Life is a Highway

Granville Scenic Byway showcases small-town charm

Granville
Settled 1805.
Home of
Denison
University,
Founded 1831

April 2017
Governor Signs Transportation Budget

The $7.8 billion biennial budget funds ODOT, the Ohio Department of Public Safety, the Ohio Highway Patrol, the Ohio Turnpike and Ohio Public Works Commission.

Between 2011 and 2016, ODOT spent over $12 billion on nearly 6,000 capital construction projects. As other states struggle with their highway infrastructure, Ohio has enjoyed record progress with highway construction as a result of its recent reforms, addressing almost 3,000 projects over the past three years with an investment of nearly $6.7 billion—all without an increase in the tax.

The capital program for the next two years will average about $2 billion each year, which means the Kasich administration will have invested $16 billion in our transportation system by the time the governor leaves office.

For over a century, ODOT’s focus has been to plan, design and build our transportation system. Our mission is the easy movement of people and goods from place to place. That does not change. However, how we accomplish that mission does evolve and is about to go through a significant transformation. Moving forward, we will take advantage of new technologies and advanced use of data to maintain the system and improve its safety and performance.

In anticipation of the demands of a 21st century transportation system that uses technology and data in better and innovative ways, ODOT is mapping a strategic plan to operate the highway system of the future.

What does a modern, 21st century system look like? As part of Ohio’s continuing effort to find innovative ways to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow—while maintaining safety—the transportation budget has proposed to give ODOT the authority to manage congestion through the use of variable speed limits and to test a new concept to reduce congestion on I-670 in Columbus.

Our budget is proposing to allow ODOT to test a concept called Hard Shoulder Running on I-670 in Columbus. The pilot would allow ODOT to turn the shoulder lane into an extra lane of travel during peak hours.

This test site, dynamic new messaging signs above the roadway will alert motorists when the extra lane is open. By testing this concept, Ohio is seeking to join other states and countries that have successfully used Hard Shoulder Running to increase capacity without the expense of building additional lanes.

By being one of the first—and best positioned—states to embrace new technologies for drones, autonomous and connected vehicles, artificial intelligence and other industries of the future, Ohio can also be among the first to benefit.

For example, Governor Kasich and ODOT recently announced a $15 million investment in a 35-mile stretch of highway between Columbus and the Transportation Research Center in East Liberty where new technologies can be safely tested in real-life traffic situations. And, our 241-mile Ohio Turnpike is also becoming a premier testing corridor, particularly for the transportation of freight.

Additionally, the budget includes funding, matched by commitments from private-sector partners, the will invest up to $25 million for expanded research capabilities at the Transportation Research Center. The TREC is a 4,500-acre independent testing facility—the continent’s most advanced—offering the ideal environment for autonomous vehicle and smart highway research, compliance and certification testing for all types of systems and components, crash testing, emissions testing, dynamic testing and durability testing. The TREC is also home to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s only Vehicle Research and Test Center, another unique advantage for our state.

The budget also includes $1.5 million for research and support for Ohio’s Unmanned Aircraft System Center and Test Complex in Springfield. The center is funded by ODOT.

This project, with total state and federal investments of $5 million, will empower drone operators, for the first time anywhere in the nation, to fly unmanned aircraft beyond their line of sight. There are also funds to advance research that will give Ohio a major advantage as unmanned aircraft and drones become the basis for new industries and economic growth in ways we cannot yet imagine.

Again, Ohio is at the forefront of all of this latest transportation technology. We at ODOT, thanks to Governor Kasich’s commitment, stand ready to work with our private sector partners to develop the transportation system of tomorrow . . . today.

Streams are dynamic systems. Flowing water erodes channel banks and beds. Sediments deposited within the river constantly shape and reshape the stream channel. It’s natural. Unfortunately, it’s also problematic for bridge designers engineering structures crossing these rivers. These natural processes often cause problems at a bridge opening that can threaten the whole structure.

A research pilot project on stream maintenance at bridge crossings sponsored by ODOT and the Federal Highway Administration could reduce the cost of stream maintenance by as much as 75 percent. Tested in nine counties in districts 2 and 3, the new process also reduces road closures, and can be done in-house by county garage highway technicians.

“IT was a foreign concept at first, but with the right tools, our people can be in the water to fix things to prevent road closures,” says Ashland County Manager Brad Mayes.

