COMMENORATING A CENTURY of CLEARING ICE & SNOW

PICTURED: Plowing snow in Carroll County, circa 1950.
Dear ODOT members,

This past year was outstanding for the Ohio Department of Transportation. We continue to grow in terms of professionalism, productivity and a healthy culture . . . A Great Place to Work and a source of pride for all of us.

ODOT provides products and services that are critical to the welfare of our state. From the Lytle Tunnel in Cincinnati; to the 1480 Valley View Bridge in Cleveland; from the Morgan State Route 266 fix; to the rehab of Interstate 75 in Toledo and all over the state, transportation investments are making a positive difference in quality of life, opportunity, jobs, commerce, and most importantly, safety.

Starting with preliminary engineering through design, final construction, and maintenance, the fact is nothing really good happens without the effort and work of ODOT people. We did over $2 billion dollars in contract work in 2017, with $2.4 billion projected for this year.

Now we find ourselves in 2018 and the middle of snow and ice season. Millions of people are counting on us, and they can rest easy because we are the standard of excellence in winter maintenance. HTs, auto techs and mechanics, TMs, CMs, HMAs and all the support folks make life better in Ohio and nobody does it better.

We will continue to upgrade our facilities and equipment, and 2018 will be another record-setting year in terms of force account work. ODOT is ready for the future too. Technology and smart mobility, including autonomous and connected vehicles, will affect our mission more and more.

“Excellence in Government” is much more than a slogan for our department: it is a goal, a vision and something worth striving for. Each day the people of ODOT demonstrate what it means.

Thank you.

A special message from ODOT Director Jerry Wray

‘Excellence in Government’ is much more than a slogan for our department: it is a goal, a vision and something worth striving for.

It is finished
Ron Poole, Central Office

At last, the mural at Central Office was completed this fall. Located on Central Office’s lower level leading to the cafeteria, the mural was the suggestion of Terri Barnhart with the Director’s Office. Grove City Garage Highway Technician Chris Berecz was invited to create the final product. Assisted by fellow HTs Derek Vincent and Gary Price, Berecz chose to base his work around the theme of ODOT equipment and tools central to the department’s mission.
On closer examination

Emily Boggs, District 9

The Planning and Design offices have embraced a new culvert inspector. The Hydraulic Inspection Vehicle Explorer (HIVE) is a waterproof, remote-controlled mini-car equipped with digital technology to aid in the inspection of the smaller conduits. The device uses the iPad to relay live video feedback of the culvert to the inspector. A nylon-coated steel cable is attached to the RC car to assist in retrieval of the vehicle and to ensure that it can be recovered if needed. The car allows culvert inspectors to perform basic, high quality inspections at a quicker rate due to its simplicity, portability, and affordability.

ODOT maintains and inspects over 84,000 conduits passing under state-owned roadways, with District 9 responsible for nearly 9,900 of those culverts. HIVE units have been assigned to each district to aid in smaller conduit inspections. District 9’s Office of Hydraulic Engineering discovered this cost-effective remote inspection tool being used by the Minnesota DOT while participating in a Hydraulic Engineering conference.

PHOTOS BY MATT MCCLELLAN, DISTRICT 9

SOCIAL MEDIA

Shout-outs

Troy Dowling @TroyDowling 22 Nov 2017
@ODOT_Toledo The diverging diamond (DDI) in #Perrysburg is well done! I just drove on it for the first time and found it to be very natural.

Harper Kristin Neles-Nunnemaker November 12, 2017
So last November the overhead signs on 75 said “Turkey goes Buckle Buckle” And my family has been talking about it all year. Will we get to see that sign again? Please?

GoodEnuf4Oats @GoodEnuf4Oats Jun 8
@ODOT_Akron I love the landscaping along the highways! Trees, bushes and tall grasses make for a relaxing view! Great job everyone!
Erin Fryz, Central Office

At the recent Central Office annual meeting, new-hire Jessica Koren told the audience she was one of identical triplet sisters. She grew up in Dublin together with look-aikes Michelle and Amanda and older brother David. Jessica works as the front desk receptionist and she and her sisters live together in the Columbus Brewery District. For this issue of Transcript, the sisters answered a few questions about themselves.

Did you, or do you, have anything matching growing up that you remember?

AMANDA: Growing up, we had the matching clothes but in different colors. Our parents can obviously tell us apart, but they would designate specific colors for us to wear to make it easier for other people. They needed a way to make sure we didn’t get mixed up, so a nurse told our dad to paint our toenails, so it was clear who was who. Dad decided to go with red, white and blue, and those colors stayed with us throughout our lives.

