How do we ‘beet’ ice & snow? pg 3

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Master Plan garners national award pg 7

Holmes County HT Tobias Hershberger refuels his truck during one of the many powerful winter storms that hit the state at the end of January.

PHOTO BY MITCH MILLER, DISTRICT 11
Credit Union Bridge earns national recognition
Adam Kearns, Guest Writer

Bridge Credit Union has been awarded the Louise Herring Philosophy-in-Action Member Service Award from the Credit Union National Association for ConnectPLUS, a retiree benefits program available exclusively to retirees from ODOT and the other agencies served by Bridge. The Louise Herring Award is intended to recognize the credit union with the best practical application of the “People Helping People” philosophy. The award will be presented this month in Washington, DC.

ConnectPLUS was launched by Bridge in 2012 in response to the large number of pending retirements of ODOT employees. Bridge representatives met with personnel officers for each ODOT District Office and Central Office to introduce the program. When an ODOT employee retires, ConnectPLUS provides them with additional value and a number of features available free-of-charge, including decreased loan rates, increased certificate rates, and incentives for referring other members to Bridge. The efforts of both department personnel officers and the Bridge staff to educate members about these benefits have contributed greatly to the program’s success.

‘Move Over’ law in effect
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Beginning in March, Ohio officials will start enforcing the new Move Over law. Signed by Governor Kasich in December, the new law requires motorists to slow down and, as conditions permit, shift to an adjacent lane when approaching construction, maintenance and public utilities vehicles parked on the roadside with flashing, oscillating or rotating lights.

The law was designed to help protect highway safety, construction, and maintenance workers on Ohio’s roadways. ODOT, the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission and OCSEA all supported the law’s passage.

During his testimony on behalf of the bill, ODOT Director Jerry Wray told the House Transportation Committee, “This is truly a bipartisan measure. When it comes to highway safety, there are no Republicans or Democrats. There is only common sense. Part of ODOT’s mission statement says that we will work to improve safety for both the motoring public and for our workers. This bill will help us do that.”

Since 2008, more than 600 collisions occurred between the travelling public and ODOT vehicles and equipment. Just last April, a crash in Delaware County resulted in the death of 27-year-old Lee Rizor, a father of two and a five-year veteran with ODOT.
‘Upward Feedback’ becoming a reality
Alexandra Buerger, Central Office

AN IMPROVEMENT TEAM WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL 12 DISTRICTS HAS BEEN MEETING OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS TO DISCUSS WAYS ODOT COULD BRING UPWARD FEEDBACK SURVEYS TO WORK UNITS. THE PURPOSE OF THE INITIATIVE IS TO GIVE EMPLOYEES A CHANCE TO COMMENT ON THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES THEY SEE IN THEIR MANAGERS. THOSE MANAGERS, IN TURN, Gain THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEar FIRST-HAND ABOUT AREAS THEY BOTH EXCEL AND NEED TO IMPROVE IN, AND SUPERVISORS OF BOTH EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS GET A BETTER OVERALL FEEL FOR THE WAYS THEIR STAFFS ARE WORKING TOGETHER. THE TEAM AND CENTRAL OFFICE HUMAN RESOURCES ARE DEVELOPING QUESTIONNAIRES ABOUT MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES. A PROCESS IS ALSO BEING DRAFTED TO ENSURE THE SURVEYS ARE ADMINISTERED IN A CONFIDENTIAL, FAIR MANNER. THESE OPTIONAL SURVEYS WILL BE AVAILABLE THIS YEAR.

Many employees statewide have expressed interest in having the opportunity to evaluate their managers, and the team believes a system like this could be beneficial for all.

LOCAL NEWS

Beets used against ice and snow
Denise Heitkamp, District 7

THIS WINTER MARKS THE SECOND YEAR Montgomery County has been using a unique agricultural product to help melt snow and ice on the highways. The privately developed product is made of the juice of the sugar beet, but with the sugar removed and mixed with other chemical additives. The resulting liquid can be applied to highways as a pre-treatment, but is more commonly used as an additive to salt before it is applied to road surfaces. The beet juice compound has the ability to activate the salts’ melting abilities at much lower temperatures and to help prevent the refreezing of water on the highways. During the recent record-setting temperatures caused by the polar vortex, Montgomery County applied the deicer to salt as it fell from the spinner on all trucks, and applied the product in equal parts with salt brine directly to roads. It successfully melted snow and ice from roadways in about 90 minutes without any refreezing issues.

Other counties in District 7 and in District 4 have also begun using the product with much success. The county has had numerous compliments on how clear the roads have been so far this winter.

Shelby County Transportation Manager Jeff Marshall programs the mixture of aqua selina, calcium chloride and beet juice that is mixed with salt and spread on roads.
Recognition for innerbelt project
Jocelyn Clemmings, District 12

The first phase of the much anticipated George V. Voinovich Bridge project was much more than the completion of a major construction project: It also served as a pilot to better incorporate sustainable construction methods in state projects. ODOT and contractor Walsh Construction incorporated what became known as the “Green 7” environmentally-friendly practices into the project: energy efficiency, green building, waste reduction and recycling, administration, awareness of the community’s environment, use of sustainable materials, and sustainable practices used in the bridge’s design and construction.

