

MARCH 2016

# Arkansas HIGHWAYS

A PUBLICATION OF THE ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT | **MAGAZINE**



## Arkansans Ask AHTD

DIRECTOR SCOTT BENNETT APPEARS ON AETN  
TO ANSWER HIGHWAY QUESTIONS

**Governor Announces  
Plan to Increase  
HIGHWAY FUNDING**

**BROADWAY:  
A Bridge in  
Transition**

**Construction Division:  
GETTING THE  
JOB DONE**



# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



## Prepared for the Storm

**IN** JANUARY, OUR DEPARTMENT FACED ITS FIRST ROUND OF WINTERY WEATHER HERE IN ARKANSAS. WITH THE SNOW CAME THE CHALLENGE OF KEEPING OUR MAJOR HIGHWAYS CLEAR FOR MOTORISTS.

Looking back a few years, we've come a long way since the winter of 2014 and the unrelenting winter weather we experienced. Today, with additional equipment and manpower, and by discussing best practices with neighboring Departments of Transportation, we've made tremendous improvements in keeping the traffic moving during winter weather.

This year, we began the winter months with adequate supplies of material to apply on the highways. We invested \$3.5 million in salt and strategically placed it in holding areas across the State. That's 35,000 tons that were ready to be spread on the highways.

As we were in 2015, this winter we have been much better coordinated and more effective in clearing our highways. With January's storm, our major goal was to keep one lane clear on our Interstates and then move to our secondary highways. We were successful in meeting those goals. Our local crews in the central and northeast Arkansas Districts hit the January storm head-on and were successful in making the highways passable.

In addition, a "Strike Force" was sent out from Central Office to help in the targeted areas. Nine trucks were sent out to spread salt and sand on Interstates 40 and 55. They concentrated on the area between Interstate 440 in Little Rock and the Missouri State Line and on Interstate 40 and Interstate 49. Central Shops also mobilized a Road Mechanic to Forrest City to support those trucks. Our new Strike Force is able to travel to any corner of the State to assist in snow removal and it has definitely been successful.

All of our success can also be attributed to the hard work put in by our maintenance crews. I want to thank everyone for your efforts and your extra time. The success we experienced in making our highways passable in January is because of your hard work. Today, with wise investment in staff, equipment and materials, snow and ice are synonymous with preparedness.

You can learn more about our winter weather preparation in a video found on our website at [ArkansasHighways.com](http://ArkansasHighways.com). Simply click on the Vimeo icon in the upper right-hand corner of the homepage and look for "Winter Weather Preparation" on page two of the videos.

Congratulations on a job well done and thank you again for your hard work in January. The Department continues to make significant improvements in clearing Arkansas' highways of ice and snow.



Loading a truck with salt and sand.



*Scott E. Bennett*

Scott E. Bennett, P.E.  
Director of Highways and Transportation

### FRONT COVER:

Behind the scenes of the AETN broadcast of *Arkansans Ask* featuring AHTD Director Scott Bennett.

### BACK COVER:

Sunrise at Interstate 30 construction zone in Saline County.

### EDITOR

David Nilles  
[David.Nilles@ArkansasHighways.com](mailto:David.Nilles@ArkansasHighways.com)

### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Paula Cigainero  
[Paula.Cigainero@ArkansasHighways.com](mailto:Paula.Cigainero@ArkansasHighways.com)

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Glenn Bolick  
[Glenn.Bolick@ArkansasHighways.com](mailto:Glenn.Bolick@ArkansasHighways.com)

### PHOTOGRAPHER

Rusty Hubbard  
[Russell.Hubbard@ArkansasHighways.com](mailto:Russell.Hubbard@ArkansasHighways.com)

### Correspondence should be directed to:

ARKANSAS HIGHWAYS  
Public Information Office  
P.O. Box 2261, Room 1002  
Little Rock, AR 72203-2261



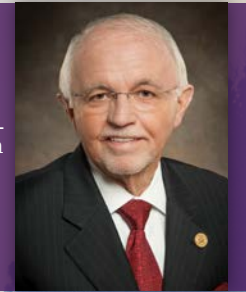
**Arkansas Highways** is published by and for employees of the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department as a medium of departmental news and other information. It is also distributed free of charge to the public upon request.

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (Department) complies with all civil rights provisions of federal statutes and related authorities that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Therefore, the Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, age, national origin, religion or disability, in the admission, access to and treatment in the Department's programs and activities, as well as the Department's hiring or employment practices. Complaints of alleged discrimination and inquiries regarding the Department's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to Joanna P. McFadden Section Head – EEO/DBE (ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator), P. O. Box 2261, Little Rock, AR 72203, (501) 569-2298, (Voice/TTY 711), or the following email address: [Joanna.McFadden@ArkansasHighways.com](mailto:Joanna.McFadden@ArkansasHighways.com). This notice is available from the ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator in large print, on audiotape and in Braille.



## ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION

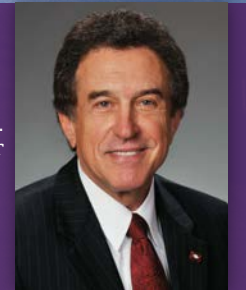
DICK TRAMMEL  
Chairman



THOMAS B. SCHUECK  
Vice Chairman



ROBERT S. MOORE, JR.  
Member



FRANK D. SCOTT, JR.  
Member



DALTON A. FARMER, JR.  
Member





MARCH 2016

# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- 5 ..... Broadway Bridge: A Bridge in Transition
- 9 ..... A Closer Look: The Interstate Highway System
- 10 ..... Arkansans Ask: AETN Program Focuses on Arkansas' Highways
- 12 ..... 5-Year Transportation Bill Approved by Congress
- 14 ..... Governor Announces Plan to Increase Highway Funding
- 16 ..... Where Benton Began
- 18 ..... Weekend Road Trip: Texarkana
- 24 ..... Construction Division: Getting the Job Done
- 29 ..... New Tourist Information Centers
- 30 ..... Interstate 30 Safety Project

18



24

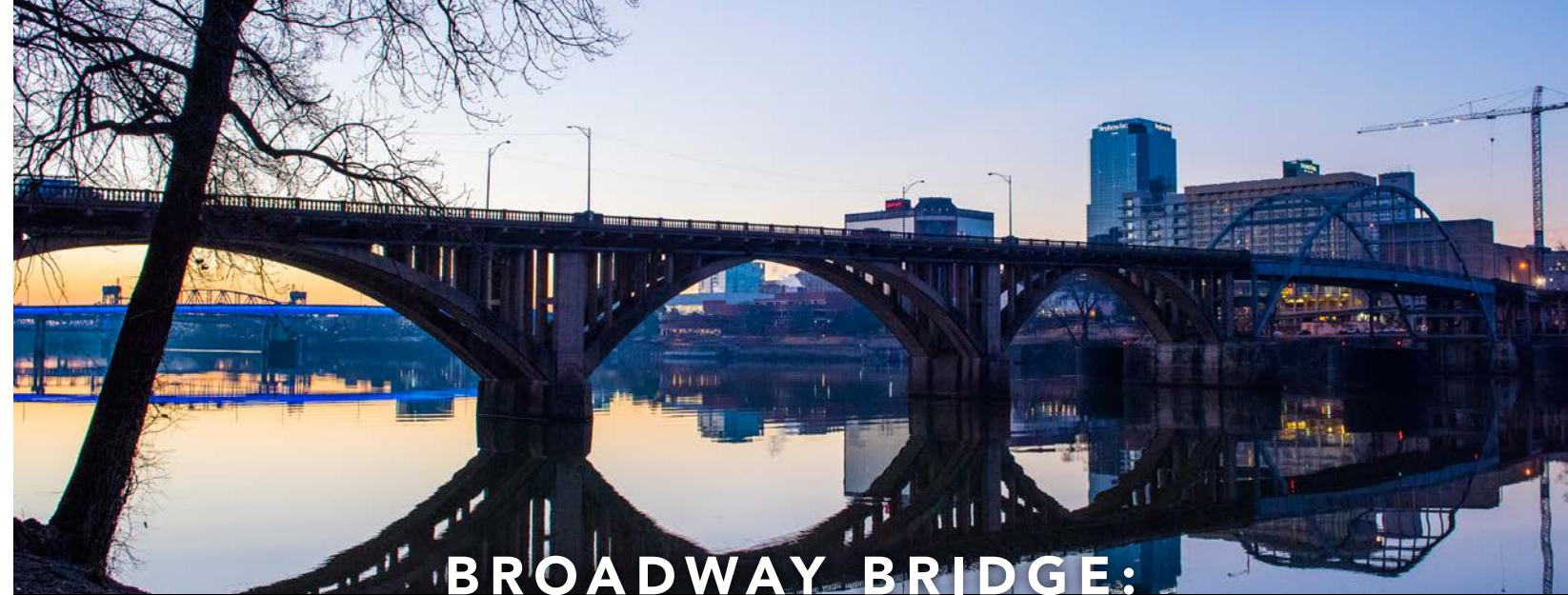


## DEPARTMENTS

- Director's Message ..... 2
- Out & About ..... 23
- Dear AHTD: Letters ..... 32
- Construction Corner ..... 33
- Arkansas Welcome Centers ..... 34
- AHTD People ..... 35

IN THE  
**NEXT** issue

- Networkfleet Means Cost Savings on Wheels
- Push Mountain Road: A Biker's Ultimate Ride
- Looking Back at the Southwest Trail



**BROADWAY BRIDGE:**

# A BRIDGE IN TRANSITION

BY DAVID NILLES



**T**HE HIGHWAY 70 BROADWAY BRIDGE, SPANNING THE ARKANSAS RIVER BETWEEN LITTLE ROCK AND NORTH LITTLE ROCK, HAS BEEN CARRYING TRAFFIC FOR 93 YEARS. COMPLETED IN 1923, THE BRIDGE IS ABOUT TO MAKE WAY FOR A NEW STRUCTURE THAT WILL SERVE CENTRAL ARKANSAS FOR THE NEXT 90-PLUS YEARS.

*(continued on page 6)*



Workers assemble the yellow vertical structure which is the formwork for the lower portion of the downstream column of the new Broadway Bridge.



In September of 2014, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department awarded a contract to Massman Construction Company of Kansas City, Missouri, to build that new bridge. The \$98.4 million award was the largest one in AHTD history up to that point.

Due to space limitations on both shores of the river, the new bridge must be constructed on the same location as the existing bridge. That presents a challenge. Approximately 24,000 vehicles a day make their way across the river on the Broadway Bridge. Traffic which normally uses the Broadway Bridge will have to use a different route when the time comes to bring the old bridge down and complete the new one.

“Not only was Massman’s bid the lowest bid the Department received, their bid was also the shortest in terms of the time the bridge will be out of service,” commented AHTD Director Scott Bennett. “From the beginning, the length of time the bridge would be out of service has been a major concern.”

Massman Construction has plenty of experience when it comes to bridge building. Their work includes construction of the Mississippi River Bridge between Lake Village, Arkansas, and Greenville, Mississippi, the new Mississippi River

Bridge at St. Louis and the Interstate 10 Bridge over Lake Pontchartrain that borders New Orleans.

A look at the bridge from the downtown Little Rock-North Little Rock area today reveals that construction activity is well underway. Construction supplies and equipment line both shores of the river where crews are working. Multiple cranes are on site that have been removing pier protection cells. The Highway 10/LaHarpe Boulevard entrance and exit ramps on the Little Rock side were closed in March of last year and have been demolished. Stairways leading up to the bridge on the north side of the river have also been removed.

“We are now at work on the structural steel and pier caps for the Highway 10 entrance ramp bridge on the Little Rock side,” says Mike Hays, AHTD Resident Engineer for Office #61 in North Little Rock. “The main span waterline footing close to the north bank is also underway.”

Also being constructed now is the north shore shared use ramp. Girders for the first four spans have been erected. The south shared use ramp substructure has been completed and work on the superstructure is underway. Wall construction continues for multiple bridge structures.

Crews have also completed all twenty-four 8'-6" diameter drilled shafts in the river. Work also continues on the remaining waterline footings which will support the river spans of the new bridge.

All of the work is taking place while traffic continues to cross the bridge, but the day is approaching when that will change and motorists will no longer be able to use the bridge.

“We’ve done a great deal of work to get to this point,” said AHTD Director Scott Bennett at a recent news conference.

“We have been dealing with high river flows and water levels and we want to have all of our steel fabrication done before we close the bridge.”

