STUCK ON A PLANE!

ODOT’s Alana Haberman cuts through ‘general confusion,’ whatever the situation

Run, baby, run!
This ODOTer has places to go.

Jeff Ragland’s Good Fortune

One Busy Man

Alive and Kicking
Pavement that will outlive your dog!
Outside firm helping to develop business structure
Alexandra Buerger, Central Office

This past spring, ODOT hired a firm called eVision Partners, Inc. to help look at how well the department’s technology systems work together to support ODOT’s business objectives.

Known as Enterprise Architecture (EA), the idea is to take all the technology ODOT uses and map it out according to business duties—everything from planning a construction project to hiring a new employee. Once everything is mapped on the EA plan, recommendations on how to best align both current and future technology can be made. Ultimately this will help ODOT achieve its Critical Success Factors.

eVision has conducted information-gathering sessions with each office in the Department and held meetings to learn ODOT’s primary business. The company will recommended an EA strategic plan to ODOT leadership by the end of this year.

National association names ODOT employee manager of the year
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

The 28,000 member American Public Works Association has named ODOT’s Deputy Director of Operations, Sonja Simpson, as the APWA Professional Manager of the Year for Administrative Management. Simpson was nominated by Shelby Ingle, an engineer with the professional services firm LJB, Inc.

“Simpson is an absolute standout star as a government professional, specifically in the Transportation Operations area,” Ingle wrote in her nomination form. “She is highly regarded by her peers and applauded for her efforts by her superiors.”

Assistant Director for Field Operations Mike Flynn agrees. “I have great confidence in her. She multi-tasks well and is very well respected by the people who work for her. This award is not only a great honor for her, but for the whole department,” Flynn said.

Simpson has been with ODOT for two years. Prior to that, she served as the assistant administrator for the Transportation Division for the city of Columbus. She has also been a project coordinator for the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission.
Culvert inventory project underway
Brent Kovacs District 4

District 4 is beginning a new initiative to inspect their 10,000 culverts in a timely manner. They have set a project goal to have 1,000 culverts ready to be inspected by October 1st each year, with a goal for all to be inspected and repaired in 10 years. The project will create an accurate inventory and standardized rating of these structures, enabling the replacement or upgrade of any culverts that need repair with efficiency, accuracy, and accountability. District 4’s Nathan Crozier is leading this charge in association with his achieving a Green Belt certification in Lean Six Sigma.

Environmental permits vital to project
Brent Kovacs, District 4

One of the most scenic routes in the state is in jeopardy due to waves pounding the shoreline. Portions of State Route 531 are experiencing erosion and may be in danger of falling into the lake. A plan needed to be put in place to try and correct erosion problems eating away

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**Racing a huge accomplishment**

Brent Kovacs, District 4

Environmental Specialist Rob Lang, Transportation Engineer Jeff Cutler, and Environmental Specialist Sean Carpenter competed in the recently held Cleveland Marathon. Lang finished the full marathon in four hours and 47 minutes, while Cutler and Carpenter ran the half-marathon in just over two hours each. Lang began running a 2009 5K benefit for Ovarian Cancer. He had volunteered to help set up the event, but had no plans to run himself.

Now four years later, Lang has completed two marathons and four half marathons. He began training for the Cleveland Marathon about five months ago and is scheduled to run in the Akron Marathon later this summer.

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**From spectator to player**

Kathleen Fuller, District 9

Ross County highway maintenance facility employee Jeff Ragland recently appeared as a contestant on the game show “Wheel of Fortune.” His wife applied for him to be a contestant on the show’s website, and Ragland was invited to audition in June at the Mardi Gras Casino in West Virginia with nearly 200 other hopefuls. Ragland and his family flew to Culver City, California where he competed and won an undisclosed amount of prize money. Unfortunately, he missed winning the final round by a slim margin.
Bridge project presents unique environmental challenge

**Mike Lopez, District 2**

**ODOT recently started work on a two-year, $11.8 million project to improve the Interstate 475/U.S. Route 23 Bridge over the Ohio Turnpike in Lucas County. But this big plan to widen and re-deck the current bridge is facing a tiny obstacle: one that measures 1.5 inches long.**

Accessing the bridge means crossing nearby Swan Creek, which is home to the Rayed Bean Mussel. Once found in at least 115 streams, canals, and lakes, the mussel now exists in only 31 streams and one lake. As such, these mussels are a federally-endangered species, and must be protected even as ODOT strives to complete the project.

