QUALITY BY DESIGN
Gayle Stanfield is all about quality assurance.

OHIO RESIDENTS HELP PLAN FUTURE OF TRANSIT

Conservation does DOUBLE DUTY
Land purchase protects habitats for endangered bats and speeds future project delivery.
ODOT forms partnership with State Farm Insurance

ODOT recently signed a sponsorship agreement with State Farm Insurance, the largest auto insurance company in the nation, to underwrite the former Freeway Service Patrol. The State Farm Safety Patrol vehicles will feature highly reflective safety markings, and both the vehicles and their drivers will feature State Farm logos.

The program will provide a supplemental funding source for the highly effective traffic management program, according to ODOT Director Jerry Wray.

“This new, innovative agreement will allow ODOT to generate sponsorship dollars over several years that we can ultimately use to help build transportation projects communities throughout the state tell us they want and need,” said Wray.

This is the first major sponsorship program ODOT has entered into. State Farm will pay the department $850,000 annually for four years. State Farm Safety Patrol employees will help keep traffic moving by clearing debris and offering assistance to stranded motorists. ODOT currently operates 20 service patrol vehicles in seven Ohio urban areas.

In 2013, these vehicles helped about 90,000 motorists at a cost of about $4 million. State Farm has 730 agents in Ohio. State Farm now sponsors safety patrols in 12 states.

Ohio residents help plan future Transit

People across Ohio recently had the opportunity to comment on what they consider to be the state’s highest transit priorities. ODOT will use a public opinion survey administered by Statewide Transit Needs Study to identify important priorities when planning future transit investments.

The survey, which Ohio residents could complete online, gave the participants 100 mock dollars to use for different transit services and enhancements of their choosing. Some examples included longer service hours or different types of public transit. Once a choice was made, a portion of their $100 was depleted, giving the participants a better idea of the challenges transit planners and decision-makers must face investing in transit.

More than 2,000 people from areas across Ohio filled out the survey. Moving forward, the consulting firm responsible for the overall study will identify top priorities for different areas of the state, and establish initiatives to roll out to the public in October. One such initiative could be the goal of improving the use of technology used by Ohio’s transit systems. The new software for electronic route scheduling or Automatic Vehicle Locators for buses could be added.

“A study of this magnitude has never been done before,” said Marianne Freed, administrator of the Office of Transit. “The information that will be available once the study is complete will be invaluable to the future of transit in Ohio.”

ON THE COVER Environmental Supervisor Mike Pettigrew spent the past four years orchestrating one of ODOT’s largest-ever land buys: a 3,300-plus acre site in Hocking County that will minimize impacts to bat habitats disturbed by road construction, allowing the department to complete jobs more quickly. See story, page 7. PHOTO BY KATHLEEN DUNLAP, CENTRAL OFFICE
State Fair display promotes highway safety

Joel Hunt, Central Office

The 2014 Ohio State Fair showcased ODOT’s interactive booth themed around Ohio’s Move Over law. Governor Kasich and the Ohio Legislature expanded the existing law in January. It requires motorists to avoid state workers performing their duties along the roadside by shifting lanes or slowing down. The goal of this law is to protect all roadside workers across the state.

Fair visitors that attended the event from July 23 through August 3 in Columbus found the ODOT display in the Marketplace Building, where they could learn more about this important change. The display also highlighted ODOT’s recent snow and ice work during the harshest winter on record; this year’s largest-ever construction season; and the importance of the state’s transportation infrastructure.

More than 50 ODOT volunteers greeted visitors, answered questions and handed out publications.

District team-up fixes landslide

Becky Giauque, District 11

A landslide along State Route 258 in Tuscarawas County was quickly repaired last month, thanks to the combined efforts of District 11 and its neighbor District 10. The landslide developed very rapidly over a six month period, leaving a 6-inch drop in the eastbound travel lane. The deformity needed to be addressed, even though it did not qualify under ODOT’s Geologic Site Management Program for addressing more serious geological road hazards.

The answer was to use a specialized piece of equipment—the ODOT Lodril—to repair the roadway. The Lodril is a high performance earth drilling attachment for excavators, used most often in construction for building structural foundations. ODOT’s version can aid in the repair of small landslides where the bedrock is relatively shallow.

Housed in District 10 when not in use, the Lodril usually has to be reserved months in advance. At District 11’s request, District 10 brought the Lodril to the project—even though it delayed some of their own projects—so repairs could be made faster to SR 258. Staff members from both districts worked on the project design, while District 11’s highway management team secured the funds and materials. The road was closed for repair, and as a result of the team work, the project was completed in just one week and for less than $29,000.
DISTRICT 7 WORK CREWS HAVE BEEN making the most out of the recent revisions in force account work, getting more done and tackling larger projects this construction season.