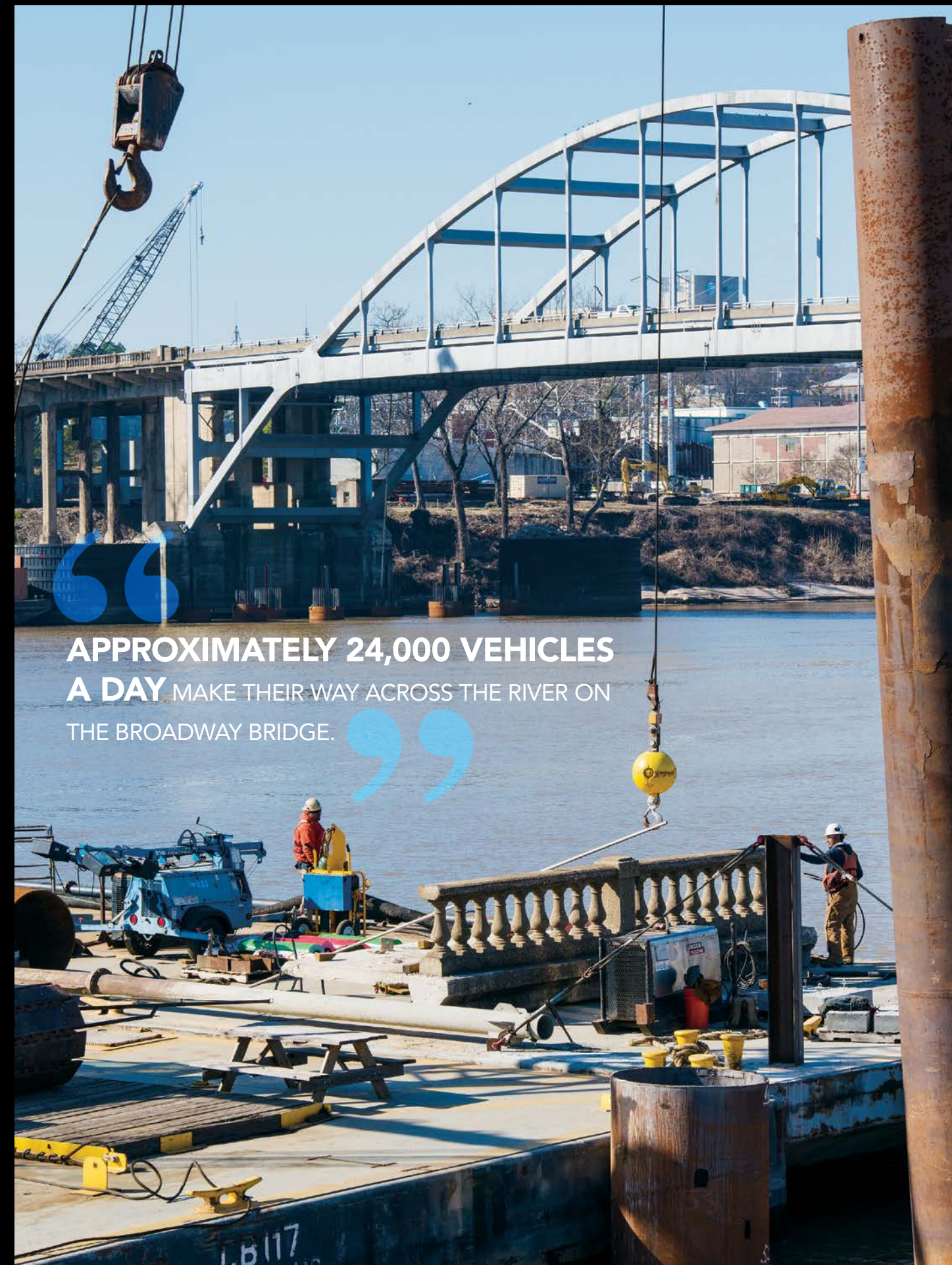
Hays added, “The contractor will then have 180 calendar days for the bridge to remain closed for construction.”

Hays states that approximately 20 percent of the work has been completed.

There have been challenges along the way in addition to the level and flow of the river.

“We’ve had the typical unforeseen challenges that we would expect for an urban project,” he adds. “We’ve encountered

*(continued on page 8)*



“**APPROXIMATELY 24,000 VEHICLES  
A DAY** MAKE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE RIVER ON  
THE BROADWAY BRIDGE.”



unexpected subsurface utilities as well as archeological issues.”

Last October, a construction crew digging a trench on the Little Rock side of the river discovered a spring cistern surrounded by brick and mortar. The structure dated back to the 1800s. Crews filled the foundation back in and redesigned a few aspects of the project to build around the cistern.

Once the bridge is closed to traffic, attention will turn to demolishing the old bridge.

“We will use a combination of rams to tear down the concrete

portions and explosives to bring down the existing arch,” says Hays.

After that is completed, work will begin on the new bridge span. The design process for the new bridge included input from City and County officials on both sides of the river as well as the general public. Multiple public meetings were held to gain input and ideas. The resulting span will feature a twin-tied handle basket arch. Pulaski County contributed \$20 million to the project to enable designers to implement this more elaborate design.

The arch span structural steel has been arriving on site this winter and will continue to arrive this summer. Work will then begin on erecting the spans in preparation for floating them into their final position on the new bridge substructure when it is ready.

The current estimated completion date for the project is in 2017. The new bridge will reopen with a special ribbon cutting ceremony which will be announced as completion approaches. □



Shown here are the temporary supports that the bridge arch structures will be secured to as they are assembled. Once assembled, the barges will float them into position and the arches will be set on the piers.



# THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

BY DAVID NILLES

**T**HIS IS THE LAST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES THAT TAKES A LOOK AT OUR COUNTRY'S INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM. PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S VISION OF A BETTER SYSTEM OF HIGHWAYS FOR THE UNITED STATES BECAME A REALITY IN 1956 WITH THE NATIONAL INTERSTATE AND DEFENSE HIGHWAYS ACT. THE NEXT STEP WAS TO CONSTRUCT THE HIGHWAY SYSTEM.

Today's Interstate Highway system stands at 47,856 miles in length and stretches from coast to coast. Because each state owns and operates its own portion of the Interstate, each state also must establish the operating requirements, such as speed limits. Enforcement is also the responsibility of each state.

## NUMBERING SYSTEM

The numbering system for our Interstates was developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). In most cases, east-west highways are assigned even numbers and north-south highways are assigned odd numbers. Odd route numbers increase from west to east across the country, and even-numbered routes increase from south to north.

When it comes to mile markers, on one- or two-digit Interstates, mile marker numbering almost always begins at the southern or western state line.

Though not connected to the main system, the states of Alaska and Hawaii, as well as Puerto Rico, each have Interstate Highways. The Interstates in Hawaii are all located on the island of Oahu, and carry the prefix H. There are three one-digit routes in the state

(H-1, H-2, and H-3) and one auxiliary route (H-201). The Interstates of Alaska and Puerto Rico carry the prefix A and PR respectively. Their highways are signed according to their local designations, not their Interstate Highway numbers. It is interesting to note that these routes were neither planned according to nor constructed to the official Interstate Highway standards.

Everyone is familiar with the Interstate “shield.” All Interstate signs feature the trademarked red, white and blue shield. Those particular colors were chosen because they are the colors of the United States flag. □



IN MOST CASES, EAST-WEST HIGHWAYS ARE ASSIGNED **EVEN NUMBERS** AND NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAYS ARE ASSIGNED **ODD NUMBERS.**





# ARKANSANS ASK

AETN Program Focuses on Arkansas' Highways



AHTD Director Scott E. Bennett is interviewed by television show host Steve Barnes.



AHTD administrative staff members man the phone banks to take calls from viewers around the State.

**T**HE CONDITION OF ARKANSAS' HIGHWAY SYSTEM TODAY AND THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE OF THAT SYSTEM TOMORROW WAS THE SUBJECT OF A ONE-HOUR, LIVE TELEVISION BROADCAST ON AETN ON JANUARY 21ST.

AHTD Director Scott Bennett joined program host Steve Barnes for the call-in show titled "Arkansans Ask: Highways." A studio phone bank was manned by members of the AHTD staff who fielded questions from the public to be answered on the program.

On a night when winter weather was approaching Arkansas, the program began with a video produced by the Department on recent efforts to improve the battle against icy roadways.

"We are in much better shape today than we were when we faced inclement weather in 2014," Bennett shared. "Storms that winter highlighted our inefficiencies and we addressed them. In 2015, we handled it much better and again this year, we are ready to go."

Barnes also asked about Governor Hutchinson's Highway Plan for providing additional funding to the AHTD.

"The Governor's plan gives us the opportunity to take advantage of available federal funding by providing the required State matching funds without raising the gasoline tax in Arkansas," Bennett added. "It's unprecedented because it's the first time we will receive a somewhat steady stream of funding from what's labeled General Revenue. There is no appetite for a tax increase of any type right now, so in the end, this was the politically appropriate thing to do."

There were other subjects Bennett addressed during the call-in show:

## CENTRAL ARKANSAS' 30 CROSSING PROJECT:

"We are still undergoing studies, it's not settled. We are in the environmental stage at this point and have held public meetings, stakeholder meetings and community meetings. We are evaluating an eight-lane alternative and a ten-lane alternative. We're also evaluating all of the comments we've heard from the public including turning Interstate 30 into a boulevard. We're looking at all of these issues and take public involvement on the project very seriously. In the end, our mission is to move people and goods safely and efficiently."

## PARTNERSHIPS:

"We began our Partnership Program in 2005. Local governments have brought \$250 million to the table for local improvements since that time. This program is an opportunity for local communities to invest in their own traffic needs and expedite those projects."

## FUNDING FOR TRAILS:

"The AHTD receives 11 or 12 million in federal dollars for a Transportation Alternatives Program. This program funds safe routes to schools, sidewalks and trails. This money can only be spent on projects such as these. We aren't spending State dollars on these projects, this is Federal money and local agency matching funds."

## CENTRAL ARKANSAS' BROADWAY BRIDGE PROJECT:

"When we close the bridge, it will be demolished and then we will take about six months to build the new bridge surface. Our goal is to have this project completed and the bridge open before the 30-Crossing project begins."

## CONSTRUCTION COSTS:

"Though revenue from the State and Federal gasoline tax has remained flat over the years, construction costs have risen. Since 1993, construction costs have gone up 180%."

Other subjects touched on during the program included widening of Highway 70 to Hot Springs, the Highway 412 Springdale Bypass, the Department's roadside mowing cycles, the authority of the Arkansas Highway Police and toll roads, among other things.

Manning the phones for the program were AHTD staff members Emanuel Banks, Andy Brewer, Mike Fugett, Mark Headley, Jessie Jones, Randy Ort, Gill Rogers, Danny Straessle, Tony Sullivan, Kevin Thornton, Jared Wiley and Keli Wylie. ■





“For the first time in over ten years, we have a long-term highway bill that allows us to better plan for the future. That is a step in the right direction.”

# 5-YEAR TRANSPORTATION BILL APPROVED BY CONGRESS

BY DAVID NILLES

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2005, THE COUNTRY HAS A LONG TERM, MULTI-YEAR TRANSPORTATION BILL. THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE IN WASHINGTON, D.C., APPROVED THE BILL IN EARLY DECEMBER TOTALING \$305 BILLION. THE FUNDING WILL BE USED TO REPAIR AND EXPAND HIGHWAYS, BRIDGES AND TRANSIT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.



## Fixing America's Surface Transportation **FAST ACT**

This bill represents the first long-term, comprehensive surface transportation policy proposal since 2005's SAFETEA-LU. The FAST Act authorizes Federal highway, highway safety, transit and rail programs for five years from Federal fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

The vote in the House was 359 to 65 in favor of the bill, and in the Senate, the new bill passed 83 to 16. The bill was then sent to the Oval Office for President Obama's signature.

The legislation will provide local and State governments with greater certainty when it comes to planning for major transportation projects.

"It will certainly help fix our country's surface transportation infrastructure," said Representative Bill Shuster, R-Pa,

and chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. "All states and communities have significant infrastructure needs and they all need a long-term certainty to address them. This proves to the American people that we can get big things done."

The 1,300-page bill authorizes \$305 billion from both the Highway Trust Fund and the General Fund of the U.S. Treasury.

"For the first time in over ten years, we have a long-term highway bill that allows us to better plan for the future," AHTD Director Scott Bennett comments. "That is a step in the right direction. It does include additional revenue for Arkansas, but it comes from one-time sources. We will have to keep this momentum going

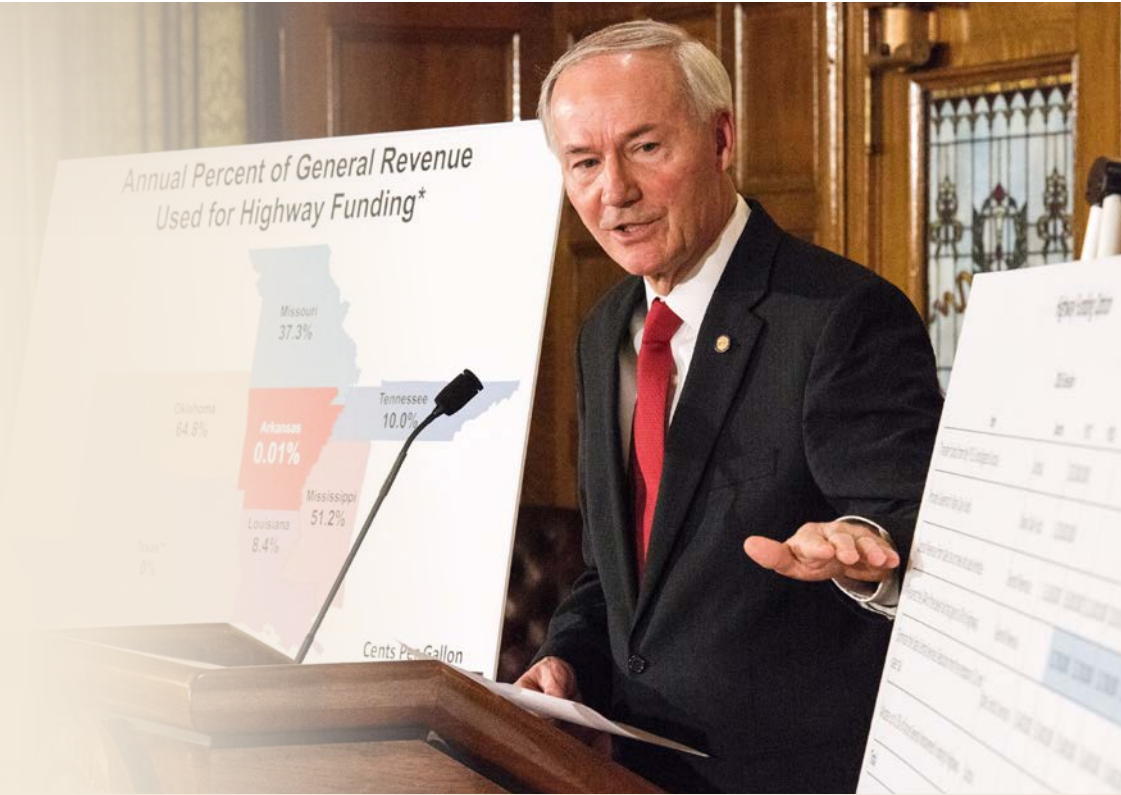
forward toward the next bill to ensure that this level of investment can be sustained, and we have to work on the State side to ensure that we can match the Federal funds. It is a good thing, but there is still a lot of work to be done."