What is the craziest question you have ever received about being a triplet?

MICHELLE: If we can read each other’s minds. The answer is ‘no,’ but we do spend a lot of time together, so we definitely pick up on each other’s body language. It’s easy for one of us to imagine what any of the others are thinking.

Do you get mistaken a lot for each other?

JESSICA: I was at a tanning salon, and someone said, ‘I know you! How do I know you?’ Of course, it wasn’t me. That stuff happens all the time.

What was the last thing you all did together?

JESSICA: We all did cryotherapy [freezing therapy]. The spa told us we were the only family that has ever done that together.

Describe one another in three words.


AMANDA: Michelle is caring and sensitive. And fun. Jessica is stubborn. Loyal . . . loud. (laughs)
Double—and triple—vision

In honor of the story on the Koren sisters, Transcript is also featuring other ODOT members born as a set with their siblings. Just think of them as more of a good thing.
Paving season is over and once again the District 10 paving trains placed an impressive amount of asphalt on the roads: 30,133 tons of in total.

This year there were some changes for the paving trains. The northern crew (working in Washington, Monroe, Morgan and Noble counties) used a brand new paver. Additionally, HTs Darin Landefeld (Monroe) and Jim Welsh (Meigs) served as transportation managers on the northern and southern paving trains, respectively. It was the first season with TMs specifically assigned to the paving trains.

“District 10 continues to invest in our future by taking care of what we have. The paving trains are a specific example of such,” said Highway Management Administrator Jamie Hendershot.

“Darin and Jim were key to our district’s success. By working together and sharing best practices, Darin and Jim increased our efficiency, placing more asphalt in less hours than last season.”

The most asphalt was placed in Meigs County—5,455 tons—following smooth cooperation.

Ashley Rittenhouse, District 10
Way better  
Ron Poole, Central Office

This winter will mark the department’s 100th season of clearing snow and ice from Ohio roads. In that time, the department has had to learn much about ice and snow. During the 2014-2015 winter, snow and ice crews travelled 12,138,860 miles, worked a total of 1.1 million hours, and spread 947,000 tons of salt. A fleet of 1,700 snow plow trucks from 200 garages, yards, and outposts maintain some 43,337 lane miles of roadway every winter. But District 10 Maintenance Administrator Jamie Hendershot began looking at ways to improve fleet deployment and took the lead in this effort.

“Hendershot knew we needed to create a program around the trouble spots in each county,” said Central Office Program Administrator Dean Alatis. “We needed to figure out the right number of trucks needed for each section, and reducing the ‘dead head’ cycles for getting trucks refilled, serviced and back on the road.”

Fred Judson with Central Office came to the University of Akron with the idea to develop a geographical information system software application for snow and ice removal. The user-friendly resource takes into account all available traffic and weather information to help garages deploy their trucks to the areas where they are most needed. The program directs trucks to the nearest salt storage areas for refills, regardless of whether that salt is located in other counties or districts. Districts 1, 2 and 10 served as the pilot for this new program in 2016; ODOT is currently in the process of getting all the districts on-line.
Diversity in a workforce spurs creativity, innovation, and different ways to approach problems by tapping the talents of its people. Making sure ODOT benefits from this wellspring falls to Workforce Diversity Recruitment Manager Traci Luers. She has worked in human resources at both the state and federal levels before joining ODOT a year-and-a-half ago.

Her job focuses on ODOT’s diversity recruitment efforts, including community outreach. Luers’ goal is to build partnerships and get the members of specific community organizations and educational institutions to share information about the department’s career opportunities so that ODOT’s workforce is representative of the communities it serves.

“We have a goal in mind,” she said, “that includes these groups helping us develop and educate future ODOTer’s. It is hoped that one day, they will join our team and enjoy the great experience of helping to create a top transportation organization.”

Luers also works closely with personnel and hiring managers to keep track of the make-up of ODOT’s workforce. She routinely spends time talking to new hires during their orientation in both Central Office and in the districts. Luers enjoys eating in the Central Office cafeteria and will use the time to have conversations with different co-workers.

“I go to the cafeteria to ‘people watch,’” she said, “just to see who is coming through there; who knows about ODOT’s history; who has positive thoughts to share.”

Luers married in July of last year and now has a blended family that includes her son and two stepsons, ages 21, 22 and 23. She enjoys working out, and volunteers with a couple of non-profit organizations that mentor women and girls. Her efforts in and outside of work keep her busy, but are very rewarding.

