



Transcript

The Ohio Department of Transportation Employee Newsletter
February 2003

**Gas tax increase will
fund an additional \$250
million in new highway
projects....see story page 3**

Strategic Initiative 6 Projects Delivered Faster, Cheaper Through Streamlining

John Hackley and Joel Hunt
Central Office

Anyone who has built a home can tell you the process is not an easy one. You must get financing and permits, buy land, hire an architect and then choose a contractor. Everyone must work together under tight deadlines and hope the plans are right. Otherwise change orders will cause delays and added expenses.

Road construction is no different.

With the volume of projects necessary to maintain Ohio's vast highway network, it is critical the project development process is as efficient as possible. Modifications to plans during development can be costly and cause delays as well as disruptions to the traveling public and local communities.

ODOT recently streamlined project development by merging the department's planning, design, construction, and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) processes into one. The action was a result of Strategic Initiative 6, **ODOT will improve the quality of its construction plans.**

Conducting the four processes separately contributed to duplication of work, budget overruns, and "scope creep" – problems created when smaller projects become incorporated into larger ones. "Once we determined what the problems really were, it didn't take long to develop a committee to start addressing them," said Environmental Services Administrator Tim Hill.

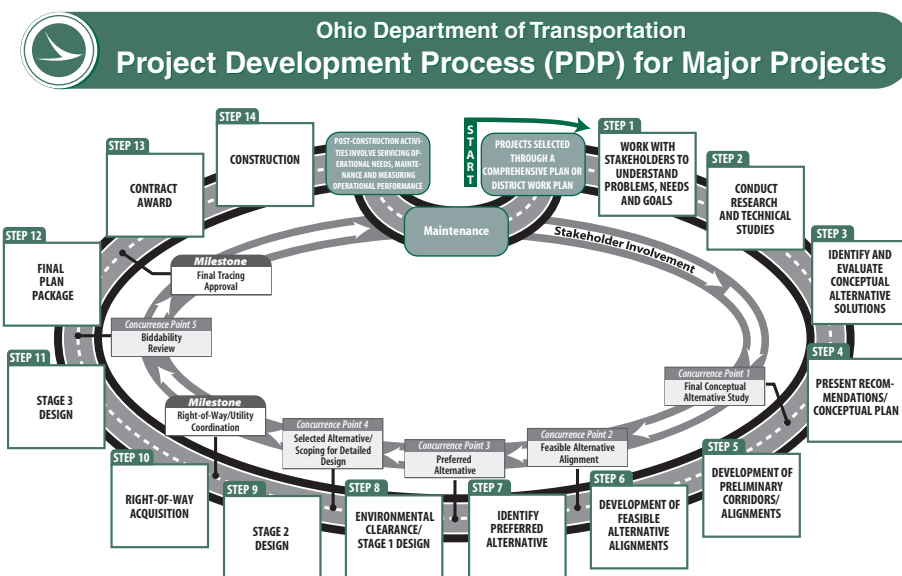
The committee was led by a focus group consisting of Hill, Urban and Corridor Planning Administrator Suzann Gad, Production Administrator Bill Ujvari, Acting Construction

Administrator Tony Vogel, and Major New Program Coordinator Bob Campbell. In addition to ODOT personnel, the committee included transportation contractors and consultants, and a representative from the Federal Highway Administration.

"We rolled the new process out this year on a conceptual basis, but it may take five or 10 years to really see the bulk of the improvements," said Ujvari. "The culture at ODOT has been defined by the segmented nature of the different offices involved in the process; there has not been the overlap of responsibilities that occurs under the new project development process."

An eventual goal of the new process is to have the ability to assign one project manager to shepherd the entire process to completion in lieu of the current method of utilizing different project managers in each phase. "If we could have this individual who has the expertise of each of these departments, it would provide a continuous bridge that would reduce the possibility of problems with the project," said Ujvari.

While this concept may not currently be practical because of the amount of specialized knowledge in different disciplines required of the position, the cross-training nature of the new process will facilitate the ability for the people involved to gain this knowledge. "People in each area are going to learn more about the different components of transportation development than they knew before, and the more they know the greater ability they have to have a better impact on the final product," said Ujvari.



