

OPERATIONS OF THE HEART

Street Maintenance is a year-round endeavor, but summer cranks up the heat and action as our crews work hard to connect Austinites to the places and people they care about all around town. They repair and maintain our thoroughfares, helping us all get to our destinations in a safe, clean and green way!

BY MICHELLE FRITH CHIEF REPORTER



The Public Works brand “Public Works Connects You - All Around Austin!” is more than just a catchy phrase – it’s a fact! Anywhere you go in Austin, whether it’s via car, bicycle, motorcycle, or on foot, you’ll see and feel the impact of our hard-working Street and Bridge Operations (SBO) crews. The organization is composed of Bridge Maintenance, Concrete Repair and Construction, Right of Way Maintenance, Street Preventive Maintenance and Street Repairs. This year the approximately 225 men and women in SBO have added to their repertoire of services. They are trimming trees and maintaining landscapes, plus taking care of Austin’s multi-use trails. With these new responsibilities, our operations teams are demonstrating how much heart they have throughout our City!

STREETS

Compared with other cities of its size, the 2010 U.S. Census shows that Austin has the second highest urban population growth (51.1 percent) in the last ten years. While the much of the rest of the country is struggling to keep their towns’ transportation infrastructure from deteriorating, our crews are actually improving pavement conditions. Back in 2009, an evaluation of the City’s streets was disheartening. A full 27% of the streets were deemed in poor or failed conditions. Austin pledged to the State of Texas to improve our streets to the point where more than 80% of our City’s streets would be rated as ‘satisfactory or better’ by 2018. So, our guys and gals pulled on their steel-toed boots and went to work. Amazingly, an evaluation conducted by the City at the end of 2011 showed that 79% of the streets have reached the desired goal! And, don’t think the citizens of Austin haven’t noticed; sixty percent of Austinites are satisfied with our streets as compared to only 40% nationwide. That’s not surprising when you consider that 95% of potholes are filled within 72 hours of reporting and 95% of emergencies are taken care of within 24 hours of reporting.

SIDEWALKS

Street and Bridge Operations is responsible for cleaning over 1,000,000 square feet of downtown sidewalks annually! That means sticky gum, trash, spilled beverages, and much more, that can make quite a mess. But our crews, using the new “Cyclone” sidewalk cleaner can really tackle the downtown sidewalks quickly. In all of fiscal year 2010-11, the crew cleaned 1.2 million

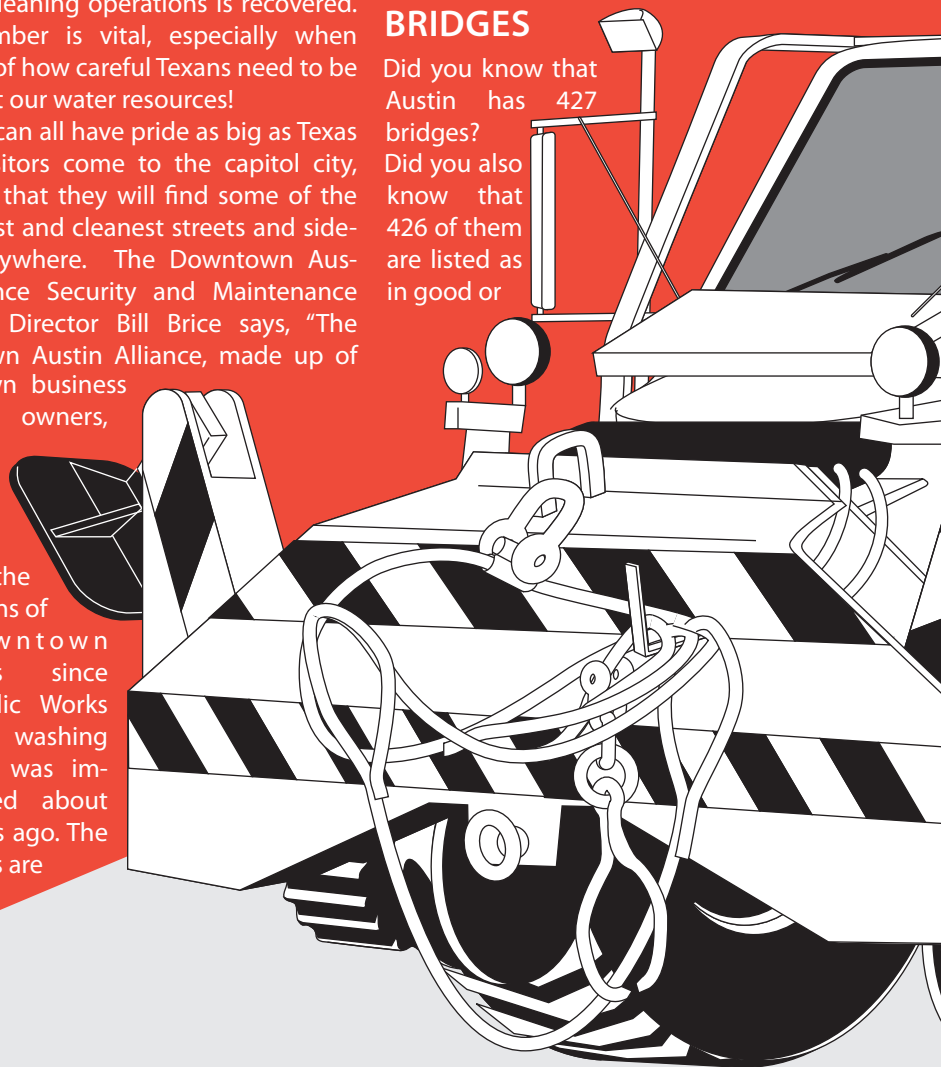
square feet of sidewalk. They have surpassed that amount in the first six months of this fiscal year. How? Instead of completing 10,000 square feet per week, utilizing the Cyclone they are able to complete closer to 100,000 square feet per week. Even more amazing, 95% of the water used in cleaning operations is recovered. That number is vital, especially when thinking of how careful Texans need to be to protect our water resources!