Assistant Environmental Administrator with the Office of Environmental Services Matt Perlik says the process uses natural channel design concepts that allow the stream’s natural energy to maintain a stable opening. The designs implemented on these projects were developed by researchers at the Ohio State University. The new process uses 3- by 6-foot concrete blocks to create the stream features at bridge crossings rather than natural rock.

“Some of these stream bridge crossing sites would need to be maintained multiple times a year,” said Perlik, “and getting in the water each time required time and effort securing permits from regulatory agencies. Using natural channel design . . . provides a sustainable solution that doesn’t need to be revisited . . . and saves both time and money.’’

Medina County Manager Matt Simon says his staff prefers the new process.

“My people love to be able to do this themselves. In the past, we’d contract it out and wind up closing the road for several days. This process reduces road closures,” he stated.

District Research Project Manager with the Office of Statewide Planning and Research Jim Martin, also says the pilot project is a great example of Central Office and the districts working together.

“We see Central Office working with the county folks and the districts to develop a better way to reduce maintenance costs at our stream and bridge crossings, saving all of us money,” he says.
A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE

Ron Poole, Central Office

IT procurement is a unique and confusing process compared to general purchasing. If an employee of Central Office needed an IT purchase costing over $2500, the customer would have to submit a request to DoIT for approval. In their submission, they would need to include all their purchasing information such as what they are procuring, all the vendors that participated in their bid, why they chose the awarded vendor, and all the vendor bid quotes. Simply put, the end-users filling out the form had to know all kinds of information they did not have access to. And this led to mistakes and frustration.

The problem was that the Information Technology Processing Request (ITPR) was originally created for internal use within DoIT, said Information Technician Chris Uguru. “The same ITPR forms were later made available to other ODOT employees to fill out but without training or experience.”

The problem came to the attention of Naya Revere, DoIT’s procurement specialist. She responded by creating an online form for Quote Requests. In essence, this process is now easier for the customer. With some fields already filled out, the form simply gathers basic information about the needed product and goes directly to Revere.

“I make it a point of processing requests like this daily,” said Revere. “I am able to fill in the needed information and submit the request to DoIT managers for approval and bid faster than before. I do the front-end work. All the customer has to do is enter the PO request.”

Her innovation has been in place since January, and has proven to be successful so far. More than 20 requests have been filled for satisfied customers.

Project gives Cleveland a ‘lift’

Amanda McFarland, District 12

When the Willow Avenue lift bridge near downtown Cleveland needed new bearings, the situation was unique: the bridge provided the only truck access to the docks at Whiskey Island — home to Cargill Salt and Ontario Stone companies — so it had to remain in service.

ODOT administered the project, and provided about $1 million in project costs, with Cleveland covering local matching funds used to purchase the new bearings.

The Ruhlin Company was selected to replace the bearing assembly in the northwest tower of the lift bridge. In order to complete the work, the contractor had to leave the bridge in the lowered position and close the river traffic for ten days. During this time the “sheave”—a grooved gear where the bearing assembly is located—was removed and transported using a custom trailer to a shop just a few hundred feet from the bridge for some custom-machined work.

The sheave bearings were successfully replaced and the bridge was back in operation within the planned closure. Had this bridge become inoperable, it would have had a severe economic impact on the supply of road salt to northeast Ohio.

Wish you were here

Vacationing couple puts active shooter training to work

Richard Deubler, District 1

I t was January 6, and Ohioans Rod and Michelle Nuveman were still a long way from home and their jobs with ODOT. Accompanied by their college-aged children, Stacey and Brad, the couple had enjoyed a four-day visit in the Bahamas on a Caribbean cruise and had arrived at Ft. Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. Both parents work at District 1: Rod a highway management administrator, Michelle, a member of human resources. All thought this would be a routine stop on their way home. It was not.

As boarding approached, the family was separated: Michelle went to the bathroom; Stacey wandered off to find a phone charger, and Brad stood guard by the luggage. Then a CNN Breaking News alert flashed across the television screen reporting a mass shooting in progress in an adjacent terminal. All was calm in their terminal, until an hour later when the apparent sound of gun shots from the security checkpoint set off mass panic and fleeing to the airport farmacy.

Though separated from each other, Rod and Michelle managed to remain calm and confident. They both had undergone active shooter training at ODOT. At her location, Michelle locked herself in a bathroom stall to make sure she avoided any and all danger. “At one point, I heard a voice calling from outside of the bathroom asking anyone who was inside to come out,” said Michelle. “They never said who they were or what they wanted, so I just stayed right where I was and didn’t make a noise.”