The bill was welcome news to Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

"It's been a bumpy ride to get a bill completed," Foxx stated. "It's not perfect and there is still more left to do, but it reflects a bipartisan compromise I always knew was possible."

Destined to be the subject of conversation for many in Congress and the transportation industry, the work left to do as we look to the future is how to sustainably pay for transportation programs in the years ahead. ■





# HUTCHINSON ANNOUNCES PLAN TO INCREASE HIGHWAY FUNDING

BY DAVID NILLES

**A**FTER WEEKS OF REVIEWING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR'S WORKING GROUP ON HIGHWAY FUNDING, talking to legislators and visiting industry leaders, on January 19th Governor Asa Hutchinson unveiled his plan to raise highway funding in Arkansas.

The proposal comes after President Barack Obama signed a new federal highway bill worth approximately \$305 billion. The challenge? The State must match federal funds that will be coming to Arkansas.

The Governor unveiled a plan that will raise \$750 million for highway projects over the next 10 years.

"There is probably a greater urgent need for the immediate infusion of State funds into highway development than ever before," Governor Hutchinson told those gathered at the State Capitol for his announcement.

Like most states across the nation, Arkansas has seen declining revenue for highways at a time when our needs are greater than ever.

The Governor's plan would boost highway funding to match federal highway dollars by accessing State surpluses and redirecting other funding — all without raising any new taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel.

In the first year of the plan (2017), the AHTD would primarily use unobligated surplus funds and money from the Governor's rainy day fund to provide the federal match of \$47 million. There would also be \$5.4 million that has gone to State central services and the reallocation of \$1.5 million from the State's sales tax

collection from sales of new and used vehicles.

In the years that follow, revenue would be generated from road user items such as a portion of existing sales tax on new and used cars to be phased in over five years, redirecting \$4 million of diesel tax that goes to general revenue to highways, eliminating State Central Service deductions from the temporary half-cent sales tax and allocating up to 25 percent of future General Improvement Funds to highways. (See chart below.)

Hutchinson pointed out that all of the states surrounding Arkansas currently direct a portion of their general revenue funds to highways except Texas, which recently voted to approve directing sales tax revenue to highways.

Looking to the future of Hutchinson's plan, the Governor projects his plan would raise \$64.1 million in fiscal 2018, \$71.1 million in fiscal 2019, \$76.1 million in fiscal 2020 and \$81.1 million in fiscal 2021 in State funds for highways.

"This new program allows us to access billions of dollars in federal highway money — all without raising taxes," Governor Hutchinson commented.

AHTD Director Scott Bennett and members of the Arkansas Highway Commission were in attendance at the announcement.

"This is a good first step," Bennett stated. "This really meets the priority need of making sure we match Arkansas' federal dollars." Bennett said that a priority now is to see that Hutchinson's plan gets through the Legislature. Finding more long-term revenue sources to pay for road projects and maintenance will follow down the line.

Hutchinson did incorporate some of the recommendations of the Working Group on Highway Funding into his plan. Those include the transfer of sales tax collections from new and

used vehicles, the reallocation of diesel taxes and the reallocation of money from the State's Central Service Fund.

"Highway infrastructure is key to our State's economic development and growth, and this plan should act as a catalyst for that growth by allowing us to increase our investment in highways without placing an unnecessary burden on Arkansas taxpayers," Governor Hutchinson added. "I think this bold, yet realistic plan accomplishes both objectives. It is a step that is important for us to take."

Governor Hutchinson has yet to decide when he'll call a special legislative session in order for the Legislature to consider the new highway plan. ■



(L. to R.) Governor Asa Hutchinson, Director Scott E. Bennett, Commissioner Robert S. Moore, Jr. and Commission Chairman Dick Trammel.

## GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON'S HIGHWAY FUNDING PLAN

2016 SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE SESSION		SOURCE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Transfer Funds from Fiscal 2015 Unobligated Surplus	Surplus	\$20.0 M					
Provide from Governor's Rainy Day Fund	Rainy Day Fund	\$20.0 M					
Special Revenue from Sales Tax on New and Used Vehicles	General Revenue	\$1.5 M	\$8.0 M	\$15.0 M	\$20.0 M	\$25.0 M	
Redirect \$4 Million of Diesel Tax that goes to General Revenue to Highways*	General Revenue		\$2.7 M	\$2.7 M	\$2.7 M	\$2.7 M	
Eliminate State Central Services Deduction from Temporary Half-Cent Sales Tax	State Central Services	\$5.4 M	\$5.4 M	\$5.4 M	\$5.4 M	\$5.4 M	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$46.9 M</b>	<b>\$16.1 M</b>	<b>\$23.1 M</b>	<b>\$28.1 M</b>	<b>\$33.1 M</b>
POTENTIAL IN FUTURE YEARS		SOURCE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Allocate up to 25% of Future General Improvement Funds to Highways**	Surplus		\$48.0 M	\$48.0 M	\$48.0 M	\$48.0 M	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$46.9 M</b>	<b>\$64.1 M</b>	<b>\$71.1 M</b>	<b>\$76.1 M</b>	<b>\$81.1 M</b>

\* Approximate total after 70/30 split with cities and counties.

\*\* Estimate based on 10-year average.



# WHERE BENTON BEGAN

**T**HE YEAR WAS 1815. William Lockhart and his family had made the long journey from North Carolina along the Southwest Trail to the banks of the Saline River. Though the trail led all the way to Texas, it was here along the river that they decided to settle, becoming what is believed to be the first non-Native American settlers to the area. Lockhart eventually operated a ferry boat in what became known as Saline Crossing. In 1831, he gained permission to build a bridge and operated it as a toll bridge. From Lockhart's settlement grew what is now the city of Benton, though the town was built to the north of the crossing on higher ground in case of flooding.

Congressman French Hill speaks to the crowd gathered at the Old River Bridge.



**THE OLD RIVER BRIDGE**  
The Old River Bridge was commissioned by the Saline County Circuit Court in 1831 and was completed in 1835 and opened to the community in 1836. It is the second oldest remaining bridge in Arkansas and was added to the National Register of Historical Places in 1977. In 1999 it was added to the "Most Endangered Historic Structures" list in Arkansas.  
The old bridge consists of two 130-foot long Pratt trusses with six panels and a single lane for traffic. The ends of each span rest on four-foot diameter concrete columns. From the columns rise the 20-foot tall iron flat trusses of each span.  
Today, efforts are being made to obtain grants to enable the establishment of the Old River Bridge as a State Park and restore it as a reflection of the historical significance of Saline Crossing. The bridge is a reminder of the historical significance of Saline Crossing. The bridge is the centerpiece of a historic trail that connects the city of Benton to the river.



## PRESERVING A COMMUNITY'S HISTORIC PAST

“This grant will get this project off the ground. We thank the Highway & Transportation Department for helping preserve a place that holds **SUCH GREAT HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE FOR SALINE COUNTY.**”

**IN 1891**, a new bridge was built for horse and wagon traffic in the Saline Crossing area. Today, that bridge, the “Old River Bridge,” is the second oldest remaining bridge in Arkansas. It was added to the National Register of Historical Places in 1977. The bridge went out of service in 1974 and became somewhat inaccessible when River Street was closed at both ends; however, it was later used in a scene in the movie *Sling Blade*.

Today, efforts are underway by a local group called Saline Crossing Regional Park & Recreation Area, Inc. to rehabilitate the bridge for pedestrian and bicycle use and to develop a regional park on the surrounding 13 acres.

“We want families to be able to come here for a day of swimming, fishing or kayaking in this wonderful riverside setting,” stated Lynn Moore, a member of the nonprofit group.

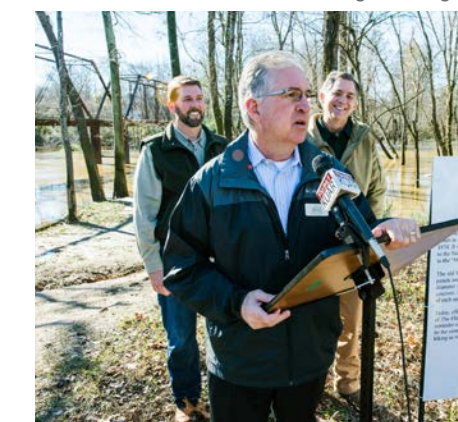
In an effort to help the group, Saline County Judge Jeff Arey suggested pursuing a grant from the Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department’s “Transportation Alternatives Program.”

The program provides funding for projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, community improvement activities, and recreational trails programs, among other things.

In December of last year, Saline County received a \$500,000 grant from the program to begin making the Old River Bridge functional again and held a news conference by the bridge to make the announcement.

“This grant will get this project off the ground,” Judge Arey commented at the news conference. “We thank the Highway and Transportation Department for helping preserve a place that holds such great historic significance for Saline County.”

(Below) Saline County Judge Jeff Arey shares his childhood memories of crossing the bridge.



Judge Arey told the crowd at the news conference that as a child living in Haskell, he used to ride his bicycle across the bridge on his way to the store in Benton.

The bridge itself consists of two 130-foot Pratt through trusses with six panels and a single lane for traffic. The ends of each span rest on four-foot diameter concrete columns. From the columns rise the 20-foot tall iron flat trusses of each span.

“This is the maximum amount available for award through the Transportation Alternatives Program,” stated AHTD Director Scott Bennett. “We are very pleased to be able to help in a project such as this.”

Congressman French Hill was one of many supporters of the project and attended the recent news conference.

“The old Southwest Trail that ran across the river right here is a great part of our Arkansas history,” Hill told the crowd. “This project puts us one step closer to creating a pedestrian trail from Little Rock to Hot Springs and is a great long-term strategy.”

The pedestrian trail will follow the original Southwest Trail between the two cities.

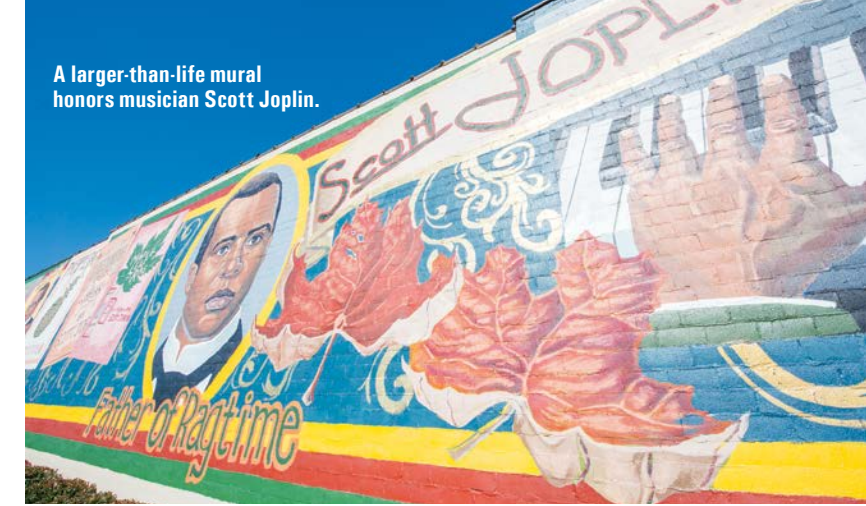
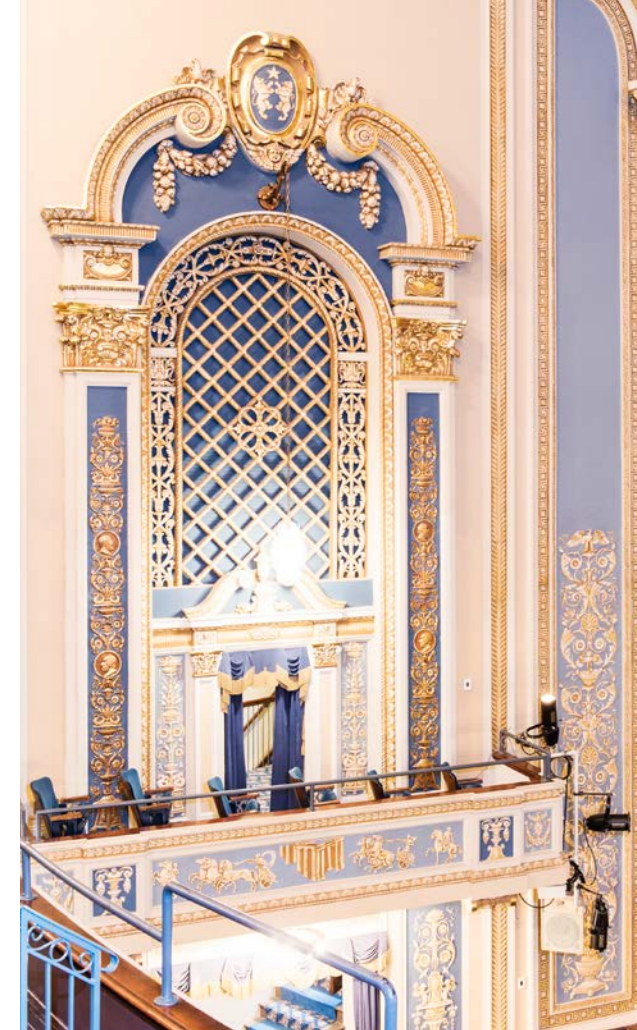
The program funds for the Old River Bridge were awarded in December. The grant will be used to take the bridge down utilizing a crane, disassembling it and for rehabilitating the bridge while it is on the ground. Future work will require more funding and will build new piers and lift the bridge back in place.

