, Arizona and Montana to introduce the Truck Parking Safety Improvement Act, which would authorize funds to increase truck parking capacity and improve existing truck parking.² ■

¹ <https://www.trucking.org/news-insights/ata-lauds-congressional-effort-improve-availability-truck-parking-0>

² <https://www.boozman.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2023/3/boozman-joins-bipartisan-truck-parking-bill-to-improve-efficiency-road-safety>



BY DAVID NILLES & VALERIE WILLIAMS

MAYFLOWER OVERPASS RIBBON CUTTING

The weather was perfect on May 26 as approximately 100 people gathered for a ribbon cutting on the new Highway 89 Mayflower Bypass.

The new bypass connects Highways 89 and 365 and includes a new overpass over Interstate 40 and the Union Pacific railroad tracks.

The completed project will eliminate the inconvenience of traffic delays while trains travel the tracks through town.

"I've sat at that railroad crossing many times," stated Mayflower resident and ARDOT employee James Patrick. "Eliminating the traffic delays at the crossing is the most beneficial thing about this project. For our residents and for emergency vehicles, this is a vast improvement."

Patrick shared that the new bypass will tie the community together.

"Mayflower is a growing area, and this will be a wonderful addition. This will save time for those trying to get to Little Rock. It will also tie Mayflower to west Conway. With the growth we are seeing, these improvements will be beneficial for everyone living in the area."

The new bypass was constructed by Emery Sapp & Sons, Inc. for \$23.6 million.

"I congratulate our contractors for the great job they did," stated Highway Commissioner Marie Holder. "They worked while Highway 89 remained open to traffic through the area. In addition to traffic, other factors also made this project unique. The close proximity of Lake Conway, Interstate 40 and the railroad tracks to the worksite presented unique challenges for the contractor to contend with. We normally don't see all of these in such close proximity on one project."

Director Lorie Tudor thanked all of the organizations involved in getting the bypass completed.

"When you consider the number of organizations that have come together to make this bypass a reality, you get an idea of how much these improvements were needed. I want to thank the City of Mayflower, Metroplan and Faulkner County for partnering with ARDOT on this project. All of us working together have now provided safer travel through the area."

Congressman French Hill, who Tudor stated was a champion for the project, shared a story with the crowd.

"This is such an important project. Since 2015, I have kept on my desk in Little Rock a list of everything I wanted to get done while in Congress. Former Mayor Randy Holland and former County Judge Jim Baker were so persuasive, the Mayflower overpass was on top of that list. This project improves public safety, it improves travel and it will provide economic opportunity. It also will benefit the entire Faulkner County area. Thanks for letting me play a part in this project over the last nine years. Now, I can draw a line through this project on that list on my desk." ■



Representative David Ray, Senator Mark Johnson and Congressman French Hill join ARDOT officials to cut a ribbon on the Mayflower Bypass.



Arkansas Trucking Association (ATA) president Shannon Newton (with scissors) cuts a ribbon on the I-40 commercial truck parking lot with Senator Reginald Murdock, ATA board members (R) and ARDOT officials (L).



Artist rendering of the I-40 commercial truck parking lot.

300 TONS OF FUN

BY MARK WOODALL

ROLLS THROUGH SOUTH ARKANSAS



The kiln traveled through Crossett on May 10, 2023.

MOST DRIVERS HAVE BEEN CAUGHT IN TRAFFIC BEHIND OVERSIZED LOADS ON THE INTERSTATE AT SOME POINT. Usually, there are escort cars with flashing yellow lights, and traffic moves at a much slower pace.

Oversized load escorts can be routine or extremely complex depending on the size and weight of the load.

Recently, the Arkansas Highway Police (AHP) assisted a transportation escort company with a unique request.

"We were asked to help with the movement of a 300-ton kiln through narrow areas of state highways," said Captain Ross Batson, Arkansas Highway Police.

The kiln had to be transported 124 miles from Crossett to Gum Springs across south Arkansas. The movement took one year to plan and coordinate with Barnhart Crane & Rigging of Memphis, Tennessee.

There were obstacles and challenges along the way because of the rare dimensions of the haul. The loaded truck stood over 22 feet high and 23 feet wide.

"I'm glad we were able to close down certain sections of the highways during the process," said Batson. "In some areas, both lanes needed to be closed and power lines had to be raised to accommodate the safe movement of the truck."

Additional coordination was required with ARDOT bridge inspectors. Careful consideration is required when moving that much weight across smaller bridges.

According to Tammy Herman, staff engineer with the Bridge Division, ARDOT uses a specialized automated system to

analyze the load weight and measurements of the bridges along the route.

"District inspection staff were also there on-site to inspect the support structure underneath the bridges," said Herman.

Inspectors also took pictures and gathered videos during and after the move.

"We are careful to check for any changes to the structure. The information is then gathered into a database for further analysis," said Herman.

"I've been doing this for 30 years. I've moved gigantic equipment all over the United States, and I have to say that ARDOT and the Arkansas Highway Police set the new bar for excellence," said Tim Fields of Barnhart Crane & Rigging. "Everyone from the bridge inspectors, engineers from Districts 3 and 7, and AHP employees Lela Cook and Captain Batson made this movement a success."