This process and graphic are under development and are subject to change. v5c- October, 2002



Taft Proposes Gas Tax Increase To Save Transportation System

Michael Cull
Central Office

Calling Ohio's transportation system "the lifeblood of our economy," Gov. Bob Taft has proposed a major infusion of new gasoline tax money and new vehicles fees – to be used by ODOT and local governments – to preserve and expand that system.

Accompanied by Director Proctor, Taft told reporters in a January 24 press conference he was responding to a public-private legislative committee which recommended additional revenue for roads, bridges and highways.

"There is broad support for this proposal and I believe that support will grow as each community of the state understands the benefit that can come to it from the standpoint of alleviating congestion," Taft said.

Key elements of the plan include:

- A 6-cents-a-gallon increase to the state's 22-cents-a-gallon gasoline tax, to be phased in over the next three years. The additional 6-cents-a-gallon will produce \$402 million a year, on top of the \$1.5 billion currently collected.
- Over five years, the Ohio State Highway Patrol will be removed from the gasoline tax income and funded with new fees on license transactions and vehicle registrations.
- Gasoline tax money currently going to the State Patrol will be redirected to local

governments for road and bridge use.

When fully implemented, the plan will provide more than \$570 million a year for road, highway and bridge improvements, with at least \$250 million a year for ODOT's Major New Construction Program, \$121 million annually for Ohio cities, \$105 million annually for the counties and \$63 million a year for Ohio townships.

Taft's infrastructure proposal is only part of his plan to raise various state taxes and fees to head off a deficit and declining state income brought on by a slumping nationwide economy.

All the tax proposals must be approved by the Republican-led Ohio General Assembly and no proposal is assured of passage. However, the infrastructure plan has, so far, received no significant opposition. The additional income will benefit not only ODOT, but local governments likely to be reliable allies in a Taft educational campaign to win legislative approval.

A 20-member Motor Fuel Tax Task Force recommended boosting the gasoline tax last December. It was a broad-based group, generally committed to infrastructure improvement and included Proctor, C. Clark Street of the Ohio Contractors Association, lawmakers, county engineers and county commissioners. It began meeting last February and held 13 public meetings in all quadrants of the state.

According to Tom McPherson, ODOT assistant director for Business Management, the gasoline tax increase will fund an additional \$250 million in new highway projects a year. For the last two years, the Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) has allocated no new money for construction. "This \$250 million would be used to help eliminate unsafe freeway bottlenecks, continue our Interstate Rebuilding program and complete rural corridors identified in the Access Ohio planning study.

"Even without additional money from the federal gasoline tax," McPherson said, "we will be able to move forward on projects to cut congestion, improve safety and, ultimately, stimulate Ohio's economy in both urban and rural areas. This additional revenue will be felt throughout the state and benefit almost every Ohioan; we will use the revenue to invest in Ohio's most valuable public asset, the transportation system."

The last gasoline tax hike was effective in 1993.



Director's Column

It Has Been a Long Winter

It has been a lot longer for those of you pushing snow than it has been for the rest of us. Winter has been relentless this year and that is taking its toll on those of you on the front lines of snow and ice control. By mid-February, ODOT already had used a record amount of salt. It has been the snowiest winter in years and harkens back to the blizzard of 1978 in terms of severity.

Everyone involved in the snow and ice effort has my thanks. I see you out there all hours and on all holidays, weekends and nights. Thanks for your efforts. It is the best effort Ohio ever has seen, and that is because of everyone involved.

This year we had more salt than ever. We've deployed the use of brine pre-treatment statewide. We've added more salt domes, upgraded equipment and tried to plan better than before. However, the real key to ODOT's success in snow and ice remains the men and women in the plows. You are the ones who make the most difference.

You don't always get thanks, but you deserve it. You certainly have mine.

We still get complaints occasionally in the media and among the public about our snow and ice efforts, but those complaints are seldom deserved. As you all provide better and better service, the public's expectation continues to rise. It gets to the point that some drivers think we should be able to make them immune to the weather. We can't, of course, but ODOT's efforts are very good and continually improving.

Amid all this snow, we are having our biennial budget hearings with the General Assembly. As you probably have heard, Governor Taft has called for a 6-cent fuel tax increase. It is very hard for any elected official to endorse tax increases in this day and age. The governor, however, recognizes the value of what ODOT does and recognizes the critical importance that our highway system plays in the state. Improving our highway network is essential if we are to continue to reduce accidents, reduce congestion and keep Ohio economically competitive.