For more information on the Saline Crossing project, visit [SalineCrossing.com](http://SalineCrossing.com).





Texarkana's Perot Theatre was built in 1924 and fully restored in 1979.



Texarkana Regional Arts Center is housed in a former Federal District Courthouse built in 1911.

# WEEKEND

# ROAD TRIP:

# TEXARKANA

BY DAVID NILLES

**A** TRIP TO THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF ARKANSAS LEADS TRAVELERS TO THE CITY THAT IS "TWICE AS NICE," TEXARKANA. STRADDLING THE BORDER OF ARKANSAS AND TEXAS, IT'S OUR DESTINATION ON THIS WEEKEND ROAD TRIP.

Our tour of Texarkana begins downtown at 3rd & Main at one of the most famous landmarks in town, the **Perot Theatre**. Built in 1924, it's known as the city's performing arts jewel. The theatre opened as the Saenger Amusement Company's "Gateway to the Southwest Theatre." It was fully restored in 1979. Texarkana natives H. Ross Perot and his sister Bette contributed much of the cost of the restoration through the Perot Foundation in memory of their parents, Gabriel and Lula May Perot. Such performers as Will Rogers, Douglas

Fairbanks and Annie Oakley have appeared on stage in the theatre's past. In fact, a nickel and an RC bottle cap would get you in to some performances. Today, the theatre hosts Broadway touring productions as well as national and international performers. Upcoming productions include Sandi Patty, the Houston Ballet and the Texarkana Symphony Orchestra. Now in its 92nd year, the Perot Theatre is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

While at 3rd & Main Streets, cross the street to see a **larger-than-life mural**

depicting the life and accomplishments of musician **Scott Joplin**. Joplin spent his formative years in Texarkana. Known as the 'King of Ragtime,' Joplin composed more than 40 ragtime piano pieces including 'Maple Leaf Rag' and 'The Entertainer.' His major opera, 'Treemonisha,' is set in the plantation area of Rondo, just north of Texarkana. He attended the Orr School and practiced piano in the homes where his mother did domestic work. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize posthumously for his musical accomplishments. The mural was repainted last summer by artist Art Pletcher.

Just a block away, at 321 W. 4th Street is a stop for lovers of the visual arts, the **Texarkana Regional Arts Center**. The

facility is housed in the first Federal District Courthouse completed in 1911. The building has been renovated but still features marble floors, vaulted halls and one of only two brass/copper cage elevators in the country. The former courtroom upstairs has been transformed into an elegant grand hall with decorative painting done by the same artisans who worked on the Perot Theatre. In the galleries, visitors will find national and regional touring exhibitions as well as works of art by regional and local artists. An annual student exhibition and an adult juried exhibition are part of each year's schedule. Wrapping up in March is an exhibition by self-taught Arkansas artist Melverue Abraham. It will be followed by

exhibitions by artists Joseph Raymond and Deborah Paris. Be sure to check out the **Art Wall** on the lawn next to the Center. It features an ever-changing number of works of art showcasing Texarkana's young artists. The Center is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 to 4:00.

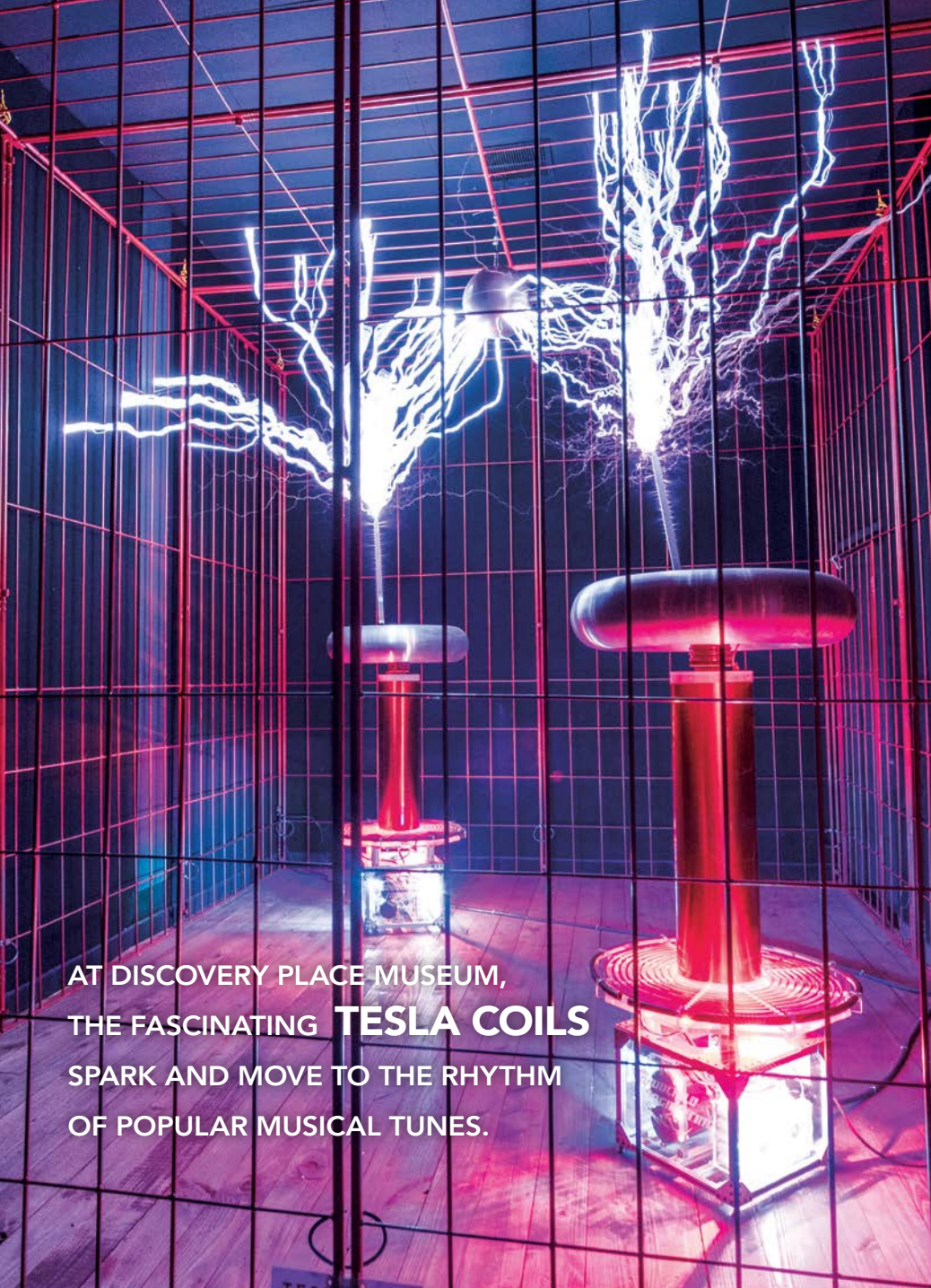
Also right in the downtown area is the top destination for kids on this road trip, the **Discovery Place Museum** located at 215 Pine Street. Young people will be fascinated with the wide variety of interactive and educational exhibits they'll find inside. Discover the wonders of life in the science lab. Other exhibits explore health, sound, motion, electricity, astronomy and other sciences. The museum's permanent features include an



The "Art Wall" showcases Texarkana's young artists.

(continued on page 20)





AT DISCOVERY PLACE MUSEUM, THE FASCINATING **TESLA COILS** SPARK AND MOVE TO THE RHYTHM OF POPULAR MUSICAL TUNES.

inviting interactive Sound Wall, a Tinkering Studio and the fascinating Musical Tesla Coils. A huge wardrobe awaits in the Dress Up area and there is also an opportunity to come face-to-face with a variety of live animals. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday and also on Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00.

If mealtime hits while you're touring downtown Texarkana, stop in at **Hopkin's Ice House** for a bite to eat. The building dates back to the early 1900s. It was originally a Ford dealership and in 1936 became Roy D. Hopkins Feed & Seed. Seventy-one years later, it became the restaurant it is today. The tin ceiling, transoms, doors, floors and glass windows are all original. On the menu are salads, sandwiches, hamburgers, pizza and amazing desserts. Brunch is served on Sundays. The restaurant is located at 301 E. 3rd Street.

Just two blocks away, you'll want to visit the **U.S. Post Office and Courthouse**. The building sits symmetrical with the State line and is located at State Line Avenue and 5th Street.

Upon arriving, you'll notice that the building interrupts the typical street grid because, like State Line Avenue, the courthouse sits right on the State line. No other Federal building in the country occupies two states.

Witt, Seibert & Halsey of Texarkana, in association with Perkins, Chatten & Hammond of Chicago, were responsible for the building's design, with James A. Wetmore serving as the acting supervising architect. The structure was built in the Beaux Arts architectural style. Its base features Texas pink granite and its walls Arkansas gray limestone. Construction was completed in 1933.

Because it sits on the State line, the building features two different zip codes, one for Arkansas and the other for Texas.

For an insight into Texarkana's past, make your way a few blocks south to Texarkana's first and oldest museum, the **Museum of Regional History**. Housed in the town's oldest brick building, the

museum's historical collection explores the region's history including a look at agriculture, early industry, civil rights and World War II. See pottery made by the area Caddo tribe and learn about the early Spanish and French explorers. An interactive music exhibit puts the focus on musicians such as Scott Joplin, "Father of Ragtime Music," Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter and Conlon Nancarrow. The museum is located at 219 N. State Line Avenue and is open Tuesday through Saturday.

To see one of the more notable homes in Texarkana, visit the **Draughon-Moore Ace of Clubs House**. The floor plan of the home supposedly commemorates the winning card in a game that set its builder on the path to fortune. The 12-room home, built in 1885 in the Italianate Victorian style, features an octagonal rotunda

connected to a rectangular salon and three other octagonal rooms resulting in a cloverleaf pattern similar to an ace of clubs. The home also features a 20-foot tower. It opened to the public in 1988 with each room featuring objects from different decades giving visitors a walk through history. The house is open for tours on Saturday and by appointment on weekdays. It is located at 420 Pine Street.

A beautiful example of Classical Revival-style architecture can be seen at the **Ahern House** at 403 Laurel Street. The floor plan for the home was designed by owners Patrick and Mary Ahern and features six unique fireplaces, each with a unique mantle design and Italian tile in various colors. Mr. Ahern grew up in Ireland and moved to the United States in 1882. He established a retail dry goods business called O'Dwyer & Ahern Dry Goods. He and

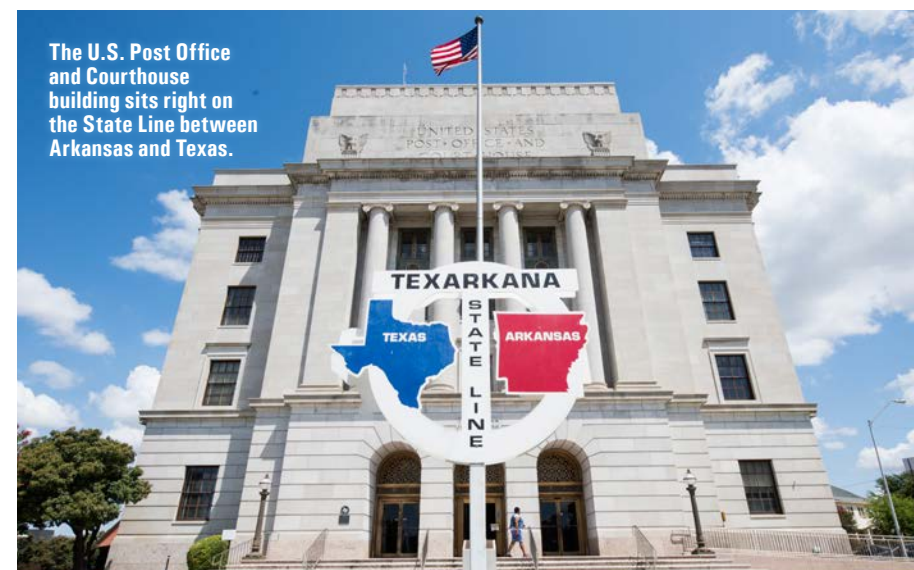
Mary raised six children in the home. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

For a glimpse of other fascinating homes from another era, swing over to the 500, 600 and 700 blocks of Pecan Street. The Claude Folke House at 501 Pecan was built in the Classical Revival style. The **Augustus M. Garrison House** at 600 Pecan was built in 1895 and is one of the city's finest Queen Ann Victorian houses. At 618 Pecan is the J.K. Wadley House, also built in 1895. It is a fine example of the Free Classical type of Queen Ann styling. In the next block, at 711 Pecan, is the Alva Horace Whitmarsh House. It is another example of Queen Ann Victorian architecture and was built in 1894. Up the street at 1410 Pecan Street is the Charles J. Neif House. This home features a Craftsman-style bungalow appearance and was built circa 1905.