The escort was something of an online sensation too. According to Ellen Coulter, ARDOT's Deputy Public Information Officer, posts about the kiln were seen more than 9 million times on Facebook.

"The kiln coverage on social media received much more attention than I ever thought it would. The vast majority of the comments were fun and positive. It was so cute to see schools take field trips to see the kiln as it passed through their towns," said Coulter. "They were tracking it like they do the Santa Tracker during the holidays!"

The Arkansas Highway Police issues 157,000 permits on average during a calendar year. A transportation escort is not required for most of the requests. ■

TIP OF THE CAP at Thaden Field



BY BRITNI PADILLA-DUMAS



NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CELEBRATED THE COMPLETION OF ARDOT'S CONNECTING ARKANSAS PROGRAM (CAP) WITH A SPECIAL EVENT IN BENTONVILLE ON MARCH 9.

ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor welcomed Bentonville Mayor Stephanie Orman and former House Representative Jonathan Barnett of Siloam Springs to the event. Also on hand were local dignitaries, highway commissioners and a number of staff members.

Voters approved a temporary ½-cent sales tax in 2012, dedicating revenue for road and bridge improvements across the state. As a result, the Connecting Arkansas Program was created with the goal of improving the connectivity of the

Arkansas State Highway System.

"With support of the Arkansas State Legislature, the Governor and Arkansas voters, the last 10 years have generated \$1.8 billion, funded 31 projects and 200 miles of road improvements as part of the CAP program," ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor told a crowd gathered at Thaden Field.

"Like every other area of the state, northwest Arkansas has benefitted from the CAP. Four projects have contributed to the six-lane widening of Interstate 49 between Fayetteville and Bentonville; another project helped complete the Bella Vista Bypass, and yet another became part of the Springdale Bypass."

Northwest Arkansas highways received improvements from nine CAP projects across the region.

Vice Chairman Philip Taldo reflected on the bigger picture.

"In the 10 years that have followed since Issue 1 was passed, 31 highway improvement projects have been carried out. And today, 31 improvement projects have been completed or are underway. These improvements would not have been possible without good planning, good design, good contractors and lots of hard work. Today, we tip our cap to every individual and every company involved in the completion of this program." ■

Top: (L. to R.) Commissioner Keith Gibson, ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor, former Commissioner Jonathan Barnett, Commissioner Philip Taldo and former Commissioner Dick Trammel cut a ribbon at the northwest Arkansas CAP celebration.

ENGINEERING
ACEC

ARDOT Receives ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

BY DAVID NILLES

THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES (ACEC) ARKANSAS CHAPTER WITH TWO 2023 ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARDS. The awards were presented at the annual Engineering Excellence Awards celebration on March 9.

The awards recognize Arkansas engineering projects that demonstrate a high degree of achievement, value and ingenuity. Judged by a panel of industry professionals from around the state, projects were evaluated based on uniqueness, future value to the engineering profession, sustainable considerations and successful fulfillment of the client's needs.

ARDOT received awards in two categories. In the Structural Systems category, ARDOT was recognized for the Palarm Creek Bridge Replacement on Highway 365. In the Studies, Research and Consulting Engineering Services category, the Department received an Honor Award for its Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment (EVID) Plan.

PALARM CREEK BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

Palarm Creek is a tributary of the Arkansas River, located in Faulkner and Pulaski Counties. The existing 171-foot bridge carrying Highway 365 over the waterway was deemed structurally deficient. The ARDOT project replaced the bridge over Palarm Creek and its approaches. ARDOT staff performed

the roadway and hydraulic study, but due to an abbreviated design schedule, the Department asked Michael Baker International to complete the bridge design and plans. This approach represented a true partnership as Michael Baker's bridge design team coordinated directly with ARDOT's roadway design team to produce the complete set of construction drawings.

As part of the project, the bridge was lengthened to be 202.5 feet in length and widened to allow for two 12-foot lanes with 8-foot shoulders. This ensured that the structure would provide a safer corridor for motorists and provide an increase in capacity of the structure. The new structure needed to be horizontally-curved in order to maintain traffic throughout the construction of the new structure, adding structural complexity to the project. The new bridge opened in February 2022.

Michael Baker International entered the project into the awards competition.

ARKANSAS EVID PLAN

In late 2021, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law established a National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program (NEVI Formula) to provide funding to states to build a national network of 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations by 2030 along federally designated Alternative Fuel Corridors. The program will carve out \$5 billion over five years to help states create that charging station network. States must submit an EV Infrastructure Deployment Plan before they can access the funds.

To develop Arkansas' plan, ARDOT collaborated closely with the Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment (E&E). A working group was also formed which included: the FHWA-Arkansas Division office, the U.S. Department of Energy designated Arkansas Clean Cities Coalition, Arkansas' Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Arkansas Public Service Commission, Arkansas' Electric Utilities (investor-owned, cooperative, and municipal), and local governments.

ARDOT brought in national architecture and engineering firm HNTB to assist with development of the deployment plan.

The focus is currently on the FHWA-designated alternative fuel corridors and the interstates: initially Interstate 30, Interstate 40 and Interstate 49. Once the Department has been certified as built-out for those corridors, the program will expand to include routes other than the interstate highways.

Plans call for building EV charging stations approximately every 50 miles along Arkansas' interstates. Location of the stations are required to be within one mile of an interstate and include four, high-speed chargers at each station. Each location must feature four fast chargers that charge at 150kw per hour.

