Bridge projects top ODOT’s summer to-do list

Joel Hunt, Central Office

With 800 construction projects costing more than $1.8 billion, construction season 2012 promises to be a busy one.

Here’s the breakdown: 154 bridge projects; 32 culverts; 30 guardrails; 19 interchange upgrades; 44 mill and fills; 90 minor rehabilitations; 5 major widening projects; 5 new construction projects; 30 pavement marking projects; 25 preventative maintenance projects; 4 relocation projects; 76 resurfacing projects; 32 signal projects; 12 signs; 37 slide repairs; 3 widening projects; and 200 others.

To Dwayne Bishop, a highway technician at District 8, a busy construction season means Ohio will have “smoother, safer, wider and less congested roads.”

Bishop has inspected highway construction projects for three years, and currently works on the replacement of District 8’s Jeremiah Morrow Bridge. He performs quality assurance on concrete and rebar.

“It’s an awesome job,” said Bishop. “It’s challenging work, but I get paid for on-the-job training.”

ODOT Director Jerry Wray said the maintenance, preservation and new construction of roads in Ohio means the ability to compete in the global marketplace.

“Well-maintained highways are essential to keeping and creating new jobs,” said Wray. “Our state’s economy, especially our agriculture and manufacturing businesses and the logistics operations that support them, depend on the ability to quickly and efficiently ship raw materials and finished goods throughout Ohio, the country and the world, and our state’s transportation system makes it possible.”

Work continues this year on the $287 million I-90 Innerbelt Bridge in Cleveland, the $200 million I-71/I-670 interchange project in Columbus and the $169 million U.S. Fort to Port project. Major construction projects set to begin this season include the fourth phase of the $102 million Hamilton I-75 Corridor project, the $56 million full-depth pavement replacement and lane addition on I-71 in Morrow County.
Bits-n-Pieces

“Sweet April showers do spring May flowers.”
—Thomas Tusser
*A Hundred Good Points of Husbandry* (1557)

Why is everyone so tired in April?
Because they just finished a 31-day March!

A week to remember
Breanna Watzka, *District 6*

EACH YEAR, hundreds of thousands of barrels are damaged because motorists barreled through construction zones. But that’s not all: Behind these barrels are workers who may be someone’s mom, dad, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. In 2011, 17 people were killed in construction zone crashes.

The Federal Highway Administration will sponsor the 13th National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week April 23–27. States across the country will host events to remind motorists that safer driving protects everyone.

On April 19, ODOT Director Jerry Wray joined media, Kokosing Construction Company Inc. and project designer CH2M Hill at the I-71/670 work zone in downtown Columbus to deliver the message “Don’t Barrel through Work Zones.”

The project—the largest in central Ohio history—will employ up to 300 men and women on site this construction season.

New timekeeping system coming soon
Greg Pore, *Central Office*

Facing change can be scary sometimes, and “Kronos,” ODOT’s new electronic timekeeping system, will mean changes when it is rolled out with the first pay period of the new fiscal year. But once employees get comfortable with the new features, it will be hard to imagine how they ever worked without it.

Kronos will handle all time and labor tracking along with leave requests and activities performed by employees. In some locations, the implementation of Kronos will include the installation of InTouch devices that will allow employees to conveniently “swipe” in and out using new badges to be issued to the workforce along with the release of Kronos. The InTouch devices are designed with an appealing, easy-to-use graphics interface and will be installed in a centralized location accessible to all employees.

Though not all locations within the department will have an InTouch device, employees working in office settings that do have them will benefit from the many perks the new set up has to offer from their work computers.

Training sessions are planned for all ODOT employees and managers in the use of the new system and devices in the next few months. For more information, click here to visit the Kronos blog, or follow the link on ODOT’s web portal.
Critical Success Factors update: Getting down to business

Ron Poole, Central Office

With the finalization of the critical success factors and their rollout completed, ODOT has moved on to the very real tasks of applying its measures of success.

In February, Central Office instructed the district offices to provide numbers comparing their offices’ current levels of accomplishment to the standards set for them under the strategic plan. They submitted written answers to questions about their deficient levels, outlining their plans for meeting the set goals.

THINKING CAPS ON
The district deputy directors took the lead on the reports, working with the heads of their offices to formulate their numbers and comments to Central Office.

“I have been calling them ‘Recovery Plans,’” observes Mike Flynn, assistant director of field operations, “because we are trying to recover the level of performance ODOT had once achieved. This process is about taking a closer look at what we do and finding our way back to better efficiency and productivity.”