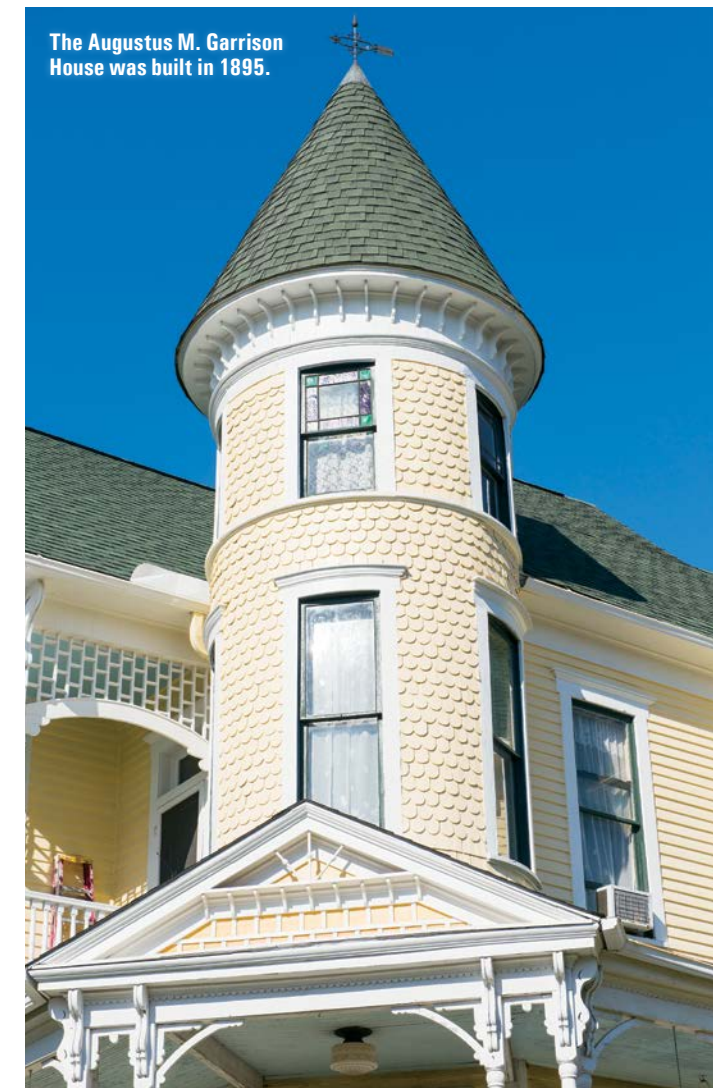
*(continued on page 22)*



Beech Street Historic District



The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse building sits right on the State Line between Arkansas and Texas.



The Augustus M. Garrison House was built in 1895.



The interactive Sound Wall at Discovery Place Museum



Texarkana Museum of Regional History



Architecture buffs will also want to visit the **Beech Street Historic District**, northeast of the downtown area. The district features homes built primarily in the early 1900s. Most are located between 14th and 24th Streets, with a few houses also included on adjacent Ash Street and County Avenue. The roadway is itself notable because it is paved with bricks laid circa 1904. The neighborhood quickly became a fashionable area to live. The most predominant architectural style is Craftsman, although revival styles popular in the first half of the 20th century are also seen.

Travelers who like classic cars will want to check out the **Four States Auto Museum**. The museum celebrates the automobiles and technology of the past. Visitors will find an impressive collection of classic cars and trucks, equipment related to automobile transportation and related historical artifacts. Cars on display are changed out often so there is always something new to see. The museum is located at 217 Laurel Street and is open Saturday and Sunday. Special tours can be arranged by calling the museum. The museum's spring car show will take place on May 7th. The show is being held downtown in conjunction with Railfest.

For history buffs, be sure to visit the **James Bowie Monument** located in the triangular park on the west side of Stateline Avenue near 10th Street and Walnut Street.

Known as "The Hero of the Alamo," the statue of Bowie was sculpted by William M. McVey and was one of 14 statues placed by the State of Texas as part of the celebration of the Texas Centennial in 1936. Bowie was one of the most prominent heroes in Texas history and is widely known for inventing the Bowie knife.

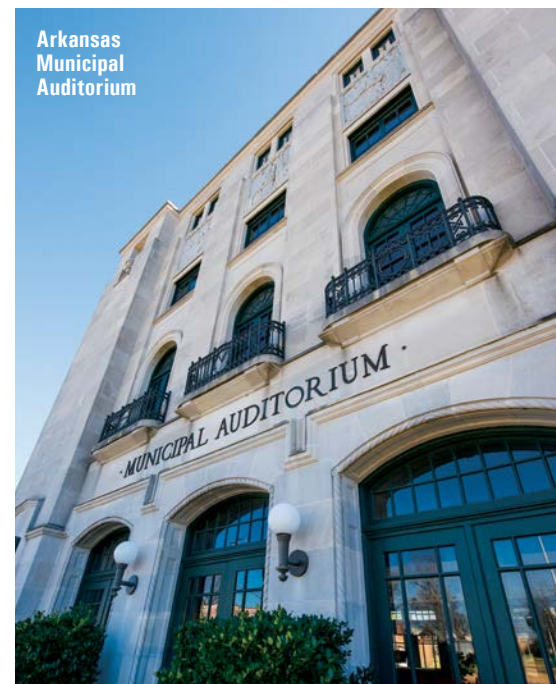
If you happen to be in Texarkana during the summer months, you can escape the heat at the **Holiday Springs Water Park**. Splash in the water all day in the wave pool, float the Lazy River or fly down the Ozark Cliff Hanger. The park is open seven days a week in the summer months and is located at 550 Crossroads Parkway.

If you are coming into Miller County on Highway 67, keep your eyes open for a sign denoting this route as part of the **Rock 'n' Roll Highway**. The name honors the early rock and roll performers that played at the **Arkansas Municipal Auditorium** in Texarkana as they traveled through town on Highway 67. Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Jim Ed Brown, Carl Perkins, Louis Armstrong, Floyd Cramer, Charlene Arthur, Onie Wheeler, George Jones, Johnny Horton, and Roy Acuff are just a few that have performed in Texarkana as they headed down to Louisiana to perform at the Louisiana Hayride.

The "twice as nice" city is a great place to head for a weekend excursion. There are more trips to come in the months ahead! ▣



James Bowie Monument



Arkansas Municipal Auditorium



Four States Auto Museum



Petit Jean State Park's Great Escape Weekend and Easter Egg Hunt.

# OUT & ABOUT

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS AROUND THE STATE

As you travel Arkansas over the next two months, consider checking out some of the listed events. Our State is full of interesting things to do, no matter which highway you find yourself driving. For additional event listings, check [Arkansas.com/events](http://Arkansas.com/events).

- \* **MARCH 15 - APRIL 12**  
TULIP EXTRAVAGANZA  
Garvan Woodland Gardens  
Hot Springs, AR
- \* **MARCH 19**  
ARTIFACT I.D. DAY  
Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park  
Visitor Center  
Scott, AR
- \* **MARCH 25 - 27**  
GREAT ESCAPE WEEKEND AND EASTER EGG HUNT  
Petit Jean State Park  
Morriston, AR
- \* **APRIL 2 - 3**  
JONESBORO AUTO SHOW AND CARNIVAL  
ASU Convocation Center  
Jonesboro, AR
- \* **APRIL 4**  
PRESIDIO BRASS  
Hempstead Hall - 2500 S. Main  
Hope, AR
- \* **APRIL 6 - JULY 4**  
FACES OF THE DELTA: A.J. SMITH  
Visitors Center - 141 Cherry Street  
Helena-West Helena, AR
- \* **APRIL 12**  
AN EVENING WITH BRANFORD MARSALIS  
Baum Walker Hall  
Fayetteville, AR
- \* **APRIL 29 - MAY 1**  
TOADSUCK DAZE  
Downtown  
Conway, AR

\* **ARTIFACT I.D. DAY:** Solve a mystery! Have you ever wanted to know more about those "arrowheads" and pottery pieces that you and your family have found? Take them to the Visitor Center at Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park to let their station archeologist take a look at them. Visitors are invited to bring up to five artifacts to be reviewed. No appraisals though. • MARCH 19

\* **GREAT ESCAPE WEEKEND AND EASTER EGG HUNT:** Celebrate spring and the great outdoors at Petit Jean State Park's Great Escape Weekend! Enjoy free nature programs and family activities throughout the park. The celebration concludes with an "Easter Egg Scramble" for children with about 2,000 Easter eggs to find! • MARCH 25 - 27

\* **PRESIDIO BRASS:** Be amazed, astonished, amused and entertained with Presidio Brass. By combining brass quintet, piano and percussion instruments with original arrangements, a unique sound has become a trademark for this ensemble from San Diego. Through their touring show of Hollywood's greatest hits, Sounds of the Cinema, these five guys present film music with a good dose of wit and humor that together have become hallmarks of every Presidio Brass performance. • APRIL 4

\* **FACES OF THE DELTA:** An exhibition of drawings and prints by Little Rock artist A.J. Smith in the galleries of the Delta Cultural Center. The works on view capture the faces of the delta and the personalities behind them. Smith's work is included in the permanent collection of the Arkansas Arts Center as well as other museums in the United States and abroad. • APRIL 6 - JULY 4



Artifact I.D. Day



Presidio Brass



Faces of the Delta



# CONSTRUCTION DIVISION: GETTING THE JOB DONE

BY DAVID NILLES

**W**HAT HAPPENS WITH A CONSTRUCTION PROJECT AFTER THE DESIGN PLANS ARE COMPLETED, THE RIGHT OF WAY IS ACQUIRED AND THE JOB IS AWARDED TO A CONTRACTOR? That's when the Construction Division gets involved on the job site to make sure all goes as planned.

After 35 years on the job, Assistant Construction Engineer Steve Peeples recently retired. Arkansas Highways visited with Peeples on his last day of work to learn more about the Construction Division and his years at the Department.

**NILLES:** *What is the role of the Construction Division at the AHTD?*

**PEEPLES:** We administer construction contracts for our road and bridge projects. Here at the Department, a typical construction project will go through the planning stage and the design stage. Then, that project is ready to be bid on and is awarded to a contractor. Once you have the contract between the AHTD and a contractor, the Construction Division comes in and we administer the job.

Resident Engineer  
Thomas Drye



We issue the work order, we approve all of the sub-contractors that are going to work with the prime contractor on the job and then, as construction progresses, we inspect the work to see that it is being performed in accordance with the plans and the specs. We monitor the progress and are the trouble shooters or problem solvers on the construction site if something unplanned comes up.

**NILLES:** *Where do our Resident Engineer Offices fit into the picture?*

**PEEPLES:** Each of our construction jobs is assigned to one of our Resident Engineer offices across the State. The staff in those offices are on those job sites inspecting the work being done. The Resident Engineer (RE) is the first line of direct contact and they work with contractors all of the time. If we need to change something in the project, or we encounter a problem that we didn't know about, or any conflicts come up, that is when we get involved with other Divisions at the Department. Depending on the problem, we serve as the liaison between the job site and our AHTD

Divisions. For example, there could be an environmental issue arise or a roadway design issue come up. Or, a bridge design issue or materials issue may spring up. Our staff coordinates the resolution to that problem and tries to do it effectively without running up the project cost. We work towards a good, equitable solution. That's our role.

**NILLES:** *You probably work with many of our Divisions here at AHTD...*

**PEEPLES:** Yes, absolutely. We work with everyone at one time or another. We are the go between to get all of the information gathered on the job site and get a decision should something come up. If it's a bridge problem, we get a bridge design recommendation for a solution. If it's a materials issue like a slide, they'll come up with a design for slide repair and get a change order in. We work with Legal, Environmental, or whomever, depending on the issue we are trying to solve. For a decision on something higher up the ladder, we can turn to our Chief Engineer.

**NILLES:** *With 60 or 70 jobs going on at one time, there must be many things you have to keep up with.*

**PEEPLES:** There are, and our Resident Engineers are our "go-to" guys. I think the most difficult job in the Highway Department is the RE job. If you read the spec book, everything falls back on the Resident Engineer. He's responsible for all environmental concerns and for meeting construction specs. It's a very expansive and difficult job to handle. Our Construction Division works with them to help them do their job. It's a big one and I've always tried to be a proponent to give them all the tools in their toolbox to be able to handle all they are responsible for.