HNTB entered the plan into the awards competition.

"ARDOT is thrilled to be recognized by our peers in the transportation industry," ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor shared. "We are fortunate to have a staff of professionals that dedicate themselves to giving their best day in and day out, and to have valuable partners such as Michael Baker International and HNTB working with us on projects like these." ■



Top: Palarm Creek Bridge on Highway 365

Bottom: The cover of ARDOT's Infrastructure Deployment Plan.



LET YOUR ADVENTURES BEGIN:

Arkansas' Welcome Centers

BY DAVID NILLES

ARE YOU READY TO EXPLORE ARKANSAS? The weather is perfect for getting out on the open road and discovering all there is to do in the Natural State. Waiting for you out there are 52 State Parks, a National Park, a National River, over 100 museums, just as many campgrounds, great places to eat and so much more.

So where to begin? All the information you need to get ready for that perfect trip is available at your closest Arkansas Welcome Center. You'll find 13 centers located at strategic points of entry to the state.

WHERE TO FIND THE CENTERS

Welcome Centers can be found at Bentonville, Blytheville, Corning, El Dorado, Harrison, Helena/West Helena, Lake Village, Mammoth Spring, Red River, Siloam Springs, Texarkana, Van Buren and West Memphis. Construction will begin soon on a new one near the Missouri State Line on the Bella Vista Bypass

STEP INSIDE: RELAX & LEARN

Inside each Center, you will find a wealth of information on tourist attractions in the state. Racks and racks of brochures, fliers, booklets and maps are available to help you map an itinerary for your trip. If you have questions, Welcome Center staff will be glad to provide you with answers. Travel consultants share their wealth

of knowledge with about one million travelers annually.

For those who have already begun their trip, the Centers make for a good place to pull off the road and rest for a while. In addition to travel information, you'll find rocking chairs for sitting and coffee for drinking. Wi-Fi is also available.

Many of the Welcome Centers incorporate design elements such as native stone and large timbers. Each includes vast amounts of space for travel brochures, sitting areas and special exhibits. They also contain computer kiosks, multi-media space and picnic areas outdoors.

A special feature of the Lake Village Welcome Center is a 3,700 square-foot multi-level fishing and observation deck overlooking Lake Chicot. The Welcome Center in Helena-West Helena is unique in that it reflects the Antebellum-style architecture of the city around it. It is also the newest Center, opening in 2013.

A HISTORY OF WELCOMING VISITORS

In 1997, ARDOT conducted a study of conditions at its 13 existing Travel Information Centers and concluded that improvements were needed. Working together with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, ARDOT developed a plan to rebuild eight of the centers. The first decision was to rename them Arkansas Welcome Centers. The first two new Welcome Centers hosted ribbon cuttings in late 2004. Fast forward to 2020 and Arkansas had 10 of the redesigned Welcome Centers opened for travelers.

COMING SOON: A NEW CENTER NEAR BELLA VISTA

Northwest Arkansas will soon be home to the state's newest Arkansas Welcome Center. With the opening of the Interstate 49 Bella Vista Bypass in September 2022 and the many motorists that drive that interstate,

it made perfect sense to build a new center along the bypass. Design plans for the new building, that will be located at the interchange of Interstate 49 and Highway 72 east of Gravette, are almost complete. Northwest Arkansas community leaders have been included in the design process.

The site will include picnic tables in a wooded picnic grove, bicycle racks and outdoor space for potential art installations.

Once completed, the new facility will join the other Arkansas Welcome Centers across the state in offering a pleasant respite from the road and a wealth of recreational opportunities to make your next trip one in which you see the best that Arkansas has to offer! ■

Top: The Arkansas Welcome Center in Harrison was completed in late 2018.



ADVANCED SIMULATORS

TRAINING ARDOT EMPLOYEES FOR THE FUTURE

BY MARK WOODALL

FLIGHT SIMULATORS HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR MANY YEARS. IT'S A HELPFUL TOOL TO TRAIN PILOTS WITH THE LATEST SOFTWARE. But did you know ARDOT heavy equipment operators can now use the same technology to sharpen job skills before work begins on construction sites?

Thanks to a \$60,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) ARDOT employees can use a high-tech simulator to provide ongoing training to our workforce.

"We see this as a way to reinforce job skills, screen future job applicants and even use this virtual technology as a recruiting tool," said ARDOT Workforce Development, Health and Safety Division Head, Eddie Tanner.

Tanner started checking with other states to see what they were using to assist with training during the pandemic. He discovered that the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has a maintenance training academy, and they have several simulators already in use.

The training simulator is a Vortex Edge Max model, which is produced by cmlabs. This futuristic tool is portable and can be updated with the latest training software. The company offers numerous training scenarios for this model.

The software package offers six different training options for heavy equipment. So, if our workforce operates a crane, a backhoe or a front-end loader, employees can practice on that specific virtual equipment. The simulator looks and feels like real job site machines. When you're sitting in the chair you can

feel the vibration of moving dirt.

"When we were going through the bid process many companies offered training for a single piece of equipment. One company only offered training for an excavator; another one only offered virtual training on a front-end loader. The Vortex Edge model offers training for several different machines and scenarios," said Tanner.

