THE GOLD STANDARD
District 12’s I-90 project achieves highest FHWA ratings for sustainability
see story page 5
Feeding those who feed us

by Joel Hunt, Central Office

ODOT is planting wildflowers and native grasses along Ohio’s roadways to reverse the decline of pollinators like butterflies and bees. Pollinators are essential for reproduction. We need them and use them to raise their offspring. Roads are vital to their survival.”

ODOT, along with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants and Quail Forever, and others have formed the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative, OPHI. The group is in their second year of an effort to plant wildflowers and Ohio native grasses along roadides. These plants can offer hope for restoring pollinator habitats while also improving weed and soil erosion control and reducing the need to mow or spray herbicides.

Marcie Lininger, wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and coordinator for OPHI, said the group collected milkweed pods to be used for later plantings.

“Last year, we collected a pickup truck load of Milkweed seed pods,” said Lininger. “Multiple facilities including Wright State University, Ohio State University, Licking County Soil and Water District and, North Central Correctional Complex in Marion, Ohio processed the pods. In addition, the correctional facility will use some of the milkweed seeds to grow plugs for plantings, package some seeds in seed envelopes and other will be planted on ODOT right of way.”

“It’s a great partnership,” added Lucas.

ODOT News FAST 5

Safety Campaign Re-launch

The department kicked off this year’s safety event over the St. Patty’s Day weekend. The message for the holiday weekend focused on drunk driving. Be on the lookout for creative safety messages during this effort.

“Don’t Be That Driver”

On April 12, ODOT hosted the 2016 National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week event. The department chose Perrysburg near the long I-75 project to kick off the event and message. “Don’t Be That Driver. Work on Safety. Get Home. Safely. Every Day.”


To create a safer, more visible and recognizable workforce, the department will kick off its NEW Jacket Program this spring. Workers with specific classifications and service time will receive a 3-in-1 jacket bearing the employee’s last name, ODOT logo, and “Excellence in Government” insignia.

Becoming a Great Supervisor

About 875 ODOT supervisors will participate in Lead Ohio’s First-Ever Manager Training for all state employees. Topics will include how to develop effective go-to techniques for communicating better, performance management best practices and conducting meaningful evaluations.

Construction Season is Here!

ODOT officially began construction season on March 29, 2016, as Director Wray visited projects in Dayton, Akron and Columbus. ODOT will deliver more than 1,100 projects, all designed to improve road and bridge conditions, increase safety and improve transportation efficiency.

ON THE COVER

The steel trusses of Cleveland’s old I-90 Innerbelt Bridge were demolished using explosives in July 2014. In total, 19,775 tons of steel and steel rebar were recycled from the old bridge. Photo courtesy of Marianne Mangan.

TranscripT

Q: “I read recently in The Cleveland Plain Dealer that a new leadership team was announced for the new Division of Opportunity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Why was it created?”

A: “We were concerned that ODOT was not doing as good a job as it could and should provide highway construction and engineering opportunities to small and disadvantaged businesses. We hired two outside consulting firms to conduct a study to see if we were correct. The consultants looked at the businesses we hired over a five-year period and concluded the percentage of contract dollars received by minority and woman-owned businesses was disproportionate to their availability in the marketplace.

The purpose of the new Division of Opportunity, Diversity, and Inclusion is to help us to rectify this situation. This is important for several reasons. Federal law prohibits discrimination. Over 30 percent of our department’s budget comes from the federal gasoline tax. If we as a department were accused of discriminate, we could risk losing that federal money. Besides, it’s not just the law; it’s the right thing to do.

The goal of this new division is to educate small and historically underutilized businesses on how to do business with ODOT and help to get more of these businesses certified for work with the department. They are also charged with helping to enhance our diversity within the department, which is in-line with our Mission and Guiding Principles . . . as we strive to “Provide easy movement of people and goods from place to place . . . we will value the diversity of all ODOT people.”
Hiring and the Anti-Nepotism Policy
by Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