A fuel tax hearing is difficult any time, but during snow and ice season the weather further draws attention to ODOT's performance. Last week, the fuel tax increase proposal had its first hearing in the Ohio House of Representatives. The House Finance Committee members kept me answering questions for more than two hours into the evening. They asked about everything from urban sprawl, to the use of concrete versus asphalt, to needs of transit.

Not a single representative expressed any criticism of ODOT. None said they would refuse to vote for a fuel tax increase on the grounds that ODOT would waste the money. None criticized our efforts on snow and ice, or project delivery, or basic roadway maintenance. None of the legislators guaranteed us the fuel tax increase will pass. However, none of them were critical and nearly all of them began their questions with a compliment about ODOT.

Such compliments are a tribute to everyone here. Our district deputy directors meet each year with all the legislators. In those meetings, the DDDs explain how we approach snow and ice. They explain our county work plan and how we measure our

efforts and measure our efficiencies. They explain how project delivery is much more reliable than in past years. They explain the OPI, the Organizational Performance Index, and how that makes us much more businesslike than ever before.

I can tell that the legislators are impressed by those presentations. They are surprised that we are so businesslike and that we have such extensive management systems. They are surprised that we think of the public as customers and that we think of ourselves as a business serving customers.

Those meetings, and the results that legislators see every day on the highways, convince them that ODOT and its people are doing a good job. Legislators' opinions are important because legislators are like a board of directors for the state. They are sent by the people to do the people's business. If most people think we are doing a bad job, then legislators will hear about it.

The legislators don't have concerns about the job we are doing. I think the legislators see what I see – an organization of people who care deeply about doing a good job.

There is no guarantee we will get a gas tax increase. Raising taxes during a recession and rising oil prices is hard. In the end, legislators may not be able to vote for an increase. But no matter what the outcome, ODOT's performance is no longer a question with the General Assembly. They know you are all doing a good job under difficult circumstances. Your performance during this long winter is enough to convince any reasonable person of ODOT's commitment.

Thanks for everyone's effort this winter. Spring will come eventually. I promise.

Online Manual To Produce Consistent Bridge Maintenance Across Ohio

Joel Hunt
Central Office

Two years ago, no formal bridge maintenance manual existed in Ohio. As a result, the levels of bridge maintenance varied considerably throughout the state, which has the second largest inventory in the country. But a research project, conducted by The Ohio State University in association with ODOT's Office of Structural Engineering and Ohio's Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), is changing that.

Now, anyone with Internet access can refer to the Ohio Bridge Maintenance Manual for descriptions of common bridge and culvert problems and treatment recommendations, including initial cost and expected life.

In Ohio, there are 43,760 bridges and culverts with spans at least 10 feet long, a daunting number for ODOT and local agency workers who had to rely on history and experience to keep these structures safe.

The gradual loss of experienced bridge inspectors due to job changes and retirement represented an additional problem in providing effective training and technical guidance to new employees. The need for the development of a reference and training manual for preventive maintenance of bridges and culverts was clear.

Matt Shamis, Ohio division bridge engineer for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) said the new manual will not change the funding formula for ODOT's bridge maintenance program, "it just makes the same knowledge available to everyone."

The manual was developed using a Web site format and was organized in two sections: Preventive Maintenance and Repair. Detailed descriptions of structural compo-

nents, deterioration processes, and treatment recommendations were established for nine common bridge and culvert types. The technical content was assembled based on state and federal bridge standards and the combined experience of the expanded project team, which included bridge inspectors and maintenance engineers from ODOT and FHWA. Field photographs taken throughout Ohio were incorporated to illustrate various bridge and culvert components and distress conditions, and links to ODOT specifications and proposal notes were established.

Created to serve as a resource and training tool for Ohio's bridge maintenance workers, inspectors and engineers, the site has had more than 1,000 visitors since being installed last fall. There were also several thousand visitors to an early version of the site on the Internet in 2001.

In addition to technical suggestions and feedback received from in-state users, positive comments about the manual have been posted by visitors from Arizona, Minnesota and England.