"It can be a huge asset by bridging the gap between classroom training and real-world experiences in a relatively risk-free environment," said Ceburn Gilliam, ARDOT Emergency Response Coordinator. "The simulator offers numerous levels of training programs to accommodate each level of user proficiency."

The simulator is currently located at the ARDOT Central Office, but the eventual goal is to travel to each District to allow employees hands-on training with the device.

"If the Department wants to augment training and better operator skills while saving money for maintenance, it might look at purchasing additional simulators," said Gilliam.

Another positive effect of the simulator is its mobility. The device can easily be moved to different locations. This added bonus will allow ARDOT to use the device at job fairs, trade schools and colleges to recruit potential employees. The return on its investment could help save valuable taxpayer funds while attracting new talent to ARDOT. ■



An Interview with

DAVID

HAAK

BY MARK WOODALL



David Haak was appointed to the Arkansas Highway Commission by Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders. He was sworn in on February 14, 2023. Commissioner Haak is a lifelong resident of Texarkana and served as a State Representative in the Arkansas House of Representatives from 1999 – 2004. Arkansas Highways magazine writer Mark Woodall recently sat down with Commissioner Haak to learn how his first year on the Commission is going.

WOODALL: What were your initial thoughts when Governor Sanders approached you about serving on the Arkansas Highway Commission?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: My first thought was wondering to myself if I would be good at it because it's a big responsibility. When I graduated from high school, my first job was with the Arkansas Highway Department working on a survey crew as a technician in Miller County, near Texarkana. I did the job that nobody with any rank had to do. It was hard work, but I really enjoyed it. After college, I returned to work for the Highway Department for another summer. From there I went into a different career, so I know so much has changed since then. But I told the Governor if there is anywhere I can help, then I'd be happy to volunteer. So, she

said she wanted me on the Highway Commission. I told her I'd have to learn a lot, and she said, "Anybody would." I will never retire, but I'm at a point in my life where I don't have to go in to run my print shop anymore. I am looking forward to this [appointment to the Commission] because I love traveling across the state of Arkansas. I love to meet new people too, so I'm excited about visiting with city managers, mayors, county judges and lawmakers. **WOODALL:** You talked about your first job with the Arkansas Highway Department. That experience will give you an advantage in this role, right? **COMMISSIONER HAAK:** (laughter) Technology has changed so much since then. Really and truly none of my previous experience will carry over, but I do have some understanding of road

construction. I'm looking forward to learning a lot of new things. I was able to visit District 3 recently to speak with engineers. I started asking questions about the overlay process on asphalt. I enjoy hearing the details of how things work. I asked them to let me know when they're out doing the actual work. I want to see how it happens because I like to visualize the process. I would also like to see a bridge inspection to see how that works. I recently visited a weigh station on Interstate 30 just outside of Hope. Watching those trucks come through was just fascinating. I was able to see everything that happened during the inspection process, and I just loved it. The whole crew is just top-notch and very friendly. They've offered to let me come back and work a day with them and I am going to take them up on that. I want to travel all over Arkansas to see everything we do. As a Commissioner, I think getting to know the territory and the people who work for ARDOT is important. I want to be able to listen to their concerns. It reminds me of my time in the Arkansas State Legislature

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“Roads are indispensable and must be kept as safe as possible.”



[Arkansas House of Representatives from 1999-2004]. I thoroughly enjoyed helping my constituents back then and feel the same about my new Highway Commissioner role.

WOODALL: As a new Commissioner, what do you see as an immediate goal or priority in the years to come?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: Roads are indispensable and must be kept as safe as possible. I know there has been a lot of progress made in the southern part of Arkansas. They have done a lot of work to upgrade and improve Highway 82. Regular maintenance and repair work is so important. It's a quality-of-life issue. Sometimes getting someone to a hospital quickly is a very real quality-of-life issue. Roads and highways will always need to be repaired or widened because so many things change over the years. Most people don't think about potholes until they hit one, and then their car must be realigned. There is also an economic aspect to maintaining the roadways. I'm amazed at the cost of construction and maintenance, so as a new Commissioner, I'm getting an education there. For example, you wouldn't think that building a box culvert would be so expensive. I'm learning that sometimes additional roads need to be built just to get to a construction site. So, it's my goal to make sure safety is a top priority and to make sure we are spending money wisely, and I think my fellow Commissioners feel the same way.

WOODALL: The voter-approved passage of Issue 1 was a huge boost to ARDOT, and it will allow the Department to thrive in the years to come. Would you agree with that?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: Yes, I do. The money will go a long way to help the Department make long-term plans with our resources. It will help us identify what we can do for future roads and development. Also, I know that when I was appointed to the commission the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) had already been approved. It lists what the Department plans to do for the next several years. It's good to see what's happening in the

future. I think the last time the STIP was approved, ARDOT accomplished everything it promised to do for the citizens of Arkansas. I think ARDOT and our State Legislature have done a great job of working together so that we have a consistent revenue stream. So, I think regular funding is extremely important.

WOODALL: I know we don't have a magic wand, but if you could make one project begin tomorrow what would you like to see?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: If I could snap my fingers, I would like to see the completion of I-49 from Texarkana to Fort Smith and all the way up north to Canada. If I could snap my fingers again, I would finish the four-lane widening across the south on Highway 82.