In its response, District 5 reported it was already meeting many of the measures under the strategic plan, but needed to focus on improving highway maintenance:

“District 5’s pavement and bridge conditions are deteriorating,” said District Deputy Director Joe Rutherford, “and we need to make sure that our resources — planning and engineering projects on a long term horizon; the appropriate utilization of precious system preservation funds; effective highway management and maintenance once the construction work is complete—are aligned to bring those conditions back to an acceptable level.”

FRESH EYES ON THE PRIZE
The submitted plans from the district office to address problem areas have been assigned to staff members in Central Office for review and, if needed, advice. Deputy Director of Operations Sonja Simpson has been reviewing plans for improving pothole repairs.

“All of the districts know their business,” commented Simpson. “As a whole, they know what it takes to get the job done. One of the biggest questions is whether they have the equipment they need. We are in the process of purchasing some equipment that they feel is much needed, and I think over the next six months we are going to see a huge change in our numbers for the better.”

WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?
The reports will be returned again in final form to the districts and each will begin the actions needed to address areas of improvement. Those actions will be born out of a collaborative effort and mutual support among many different sections of ODOT.

“This is about coming together and really listening to what people need to address their problems,” said Flynn.

Photo by Brent Kovacs, District 4
Project traveled long road

Brenna Slavens, District 10

There is no denying it: The Nelsonville Bypass is a unique project in more ways than one. Phase Two of the project is scheduled to open late November, more than seven months ahead of schedule. When finally completed in 2013, this final stretch of U.S. Route 33 stretching from Michigan to Virginia will be transformed into a safer, four-lane limited-access highway.

It has had to overcome more than its fair share of obstacles. Originally proposed in the 1960s, the project was construction ready by the 1970s. Then an oil and gas embargo limited funding and stalled the project. Fast forward a couple decades, and the project was resurrected and designated as a priority by the federal government. Then just over five years ago a decision was made that would prove to be the pivotal step the project needed.

“The district proposed selling a small portion in the middle of the two phase project in December 2006,” recalled District 10 Deputy Director T. Steve Williams, “to get our foot in the door. And so, Phase One (Dorr Run) was born.”

The opportunity to take the next steps came in 2009, with money made available through a federal stimulus package: “With the funding in place, construction began on phases two and three in the fall of 2009,” said Williams. “All combined, the bypass became the largest stimulus project in the state.”

The plans for the bypass included unique features to protect the local wild life, including the rare Southern Grizzled Skipper Butterflies. Perhaps the most unique aspect to the project is the tribute to the city of Nelsonville and its history that’s incorporated into the aesthetics. Nelsonville was a large producer of clay bricks embossed with star patterns used to pave sidewalks in many U.S. cities during the late 1800s and early 1900s. To help preserve this history, the star brick design has been incorporated into the concrete railing of several bridges in phases two and three.

“Bridges are one of the most visible infrastructures to a project and knowing the significance of the Bypass and how it would impact the community, the decision was made to include a piece of the city itself,” said Williams.
MEET THE DDD
Randy Chevalley, District 7
Mandi Abner, District 7

Randy Chevalley began his career with ODOT in 1986 as an Engineer-in-Training, and has worked in District 7 for the majority of his career. He spent seven years as the district planning administrator and two years as the district production administrator before becoming a highway management administrator.

Chevalley’s experience with different departments within the district allows him to work with his employees from the ground level up. He is thankful for the efforts of his co-workers.

“The employees of District 7 truly make it possible for motorists to get to their destinations safely on a daily basis, and they should be proud of what they do,” said Chevalley.

Chevalley holds a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from Ohio University and an associate degree in civil-construction engineering from Clark Technical College. He enjoys spending time with his wife Kimberly, two daughters, Erin and Kelsey, and son Josh.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
Paul Staley, Central Office

Each year, ODOT receives more than one billion dollars from the federal government to assist in funding construction programs. These monies are authorized by legislation that is first passed by the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, and then signed by the President.

On March 29, the House and the Senate approved HR 4281, a clean 90-day extension of the current surface transportation, known as SAFETEA-LU, averting a potential shutdown of the federal surface transportation program. The measure, which passed the house 266-158, was the 9th extension of the current authorization. The Senate approved the measure by unanimous consent.

Closer to home, ODOT Director Wray testified before the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation and the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee in late March. The Ohio House and Senate asked the director to talk about the funding shortfalls and the need to delay projects on the TRAC list.

During a Q&A session, Subcommittee Chairman Ross McGregor asked Wray why he thought the department would be able to meet the difficult challenges of maintaining and improving transportation system with limited funds and increasing inflation:

“It’s because of the people of ODOT,” replied Wray. “The people of ODOT possess the creativity, initiative, knowledge and ability to see the department through this crisis. I’m confident they will positively amaze us—both you and me!”
Talent runs in ODOT family
Ron Poole, Central Office

Eighteen-year-old Ashley Hull wants a career as an artist, and she is already off to a good start: Her oil painting, “Misty Eyes,” took third place in an international art competition sponsored by Artist’s magazine in February. Also, two of her pieces were selected for the 2012 Ohio Governor’s Youth Art Exhibit, on display in the lobbies of the State Office Tower and the Ohio Department of Education building.