I've joked in meetings that REs are responsible for world peace (*laughs*). That's the last statement in the spec book. My job is to try to help them do their job. I think we've been successful and made improvements.

A big help with covering all of the bases is our system of documentation, a computer program called SiteManager. It's used for monitoring progress by the contractor, making daily work reports, processing estimates, documenting that all tests are being done, that materials are certified, estimated completion dates are up to date, tracking where money is spent to make sure it is spent prudently. Everything is in that program. A great deal of work went

*(continued on page 26)*

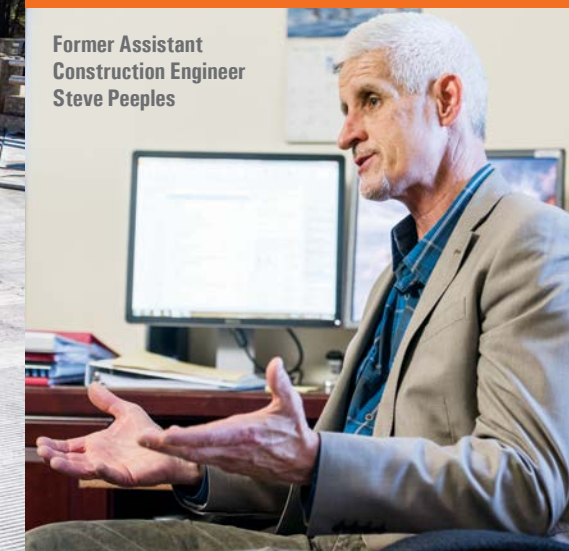


“**CONSTRUCTION DIVISION STAFF** COORDINATE THE RESOLUTION TO PROBLEMS AND TRY TO DO IT EFFECTIVELY WITHOUT RUNNING UP THE PROJECT COST. WE WORK TOWARDS A GOOD, EQUITABLE SOLUTION. THAT'S OUR ROLE.”

Interstate 530 construction  
near White Hall.



Former Assistant  
Construction Engineer  
Steve Peeples





into getting our SiteManager program up and running. Kevin Thornton, Ben Browning, David Henning, Jamey Wilhite, Mitchell Archer and Steve Pennington were instrumental in that process. From the beginning of a project to actually auditing every project for final pay, we have to make sure everything is done correctly and it clears the books. We send the final estimate to the contractor and get a release from them and then the job is put to bed.

The thing we like to do is build roads and bridges, but there's a lot of documentation that goes into that. We have to be accountable from a job's birth to its burial!

**NILLES:** *What happens if an unexpected problem comes up on a construction project?*

**PEEPLER:** If the contractor has a question or an issue on the site, the Resident Engineer is the responsible party, they are the specified decision maker. We have 31 REs across the State, 33 if you count our two consulting REs with the Connecting Arkansas Program. All of them are supervised by the particular District Office they are in. The average RE office has about 15 staff people working in that office. No matter the problem, we like our RE decisions to be uniform and equitable statewide. We want to give the same answer to the same question. If a problem can't be resolved on the RE level, then the question goes to the District Engineer.

Former Assistant Construction Engineer Steve Peebles



**NILLES:** *What is an example of a construction problem that might arise on a job site?*

**PEEPLER:** The first thing that comes to my mind is a slide. There are certain Districts where you don't have that situation, but in others you do. For instance, the Highway 23 slide in Franklin County last year. Or, we have had times where we will remove an old pavement and find bad subgrade underneath because water has been trapped under there for years. As a result, we will have to undercut or back fill to stabilize the soil. You may find things on a job site that you didn't know were there when you started, like a pipe underground or in the case of the Broadway Bridge

in Little Rock, a spring cistern. Or you may find an environmental issue such as discovering a cave up in District Four. Any number of things can come up and they can alter your job design. When we hit the ground, there are always variables and changes. That's kind of our deal. We have to modify things to get the end product that we want. That can result in new pay items because you're spending more money for the job and change orders must be completed. Ultimately, the RE has authority to say "let's fix it this way."

To me, that's the exciting part of this job because there is a lot of variability. Different things can come up every day.



“ IF THE CONTRACTOR HAS A QUESTION OR AN ISSUE ON THE SITE, THE RESIDENT ENGINEER IS THE RESPONSIBLE PARTY, THEY ARE THE SPECIFIED DECISION MAKER. IF A PROBLEM CAN'T BE RESOLVED ON THE RE LEVEL, THEN THE QUESTION GOES TO THE DISTRICT ENGINEER. ”

**NILLES:** *Sounds like every role is critical to the success of each and every job.*

**PEEPLER:** We have a lot of plates to spin, hoops to jump through to make sure we follow all the regulations. We are on board with that. We've grown to love it. We are pretty well versed in all the regulations we need to comply with. SiteManager has really helped. In staff meetings on Monday morning we look at everything that may possibly be behind, such as construction diaries, estimated completion dates that haven't been updated. We can query that system for any number of things. It shows us that all tests have been done, certifications are done, that we are meeting Disadvantaged Business Enterprise goals (DBE), getting a subcontractor approved or getting purchase orders done. It keeps staff from getting behind. It helps our staff stay up to the minute on everything.

In addition to staff duties, we all have specialty duties. We always have a Construction Division member that serves on the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification committee. We also have someone that is on the Work Zone Safety and Mobility Committee. We have somebody in charge of Short-term Activity Authorizations, which are permits from the Arkansas Department of Environmental

Quality to work on our jobs. We have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System specialist who keeps abreast of environmental regulations and changes to that who keeps everybody up to date on that. We have a storm water pollution prevention plan for every job. We have to keep up with all of that and make certain new requirements are in action.

**NILLES:** *Looking back on your 35-year career with the Department, what have you enjoyed the most?*

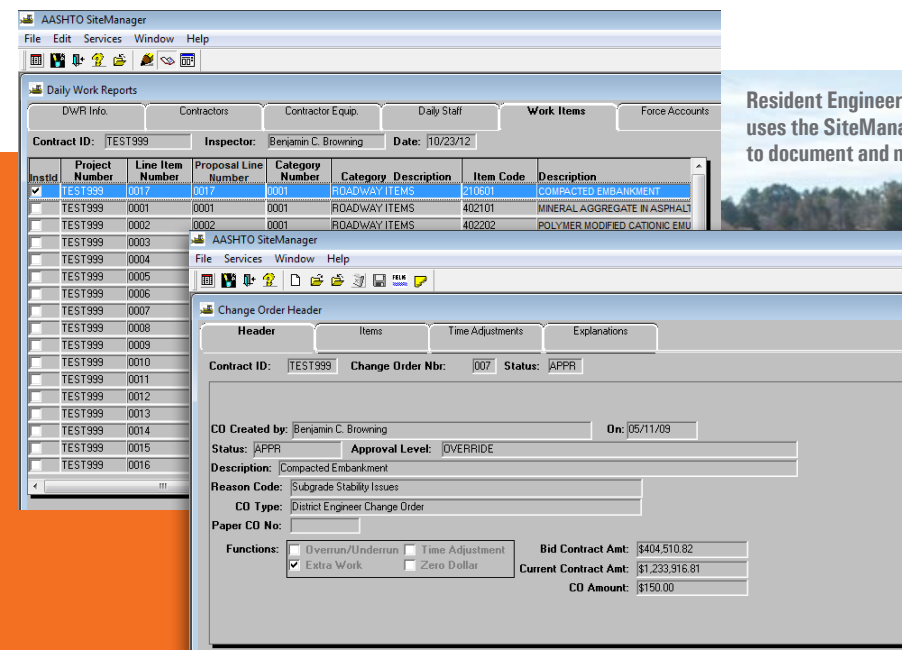
**PEEPLER:** There's a two part answer. My favorite jobs, because I liked to do it, were when I was a young engineer with boots on the ground. Unlike today, we did all of our own surveying and layout work. My first couple of jobs, where I was the engineer in charge, we took those projects all the way through and we would build a road or a bridge. You saw something constructed in concrete, steel or asphalt and you watched it through from beginning to end. That was my most satisfying experience because you actually were seeing the fruits of your labors.

Secondly, you look at some of the bigger projects we are doing now. I've been here 35 years so I'm seeing projects we are getting ready to do now that I was

involved in 35 years ago. We're getting ready to finish Interstate 40 between Morgan and 430. I was the RE on the first rubbilization project on that pavement. I was also involved in the existing Interstate 30 Corridor in downtown Little Rock and we are now preparing to redo that project. Watching the Big Rock Interchange come to completion has also been important to me.

On the flip side, one of my jobs that seemed to go horribly wrong was the river bridge at DeValls Bluff. We were looking forward to a new location job over the White River. The plan was to build approaches and build the tie-ins. But, we had horrible problems getting it built. Problems arose with a conglomerate layer and issues down in the cofferdams. Then we had a claim pending, but we finally got that settled. In the end, it did get built. There's a model of the old bridge here at Central Office and we have pictures of the demolition of that bridge on view. Locally, the Rest Area over in that area has information on display on the history of the old and new bridge. Ultimately, that was a good project. The new bridge has been a big success and been well received.

*(continued on page 28)*



Resident Engineer Stan Glover (R.) uses the SiteManager software (L.) to document and monitor job progress.





**NILLES:** Any stories you'd like to share from your time working with the RE Offices?

**PEEPLES:** One of the best things I ever learned was to listen. I was working on one of my first bridges out at Fourche Dam. I was driving a test pile and I had earplugs in because the diesel hammer I was working with was loud. You have to count blows when you're driving a pile. I'm out there with my ear plugs in, hard hat on, looking through the equipment and counting blows. Once you start a test pile, you don't stop. Well, the contract superintendent comes walking up. And he is just talking. He's red faced, moving his arms. I'm still counting blows as he talks. I don't know what he's saying but he's animated. I'm an engineer, I can't multi-task. I'm doing my test pile; I'm giving him a little eye contact and wondering what he's doing. This goes on for about five minutes. I can tell he's calming down because he is not red-faced or moving his arms anymore. He leaves after about five minutes. I thought to myself, well, I better go see what he wants when I get finished. I said, "Do you need to talk to me?" and he says "No, you know I really appreciated you listening. We're going to have a good relationship on this job." I just said thank you. I never knew what he was talking about. But I learned that you listen first.

You know, cell phones are a horrible thing. When a motorist calls up here to the Department, they want to tell you what their road situation is. You just let them talk and your job is to listen. And if you think they're not finished venting their frustration, you ask them questions. Then you say, "I'll try to help you, I'll investigate it and see what we can do." That works with contractors, property owners, and motorists. I learned it by accident standing there with earplugs in.

I just want to say that this is a great place to work and we all need to remember that. Everyone in the RE offices across the State is important. That goes for the rest of the staff as well. I played football in college, and we used to draw up plays on a chalkboard. We had eleven Xs and eleven Os. Everybody on that 11-man team had to make their block to get the job done. It's the same way in the RE office, the Construction Office or any office. Everybody is important and everybody's role is critical. From the Director on to our entry level people, there is a purpose in what they do that makes it all come together. You build on all of that and it comes together as a team. You trust everyone to do their job, and they come through.

The important thing is that you need to be able to remember to laugh. I've always

enjoyed making people laugh and I've always had people around that entertained me immensely. I've had people with 'good character' doing that and then some that were just plain 'characters.'

**NILLES:** What are your plans for retirement?

**PEEPLES:** I'm blessed because my Mom and Dad are still living and in good health. They live in Sherwood and I live in Cabot. So, I'm looking forward to spending more time with them. In addition, I have my son, my daughter-in-law and my grandkids here in Little Rock. It will be nice to spend more time with my grandkids. I have church activities that I want to be more involved in. I have maintenance to do at my house, I've successfully deer hunted and duck hunted around that for too long. I have some remodeling to do. I may or may not undertake that! I've been in construction my whole career and I like building stuff... deer stands, duck blinds, play houses. It's a fun hobby. Hopefully I'll get to do a lot more things like that. With a group of others, I have a farm and a tractor on about 400 acres in southeast Arkansas. We hunt and fish down there. I'll be spending time there.

So, I have enough things on my plate for a little while. I enjoy them and they will keep me busy. ■

COMING SOON:



## New TOURIST INFORMATION CENTERS

**T**HE DOORS OF THE BIG PINEY REST AREA ON INTERSTATE 40 CLOSED FOR THE LAST TIME ON JANUARY 8TH. NOT BECAUSE IT IS PERMANENTLY CLOSING TO THE PUBLIC, BUT BECAUSE IT IS BEING REPLACED WITH A BRAND NEW ARKANSAS TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER.

The Big Piney Rest Area is one of several rest areas that will be undergoing complete transformations into Arkansas Tourist Information Centers over the next year.

Existing buildings at the Big Piney Rest Area will be demolished to make way for construction of larger buildings to accommodate a greater number of restroom facilities that meet the latest Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, that are more family friendly and that feature baby changing stations.

Unlike the Department's Arkansas Welcome Centers, the new Tourist Information Centers will be unmanned, equipped instead with self-service kiosks that feature the AHTD's highly successful

travel and construction information site, IDriveArkansas.com. Additional kiosks will provide current weather conditions and forecasts as well as information about local attractions, dining, lodging and more. Limited public Wi-Fi access will also make its debut at the new facilities.