WOODALL: I know you've had a chance to speak with your fellow Commissioners. Can you think of common goals that you all share?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: I think we all agree that our roadways should be as safe and convenient as possible. We have the best road department that any state could have. I'll give you an example. When we had the ice and snow in the central and northern parts of the state ARDOT had those trucks out beforehand spreading salt and sand. When it got really bad those crews were out there assisting drivers. They were ready to go to help the people, and I think that is our common thread among the Commissioners; we work for the people of Arkansas to try and make their lives better. Each Commissioner serves their Districts, but they're also doing everything they can to benefit everyone in Arkansas.

WOODALL: I know you have not had the opportunity to meet everyone, but what is your impression of the employees of ARDOT?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: That's easy. GREAT! I've talked to several people (not as many as I want to), but I've made phone calls, talked to my fellow Commissioners, and spoken to some engineers. Everyone I have reached out to seems eager to help explain things to me. I got a chance to visit District 3



Headquarters and they answered so many of my questions. They've also offered to provide me with regular updates on projects in the area. But everybody and I do mean everybody has bent over backward to help me understand things. And I know that I don't always ask the right questions, but they don't laugh, they take it seriously and they are doing everything they can to help me grow. I have the utmost respect for the staff at ARDOT.

WOODALL: Can you think of anything I have not asked you today that you would like to talk about?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: I would just like to say that I have traveled at least 80 percent of the State of Arkansas with my wife, Debbie. She was on the Parks and Tourism Commission for 16 years, so I've had the opportunity to drive on most of our highways. I went through so many small communities to stop and visit, and I marked them off on a map. Arkansas is a beautiful state and I love driving

on the highways. I also understand now why motorcyclists like to visit our state; it's because of the scenery and the smoothness of our roadways. I encourage everyone to get out and drive through the state. It's just beautiful.

WOODALL: There seems to be a follow-up question there, sir. If you've traveled to 80 percent of the state, what areas do you have left to see for the remaining 20 percent?

COMMISSIONER HAAK: When I say 80 percent that probably covers all the Interstates. I've been all over, so it got to the point where I didn't have new areas to drive. It's hard to find new locations, and that's part of the thrill that I'm having now. I want to visit the locations in my District because that will give me the opportunity to drive on the roads again. It will also allow me to meet new people. The way I see it, everyone has a story to tell. I guess I just like to hear about their lives, so this just ties right in with what I want to do. ■



IDRIVE **ARKANSAS.COM**

CAMERA NETWORK EXPANDING

BY DAVID NILLES

WITH THE ABILITY TO SHARE HOW TRAFFIC ON MANY OF ARKANSAS' MAJOR HIGHWAYS IS MOVING, IDRIVEARKANSAS HAS BECOME A POPULAR AND IMPORTANT TOOL. Consulting IDriveArkansas before heading on a road trip has the potential to save motorists time and the inconvenience that comes with congested roadways.

IDriveArkansas premiered in 2013 providing motorists with up-to-the-minute information on highway construction zone locations, weather-related conditions and the popular real time traffic flow feature.

In addition to all of this information, IDriveArkansas also displays locations of Arkansas Welcome Centers and rest areas, commuter Park & Ride lots and weight restrictions on bridges around the state. There is even an option to ask questions, report problems, report littering and more.

The IDriveArkansas.com website can be accessed on a computer, on a tablet or on a smartphone. It's also available in app stores. Once you arrive on the site, you'll find travel information to guide you on your trip.

POPULAR "GO TO" FEATURES

Since its debut, IDriveArkansas has had over 9 million visitors. There are two features on IDriveArkansas that are probably the

most popular and used most often. One is a live map providing weather-related road conditions that help motorists determine if there is ice or snow on their planned route. The other popular feature is the site's network of live cameras giving motorists a live glance of how traffic is moving in the area they are headed. If the roadway is congested, the app gives motorists plenty of time to choose a different route to avoid standing in traffic.

A NETWORK OF VIDEO CAMERAS

The network of live video cameras available is stationed along Arkansas' interstates and other major highways to help determine conditions out on the road.

"We currently feature over 300 permanent ARDOT cameras on the site," says Denise Powell, Digital Content Coordinator, in the Public Information Office.

"I would say that our cameras are the most popular feature on IDrive. The cameras allow travelers to see current conditions on the roadways and provide the opportunity to 'know before they go.' This can save on frustration by avoiding getting caught in a backup. A live video can be worth hundreds of saved minutes."

In addition to covering highways in Arkansas, cameras provided by the Tennessee Department of Transportation stream live traffic on Interstates 40 and 240 in the Memphis area. The "SmartWay" cameras aide motorists should a traffic incident in Memphis back up traffic onto the Interstate 40 and Interstate 55 Mississippi River Bridges.



ARDOT also has mobile video cameras mounted on trailers that are able to travel to temporary high traffic areas in the state.

Powell has recently made it easier to access the cameras on the site.

"As we have been adding more cameras to our network, we finally reached a point where we needed a less cluttered map," she explained. "By moving our cameras into clusters, we are able to clean up the look of the cameras on IDrive and this makes it easier to find the cameras you are interested in viewing. Instead of seeing them all at once, you are able to click a cluster marker in the area you are interested in viewing, and it will automatically zoom you into those cameras in that area."