Her father, Bruce Hull, works as a graphics designer with the Division of Communications in ODOT Central Office. The two have shared a love of creating artwork since Ashley was five.

“Painting helps me deal with my feelings,” she said. “I have to paint or else I feel as if I won’t function.”

After graduating high school this May, Ashley will be attending the Columbus College of Art and Design in the fall. She also enjoys horseback riding and playing the cello.

You ain’t seen nothing yet!
Innerbelt construction ramps-up with structural steel addition
Jocelynn Clemings, District 12

Construction of a new westbound I-90 Innerbelt Bridge has been underway for more than a year, but this summer is sure to bring some striking changes to the Cleveland skyline.

Earlier this month, crews began erecting the behemoth steel members which will frame the new bridge. Later this spring, crews will begin constructing the signature “delta” girders to form the unique, arched appearance of the new bridge. A temporary support system will be connected to each pier for girder support.

“We don’t do a lot of these,” said Innerbelt Project Manager for Construction Tom Hyland. “This is a very unique design, and when the delta girders go in, you’ll really start to see the new bridge take shape.”

The entire project is on pace to be complete and open to traffic in late 2013.
Ty Thompson, Planning Engineer

Six-year veteran Ty Thompson currently works out of the District 5 Newark office. Prior to his current position, Thompson was a District 5 Safety/Traffic Engineer for four years and a metropolitan planning organization planner for one year with Central Office.

“I enjoy the opportunity to work with local agencies, businesses, and citizens on addressing transportation problems/concerns in their area,” he said about his job duties. “Helping local stakeholders and customers to tackle problems such as addressing safety concerns, resolving congestion issues, and/or improving access for economic development has been and will continue to be one of the more rewarding aspects of my role at ODOT.”

Outside of work, Thompson enjoys spending time with his wife, Kristen; children, Andrew and Emily; playing golf, fishing at Lake Erie, and going to Columbus Blue Jackets’ games.

De-stress for success

According to the Mayo Clinic, 25 percent of the U.S. population claims they are most stressed because of their jobs. If you are feeling the effects yourself, the right stress management strategies can alleviate some of the problems and make your work time more positive and productive.

First, you should be on the alert for the warning signs you are suffering from stress at work. Some symptoms include feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed; feelings of fatigue or trouble concentrating; and muscle tension, headaches or trouble sleeping.

Mismanaging time can shoot stress levels through the ceiling, so take steps to better manage your workload: set realistic goals and track your progress.

Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day to take a walk or sit back and clear your mind. Also, try to get away from your desk or work station for lunch.

Take time to relax and take care of yourself with exercise and healthy eating and sleeping habits. Stress is a normal part of life, but it doesn’t have to harm your health, or your productivity.
Daveen Goodman and Katie Wood work to develop an “Action Register” that will become part of the team’s implementation plan for the Kaizen.

Eastern business concept lands here
Pieter Wykoff, Department of Administrative Services

In modern business, the Japanese word “Kaizen” refers to a continuous practice of improving the way things are done at work by showing employees how to spot and eliminate wasteful processes and needlessly hard efforts. Now, it has come to ODOT.

The department has been forming teams of employees to tackle tough process problems using Kaizen principles. Smaller groups spend a period of time creating solutions for parts of a larger problem, then meet in an intense, week-long session to combine their best approaches into a single solution.

The results have been impressive. Last year, a Kaizen team at the ODOT Office of Aviation completely changed the registration process for airplanes and helicopters from a paper-based system to on-line registration and fee submissions. This eliminated a long-standing backlog and is also expected to bring in additional $60,000 in fee revenue by next year.

Another ODOT Kaizen team looked at the Office of Real Estate’s backlogged records retention process, designing a computer system where all documents will be scanned and stored on a common hard drive. Processing backlogs will be eliminated, and the office will save more than $190,000 annually in labor and nearly $15,000 in paper and printing costs.

More recently, an ODOT Kaizen event was concluded to address the mainframe-based Equipment Management and Transportation Management System used to track many business transactions at all levels of the department. Michael Cope, assistant director for Business and Human Resources, pushed for change:

“We’re still using the same paper forms we used when I first came to work at ODOT in the late 1970s,” said Cope. “It’s time we enter the 21st century.”

The Kaizen team concluded that by using a computer system to instantly send data from the field to an automated tracking process, the department will save $50,000 annually in copying and printing costs, and a 10 percent reduction in labor hours.