One of the more controversial policies adopted at ODOT during the Kasich Administration has been the anti-nepotism policy which for the most part limits people from helping to get family members employed at the department. The policy, instituted by Director Jerry Wray, has been in effect for about five years. Wray continues to defend the it. “When I became director the first time in the early ‘90s, ODOT was a closed system,” said Wray. “Doors were open to some and not others. Our goal was to provide a more open system that would provide opportunities for more people. However, we knew it would shake things up, since the old way of doing business had become part of our department’s culture.” There are some who say the policy has gone too far. An ODOT manager with over 20 years’ experience with the department, says the policy would have cost her career. Both her mother and her aunt, now retired, once worked for the department. They helped her get a summer job at ODOT years ago. “A lot of people are not happy about it,” she said. “I think the pendulum has swung too far. Maybe it might have made sense 20 years ago. Today, I don’t see the level of patronage and nepotism that used to be rampant when I started. Now we’re hurting ourselves as an organization, because we’re being hypersensitive on this issue.” Wray says the policy will ultimately lead to a more diverse, inclusive workforce. “For the most part, it has worked out well. Perhaps we may have missed an opportunity here or there, but I think it’s working, and leading us to be a more professional organization,” Wray says. The ODOT manager disagrees. She has had a long career that includes a number of promotions. “It’s what you do with the opportunity once you get your foot in the door that counts,” she said. “You still have to prove yourself.”

Always have someone watching
by Mandi Dillon, District 7

District 7 employees Dave Maggard and Ken Beekman were patching potholes along I-75 near Dayton when a car last control and began to drive directly towards them. Maggard was watching traffic and quickly grabbed Beekman, pulling him along and over the nearby guardrail. The out-of-control vehicle slammed into the back of their ODOT truck at the exact spot where the men had been working just seconds before. When asked, Maggard says he just did what anyone would do at that moment. “I just remember grabbing his jacket and just kind of jumping, not really not knowing what would happen—just hoping it would be a good turnout.”

Both men were unharmed. Beekman says without Maggard there, he could have been killed. “It makes you think, definitely,” Beekman said. “Keep an eye on the traffic and always have someone watching.”

ODOT’s construction team made commitments to recycling nearly all construction materials, including steel, concrete and asphalt, managing storm-water with a robust system for treatment, and reducing energy use and emissions. Improvements being installed include creating bike and pedestrian facilities, utilizing LED lighting technology for both aesthetic appeal and to increase safety for the highways and streets, and restoring and creating wildlife habitats. One of the more unique aspects of the project is the protection of baby fish within the navigable waters of the Cuyahoga River. The project installed “fish pocket habitats” behind new steel bulkhead walls. These habitats will be used as a “test area” for larval fish. The project will also “aerate” water which drains into the Cuyahoga River—helping make what was once a burning river into a place where wildlife can thrive and grow.

For these enhancement to the renowned “George V. Voinovich Bridge,” the westbound bridge project achieved Gold level status under the federal government’s INVEST standards. The eastbound bridge project has already achieved Platinum level status—the highest level attainable under the program. ODOT recently joined the city of Cleveland in kicking off the year of “Sustainable Transportation,” part of their 10-year initiative to engage people from all walks of life to design and develop a thriving and resilient Cleveland region. Each year of the 10-year plan focuses on a different area of sustainability.

ODOT is pleased to do its part in making Cleveland greener with sustainable bridge design and construction methods. For more info, please visit www.innrebelt.org.

Cleveland’s new George V. Voinovich Bridge includes a system of eco-friendly, color-changing LED lights. Public input was used to select the final lighting scheme.
Anne Fornshell was named to the director’s staff as assistant director of Business and Human Resources in mid-February. Anne started her ODOT career back in 1991 as an entry level training officer and worked her way up to deputy director when she left the department in 2003. She earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degree from Ohio University. She returned to ODOT as the deputy director for Human Resources in late 2015. Fornshell lives in Galena with her husband, Matt and two daughters. Here are 5 facts to know about ODOT’s latest AD.

**1. Her golden retriever is 100 pounds . . . but don’t call him fat, there is just more of him to love.**

Anne is an Athens townie. She grew up there, went to college at OU, and plans to retire there.

**2. She is addicted to March Madness basketball and watches all the games.**

**3. Coffee and chocolate are her lifelines.**

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**4. Inspiring Hope**

Each month Central Office personnel and the district deputy directors hold a Senior Leadership Meeting. For variety, these meetings are sometimes scheduled at other, unique state facilities. Recently, Director Jerry Wray arranged to have this monthly gathering at the Ohio Women’s Reformatory in Marysville.