This is the third layer that ARDOT has clustered on IDrive, the other layers being Exit Numbers and Mile Markers.

EXPANDING THE NETWORK OF CAMERAS

With an increase in the number of visitors using IDriveArkansas and the popularity of the video camera features, ARDOT is now expanding the number of cameras monitoring Arkansas' highways.

"We are currently conducting camera location audits," stated Joe Hawkins, Staff Engineer in ARDOT's Maintenance Division. "We are also following up to see if there are areas on our highways that need additional cameras based upon Traffic Management Center incident experience. We anticipate approximately 450-500 cameras when we are finished adding new cameras on Interstates and select U.S. Highways. All Interstates and U.S. Highways in the state are being assessed."

THE CAMERA'S EYE

As ARDOT adds new cameras to its network, the technology featured in the cameras improves.

"We have upgraded through several models over the years, each one with better technology than the last," Bobby Allison, ITS Operations Supervisor in the Maintenance Division, explained.

"We currently have several models in the field with varying specifications depending on the need, but our baseline technology requirements are: 1080p HD resolution, 360-degree

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“WE ANTICIPATE APPROXIMATELY **450-500 CAMERAS** WHEN WE ARE FINISHED ADDING NEW CAMERAS ON INTERSTATES AND SELECT U.S. HIGHWAYS.”

endless pan, 180-degree down-tilt from horizon to horizon and 30x optical zoom and with compression technology to support video for IDrive Arkansas. All cameras currently meet or exceed these standards.”

BUILDING A BETTER VIEW

To install the new cameras and maintain the current ones takes a top-notch crew.

“The ITS Operations Crew currently has 13 people, which includes six dedicated ITS technicians who handle the camera installations as well as day-to-day ITS maintenance,” Allison shared. “The installations are done in a multi-stage process, and different stages require different numbers of team members. Some jobs only require 2 or 3 people, while the bigger portions will require 4 or more. Many times, the crew can divide up and take care of different stages at the same time. If additional help is needed, ITS radio techs are available as well as a master electrician.”

The Operations Crew has become proficient enough that they can install a new camera site in one day, with ideal conditions.

“With our camera expansion, we normally handle installations in groups and stages in order to be as efficient as possible,” Allison added. “For instance, with tilt towers sites, we will normally work on installing the foundations at a large group of sites along a highway corridor first, then come back and stand the tilt tower, and lastly finish equipping the site with all of the needed hardware.”

There are two common structure mounts ARDOT uses to install the cameras. They include existing overhead sign structures

and the tilt towers. The overhead sign structures tend to be a simpler install since they are on an existing structure, while the tilt towers are a much more involved construction.

“We have locations that tend to be more challenging than others for a number of different reasons, but our biggest challenges are normally with our tilt towers. We use a large 10-foot helical-screw foundation tube to mount the towers, which requires a pilot hole to be drilled. Rocky terrain like you find in northwest Arkansas can really slow the process down and tends to be our biggest challenge,” Allison explained.

Allison also shared that once up and running, the cameras have a good track record.

“The brand and technology we have are very reliable. We don’t have official statistics, but we estimate that our cameras have a better than 98% reliability rate on average. We have outages that occur for different reasons and sometimes it is because a camera fails, but more often it’s an external issue with communications or power.”

All of the cameras on the network have pan, tilt and zoom capabilities that ARDOT personnel have access to use in order to optimize the view.

Without a doubt, all of the new technology and capabilities being utilized in the IDriveArkansas camera network are providing motorists on Arkansas’ highways a better view of what they will encounter as they travel across the state. ■

Top: (L.to R.) Matt Hamilton, Luke Wells and Chuck Bolin erect a traffic camera pole on Highway 67.

INTERNATIONAL ROADCHECK: MAKING OUR HIGHWAYS SAFER

BY DAVID NILLES

ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE (AHP) JOINED FORCES WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES FROM ACROSS THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT MAY 16-18 FOR THE COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SAFETY ALLIANCE’S (CVSA) INTERNATIONAL ROADCHECK.

The three-day roadside event is a high-visibility, high-volume 72-hour inspection and enforcement event where CVSA-certified inspectors in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. conduct inspections of commercial motor vehicles and drivers at weigh/inspection stations, designated inspection areas and along roadways.

Arkansas Highway Police set up Roadcheck inspection locations at two weigh stations -on Interstate 40 at West Memphis and on Interstate 55 at Marion.

“Arkansas Highway Police and the trucking industry have a common goal: to keep our roads safe” stated AHP Captain Jeff Smith.

PASSING THE INSPECTION

During International Roadcheck, inspectors conducted their usual roadside safety inspections of commercial motor vehicles and drivers. This year, inspectors also focused on anti-lock braking systems (ABS) and cargo securement to highlight the importance of those aspects of vehicle safety. Although

ABS violations are not out-of-service violations, ABS play a critical role in reducing the risk of collisions by preventing the wheels from locking up or skidding, allowing a driver to maintain control of the vehicle while braking. In addition, improper cargo securement poses a serious risk to drivers and other motorists by adversely affecting the vehicle’s maneuverability, or worse, causing unsecured loads to fall, resulting in traffic hazards and vehicle collisions.