The Federal Highway Administration recently recognized the project for its successful efforts, and District 12 ODOT Deputy Director Myron Pakush and the project team were recognized at the “Whom to Watch” in Sustainability Forum held by Crain’s Cleveland Business Publication.

Program to promote quick clearance starts
Amanda McFarland, District 12

ODOT’s Central Office and District 12 have partnered to expand the Towing and Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP) to the Cleveland metro area. TRIP promotes quicker removals of large disabled vehicles following highway collisions by utilizing a cash incentive for qualified towing companies. After its successful pilot in Columbus, TRIP was rolled out to local law enforcement and first responders at the quarterly Cleveland Traffic Incident Management meeting held at the end of 2013.

Large commercial vehicle incidents frequently result in multi-lane or even full road closures, which are a large generator of congestion and secondary incidents. TRIP will pay qualified heavy-duty towing and recovery companies monetary bonuses for the quick clearance of such incidents in the Cleveland metro area. This practice is expected to reduce the clearance time of these incidents by establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with well qualified towing and recovery companies. The Columbus version of the program has had ten trips so far and has enjoyed strong success since its initiation last year.

ODOT will prequalify select Cleveland area towing and recovery companies to take part in this program on a year-by-year basis.
**Q**

“WE HAVEN’T HEARD AN UPDATE ON THE HIGHWAY TECHNICIAN (HT) SERIES IN A WHILE. IS ODOT STILL PLANNING TO MAKE CHANGES TO IT?”

**A**

“SINCE JANUARY 2011, THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE ON THIS SUBJECT. WE’VE RECEIVED COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE SERIES’ TRAINING AND HAVE HEARD OTHER CONCERNS ABOUT HOW CONSTRUCTION EXPERIENCE IS OBTAINED, AND THE LIMITATIONS ON HT CAREER PATHS. IT’S NO WONDER SO MANY ARE INTERESTED IN WHAT’S GOING ON: OVER 40 PERCENT OF OUR WORKFORCE IS CLASSIFIED IN THE HT SERIES.

In 2012, we put together a joint HT Taskforce chaired by District 10 Deputy Director Steve Williams which included three HT members, a county manager, two highway management administrators (HMAs) and two district Construction and Testing engineers. One of the first steps was to survey the HMAs, county managers, district construction, testing and project engineers, and all HTs and union leadership. The 927 responses revealed:

- About 75 percent were in favor of creating two career paths in the HT Series - one for maintenance and one for construction. Only 15 percent opposed.
- About 75 percent said the series hinders ODOT’s maintenance with limited forces, particularly in the summer with so many people in construction or training.
- Construction HT respondents felt overwhelmingly that math skills were too low and the overall ability to read and comprehend specifications should be stressed. They felt the HT 1 provision to have a CDL should be dropped in favor of possessing good math and comprehension skills. CDL training can be obtained later.

The joint taskforce put together a series of recommendations, including a HT three-tier career path of maintenance, construction, and testing. They suggested the career path split into those three areas at the HT3 level. In addition, someone could potentially be hired from the outside if they have an associate degree or higher in Construction Management.”

— Director Jerry Wray

*Look for Part 2 of this Ask The Director in the March edition of Transcript.*

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**Driver’s best friend?**

**PICTURED IS THE FIRST EVER DIVERGING DIAMOND INTERCHANGE BUILT WITHIN OHIO, AT INTERSTATE 270 AND ROBERTS ROAD IN COLUMBUS. THE DIVERGING DIAMOND DESIGN IMPROVES SAFETY AND REDUCES CONGESTION BY SWITCHING MOTORISTS TO THE OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE ROAD AS THEY PASS OVER THE FREEWAY. THIS REDUCES THE NUMBER OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT POINTS BETWEEN VEHICLES AND INCREASES THE CAPACITY OF THE INTERCHANGE. ©

**PHOTO BY ED KROMAN, CENTRAL OFFICE**
Shale industries are a rising presence in the state. Eastern Ohio is the sweet spot, with activity expanding both north and south. To date, 23 Ohio counties now have some level of shale development. Statewide, there are a total of 1,050 wells either permitted, being drilled, drilled, or producing energy, but data suggests that almost 2,000 wells may be in production in Ohio by the end of this year.

This industry is an economic boom for Ohio, but it also brings increased demands on roadways, as drilling sites install new pipelines and driveways and ship out super loads of their product. Addressing these issues is the job of District 11’s Anna Kuzmich. Already a pavement engineer with the office, Kuzmich took on a new role as ODOT’s first statewide shale coordinator in July, 2012. Her job is to work with the shale industry and with ODOT to make certain shipping permits are issued consistently to companies throughout the state and that the transportation is being used safely and productively by everyone.