Transformation of the Big Piney facility is the first among several Rest Areas in the State that will become Tourist Information Centers. The White River and Social Hill Rest Areas have been let to contract to undergo the same conversion. In addition, the Arkansas Welcome Centers in Harrison and at the Red River near Texarkana (Highway 71) are now being replaced with new facilities.

The Big Piney Rest Area was originally constructed in 1991. Crow Paving of



The current Big Piney rest area.

Morrilton, Arkansas, was awarded the contract to construct the new Tourist Information Center at Big Piney with a bid of \$3.6 million.

Plans are for the new Center at Big Piney to open in mid-2017.

The location of all rest areas and Arkansas Welcome Centers can be found on page 34 of this magazine and at [IDriveArkansas.com](http://IDriveArkansas.com). ■







# INTERSTATE 30 SAFETY PROJECT

## GAINS NATIONAL ATTENTION

**D**URING A NATIONAL AWARDS CEREMONY ON CAPITOL HILL IN LATE 2015, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) was recognized by the Roadway Safety Foundation and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for its efforts to decrease the number of dangerous wet weather crashes along a four-mile section of Interstate 30 in Clark County.

The Department had identified 70 crashes over a four-year period that were caused by wet weather and resulted in roadway departures. The AHTD sought and implemented cost-effective countermeasures by installing an Ultra-Thin Bonded Wearing Course (UTBWC) pavement treatment to the roadway surface. The treatment increases traction and reduces the risk of skidding.

After application to the roadway, the Department observed that the improved pavement texture lowered wet weather crashes from 70 to just five on the four-mile segment of Interstate 30. That's a 93% reduction of crashes over four years.

The crash reduction potential of Arkansas' Interstate pavement surface treatment was so dramatic that the Department authorized the program to

be expanded. Five additional locations were treated with UTBWC.

"The Ultra-Thin Bonded Wearing Course has been proven to be an effective safety improvement to reduce wet weather crashes on our Interstates," said AHTD Director Scott Bennett. "Because of its effectiveness, we have identified additional locations for this treatment and believe this not only supports our

strategic goal but also helps Arkansas move one step closer Toward Zero Deaths."

The AHTD's project was one of 10 recognized with a 2015 National Roadway Safety Award at the ceremony.

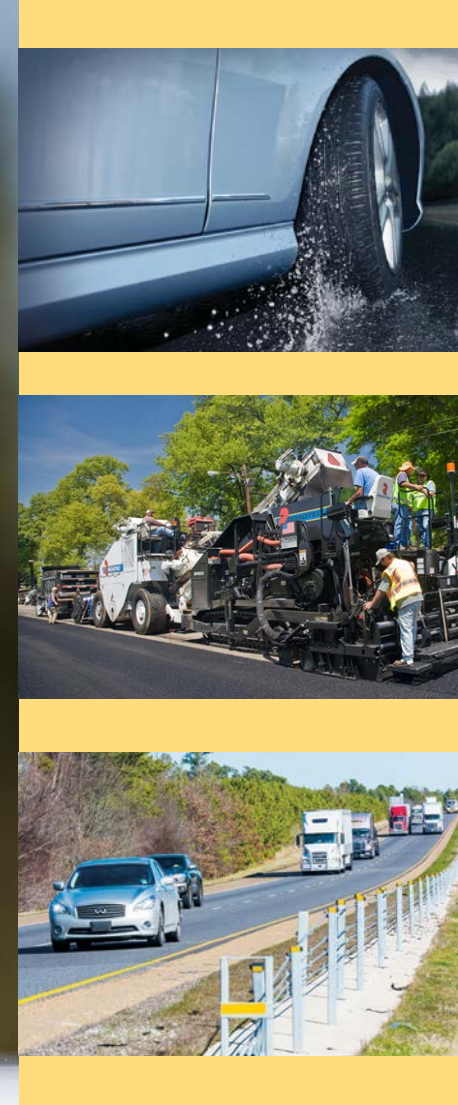
"The innovative highway safety projects honored here are vital because deficiencies in the roadway environment contribute to nearly one-third of all

traffic deaths," said Roadway Safety Foundation Executive Director Greg Cohen. "The National Roadway Safety Awards are an opportunity to recognize the unsung heroes who plan, engineer and implement creative measures to help save lives on a daily basis and rarely receive credit for doing so."

"More than 32,000 people died in traffic crashes in 2013 and millions of

individuals suffered injuries," Federal Highway Administrator Gregory Nadeau commented. "Innovative roadway safety programs are a critical part of saving lives and preventing injuries on our nation's highways."

The National Roadway Safety Award recipients were evaluated on effectiveness, innovation and efficient use of resources. ■





# Dear AHTD,

I would like to thank AHTD and the tax payers of Arkansas for committing the resources to install cable barriers along Interstate 40. I would also recommend some type of barrier, either Jersey Walls or cable barriers on all highways where possible.

Yesterday I was traveling west on I-40 between Morrilton and Atkins when an east bound car came across the median. It hit the cable barrier that is on the west bound side and the cables kept the car from hitting me head on. It was terrifying because the cables stretched as they were absorbing the impact, but being shaken up is a lot better than the outcome of being hit head-on. My family and I thank you very much!

Sincerely,  
**Chuck Gibson**  
 Tulsa, Oklahoma

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Thank you so much for your continued support of Special Olympics! We truly appreciate the contribution that your agency makes each year, both monetarily and by donating your time. It was great to see you at our State bowling competition as well as at the recent Polar Plunge where you served as a judge. Additionally, thank you for providing officers to present awards and spend time with our athletes during bowling. You guys rock!

### Alexis Teal

Director of Development for Law Enforcement Torch Run Special Olympics of Arkansas

*NOTE: This letter was addressed to Arkansas Highway Police Chief Ron Burks.*

## CABLE BARRIER THANKS

I wrote to you back in August regarding a cable barrier matter in Clark County, which was repaired almost immediately after your response. I, and other motorists, are appreciative of your swift action.

I am writing you now to extend commendations to the AHTD crew which maintains the cable barriers in Hot Spring County. Recently there was a serious accident on I-30 just east of the Clark – Hot Spring County line which involved an 18 wheeler crossing from the east bound lanes into the west bound lanes and damaging a portion of the cable barrier. Your crew had the cable repaired in just a few days.

During my previous tenure as mayor of Friendship, I found your Hot Spring County crew to be extremely cooperative. Please extend my appreciation to them.

Kind Regards,  
**Willam Garret**

*NOTE: This letter was addressed to Jeff Venable, District 7 Engineer.*

## SNOW REMOVAL APPRECIATED

To all the dedicated workers at the AHTD: Our sincerest thanks, for a job well done.

Our grown son had to travel to Memphis for his company, on the 22 of January 2016. We were concerned as was his wife due to the rough weather. Many prayers and several hours after he left, he texted he was there safe. He didn't credit his driving, or his ride. He gave full credit to the Highway Department and the excellent job those at AHTD did on the Highways. He said not one problem from Searcy to Memphis. Thank you for the care taken in doing your jobs. We had watched the news Thursday evening, showing the workers filling sandbags to weigh their trucks down, just to keep their own trucks on the highway. Sure they get paid, but there is no price we could ever place or pay, for the added safety when travel is necessary. I never complain about paying my fair share of taxes, due to services such as yours.

Sincerely,  
**Kelly Fryrear**

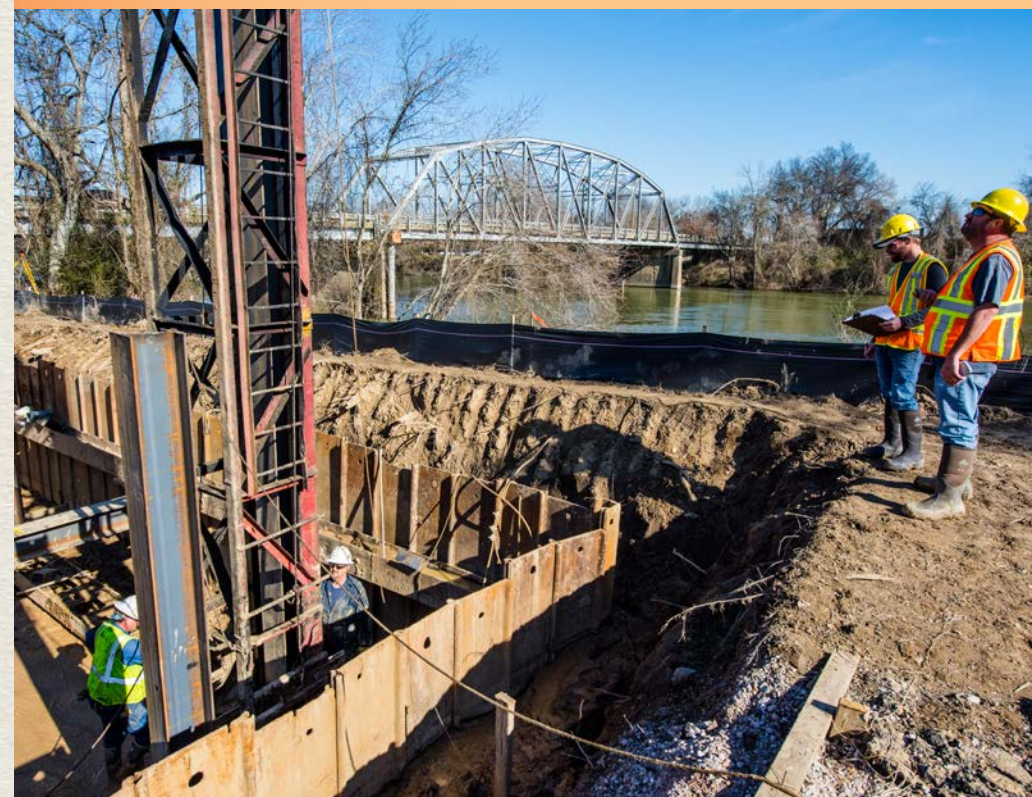
## DRIVEWAY REPAIRED

It's easy fun to poke at a road crew as you drive by and is always easy to assume we know what's going on. Today I have to give a shout out to the AHTD crew of the Malvern District. We had a minor inconvenience (heavy on inconvenience) due to some recent work on the Highway. By way of telephone, I submitted a request and —'BAM'— the next day two AHTD gentlemen were repairing the inconvenience at our driveway. Now, no jokes — that's service folks!

**Jenny and Jeremy Stafford**  
 via Facebook

## DISTRICT 7

# CONSTRUCTION



## CORNER

The east side of Arkadelphia is the location of a construction project that is making improvements to Highway 51 in the area of the Ouachita River.

Crews in District Seven are replacing an old 1930s truss bridge and railroad underpass with a new bridge on new location. The new bridge will span both the Ouachita River and the Union Pacific Railroad. The project will provide much more reliable access to Arkadelphia by eliminating the existing curve in the roadway and raising the highway above an area that is sometimes prone to flooding.

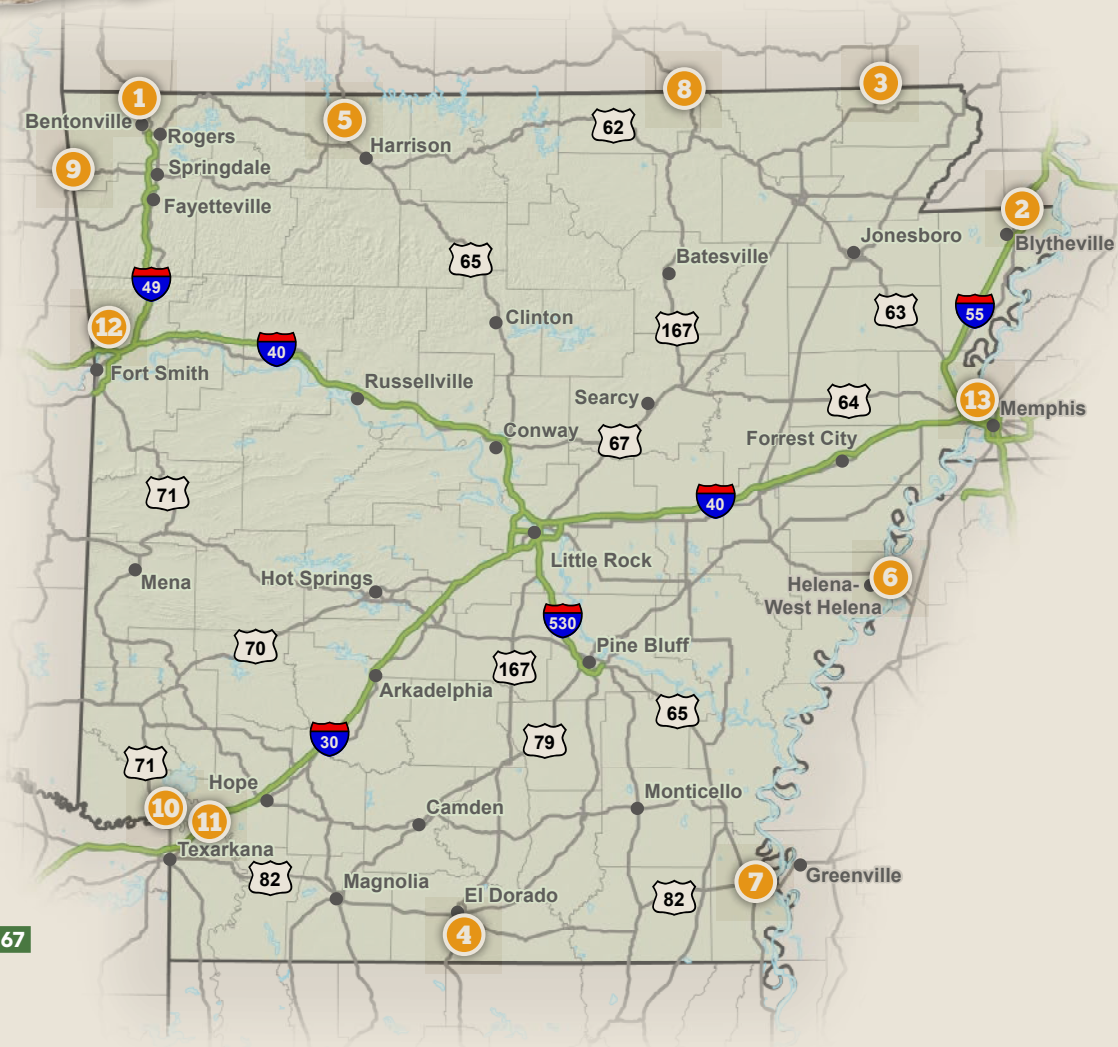
The project was let to contract in December of 2014. Robertson Contractors, Inc. of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, was awarded the contract at \$14,872,977.02.