International Roadcheck also provided an opportunity to educate the motor carrier industry and general public about the importance of safe commercial motor vehicle operations and the North American Standard Inspection Program.

MAKING OUR HIGHWAYS SAFER

Vehicles that successfully pass a Level I or Level V Inspection without any critical vehicle inspection item violations may receive a CVSA decal, which is valid for three months. Following inspection, they are free to get back on the road.

If the inspector does identify critical vehicle inspection item violations, as outlined in the North American Standard Out-of-Service Criteria, the vehicle is restricted from

operating until the identified out-of-service conditions have been corrected. Inspectors may also restrict the driver from operating if the driver is found to have driver out-of-service violations, such as not possessing a valid or necessary operating license or exhibiting signs of impairment.

“During the 2023 CVSA Road Check, our AHP officers conducted 805 inspections,” Captain Smith shared. “A total of 1,568 violations were discovered and over 220 vehicles were placed out of service. We also issued over 131 CVSA decals to vehicles with no critical items found during the level 1 inspection.

“Keeping the public safe is our most important daily goal when our officers conduct inspections,” Smith stated. “Our officers take pride in their jobs, and this year’s event was a success.” ■



PFC Marlin Underwood (R) conducts an inspection.



THE CITY OF HOT SPRINGS WAS THE DESTINATION FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2023 TRC CONFERENCE & EQUIPMENT EXPO PRESENTED BY THE ARDOT TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH COMMITTEE (TRC).

The event is an opportunity to learn the latest in highway construction technology.

"We had 380 attendees this year, the largest ever to attend the conference," Bethany Stovall, Research Support Supervisor in System Information and Research shared.

ARDOT employees at the conference were joined by transportation officials, consultants and equipment vendors to discuss all things having to do with highways. Attention was focused on how highways are designed, how they are constructed and the latest procedures when they need repair. The conference was also an opportunity to address the changes to be faced in the world of transportation as we plan for the future.

ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor kicked things off with a State of the Department and a video overview of major construction projects across the state. Vivien Hoang from the Federal Highway Administration - Arkansas Division followed with an update on federal funding in Arkansas. The first half of the general session concluded with a presentation by Bob Cook and Jerry Holder with Garver who gave an inside look at the possibilities and motivation for a Deck Park over Interstate 30 in downtown Little Rock.

Breakout sessions followed over the next three days. Among the many offerings for participants were presentations on the future of asphalt, the latest in concrete technology, landslide research in Arkansas, innovations in wet reflective pavement

markings and ARDOT's efforts on behalf of wildflowers and pollinators.

In addition to the presentations, participants had an opportunity to visit with representatives from almost 40 design and construction companies in the exhibitors' area of the conference. Also on display at the conference were project posters for all of the current and recent TRC projects, several projects funded through the Transportation-Related Research & Workforce Development Grant Program and other transportation-related research from across the state.

Thanks to the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), a traveling national memorial for those killed in work zones was on display in the exhibitors' area. ARDOT's three employees who were killed within the previous 15 months were remembered with floral displays near the memorial and a moment of silence during ATSSA's brief presentation at lunch.

"It's great to see so many of our ARDOT staff, university researchers, consultants, vendors and even ARDOT retirees turn out to get updated on transportation-related research and innovations," Mark Headley, Division Head of System Information and Research, said about the conference. "While a transfer or presentation of the findings of federally funded research activities is required, ARDOT has gone well beyond that requirement to help spread the word on new transportation-related research and innovations and also provide as many as 15 professional development hours (PDHs) for professional engineers.

With the success of this year's conference, featuring the largest number of participants ever, plans are already underway for 2024. ■



BY DAVID NILLES

YOU ARE MEANT TO BE THE ANSWER. That was the theme of the 2023 Women in STEM Conference on April 14 in North Little Rock.

The event was held for female students in grades 9-12 and over 100 attended to gain insight into future careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The event was presented by ARDOT and On the Job Training and Supportive Services Programs (OJTSS).

Corallys Ortiz, a meteorologist at THV11, served as moderator and introduced ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor who welcomed the students.

"The fact that you are here today tells me that you take your future seriously and that you are taking advantage of opportunities that come your way," Tudor shared with the audience. "When I look across this room, I see potential. I see our leaders of tomorrow.

"The United States Army used a recruiting slogan for over twenty years that encouraged young people to 'Be All That You Can Be.' I think that is such good advice. You are going to have opportunities and challenges that come your way in the very near future.

"Our theme today is 'You Are Meant to be the Answer.' But if you are the answer, then what are the questions? The questions are who will be our future doctors of tomorrow? Who will be our lawyers, or our engineers? Who will educate our students? There are many questions about your future. But, you will most definitely be the answer. You are the workforce of tomorrow."

Tudor went on to share her own career path which saw her go from a clerk typist at ARDOT to the Director of the Department. She left the students with three things that will take them far in life: a good attitude, a hard work ethic and trust in God.

Following Tudor at the podium was a fellow engineer, Becky Keogh, State Infrastructure Coordinator for the Arkansas Department of Finance & Administration, who gave the students this advice,

"Follow your passion and lead with it, live pragmatically and use your principles. We want you to be at the table as we move forward."