When a longitudinal joint deteriorated on Interstate 70 in Montgomery County, work crews milled a 3-foot wide slot and filled it with asphalt for a total length of 15 miles. They worked three extended nights and placed 1,440 tons of material. Some seasoned employees had never tackled a project of this size.

“Our crews went home proud of what they accomplished,” said District 7 Highway Management Administrator Scott Kasler.

District 7 also took on the repair of a deteriorated culvert on State Route 235 in Clark County. It was imperative that this project be completed in an effective and timely manner prior to a nearby contract project. Challenged by District Deputy Director Randy Chevalley, the crews completed the important repair in two days.

Additionally, the district has replaced a very old stone arch on State Route 202 damaged by heavy rains, as well as large culverts that would have previously been contracted out. The culvert replacements had to meet ODOT construction specifications and were documented the same as any outside contractor’s work.
FOR GAYLE STANFIELD, it's all about quality control and quality assurance.

Highway Technician Stanfield works to ensure the various concrete, asphalt and aggregate materials used for ODOT highway projects meet construction specifications. The staff members within the District 8’s state-of-the-art testing lab perform a variety of procedures to determine that only approved materials are used for highway construction projects.

Stanfield’s day-to-day duties focus on working with samples of asphalt materials being used for various highway resurfacing and reconstruction projects. In the simplest terms, Stanfield tests each sample to ensure the supplier followed the “recipe” per established standards to create a particular mix design. These materials are submitted either as sample cores cut from the roadway itself or in pans that come directly from the supplier’s asphalt plant. She also performs inspections of suppliers’ asphalt plants located within District 8 boundaries.

“The biggest thing . . . back here, is consistency,” she said. “Do everything the same way and there’s never a question about testing procedures and results.”

Her duties include checking core samples for density. Nuclear gauge testing is conducted to determine whether the percentage of liquid asphalt in a sample corresponds with the asphalt supplier’s description. Gradations are also performed to ensure correct percentages of aggregate are used.

Some of the equipment Stanfield uses has been on-site since before she began working in the test lab: the “Mary Ann”® Sifter, for instance, which uses a series of sieves to sort an asphalt sample into its component sizes, down to as fine as baby powder. Other equipment is newer, such as the ignition burner—an oven set at 500 degrees Celsius to burn off the asphalt from a sample before it undergoes testing.

Stanfield began her 25-year ODOT career in District 8 as a delivery worker before moving to test lab operations as a bituminous plant inspector. She advanced to a materials controller position before entering the highway technician series. The joys of her work are the technical procedures in measuring and calculating a sample’s components and density.

Another aspect of her job which Stanfield enjoys is teaching other employees about testing procedures. One class that she developed and taught is an HT pre-level 2 aggregate class.

“I love to train people,” said Stanfield. “I relish the opportunity to translate a highly technical skillset into something my students can understand.”

Outside of work, she is an Ohio State football fan and enjoys bantering with a co-worker who expresses an affinity for the University of Michigan team. She also enjoys swimming, cooking, reading and working on a variety of crafts.
“ODOT needs to remember there is NO PROFIT to be made! Quit trying to compete with contractors and crunch numbers. Simply use common sense to safely maintain our highway system and provide quality service to the people of our state. ODOT is putting stats and numbers at a higher priority than PEOPLE! It needs to change.”

“On the contrary, we believe our highest priority is people—both inside and outside of ODOT. By ‘crunching numbers,’ which in our case is the implementation of Critical Success Factors and the metrics associated with them, we examine the quality of work life of our people here at ODOT, we measure the safety of our roads as well as the pavement and bridge conditions, and we make sure our contract program is being delivered in a way that’s giving the people of Ohio the best possible value. All the numbers we crunch help us improve quality of life, safety, and opportunity for people.

What’s more, when I hear people say ‘ODOT doesn’t make a profit,’ or ‘it’s just government,’ I can’t help but think, that type of thinking is a cop-out. Should we not determine the worth, the usefulness, or the importance of the services we provide? In other words, should we not consider our value to the people of Ohio? Value can be measured, and if we’re striving to provide the best possible value, let’s make certain we’re getting the job done by measuring what we do.

Settling in to the ‘it’s just government’ mentality, I believe, creates mediocrity. This is the type of thinking we’re trying to move away from by asking our people to challenge themselves and examine their performance in a measurable way. As we are more and more successful, Ohioans will experience the highest-quality transportation system, and the people of ODOT will be able to experience the pride and satisfaction of genuine achievement and know they are making a difference.”

— Director Jerry Wray

The Fast Five

1. **Staffing CSF no longer tracked**
The start of the new fiscal year brought an end to the Progress Toward Optimal Structure metric, which measured staffing levels. Leadership has indicated the overall number is “about right.”