“Having a diverse workforce is an ODOT priority,” Luers observed. “Diversity and inclusion has to be something that is reiterated all the time, so people understand this is who we are, this is what we do. We’re ODOT. We’re one team.”

Ron Poole contributed to this article.
PUBLIC SHOWSTOPPERS

Touch-A-Truck. Paint A Plow. These two important community outreach programs go hand-in-hand with the department’s initiatives to enhance awareness and promote safety.

Recently, Lawrence County ODOT paid a visit to Easterseals of Southeast Ohio in South Point, bringing the world of ODOT to members of the local chapter’s Adult Day Program who were able to take a look at the equipment, climb into the cab and apply their handprints to a plow. In District 6, crews from the ODOT Hilliard garage in Franklin County visited with some of the children who attend early childhood education classes at Easterseals.

“Whether it’s Touch-A-Truck or Paint A Plow, we have found such programs to be a great way to showcase our equipment and the good work our crews do while providing a terrific learning experience for members of the community,” said ODOT District 9 Deputy Director Vaughn Wilson.

Working with organizations like Easterseals, ODOT districts will participate in Touch-A-Truck events throughout the state to promote the department’s efforts. Paint-A-Plow events provide a hands-on experience, as members of the public paint an ODOT snow plow blade with their original artwork. The blades are visible when in full service during the winter-weather months and at events within communities.

“I think our crews get as much out of these outreach events as the participants,” said Mitch Blackford, District 6 deputy director. “Being a good neighbor at ODOT means showing folks the garage and in some cases bringing it to them.”
You’ve probably heard it said that it’s good to take stock of your blessings. I thought I was fairly good at that. Then, I met the women of the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville.

I had the pleasure of accompanying Terri Barnhart, executive assistant to ODOT Director Jerry Wray, to the facility on December 14 during their preparations for Mom and Kids Day. The event, which allows incarcerated mothers to “shop” for two gifts for each of their kids from among donated items, is held some time prior to the Christmas holiday.

I, along with Terri and other ODOT representatives and toy contributors, sat in chairs facing 100 or so women assembled in the visitors center. There we heard gratitude expressed in words not typical to the season.

“This is my first Christmas behind bars,” said one mother through tears. “My kids don’t even know they’re getting gifts.”

“I just love you all from the bottom of my heart,” said a mother of five children, ages ranging 3-18.

The mothers were given the chance to ask us questions, many concerned working for ODOT and the apprenticeship program. As Terri described the program which allows participants to earn a CDL paid for by the state and earn $16 per hour, the reactions of hopeful elation were audible throughout the hall.

That’s when the expression of yearning began appearing on many of the faces of the women. And then this thought struck me: They want what we have. They want a job that will give them a promising future. A job that allows them to feel accomplished. They want a job that makes them feel normal.

You could use a lot of words to describe that evening. “Humbling” is certainly one; “Grateful” is another. But “Blessed” sums it up best. To have the chance to pass along a part of our collective blessing to people who needed it was truly a privilege.
In an effort to improve safety, District 11 recently teamed up with a crew from District 10 to install rumble stripes on the centerline of U.S. Route 250 through the Tappan Lake area in Harrison County. District 11’s Safety Review Team determined that rumble stripes on this seven-mile stretch of roadway could decrease the number of left-of-center crashes on the road.

Since District 11 doesn’t have its own painting crew, District 10 stepped in to help get the job done. A contractor milled the rumble stripes, the District 10 team completed the painting, and ODOT’s Harrison County employees provided traffic control.

Centerline rumble stripes are designed and installed to reduce left-of-center crashes. The sound and vibration created when a vehicle rides over the rumble stripe warns inattentive or sleeping drivers that they are traveling left-of-center. State and national studies have estimated that centerline rumble stripes can reduce crashes on two-lane roads by up to 30 percent.
PHOTO FLASHBACK: A CENTENNIAL OF SAFETY
Ron Poole, Central Office

With this winter season, the state will have been in the snow and ice clearing business for 100 years. It represents a huge investment in the selfless service to the safety and convenience of others; workers past and present clearing roadways of snow and ice regardless of the severity of the storms or the modesty of the tools at their disposal. From its start as a service to a local army base, snow and ice removal has become a statewide service depended upon by millions of motorists through the years.

Photos courtesy of the ODOT photo archive: http://photoarchive.dot.state.oh.us/