THV11's Corallys Ortiz kicks off the Women in Stem Conference

After the morning presentations, students participated in breakout sessions that featured Dr. Constance Meadors, Associate Director of Arkansas Space Grant & NASA EPSCOR, as well a panel presentation featuring Rochelle Blue, ARDOT Staff Construction Engineer; Leslie Davis, Co-Founder and CEO of Harbor Environmental and Safety; Sharon Hawkins, ARDOT Staff GIS & Mapping Administrator; and Dr. LaCandian Spencer, a Clinical Pharmacist at UAMS.

Afternoon speakers included Dr. Whitnee Boyd, CEO of Doc B. Empowers. Dr. Boyd has dedicated her career to building pathways to college for those from underrepresented communities.

Participants also had an opportunity to engage with numerous companies in the exhibitor's area. Among them were several engineering firms including Garver Engineers, McClelland Consulting Engineers, Jacobs Engineering and Harbor Environmental Safety and Engineering. Among the other exhibitors was the American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

Closing remarks were presented by Joanna McFadden, ARDOT EEO/DBE Officer, who promised good things to come.

"We want to make next year's STEM conference even bigger, better and bolder."

Among the sponsors of the Women in STEM conference were Garver Engineers; Jacobs; Ergon; Harbor; Brown Engineers; CEI; Emery Sapp & Sons; Rogers Group and McClelland Consulting Engineers, Inc. ■



OUT & ABOUT

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AROUND THE STATE

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://arkansas.com/events)

- * **BIG STEAM MUSIC FESTIVAL:** Celebrate the festival's second year of blues and roots music. The lineup features Anthony Gomes, Bernard Allison, Trey & Jason, Tullie Brae, Akeem Kemp and many more. Admission is free. • SEPTEMBER 29 & 30
- * **FIRST FRIDAY:** A monthly festival series held in October in the Bentonville Square featuring live music, food trucks, multiple family-friendly activities and local vendors. The free event welcomes all members of the community. • OCTOBER 6
- * **STRINGBAND MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL:** Enjoy live music at the Ozark Folk Center featuring Steam Machine, The Howlin' Brothers, the Ozark Folk Center Square Dancers and Whoa Mule Stringband among others. Enjoy all-day admission to craft shops, gardens and family-friendly entertainment in the Craft Village. • OCTOBER 13 & 14
- * **U.S. MARSHALS MUSEUM:** The museum features a unique exterior with a modified star-shaped design signifying the star badge worn by courageous U.S. Marshals. Inside, five immersive galleries educate guests about the critical, ever-evolving role the Marshals have played in upholding the Rule of Law, driven by justice, integrity and service. The museum collection of more than 1,000 artifacts includes historic journals and memorabilia from the Western Frontier, the Civil Rights era, the Oklahoma City bombing, as well as badges and guns used by the Marshals Service throughout the years.

AUGUST 25 & 26
FORT SMITH INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
Masonic Temple
Fort Smith, AR

SEPTEMBER 2
39TH ANNUAL ANTIQUE AND
CLASSIC CAR SHOW
Mammoth Spring State Park
Mammoth Spring, AR

SEPTEMBER 29 & 30 *
BIG STEAM MUSIC FESTIVAL
Hill Wheatley Plaza
Hot Springs, AR

OCTOBER 6 *
FIRST FRIDAY - OKTOBERFEST
Downtown Square
Bentonville, AR

OCTOBER 13 & 14 *
STRINGBAND MUSIC & ARTS
FESTIVAL
Ozark Folk Center State Park
Mountain View, AR

NOW OPEN *
U.S. MARSHALS MUSEUM
789 Riverfront Drive
Fort Smith, AR

Photos courtesy of Arkansas Parks & Tourism



The Howlin' Brothers; Stringband Music & Arts Festival

U.S. Marshals Museum



DISTRICT 9

CONSTRUCTION

CORNER



CREWS IN BENTON COUNTY HAVE COMPLETED WORK ON IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HIGHWAY 71B INTERCHANGE ON INTERSTATE 49 IN ROGERS.

APAC-Central was awarded the \$26.9 million project in July 2018 and began work in September of that year.

The purpose of the project was to replace the Interstate 49 overpass and modify roadway approaches for a new Single Point Urban Interchange System (SPUI) at the intersection with Highway 71B. The design was created in order to help move large volumes of traffic through limited amounts of space safely and efficiently. This is Arkansas' second SPUI to be constructed, the first being constructed for the Bella Vista Bypass.

"The staging of the interstate along with the long span of the SPUI bridge made this project very challenging," stated David Bushey, District 9 Staff Engineer. "Naturally, the interstate had to remain open during all phases of construction. The job was set up to require interstate work

to be completed first because of extensive utility conflicts along Highway 71B. Even after all known utilities were clear of construction, a stream of undiscovered utilities in the way were sources of some delays."

In addition to the new interchange system, the project installed new traffic signals at the interstate ramps at Moberly Lane and at N. 46th Street. Also included in the improvements was the widening of Highway 71B from four lanes to six lanes for approximately one mile.

The improvements represent a partnership between ARDOT and the cities of Bentonville and Rogers. Each city contributed \$1.5 million.

"Traffic flow is much better since completion of the project and will continue to improve with signal coordination and timing adjustments," Bushey added.

Including traffic on both Interstate 49 and Highway 71B, approximately 115,000 vehicles travel through the interchange each day. ■





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