

A SALUTE TO A CUSTOMER

CITY OF HILLSBORO

Street repairs are right up the alley of this north-central Texas community



Bryan Chamberlain,
 Streets Director

When there's a road that needs to be rebuilt in the city of Hillsboro, Texas, Streets Director Bryan Chamberlain doesn't get on the phone and call for outside help. Instead, he and his small, productive team of city employees transform from a maintenance crew into a full construction crew.

"Our city manager believes in doing everything ourselves and being self-contained," said Chamberlain. "We've accomplished a lot in the last three years. We had the right people in the right place and everything came together."

Helping it come together was the passage of a \$9.9 million bond issue by Hillsboro residents in 2006. Since then, Chamberlain estimates his department has rebuilt 40 roads totaling six miles.

"To my recollection, we've only used contract help on five or six of those roads in that time," Chamberlain said. "Those particular projects were just so big my department couldn't handle them and at the same time take care of the other projects we had on the table."

Street distress

In total, Hillsboro has about 48 miles of roads that Chamberlain and his crew of seven employees are responsible for cleaning and maintaining. Located about 30 miles north of Waco and about 60 miles south of Fort Worth, Hillsboro has approximately 10,000 residents, many of whom — like residents of practically every city in America — don't mind voicing an opinion when streets start to fall into disrepair.

"The biggest complaint in this city has been the condition of the roads," Chamberlain

said. "People got tired of seeing the streets in such disarray. The roads were terrible. So we got this bond issue approved and we've been working from it.

"I started here about six years ago. When I came to Hillsboro, I drove through the town, looked at the roads — having a background in paving — and thought, 'This is a paver's dream. There's 30-years worth of road building here.'"

At Chamberlain's urging, and with the support of City Manager Jack Harper, the city of Hillsboro began keeping more of that work in-house. Chamberlain estimates it saves the city millions.

"I would say that we saved \$2 million alone this year just by doing the work ourselves," he said. "Now that we're rebuilding streets, it's practically all we do. There are only eight of us, including me, so whenever we're building roads, that's what we concentrate on. We're doing all we can to get those roads finished. We did 17 roads last year in-house.

"Usually we go out and look at the roads to see if they have much base failure," Chamberlain explained. "If there's not much base failure, we just do what we call rehabilitating. We have an Asphalt Zipper machine that chews up the asphalt and creates a new base. Some of these roads have been built up so much, we have to take off about four inches of asphalt, but we've also taken off as much as eight inches. Then we mix it back in and make reusable base out of it. We save money on the base by not having to buy new base rock. That's really important for us."

Chamberlain estimates about two of the six miles of work this year have been full-depth



(Right) Mauricio Abrego with the city of Hillsboro takes on a load of asphalt mix with the Komatsu WA250-6 wheel loader, which he then uses to feed the city's asphalt paver (above).

reconstructions. "That's where we strip the whole road, take it down to the subgrade, then stabilize the subgrade with lime and rebuild everything back," he said. "We put new base and new asphalt back in it."

Working with a Komatsu WA250-6 wheel loader

To help accomplish that work, the city of Hillsboro recently purchased a Komatsu WA250-6 wheel loader from Continental Equipment Company and Territory Manager Charlie Whippo. The city also continues to use a Gallion grader it acquired from Continental Equipment about 15 years ago.

"Anytime we use the Asphalt Zipper, we use the Komatsu WA250 with it," Chamberlain said. "It's been a nice machine. We haven't found anything it can't handle."

"We use our WA250 to feed the asphalt and for loading sand and base rock at the yard. We also use it for a little backfilling here and there. And if we put too much asphalt down and spill over, we use the loader to pick it up."



Chamberlain said the WA250 has proved to be comfortable and operator-friendly. "Our guys are fighting to get in that loader," he said. "It's a very nice piece of machinery. We didn't have a loader before, and luckily we had the right people in place and had saved the money to purchase it because we needed it very badly."

When mechanical issues arise, the city of Hillsboro operates a full shop to service its fleet of cars and other equipment, including

Continued...



**RELIABLE
EQUIPMENT**

**RESPONSIVE
SERVICE**

Accomplishing big jobs with small-town resources

... continued

the WA250. "When it comes to changing oil, we usually run it about 200 to 300 hours then we let the shop guys know and they change it," Chamberlain said. "Nothing seems to break down on that machine. We don't ever have it in the shop other than for changing the oil and the filters."

Hard work, dedicated crew

With productive equipment and a skilled crew in place, Chamberlain said a dedication



(L-R) Continental Equipment Customer Support Representative Ron Weaver and recently retired Territory Manager Charlie Whippo have worked with Hillsboro Streets Director Bryan Chamberlain to meet the city's equipment needs.

For 15 years, the city of Hillsboro has had steady production from its Galion motor grader, which it acquired from Continental Equipment Company.



to hard work has been the driving force behind the city's strategy to take on more road-improvement projects. "There are so few of us. We know we have a job to do so we just get out there and do it," he said. "There's not a bunch of complaining about it being too hot. We just go out there and get the work done and move on to the next project."

Chamberlain said he especially appreciates the contributions of his right-hand man, Mauricio Abrego, who is retiring after 23 years with the city. "He's leaving me this year and he's going to be hard to replace," Chamberlain said. "But the whole crew — they're all great guys. They all have their own positions on the crew and they know what they need to do."

Chamberlain said that crew completed work on 11 roads in 2008. "That includes about four to five miles of street. A couple of them were fairly good-size projects."

In the future, that resume of accomplishments might be expanded to include utility lines. "We have to move a number of water lines," Chamberlain said. "That's something we're going to consider doing ourselves. We know everything will get done if we have a part in doing it."

That approach appears to be working for the city of Hillsboro. Chamberlain pointed out that if doing such projects in-house works in his city, it could probably work for other communities too.

"What we're doing shows it's possible to get things done with the resources we have in place," he said. "A community can take what it has to work with and start rebuilding like we did. It isn't impossible. Plus, there have always been good people out there to help us out — like Continental Equipment and Charlie Whippo. He's been a big help to us. It's possible for any little city to grow if they just put the right people in place."

"In our situation, for the number of people we have, I think we do an outstanding job. I don't think anyone could ask for anything more." ■