



Texas two-step

Excavator aids widening, extension of highway near Dallas-Fort Worth

Ed Bell Construction of Dallas is nearing completion on two years of work along Farm-to-Market Road 1938 in Tarrant County. The project has two parts to it: One involves widening existing portions of FM 1938, also known as Davis Boulevard and Randall Mill Avenue, to provide more lanes to accommodate increasing traffic.

In addition, crews are building a connecting portion between Randall Mill and Precinct Line Road. This would extend FM 1938 from I-820 in North Richland Hills to Highway 114 in Westlake, a total of approximately 15 miles.

Initial construction on FM 1938 began in June 2010, starting at Highway 114 on the northern end.

Initial construction began in June 2010, starting at Highway 114 on the northern end of FM 1938. When building the new portions, crews were able to work on the northbound and southbound lanes simultaneously. As they worked their way south, they could only widen one side at a time in order to keep traffic flowing.

When it came time for structural work, such as putting in retaining walls, the contractor turned to the Caterpillar 320D L hydraulic excavator. Smaller than many of its counterparts, the 320 was perfectly suited for making the shallower cuts of 15 ft or less, according to Ken Brookshire, excavation superintendent and equipment manager for Ed Bell Construction.

The smaller excavator also was useful for laying reinforced concrete pipe for new storm sewer lines, according to Brookshire.

While excavating the footings for the retaining walls, crews hit several pockets

of both sugar sand and groundwater, creating muddy conditions that could have been a real setback. Brookshire reported, though, that the 320 performed admirably, allowing them to push through and complete the work with minimal delays.

Brookshire also pointed to the wide availability of replacement parts as another reason Caterpillar was chosen for the job. "Some of the other brands we've used in the past, we've had to overnight parts or it takes two weeks to get here," he said. "With Caterpillar, worst-case scenario, we wait overnight for a part through UPS or FedEx."

In the end, it all comes down to dependability, said Brookshire. "We've bought other brands in the past that are good machines for a couple of years, but we've got a couple of Caterpillar excavators in our house right now that are over 10 years old and they're still running."

Brookshire expected the entire project to be completed sometime in July. **R&B**

Excavators
Caterpillar
320D L