“I’m fascinated by the industry and find it to be a great challenge,” said Kuzmich. “I’m excited to learn new things and be part of this great opportunity for the state. I continue to be surprised by how willing the oil and gas companies are to cooperate with us and how safety conscious they are.”

Helping with the permit process is no small job: In 2013, districts saw a large increase in permits for gathering and transmission lines of both liquid and natural gas. Just about 50 percent of the permits issued in District 11 are now oil and gas related, with about 35 percent of those issued in nearby District 10. Districts 4 and 5 are also seeing a 10-15 percent increase. This makes it extremely difficult for the district permit technicians and engineers to visit each site. Both the county and transportation managers step in and help review requests by visiting the sites. Additionally, eastern Ohio has seen an increase in superload and oversized load transports.

“We are experiencing some difficulties with the transport of these loads simply because of the geometry of our more rural roadways,” noted Kuzmich, “but we are continuing to work through them.”

Kuzmich has been with ODOT for 20 years. A non-traditional student, she went back to school in 1990 as a single parent, driving about 140 miles round trip every day to the University of Akron from Jefferson County. She graduated as a civil engineer in 1996, and received her Professional Engineer’s license in 2001.

Outside of work, her first love is being a “Granna” to her three grandsons, age 4 and nine-month old twins. She has two adult daughters and also enjoys rescuing plants from the take-me-home-before-I-die sale racks.”
Building Operating Management Magazine has announced ODOT will receive the national FMXcellence Recognition Award at a conference in March for best practices and innovation in meeting the department’s organizational priorities. ODOT was selected for the development and implementation of a Statewide Facilities Master Plan and Optimization Process which provides a foundation for making rational, cost-effective and needs-based decisions regarding building facilities used in the core business functions of the department.

“Prior to the Statewide Master Planning and Optimization Initiative, decisions were randomly made with little or no input from shareholders,” said Daniel Barr deputy director for the ODOT Division of Facilities & Equipment Management, “and deficient facilities were replaced only as funding was made available.”

The FMXcellence award recognizes in-house facility management departments for innovation, use of best practices and impact on the overall organization.

Edward Sullivan, editor of Building Operating Management Magazine said, “Whether it’s sustainability, cost-cutting, or a construction or renovation project, the in-house facilities manager function plays an important role in achieving results for the organization. And in-house facility management departments that achieve results deserve praise.”

According to Dave Coyle, assistant director of Business and Human Resources, ODOT is experiencing a transformational period where the main focus is to direct all resources on improving true core business functions.

“ODOT’s vision is to become a long-term, reliable, professional and highly productive organization,” he said. “Through the Statewide Master Planning Process, ODOT was able to move the facilities function closer to the department’s vision. The Master Planning Process has the potential to be one of the most transformational tools in the history of the department.”

Highlights of the ODOT Statewide Facilities Master Planning Process goals include linking the ODOT Statewide Facilities Master Plan with the ODOT Strategic Plan, reducing the average age of facilities, reducing square footage of staffed areas, reducing total statewide facilities maintenance and utility costs, reducing construction costs and exploring shared resources to improve efficiencies, reduce costs, and create opportunities for possible revenue production.

ODOT will receive a national award in March for its Statewide Facilities Master Plan. Developers of the plan include: front row: Rick Puderbaugh (left), Vicki Ashley, Bob Denman, Marie Cerda, Sulaiman (Sully) Bah; back row: Tyler Bircher (left), Steve Masters, Daniel Barr, Tim Brunney, Dwight Neely. Not pictured: Kerry Johnson, Julie Sharon, Danny Brown, David Coyle, Rush Shipe, James Mullins.
Highway technician plows through an American sport

Brent Kovacs, District 4

It started in the 1860s, when farmers challenged each other to see whose plow horse could pull the most weight mounted on a barn door. Work vehicles replaced horses by 1929, and by the 1950s tractor pull competitions were part of local and state fairs.

Ohio is an integral part of this sport; some of those first motorized vehicle competitions were held in the state, and it was two Ohio brothers who invented a special crossbox modification allowing tractors to be “soaped up” with more than one engine in the 1960s. Today, Jim Miller in District 4 is part of the state’s connection to this powerful motor sport. A 20-year participant, Miller competes in the summer months and on weekends and won ten events in 2013.

“I enjoy spending time with my family and friends at the weekend pulls,” said Miller. “For us, it truly is a family event.”

Miller got his start with the big diesel tractors that are seen at the yearly county fairs, but has used garden tractors for the last 10 years. The engine has more than 100-horsepower and runs on alcohol, the same fuel that top fuel drag cars use.

Of course, Miller also finds satisfaction from his duties in Stark County, fixing broken equipment, mowing grass and trimming trees. He says the key to being successful as a highway technician and at tractor pulling is having a good team around you. Fellow Stark County employee and competitor Bob Clappsdale helps Miller with his vehicle. Miller is also getting the younger generation involved:

“My son Jesse, who is 12 years old, has been tractor pulling since he was 6,” said Miller. You can see videos of Miller’s events at: youtube.com/jdmiller4020

Miller at Hammerdown Pull in Orwell, Ohio.