

DRAFT**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Wednesday, August 27, 1997

DOT ____-97

Contact: _____

Tel.: (202) 366-_____

**DOT Honors Mrs. Lyndon Johnson's
Highway Beautification Efforts**

Stonewall, Texas -- U.S. Secretary of Transportation Rodney E. Slater today dedicated a roadside native wildflower garden to honor Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson's promotion of highway beautification.

"As First Lady, Mrs. Johnson championed the faith that America is beautiful, and that we must leave the country looking as good, if not better, than we found it," said Secretary Slater in dedicating the garden. The garden is located at the Church Park rest area on U.S. 290, near the LBJ Ranch, Mrs. Johnson's home since 1952.

President Clinton said that "Mrs. Johnson was among the first to recognize that how we build and maintain America's roads demonstrates our respect and appreciation for the beautiful and spacious land we have inherited. The effort she launched a generation ago to beautify our highways has reaped benefits in all 50 states, and helped to inspire our nation's commitment to environmental protection."

As First Lady from 1963 to 1969, Mrs. Johnson promoted efforts to protect the environment, including the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, which enabled improved landscaping, the removal of billboards, and screening of roadside junkyards.

After President Johnson left office in 1969, Mrs. Johnson continued her sponsorship of environmental initiatives, especially those to enhance the nation's highways. In 1982 she founded the National Wildflower Research Center, and in 1987 she sponsored a summit on wildflower programs. Her efforts that year helped to create a requirement that 1/4 of one percent of the landscape budget of federally-funded highway construction projects be devoted to planting native wildflowers.

The wildflower program is administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which President Johnson created in 1967. As part of the Department's 30th anniversary celebration, the Federal Highway Administration and the Texas Department of Transportation joined to dedicate the Church Park wildflower garden in Mrs. Johnson's honor today, the 89th anniversary of President Johnson's birthday.

Accompanying Secretary Slater and Mrs. Johnson at the garden's dedication were Senator Charles Robb of Virginia, Mrs. Johnson's son-in-law; Bill Burnett, Executive Director of the Texas Department of Transportation; and Deputy U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mortimer Downey.

The garden consists of flowers and plants native to central Texas, including Desert Willows, Texas Redbuds, Mountain Laurels, Texas Sages, and Black-Eyed Susans, and is open to the public.

#####

*An electronic version of this document can be obtained via the World Wide Web at:
[http:// www.dot.gov/affairs/index.htm](http://www.dot.gov/affairs/index.htm)*

(Draft 2)