We can all have pride as big as Texas when visitors come to the capitol city, knowing that they will find some of the smoothest and cleanest streets and sidewalks anywhere. The Downtown Austin Alliance Security and Maintenance Program Director Bill Brice says, “The Downtown Austin Alliance, made up of downtown business property owners, has seen a tremendous improvement in the conditions of the downtown sidewalks since the Public Works sidewalk washing program was implemented about two years ago. The sidewalks are

noticeably cleaner and the regular detailed-cleaning has a big impact on making downtown Austin a more desirable place for people to work, live, entertain or host a meeting or convention.” You know PWD is doing great work when you get feedback like that!

BRIDGES

Did you know that Austin has 427 bridges? Did you also know that 426 of them are listed as in good or





excellent condition? It is comforting to know that our pedestrians, cars and bicycles are able to cross Austin bridges without fear for their safety, thanks in part to the SBO crews. In 2010 a national government report found that close to 12 percent of the nation's bridges were "structurally deficient" and required replacement. The average age of U.S. bridges is nearing 42 and bridges are usually designed for a life span of 50 years. Once again, Austin leads the way in repairs and critical maintenance to keep us mobile.

TRAILS

Anyone who's been in Austin for more than a day is well aware of the beautiful trails throughout the City. Yet again, our SBO crews shine at what they do. People strolling or running along the trails are appreciative of the enhanced appearance, maintenance and safety. Running enthusiast and Austin resident Victor Trevino says, "The maintenance of the trails has improved greatly. I've noticed new expansions and additions and particularly appreciate that the trails are cleaner. I don't

have to dodge brush in the pathway!" Victor also has noted the trails are smoother and that there is less debris. No wonder Austin is rated as the best city in the country for the next decade (2010-2020) by Kiplinger's Magazine!

LEAN, CLEAN AND GREEN

PWD keeps an eye on our planet while keeping us moving in all the directions we want to go. Street and Bridge maintains many rain gardens in the right-of-way

(unless they are constructed to satisfy water quality permit requirements, in which case Watershed Protection maintains them). "PWD's commitment to allow rain gardens in the right-of-way and to maintain those rain gardens will have a positive impact on controlling the amount and quality of stormwater runoff, allowing vegetation to grow with much less irrigation. One of the elegant features of rain gardens is that they require very little long term maintenance," says Kevin Sweat, Engineering Services Division.

Another example of SBO keeping it clean is the fact that in FY2011 they began using warm-mix asphalt in its overlay operations. This technology offers the benefits of lower fuel consumption and reduced greenhouse emissions by lowering the temperatures at which the material is applied to the road.



Reduce, reuse, recycle? No one does it better! Vehicles purchased for the Right-of-Way crew were older vehicles needing some TLC. Lee Garza and Israel Sanchez took the initiative and made repairs to the vehicles, saving the City \$3,500 but spending only \$180 in materials.

And our crews are also beginning to use crushed recovered glass and concrete from the Austin Resource Recovery as base in their projects - saving money and materials. Good for the environment and the bottom line.

Finally, necessity being the mother of invention, the Utility Cuts crew designed and created their own meeting/break/computer room and recycled the old materials. No one can say these innovators aren't dedicated to doing the right thing!



PLAYS NICELY WITH OTHERS

Street and Bridge Operations are increasingly collaborative with internal and external stakeholders. Through participation in the PWD Monthly Coordination meetings, opportunities to excel are being presented. Operations recently identified a project to collaborate on with Water and Wastewater, resulting in \$150,000 in cost savings to the City.

COURAGE AND HEART

A true emergency occurred in Austin on January 25, 2012 when a tornado struck our city. A Street and Bridge on-call crew and night crew members responded immediately to the situation. They worked in treacherous weather conditions, blocking citizens from entering dangerous areas, ensuring the safety and security of Austinites. The team, including Johnny Colvin, Charles Felipa Sr., Paul Martin, Kenny Smith, Joe Stornes and Pete Valdez are positive examples of what our crews can and will do for our City. Due in part to their work, there were no injuries reported that evening! This is just one of many instances in which SBO crews have helped to keep

Austinites safe by blocking streets that are unsafe for passage.

NO JERKS ALLOWED

Recently SBO employees starred in the soon-to-be-televised Worker Safety Public Service Announcement "The Jerk". The 60-second satirical video comparing grocery shopping behavior to street safety is a funny, yet powerful way to make Austin drivers think twice while driving in work zones. To see the PSA, you can visit the Public Works website at: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/publicworks> and scroll to the bottom of the page, or you can view the video on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=kdLkGmN_EHw

The PSA will soon be airing on various channels throughout the summer on Time Warner Cable.

It's clear that PWD's Street and Bridge Operations put a lot of heart into all the work that they do for Austin, and we are all grateful!