2. **IT hopes to resolve issues through new service**
The Division of Information Technology offers the “IT Now” system to employees, which allows them to submit their own tickets for problems or to monitor the status of widespread issues.

3. **Lean event examines purchasing process**
A team of employees gathered for a week-long event to better the IT procurement process. Examining each step, the group developed a more streamlined process to purchase products and services.

4. **ODOT booth educates state fairgoers**
ODOT presented a “Move Over”-themed booth at this year’s Ohio State Fair, complete with a “Paint-the-Plow” and Distracted Driving Simulator.

5. **Inaugural group completes leadership training**
Consultant Jason Barger led ODOT’s first Leadership Development Program, a six-session training offered to employees statewide focused on improving leadership skills among management.
The reality is that transportation construction must be undertaken with a responsibility to the environment. Balancing the need to protect the environment with the need to keep highway projects moving forward is the challenge of ODOT’s Office of Environmental Services (OES). OES scientists and administrators make certain all environmental concerns surrounding projects are addressed and resolved under the law.

One such on-going concern facing ODOT is the health and well-being of the Indiana bat. First listed as federally-endangered in 1967, these bats are migrants which hibernate in caves during the winter. They typically roost in suitable trees during the summer months. One of the key factors that led to the decline of their numbers is the loss of such trees, caused by among other things, highway construction. Since the Indiana bat is assumed to be present in all 88 Ohio counties, the need to protect this species can cause construction or maintenance projects requiring tree-cutting to suddenly stop. Projects across the state can be stalled while OES works with environmental agencies to resolve these conflicts.

In recent years, the department entered into an agreement with United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) to resolve this dilemma. To fulfill the agreement required the cooperation of ODOT’s Real Estate Division, District 10, Planning, CADD and Mapping, Chief Legal Counsel, Consultant Services, and Office of Finance. It also required the help of outside entities such as the Attorney General’s Office and other federal, state and private consultant partners.

In short, ODOT had to buy a lot of land for a little bat.

A SAFE PLACE TO ROOST

The potential environmental impacts to an animal habitat in one area can be allowed if a suitable habitat can be provided in another. Agencies like ODOT can buy credits in these areas in exchange for construction they undertake. Since there were no commercially available bat habitats in Ohio, ODOT took on the mission of finding and securing a large tract of land that could serve this purpose. ODOT entered into talks for the purchase of a 3,331-acre site in Hocking County owned by the Sunday Creek Coal Company. The property contained large amounts of forest and was already known to have a number of bats.

The site was promising, but it had to be approved by the USFWS. This meant it had to undergo a large-scale ecological survey and inventory to prove it had an Indiana bat population. This study documented the various natural resources on the property, including forested habitat, streams, and open waters. The ecological study was completed over the course of several months, using multiple ODOT teams of skilled scientists and biologists.

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“Our team faced many challenges,” said OES Environmental Supervisor Mike Pettegrew. “The terrain was extremely difficult, there was extensive forest coverage, limited summer field season, and huge amounts of data to collect, process, and interpret. To my knowledge, we have never conducted an ecological study of this magnitude.”

A TECHNOLOGICAL GAME-CHANGER

One of the distinctions of this project was the use of acoustic bat detectors: a first for ODOT. These devices use high definition microphones to record the high-frequency sounds bats use to navigate around objects and to find food. Each bat species has a signature frequency. By recording the bat calls in the area and later analyzing the sounds digitally, ODOT members could confirm if Indiana bats were on the land or not. This new technology had been recently endorsed by USFWS as an acceptable method for surveying the presence of bat species. Acoustic bat surveys are more cost-effective than the traditional surveys and do not require that animals be caught and handled.

Sampling on the property was conducted from June 2012 through September 2012. The results revealed the presence of 11 bat species, including the Indiana bat, and proved the land would make a suitable conservation site. The complex purchase of the property was completed in December 2012. It was one of the single largest acquisitions of land in ODOT’s history.

With a property secured for pooled statewide bat habitat conservation, the department plans to further streamline the coordination process with USFWS. This would allow ODOT to deliver its transportation program in a more predictable and efficient manner.

NEXT STEPS

Since the land purchase, ODOT has been working with USFWS on the final details which will lead to formal approval of bat habitat conservation credits for the site. The property will yield more than 2,000 acres of pooled credits for federally-listed endangered bat species. This will also apply to species which may need protection in the future, such as the northern long-eared bat. Once a long-term management plan for the property is established, the final step in the process will be to transfer the property to the ODNR Division of Wildlife for perpetual protection and management.

“This project has been the definition of a team effort,” said Pettegrew. “It could not have been accomplished without the work of a lot of quality individuals.”