“IT was one of the best meetings we’ve had. It was very emotional,” Wray says.

Wray’s executive assistant, Terri Barnhart, said the ODOT leadership team was allowed to tour the reformatory and see some of the programs the woman can participate in by giving back to their local communities and to help the inmates to reintegrate back into society. Following the tour, Barnhart decided that ODOT should develop a partnership with ODRC to benefit these women. She asked the department’s workforce to consider donating items to benefit these programs.

“Once we saw what they did to prepare to come back to society, I thought we could help them,” she says.

For two months, ODOT employees were asked to donate raw materials for the inmates use to create useful items for the less fortunate. These included grocery plastic bags used to create sleeping mats for the homeless, and yarn to crochet into blankets, hats, and shoes for foster homes. The response was overwhelming. In just a few days, ODOT employees donated dozens of grocery bags, yards and yards of yarn, plus countless baby clothes for children in need.

“The people of ODOT have big hearts,” Director Wray says.

**5. Boundaries: crossed**

It was a direct enough challenge from Director Wray to his district deputy directors: encourage your employees to visit other offices to help out and learn new best practices.

This is what happened when some did:

District 4 Deputy Director Al Biel, P.E. and District 9 Deputy Director Vaugh Wilson, P.E. thought up a plan, and sent highway technicians Aaron Montgomery and Randy Spiller from Scioto and Brown counties, respectively, to Ashtabula County for two days, to get a taste of the kind of storm that makes its way across Lake Erie. Lake-effect storms absorb moisture and dump large amounts of snow—sometimes multiple inches an hour—on nearby communities. Both men left with new practices to teach and a greater understanding of these kinds of severe storms. “It’s impressive how these guys and gals deal with a lot of snow every day,” Spiller said. “It was neat to see how they shifted their routes around to deal with heavier snow in one area compared to the other.”

Hancock County, in District 1, provided people and equipment this winter to help the Ohio State Highway Patrol, Findlay post, construct a new impound lot. The district had previously provided people and equipment to assist District 2 with chip seal projects in Henry County on state routes 189 and 110 and SR 18 in Wood County. Trucks, people and equipment from the District 1 counties of Defiance, Paulding, Putnam and Hancock were involved in the project. District 1 also sent representatives to visit Indiana DOT facilities in Ft. Wayne to see their wash bay and salt storage buildings. The visit was valuable research applied to the construction of a new full-service maintenance garage in Paulding County to get underway this year.

Randy Spiller, above, drove a tandem plow truck with a wing plow on it for the first while in Ashtabula County.

Aaron Montgomery washes a truck inside the Ashtabula County garage at the end of his shift. PHOTOS BY BRENT KOVACS, DISTRICT 4
So why write about this guy?
Brown was an assistant human resource administrator in Human Resources with Central Office. He was just promoted to deputy director of that division, replacing Anne Fornshell.

Qualifications? He’s an Ohio State graduate with a degree in Business Administration. In May he will be receiving his Masters in Public Administration from the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University. He has worked for ODOT since 2004, starting as a personnel officer.

What’s he like? Those who know him describe him as a true public servant who has been diligently working to serve the state of Ohio for over a decade. Brown has had an exemplary record and has been promoted several times since he has been with ODOT.

Why was he chosen for the job? After former Deputy Director of Human Resources Anne Fornshell was promoted to assistant director, ODOT was looking for someone with the same leadership skills and passion to serve. They found that in Brown: a natural leader with the drive, professionalism, and determination to make a difference.

How will he approach this new position? Brown will hold service, innovation and communication with purpose as the guiding principles of his office.

So he really likes the department, then? “I was interested in a career with ODOT because it is a continuously growing innovative organization,” he says. “It’s a special place, with good people who want to do a good job with everyone working together.”

Any other facts we should know? Brown was born and raised in Glynwood on a grain farm. A husband and father, he coaches his son’s baseball team and enjoys watching historical documentaries. He has a special interest in the Kennedy Conspiracy theories. Yes, he is comfortable with you knowing that.