Now a year into the project, crews estimate that construction is approximately 30% complete. Anticipated completion is targeted for the summer of 2017. ■



# ARKANSAS WELCOME CENTERS

**T**hey're positioned at strategic locations across the State, welcoming motorists to Arkansas. Attractive and inviting places to take a break from the road. They are the State's thirteen Arkansas Welcome Centers (AWC). Each Center is open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily (6:00 p.m. during summer months). Restrooms are available at all hours. An interactive map of AWC locations can also be seen at [IDriveArkansas.com](http://IDriveArkansas.com). Just click the "Traveler Information" tab.



**1. BELLA VISTA — HIGHWAY 71 B**

13750 Visitors Center Drive  
Bella Vista, AR 72714  
Phone: 479-855-3111

**2. BLYTHEVILLE — INTERSTATE 55**

5241 Interstate 55  
Blytheville, AR 72315  
Phone: 870-762-2512

**3. CORNING — HIGHWAY 67**

6717 Highway 67  
Corning, AR 72422  
Phone: 870-857-6014

**4. EL DORADO — HIGHWAYS 82 & 167**

3315 Junction City Highway  
El Dorado, AR 71730  
Phone: 870-881-9160

**5. HARRISON — HIGHWAY 65 N**

3391 Highway 65 N  
Harrison, AR 72601  
Phone: 870-741-3343

**6. HELENA-WEST HELENA — HIGHWAY 49**

1506 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive  
Helena, AR 72342  
Phone: 870-338-7602

**7. LAKE VILLAGE — HIGHWAYS 65 & 159**

3697 S. Highway 65 82  
Lake Village, AR 71653  
Phone: 870-265-5832

**8. MAMMOTH SPRING — HIGHWAY 63 N**

17 Highway 63 N  
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554  
Phone: 870-625-7364

**9. SILOAM SPRINGS — HIGHWAYS 412 W & 59**

2000 Highway 412 West  
Siloam Springs, AR 72761  
Phone: 479-524-4445

**10. TEXARKANA — HIGHWAY 71**

12555 Highway 71  
Texarkana, AR 71854  
Phone: 870-772-7511

**11. TEXARKANA — INTERSTATE 30**

10000 Interstate 30  
Texarkana, AR 71854  
Phone: 870-772-4301

**12. VAN BUREN — INTERSTATE 40**

2915 Interstate 40  
Van Buren, AR 72956  
Phone: 479-474-9515

**13. WEST MEMPHIS — INTERSTATE 40**

704 East Service Road  
West Memphis, AR 72301  
Phone: 870-735-3637

## AHTD PEOPLE

### NEW EMPLOYEES

- BRIDGE** • Korey Pough, Engineer I; Charles Price, Structural Detailer
- COMMUNICATIONS** • Nikki Brown, Telecommunication Operator
- CONSTRUCTION** • Leroy Hunter III, Engineer; Troy Davis, Jr., Engineer; Travis Lee, Engineer; David East II, Construction Helper; Jordan Hasley, Engineer; Shanice Jackson, Engineer
- ROADWAY DESIGN** • Austin Hales, Engineer
- SYSTEM INFORMATION & RESEARCH** • Ashley Hunter, Engineer
- DISTRICT ONE** • Joshua Voyles, Maintenance Aide I
- DISTRICT TWO** • Lauren Taylor, Storeroom Assistant I; Carter Davis, Parts Runner
- DISTRICT THREE** • Wesley Reynolds, Maintenance Aide I; Bradley McKinnon, Maintenance Aide I; Ginna Alford, Maintenance Aide I
- DISTRICT FOUR** • Daniel Hodge, Mechanic; Matthew Nichols, Maintenance Aide I
- DISTRICT SIX** • Craig Gunter, Mechanic; Corey Hudson, Mechanic; Joshua Iler, Mechanic; Timmy Caldwell, Maintenance Aide I; Gary Davis, Maintenance Aide I; Donnie Pirtle, Maintenance Aide I; Clarence Roberts, Maintenance Aide I; Bryan Smith, Maintenance Aide I; Troy Vail, Maintenance Aide I; James Wallace, Maintenance Aide I; Donnie Griffin, Maintenance Aide I; Allen Mems, Maintenance Aide I; Mickey Bowman, Maintenance Aide I; Richard Farmer, Maintenance Aide I
- DISTRICT SEVEN** • Michelle Pullen, Maintenance Aide II; Efreem Mason, Maintenance Aide I; Robert Primm, Maintenance Aide I
- DISTRICT EIGHT** • Gary Dennis, Storeroom Assistant I; Matthew Duvall, Maintenance Aide I; Andres Martinez, Maintenance Aide I
- DISTRICT NINE** • Matthew Holt, Maintenance Aide I; Robert Hunsaker, Maintenance Aide I; Jimmy McGarragh, Maintenance Aide I
- DISTRICT TEN** • Vivian Madison, Maintenance Aide I; Travis Postell, Maintenance Aide I; James Spencer, Maintenance Aide I

### PROMOTIONS

- ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE** • Brad Perkins, AHP First Lieutenant; William Scott, Jr., AHP First Lieutenant
- BRIDGE** • Benjamin Spilker, Bridge Design Engineer
- ENVIRONMENTAL** • Yulissa Mendoza, Administrative Aide IV
- FISCAL SERVICES** • Robyn Smith, ASHERS Executive Secretary
- MAINTENANCE** • John Sullivan, Striping Crew Leader
- ROADWAY DESIGN** • Claire Schoppe, Advanced Design Engineer; Stephen Sichmeller, Senior Design Engineer
- SURVEYS** • Robert Blakeley III, Surveys Technician III
- DISTRICT ONE** • Howard Gracey, Crew Leader; Darren Henderson, Construction Aide III; John Turner, Maintenance Aide II; Willie Winfield, Maintenance Aide II
- DISTRICT TWO** • Timothy Cagle, Crew Leader; Vernon Fisher, Area Maintenance Supervisor; Lamar Summers, Area Headquarters Attendant
- DISTRICT THREE** • Osiris Muhammad, Engineer I
- DISTRICT FOUR** • William Lake, Construction Field Engineer I

The AHTD employs approximately 3,600 people. We welcome our new employees, congratulate others on promotions and service, and say goodbye to those retiring.

- DISTRICT FIVE** • Michael Copeland, Maintenance Aide II; Jerry Elliott, Maintenance Aide II
- DISTRICT SIX** • Brian Cogburn, Maintenance Aide II; Wayne Hogue, Maintenance Aide II; Joshua Walker, Resident Engineer
- DISTRICT SEVEN** • Donny Berg, Crew Leader; Andrew Hoggard, District Maintenance Engineer; Steven Rawls, Maintenance Aide II
- DISTRICT EIGHT** • Tanner Clement, Engineer; Jerry McGhee, Maintenance Aide II; Benny Russell, Maintenance Aide II
- DISTRICT NINE** • Colton Cowles, Construction Field Engineer II; Dustin Ramsey, Maintenance Aide II
- DISTRICT TEN** • Richard Bice, Maintenance Aide II; Kevin Myers, Maintenance Aide II; Scotty Rogers, Maintenance Aide II; Tyler Woolbridge, Maintenance Aide II

### SERVICE

- BRIDGE** • Amanda Pinto, Advanced Bridge Design Engineer, 5 yrs
- CONSTRUCTION** • Diane Tomlinson, Resident Office Technician, 35 yrs; Dennis Burton, Construction Aide I, 10 yrs; Paula Chesshir, Resident Office Technician, 10 yrs
- E.E.O./D.B.E.** • Natasha Halbert, DBE Program Specialist, 15 yrs
- FACILITIES MAINTENANCE** • Phillip Watkins, Facilities Management Project Coordinator, 10 yrs
- HUMAN RESOURCES** • Carla Edwards, Personnel Staff Coordinator, 15 yrs
- LEGAL** • Angela Evans, Staff Attorney, 10 yrs
- MATERIALS** • Jessica Jackson, Materials Area Engineer, 10 yrs
- REPROGRAPHICS** • William Schulze, Reprographics Technician, 15 yrs
- SURVEYS** • Brian Freyaldenhoven, Photogrammetry Section Head, 30 yrs; Jim Tadel, Staff Land Surveyor, 20 yrs; Eric Benson, Surveys Aide III, 5 yrs; Andrew Waits, Surveys Crew Chief, 5 yrs
- SYSTEM INFORMATION & RESEARCH** • Gary Curtis, Data Collection Supervisor, 15 yrs

- DISTRICT ONE** • Clarence Carter, Maintenance Aide II, 20 yrs; Howard Gracey, Maintenance Aide III, 5 yrs; Richard Brickey, Maintenance Aide II, 5 yrs
- DISTRICT TWO** • Katherine Foster, Maintenance Aide II, 20 yrs
- DISTRICT THREE** • William Jones, Sealing Job Superintendent, 20 yrs; John Burdue, Senior Mechanic, 20 yrs; Jerry Reeves, Senior Mechanic, 15 yrs; Gerald Walker, Maintenance Aide II, 10 yrs
- DISTRICT FOUR** • Dan Mowrey, Motor Patrol Operator/Finish, 30 yrs; Larry Hancock, Maintenance Aide III, 10 yrs; Larry Price, Maintenance Aide II, 10 yrs; Matthew Kildow, Maintenance Aide II, 5 yrs
- DISTRICT FIVE** • Jeremy Matheny, Crew Leader, 20 yrs; Ronnie Sutherland, Maintenance Aide II, 15 yrs; Clay Hazelwood, Maintenance Aide II, 15 yrs; Russell McBride, Maintenance Aide I, 10 yrs
- DISTRICT SIX** • Eugene Reed, Maintenance Aide III, 5 yrs
- DISTRICT SEVEN** • Dennis Carpenter, Maintenance Aide III, 30 yrs; Harold Thomason, Maintenance Aide III, 15 yrs; Thomas Garcia, Welder, 5 yrs

- DISTRICT EIGHT** • Mark Malone, Motor Patrol Operator/Finish, 20 yrs; Walter Edwards, Bridge Job Superintendent, 20 yrs; David Duvall, Sign Erector, 10 yrs
- DISTRICT NINE** • Stephen Duran, Maintenance Aide II, 15 yrs; Jeffrey Hudgens, Maintenance Aide II, 15 yrs; Jeremy Merriman, Maintenance Aide III, 10 yrs; Mark Corliss, Rest Area Attendant, 10 yrs
- DISTRICT TEN** • David Prine, Crew Leader, 30 yrs; Jimmie Bruce, Maintenance Aide II, 5 yrs; Franklin Hendrix, Maintenance Aide II, 5 yrs

### RETIREMENT

- ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE** • Cecile Knight, Division Office Manager, 15+ yrs
- CONSTRUCTION** • Stephen Peebles, Assistant Construction Engineer, 35 yrs
- TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & POLICY** • Lydell Harris, Cartographer Supervisor, 28+ yrs
- DISTRICT TWO** • Elven Mustiful, Dozer Operator/Finish, 32+ yrs
- DISTRICT THREE** • Mary Green, Guard, 18+ yrs
- DISTRICT FOUR** • Lewis James, Crew Leader, 28+ yrs
- DISTRICT FIVE** • Russell McBride, Maintenance Aide I, 10+ yrs
- DISTRICT SEVEN** • Marion Howell, Bridge Repairer II, 20+ yrs

### MEMORIALS

- PLANNING & RESEARCH** • Denver Duncan, 1/17/16, retired
- DISTRICT THREE** • Quint Taggart Chism, 1/30/16, active
- DISTRICT FOUR** • Robert Dale Hausam, 2/2/16, retired
- DISTRICT SIX** • Thomas Lee Minnie, 5/27/15, retired
- DISTRICT NINE** • James A. Campbell, 1/20/16, retired







Arkansas State Highway and  
Transportation Department  
Post Office Box 2261  
Little Rock, AR 72203-2261

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Little Rock, AR 72203  
Permit No. 2556

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

