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Sent: Wednesday, May 09, 2018 12:01 PM

To: David Barer <David.Barer@kxan.com>

Cc: Brittany Glas <Brittany.Glas@kxan.com>; Josh Hinkle <Josh.Hinkle@kxan.com>; Bob Kaufman <Bob.Kaufman@txdot.gov>; Benjamin Utley <Benjamin.Utley@txdot.gov>

Subject: RE: KXAN, questions regarding TxDOT employment, gender and discrimination

David,

On behalf of Commissioner Ryan, please see her responses to your questions below.

Thanks.

Veronica

- **The number of female TxDOT workers has dropped by 2 percent, to 22 percent, over the past decade. Why has this happened and what is TxDOT doing to reverse that trend?**
 - As of April 30, 2018, TxDOT's workforce is 22.6% female. Ten years ago on 9/1/2007, our female workforce was 24.1, the difference being 1.5 percentage points. However, we recognize the benefits of a diverse workforce and continue to work on improving this metric.
 - To help increase female workers at TxDOT, we undertake the following activities:
 - We make efforts to actively recruit female employees for all areas in the department and have specific efforts to seek these potential employees out with target recruiting of women and minorities through the following events: job fairs, media sources, and programs, Veteran Events, Society of Women Engineers, the TxDOT Conditional Grant Program (for economically disadvantaged students), College and University Fairs, Construction Conferences, Community Career Fairs, Hiring Events, the TxDOT Employee Referral Program, Professional Women's Magazine and Texas Government Insider.
 - Executive management is regularly and proactively monitoring applications, interviews and the hiring of women and minorities to ensure progress is being made.
- **TxDOT records consistently show dozens of harassment and discrimination complaints filed in each of the past 5 years, why is that happening?**
 - The Texas Department of Transportation consists of almost 12,000 employees of various backgrounds across the state and has an average of 44 complaints, or just approximately 0.35%, per year over the past three years alleging discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. We track all allegations and take each one seriously.

- In 2015, TxDOT made improvements to its processes for handling employee complaints. The Ethics and EEO section was created was to show the importance of these concerns. When these functions were moved into the Human Resources Division, we made a large educational push (through New Employee Orientation, through Web-Ex's, through live presentations and through updating policies and procedures) to ensure that TxDOT employees knew the process for filing complaints of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. We believe that these education efforts proved successful and yielded an increase in filed complaints after 2014, and you will see that the numbers from 2015-2017 are relatively consistent.
- Sadly, all organizations have to deal with the unacceptable problem of discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation. I believe what is most important is that we are handling the issues appropriately as they come up and we are taking proactive steps in the form of outreach, presentations, and training to prevent them. We have tried very hard to foster an environment where employees feel comfortable bringing their concerns to our department. My commitment to the department is it to continue to work with leadership to ensure we stay focused on improving these efforts as well as the outcome of those efforts.
- **How do you plan to address these issues: numerous harassment and discrimination complaints filed each year and the discrepancy between male and female employment at TxDOT?**
 - We are committed to increasing the number of female and minority employees within and at all levels of TxDOT. As stated earlier, we will continue to provide training, presentations and other forms of outreach to get the message across that harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated by the department. All employees are required to take training every two years that covers discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in the workplace. The EEO team regularly travels and gives presentations to divisions and districts concerning ethics and equal employment opportunity in the workplace. The mandatory postings in each office contain the steps for filing complaints concerning these issues. There are also posters and fliers available concerning those issues. New employee orientation contains a 20 minute presentation that covers discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in the workplace and also lets employees know how to contact us if they have any concerns. We will also continue to discipline employees who engage in actions inconsistent with the department's policy on discrimination, harassment, retaliation, up to and including termination of employment.
 - We will continue to monitor the metrics and culture of the department to look for continued areas of opportunity and where improvements can be made. Additionally, a zero-tolerance approach is and will continue to be communicated from the department's top leadership to all employees.

- **Why are there fewer women and minorities in the management and upper ranks at TxDOT?**
 - We are pleased that we are making progress in this area. As previously mentioned in another email from the department, 41% of our current management/supervisor positions are women and minorities. As Mr. Bass stated in his interview with you, we now have women leading our Construction and Design divisions for the first time in our history.

- **As the lone female commissioner, what are your thoughts on the current state of gender equity in TxDOT pay and upward mobility?**
 - The information TxDOT has previously provided you has shown that on average women make more than men and that many hold management positions. While we acknowledge we have room to improve, each year we make great strides toward equity and diversity. Also, important, is our focus and commitment to providing an environment that fosters respect for differences in cultures.
 - Furthermore, and in closing, I would add that this is a great question for all businesses and organizations, not just TxDOT. I believe that we, as in any organization, should focus on respecting and developing all people, all employees, and judge employees within a specific work force on their diverse talents.
 - Respecting what is different from ourselves is truly what diversity is about...an ideal I believe society is still trying to figure out. I ask myself everyday how to ensure I have a positive impact on the department and what can I do personally to impact this goal? The answer...exhibit and model mutual respect through professional leadership and common courtesy. I believe that is the simple solution to a complex issue.