Shamis said ODOT's process for identifying problems and planning repair projects will remain the same, despite the manual. "Inspectors are still the first, and sometimes the only people to look at bridge conditions. They log the conditions into ODOT's Bridge Management System and that information is used by ODOT planners to plan repair projects. In the meantime, though, maintenance workers and planners alike can refer to the manual for suggested repairs and maintenance."

Information provided in the Ohio Bridge Maintenance Manual may also prove to be helpful in postponing further deterioration of bridges maintained on the local roadway system. Based on a recent analysis of county bridge deficiencies statewide, ODOT estimates about \$200 million may be needed to bring bridges in all 88 counties up to similar and acceptable conditions.

FHWA paid 80 percent of the \$100,000 research project that resulted in the manual.

The Web address for the online manual is: <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/preventivemaintenance/>



Production Office Adds Value, Transcends Boundaries

John Hackley
Central Office

Thousands of miles of roadway are maintained by ODOT, and none of them would have been built without highway construction plans. Much of the responsibility for these plans rests with the nearly 35 engineers and technicians who make up the Office of Production.

Before ODOT was restructured in 1995, all of the department's design plans were drafted at ODOT's district offices while Central Office set design policies and standards and reviewed the proposed designs.

"As construction plans would move through the development process, they would ultimately end up in Central Office, and there was usually a need to change them for one reason or another," said office of production Administrator Bill Ujvari. "Now we can make the changes right here instead of sending the plans back to the district or having the district send them back to the consultants."

The office of production is also responsible for the ODOT Computer Aided Design and Drafting (CADD) system, and the administration of the ODOT Value Engineering and Transparent Boundaries initiatives.

Highway designs require cross sections that demonstrate the distance between the ground and the roadway along different sections of the road. "In order to develop cross sections in the past they would need to be drafted by hand," said Ujvari. "CADD has expedited that function to the point where the time involved in developing the cross sections of old and the development of the cross sections of new is probably a 10 to one ratio." Aside from using cross sections to tell a highway construction contractor how to build a project, they are used by ODOT to estimate the cost of a project and by potential contractors to set an amount to bid for a project.

The Value Engineering initiative managed by the office of production is a federally mandated process to identify potential improvements to construction plans for projects that exceed 25 million. "The concept of Value Engineering is to get the most for your money, but that doesn't always mean you are going to save dollars," said Ujvari. "Sometimes it is a matter of providing a more effective or stable design that avoids a geological hazard like a future hillside slip for example."

A team of engineers is assembled by the office of production for each of these high-budget highway projects. The team works through two sessions that typically last two-and-a-half days. The first session takes place during the preliminary stage of a project

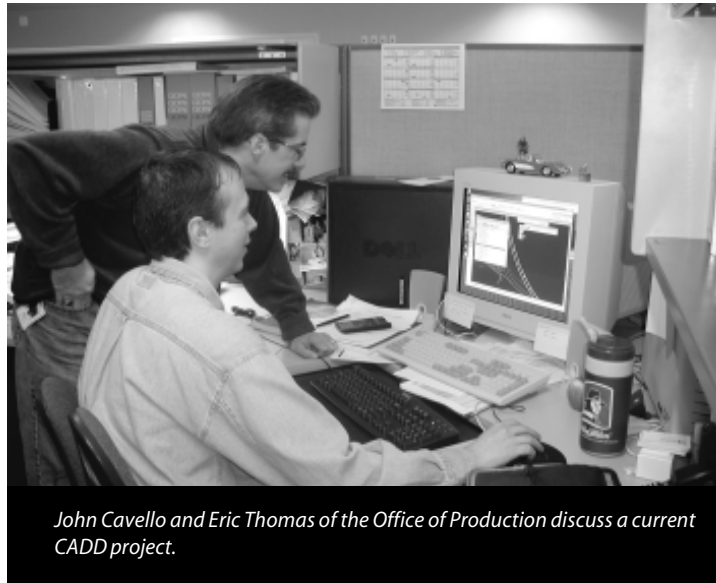
when alternative alignments are being considered, and the second session begins later when more details of the design are available. "These efforts have saved millions of dollars according to what we have seen from preliminary estimates," said Ujvari.