In order to answer this challenge, ODOT will close Manley Road through June 2015 to provide easier access to the bridge for moving materials and staging equipment. But to really protect the creek, ODOT designers have called for a special bridge to be built across the stream. This will make the work easier and keep the Rayed Bean Mussel safe and sound.

“Ask the Director” is a Transcript feature for employees to submit ODOT work life questions to Director Jerry Wray. He will consider questions on ODOT policy and procedures, future infrastructure projects, snow and ice control, and a variety of other issues that are on the minds of the men and women of ODOT. You can submit your questions to Alex Buerger in the Office of Communications, either by email at Alexandra.Buerger@dot.state.oh.us, by interoffice mail (Mail Stop 1420), or by phone at (614) 387-6225. Director Wray chooses which question(s) to respond to in Transcript each month. All names will be kept confidential if requested.

**Q** “You have been through about half of the 13 annual meetings this summer. What is your impression of these events?”

**A** “The meetings thus far have gone well. All of them have had a nice crisp pace. As the Quality of Work Life survey pointed out, the people of ODOT think we should do a better job of communicating our mission and our strategic goals. One of the ways to do that is through these meetings.

I’m sure there are some people who don’t like the meetings. There are probably some people who don’t even show up. However, we owe it to the people who do show up to make the meetings interesting and informative. Each meeting is different, whether it’s at Central Office or one of the districts. Each district owns their own agenda. As we improve each year, more and more people are involved.

As we mature, the emphasis will be on performance, production, and results over resources. How have we performed in the past year? What are the best practices that make us more productive and can be shared with other districts and other counties?

Indications are that most people like the idea of the annual meetings and want to see them continue and improve.”

— Director Jerry Wray
ODOT manager charts a sure course
Alexandra Buerger, Central Office

When describing her typical day at ODOT Central Office, Alana Haberman recalled a term she heard years ago while on a flight to Jamaica during her honeymoon.

“We had landed but weren’t yet allowed to exit the plane,’ she remembers, “so the flight attendant announced that we would all receive another rum punch due to the ‘general confusion’ at the airport.”

As the manager of Purchasing & Payables, cutting through “general confusion” is a common part of her duties. Alana’s job is to supervise all general purchasing that goes on at the department. Along with her team of seven, she oversees the creation of every purchase order across the state and works hand-in-hand with the districts to make sure their requests are fulfilled. Since she was hired four years ago, Alana has helped establish policies and procedures related to buying and receiving goods. It is her goal to fix problems or clear roadblocks for anyone at ODOT trying to make a purchase.

Alana welcomes the challenges of her job, which is evident the moment you watch her at work in her cubicle on the fourth floor of Central Office. There are a steady stream of people with dilemmas and phone calls with questions. A new issue can arise at any moment. Alana is able to handle it all.

Alana has also mastered the art of communicating with the Office of Budget and Management (OBM), the agency that scrutinizes all our purchase requests. “Recently, a district was in the process of buying several monitors for their facilities when OBM put a stop on the payment,” says Jim Snyder, an administrator in Finance. “Alana worked her magic, explained to them why the purchase was important for the people of ODOT, and the purchase went through after all. In short, Alana is customer service.”

The month of June brings the end of the fiscal year, so the “confusion” was in full force at the beginning of this summer. Alana takes pride in her team as well as the district fiscal offices in delivering “the smoothest budget close-out” she’s seen at ODOT.