“I never really felt panicked or distressed,” Rod said. “I’d say we made rational, well-thought decisions at every opportunity.”

Michelle eventually found Rod and their son, and they searched for forty minutes until they found daughter Stacey safe. The reunited family made it to an air cargo facility outside the airport where they waited until the danger had passed. The proactive approach they took may have been the difference between escape and disaster.
District 6 construction inspector Chad Mayberry is a soft-spoken, laid-back guy, except when you say two words: corn hole. Mayberry’s face lights up, and for good reason. The highway technician and 20-year veteran with the department is royalty in the competitive world of corn hole contests. He started participating in the sport six years ago.

“I’m ranked eighth best in Ohio out of a pool of 150, and 37th in the world in the corn hole doubles category,” said Mayberry. He was part of a two-man doubles team that came in first at the Ohio State Fair.

“All I know,” says fellow Inspector Tony Lewis, “is if we do a district corn hole tourney for Combined Charities, Chad always takes home the players pot every time.”

Mayberry plays in a league that’s recognized by the American Corn Hole Organization, a Cincinnati-based group puts on regional, state and world competitions during the corn hole season. It starts in September and runs nine months.

“I’ve been to the world competition a couple of times,” said Mayberry. “It’s a great way to see places such as Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky and even Michigan.”

One of Mayberry’s most memorable tournament victories was earlier this year, with his 17-year-old son, Austin. “He’s getting better, but he still can’t beat me,” laughed the proud papa, who quickly pulls up a photo on his smart phone of the duo playing.

Mayberry doesn’t have a trophy case. “I have something better: a cash payout that’s a percentage of the entry fee which is never more than $50.”

Nancy Burton, District 6

District 1

“We’ve been performing litter pick-up, pothole patching and some spot berming.”
- Brad Adam, Allen County

District 2

“We’ve been doing a lot of spring and summer activities: trimming brush, pothole repairs, cleaning equipment.”
- Andrew Beaverson, Wood County

District 3

“Pothole patching . . . It’s something that has to be done in order to keep traffic moving until a more permanent fix can be done.”
- Brian Maxwell, Medina County

District 4

Craig Adgate HT-2 from Trumbull County has spent more time than usual responding to high water this winter. By placing high water or closures signs, monitoring the water level and inspecting the roads for damage he helps to ensure that motorists have safe and reliable roads.

District 5

“Crack sealing and Cutting Brush.”
- Jeff Blue

District 6

“We’ll be doing a lot of pothole patching, spot berming, small tile work, cleaning equipment, painting plow [blades]. We’re keeping busy.”
- Austin Baldwin, Wood County

District 7

“We took advantage and replaced a culvert pipe on SR 132, a lot of ditching, tree trimming, guardrail & cable rail repair.”
- Arik Adams

District 8

“Pothole patching, trimmings, guardrail, cable rail.”
- Rick Vandine, Morgan County

District 9

“A variety of stuff – ran the tiger ditcher, I’m the labor foreman on the berming crew and we’ve been spot berming.” In winter time, “if you work 12 to 16 hour days you are short on time to be in the woodshop, whereas this year it’s been pretty mild.”
- Rick Vandine, Morgan County

District 10

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- Rick Vandine, Morgan County

“With the mild winter, we’ve been berming, doing pothole repairs, and cleaning equipment.”
- Chris Douglas, Wood County

“Pothole patching . . . It’s something that has to be done in order to keep traffic moving until a more permanent fix can be done.”
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Ron Poole, Central Office

Country music’s Rascal Flatts could have been thinking about Ohio’s byways when they recorded their award-winning cover of “Life is a Highway.” This song captures the essence of country roads and evening winding drives. A perfect example exists right here in central Ohio with the Granville Scenic Byway.

Designated in late 2016, this ten-mile route runs along state routes 37 and 662 in Licking County. A local committee worked for more than a decade on the application made to ODOT. According to State Byways Coordinator Thomas Barrett, the status is well-deserved.

“We define a scenic byway as a roadway with one or more intrinsic archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational or scenic qualities,” said Barrett. “This byway has all of these, and it’s a convenient divergence when traveling between Newark and Columbus.”

The newly designated roadway runs through the village of Granville, and is considered a great way to revisit the look and feel of small-town America and Northeastern charm.