Another major initiative managed by the office of production is known as Transparent Boundaries. The concept

behind the program is to allow districts to perform design work for any other district depending on the design capacity of each district to avoid excessive consulting costs. The system works to utilize the ODOT production offices to their full capacity. "There is no district production office that just looks at one area of the state," said Ujvari. "We operate as one united state in Ohio."

As part of the Transparent Boundaries initiative, the office of

production provides assistance to district offices by reviewing design plans. According to Ujvari, the ability to create designs within Central Office is an important element of this responsibility. "My feeling is that it is difficult to review plans if you have never designed a plan," he said. "If you are not a designer and you are performing that review function, you are only going to be able to review to a certain level just because of your limited understanding and involvement with how that design advances."



John Cavello and Eric Thomas of the Office of Production discuss a current CADD project.

Photo/Leslie DeIovade



Hobby Shoppe...

Raising Champions

Lindsay Mendicino
Central Office

Gary Streater has been a hard-working garage manager at ODOT for the past five years. As anyone who has experienced it will tell you, managing a highway garage is no 9-to-5 job, especially during snow and ice season. But before and after Streater puts in his time for the day, he is hard at work on his hobby, which has been his lifelong passion.

"It's been in my blood as long as I can remember. For me, working with horses is as natural as waking up," Streater said.

When he was a child, Streater's father bought, trained and sold horses. "I started working with horses when I was 6 years old," he said. "I've been working with them ever since."

Streater's success has not come without years of hard work. Starting at a young age, Streater learned from and trained with anyone he could find. His mentors included his father, a 4-H advisor and a professional horse trainer. "I was always looking to learn something new. I asked questions, worked hard and I had some great people to teach me," Streater said.

Streater's work and training has paid off. Not only does he raise and care for champion horses, but he also travels the United States and Canada as a judge for horse shows. A few years ago, Streater's reputation earned him the opportunity to be a judge for the Paint World Show. Even though he was unable to attend the show, Streater said he felt honored to be asked.

Even with all of his success, the work never stops. "I'm still learning new things everyday. What won at shows 10 years ago won't win today," Streater said. "I'm constantly working to make my horses better than they were the year before."

Streater's wife, Lee, also shares his passion for horses. "Raising horses has been a huge part of both of our lives, and it's great to have a partner who has just as much interest in this as I do," he said. Together they raise, train and care for the horses – a full time job for Lee.

"It's definitely a team effort," Streater said. "I'm up at 5 a.m. every morning to feed the horses before I go to work, and Lee is there at 7 a.m. to start the daily training regimen. At night we work together until nine or 10 p.m." Daily training for the horses includes warm ups, exercising and practice for special events.

Beginning in March each year, Streater and his wife travel the U.S. showing their horses and the others they have trained. This spring they will be attending the Pinto World Show in Tulsa, Okla. and the Paint World Show in Fort Worth,

Texas, among others.

When he is not at ODOT or traveling with his world-class horses, Streater can be found on his farm in West Jefferson, Ohio where he and his wife care for and train anywhere between 17 and 25 horses; six are their own.

At ODOT, Streater recently moved from Franklin County, where he had been a transportation manager since 1998, to Central Office Equipment purchasing.



Photo Courtesy of Gary Streater

Gary and Lee Streater with their yearling filly, Zipped Assets, after she won an award at the Tulsa State Fair.

Streater raises, trains and shows horses. And not just any horses: over the years, Streater has raised or trained several World Champion Paint and Pinto horses, including a Supreme Champion – an award bestowed on the horse earning the highest number of points in different shows.

FY

Leonard E. Brown came to ODOT in mid-January to head the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP). Brown has served as Ohio Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the past five years.

Ohio's LTAP provides cities and counties with technical assistance in maintaining their local roads and bridges. As the deputy director for Ohio's LTAP operations, Brown is responsible for developing training opportunities and coordinating the dissemination of resources to aid Ohio's local governments in improving their transportation operations.



Photo / Leslie Dellovade

Across the country, state LTAP centers serve 38,000 local agencies which are responsible for maintaining nearly 3 million miles of roads and approximately 300,000 bridges. LTAP's primary function is to help these local governments tap into new technology, information and training so they can operate more efficiently and safely.

Prior to his appointment at FHWA, Brown served as an assistant FHWA division administrator in Indiana; chief of district operations in the FHWA California division office; and several field engineer positions in Louisiana, Iowa and Ohio.

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