Finding relief from the general confusion at work comes in the form of family and friends. She has been married for 35 years to Mark, an attorney who also works for the state. They have three grown daughters and a son-in-law. They recently welcomed their first grandchild, a “stunning” one-year-old girl named Kate:

“She can say ‘Grandma,’” Alana says with a proud smile.

She and Mark also enjoy dinners with friends and traveling, and she also has a love of shopping.

That passion for retail therapy translates well for Alana at work, as she essentially “controls the purse strings” for the department.

“I may not handle the big dollars for ODOT,” she points out, “but the purchases we oversee affect the day-to-day lives of every employee. If I can make sure someone gets the tool he needs to do his job, it’s been a good day.”
Filling up made easier

Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Each year, ODOT employees use about 5.5 million gallons of fuel from more than 200 ODOT pump locations across the state. And every one of those people who got their gas had to go through the same dance: Pull into an ODOT facility, pump the fuel, then go inside and fill out a form with the vehicle serial number, how much gas was pumped, and the precise date and time.

Yeah, it’s ridiculous. The process is time consuming and error prone.

Fortunately, ODOT Project Manager Todd Wulfhorst wants to change all that.

“We are working to improve the fuel management system,” he said. “Our goal is to streamline the system, making it easier and more accurate for employees.”

Under the new system, an ODOT employee will be able to use their department ID badge to activate the gas pump. Thanks to an on-board diagnostic system, the gas pump will record the vehicle serial number, the time and date, and the amount of fuel pumped. Once employees fill up their vehicles, they can be on their way. There will be no more going into the office to fill out endless forms.

The new system will be able to calculate and track information about any vehicle, such as its per mile gas consumption.

“Not only will this be a more accurate system, but it will also allow us to make better decisions about our equipment,” Wulfhorst said.

There is already a pilot project to test the new system in Columbus at the West Broad facility. Another pilot project will be installed soon at the Westerville Garage in Franklin County. If the pilot projects are successful, the vendor, Fuelmaster, will be given the go ahead to install the new gas pumps at 189 state locations across Ohio. The goal is to have the new fuel management system in place by late fall, prior to snow and ice season. ☺
Down on the farm
Joel Hunt, Central Office

District 3 Transportation Manager Howard Goodyear is a busy man: In addition to his ODOT duties in Medina County, Howard is also an emergency medical technician, a fire and rescue volunteer, a new father of a year-old daughter, and a third-generation farmer. Often heard saying he’s got all the animals on Old McDonald’s farm - and then some - Goodyear is honored to carry on the family business.

“With more than 60 head of animals, you could call me an animal person,” he said.

Spring Mist Farms isn’t your typical family farm; it’s more of a tourist destination. Located in the Brunswick Hills, the farm has a traveling petting zoo and a banquet hall for weddings and private parties. Goodyear has a horse-drawn carriage and sleigh on the farm that has won first-place in many local competitions. There are no grain crops – only hay for the animals.

Goodyear works with his parents, his brother, his wife, Abby, and some hired hands to keep the 55-acre farm running smoothly. “The extra help lets me focus on my work at ODOT,” he said. “It is early mornings and late nights for me.”

His training to be an EMT and firefighter started the day after he graduated from high school. Goodyear comes from a long line of firefighters. Now he volunteers nights and weekends. “We had almost 800 runs last year,” he said.

Somehow, Goodyear manages to stay afloat through all his hard work and long days. While he doesn’t let any of his outside interests get in the way of his duties at ODOT, he truly likes his busy life: “I save all my comp time from the winter and I use it during the summer when the farm is busiest,” said Goodyear. “I enjoy farming, working with the livestock, spending time with the animals, giving tours and teaching kids about the animals.”

Old McDonald had a farm – indeed! ✯

Photos courtesy of Howard Goodyear and Spring Mist Farms. © Spring Mist Farms