Ready . . . Set . . .
Opportunity Corridor work to begin pg 6

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY
Ramp treatments grind away at high collision rates pg 4

WORKING WITH CULVERTS
ANYTHING BUT BORING pg 7
Half-century-old buildings make way for larger, more efficient ones

Joel Hunt, Central Office

In four short years, ODOT has constructed 14 new Full Service Maintenance Facilities and two outposts around the state, with six more facilities scheduled to open in 2015. This is the largest push for new buildings since the interstate system was built in the 1950s.

Prior to 2011, ODOT only built an average of one new facility per year. At $8.5 million each—not including land—Assistant Director Dave Coyle sees them as a good investment. “Today’s snow and ice equipment is too large to fit inside the older buildings,” Coyle said. “The new buildings are more energy efficient and have more space for materials and equipment.”

Tyler Bircher, statewide facilities information coordinator, said they use cost-saving materials like fabric structures to cover salt. “Better equipment and technology,” he said, “will help extend the life of snowplow trucks, too, with their built-in undercarriage wash systems to wash away salt from under trucks.”

The mission of ODOT’s Office of Statewide Facilities Operations drove the site selection process, which is to provide safe, functional and cost-effective properties and

Uniform program set to begin

Alexandra Buerger, Central Office

Employees statewide may start taking advantage of a new program this year that will provide uniforms to wear on the job.

The optional program will supply freshly-laundered, high-visibility shirts and denim pants with additional retro-reflectivity striping to employees on a weekly basis. The cost for the service will be split between ODOT and the participating employee.

“After hearing that a number of ODOT people rent uniforms on their own, leadership began tossing the idea around to offer the service to everyone,” said Shannon Slavin, program lead in the Office of Employee Health and Safety. “We figured out a way to make it happen.”

Once a sample uniform is finalized, vendors will bid on a contract with ODOT, and one company will be selected to provide the service. Classifications eligible for the uniform program are yet to be determined. However the list will be similar to those approved for the boot-purchasing program: highway technicians and auto mechanics.

ON THE COVER Clark County crews clear debris from under the State Route 4 bridge near Enon. Photo by Mike Bloomfield, District 7
**ASK THE DIRECTOR**

**I am concerned with what seems to be a move towards hiring consultants and wanting to contract work out instead of creating a strong workforce who can perform the work in-house.**

**A**

**The department must constantly seek a balance between maintaining in-house expertise and not growing too large. Our resources and our capital program are very cyclical. Currently, we have one of the largest capital programs in ODOT’s history. I can’t promise that will be the case in four or five years. If we grow too large and resources at either the state or federal levels decline in the future, we would face the issue of layoffs. In addition, Ohio has a great engineering industry that does a good job and should be supported. Many of the people who work at these firms began their careers at ODOT, which allows us to take advantage of their talent and experience.”

— Director Jerry Wray

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**THE ODOT NEWS Fast Five**

1. **Lean event looks at sign production**
   Employees directly involved in making ODOT signs met to evaluate the creation process and to review new design software for future use. The selected software will help create anything from memorial signs to large interstate signs indicating exit ramps.

2. **Contract negotiations to start**
   Negotiations between the State of Ohio and the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association for the next union contract are pending. Updates to the finalized contract will be provided once available.

3. **Safety program kicks off**
   District 11 launched a safety campaign to encourage a safer workplace over the course of 2015. Employees can participate in training and safety videos while maintaining an injury-free record to earn prizes.

4. **District 7 plans work months ahead**
   County managers in District 7 worked last month to create work plans for the upcoming summer. The plans will build requests for new materials and equipment around anticipated projects, as well as organize staffing levels.

5. **ODOT receives regular air time in Toledo**
   District 2 representatives can now be seen regularly on Toledo’s NBC 24 newscast during its “Better Living” segment every two weeks. Issues relevant to the motoring public, such as snow and ice efforts, construction, or pothole repairs will be discussed.
facilities that support the core functions and mission of ODOT. The office worked with all the districts and Central Office shareholders to put together a master planning process to provide a systematic method for gathering and analyzing facilities. “This information assists us in making effective and logical decisions regarding design, location and function of future ODOT facilities,” said Sulaiman Bah, statewide facilities engineer.

So, what happens to all the facilities ODOT leaves behind? It’s up to the districts. According to Bah, selling or giving them to the locals is top on the list. Coyle believes the biggest take-away from this project has been the benefit of the wider use of resources. “We want to share resources to improve efficiencies where possible,” he said. “District 1’s Forest Outpost in Hardin County is being shared by three counties. Districts 1 and 2 are exploring sharing an outpost, and the Fulton County Full Service Maintenance Facility may be used by both ODOT and the local municipality.”

Better safe than sorry
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Over the past eight years, ODOT has substantially increased its investments in highway safety improvements. Under the wet pavement program, 84 interstate ramp locations with high collision rates during wet conditions were selected to undergo an experimental process. Their ramp surfaces were milled and grinded, then treated with additional surface overlays. The goal is to increase friction and create more traction during rainy conditions.

This intense effort started with a special team in Central Office, according to ODOT Acting Deputy Director of Planning Jennifer Townley. “Each year our safety team gets together to examine systematic conditions where there are a high number of crashes,” she reports. “After examining the data, we come up with relatively inexpensive ways to try to reduce those crashes.”

Before the program began, more than 2,700 crashes at on- or off-ramp locations under wet roadway conditions occurred. By 2013 that number had dropped to just over 1,800. In addition, Ohio had only 990 traffic-related deaths—the lowest number of fatalities since 1936. The department invests over $100 million annually seeking solutions to lower the number of highway collisions.

Improving safety is one of five critical success factors ODOT measures as part of its strategic plan. “The safety of the travelling public is important to this department. We are looking at things that will have an immediate impact on safety,” Townley said.
A DAY IN THE LIFE

National Engineers Week
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

It is a fact that National Engineers Week has included the day of February 22 every year since 1951. That is the date the nation's first president, George Washington, was born. Washington is considered by many to be the country's first engineer, as he was appointed official surveyor of Culpeper County, Virginia at the age of 17. He would have been right at home at ODOT.

Web-search the definition of the word “engineer” and you will find “a person who designs, builds, or maintains engines, machines, or public works.” As part of public works, transportation is at the heart of much of the engineering field. ODOT’s Chief Engineer, Assistant Director for Transportation Policy James Barna, says his colleagues in the profession are critical to the department’s mission.

“They are involved in almost everything we do,” said Barna. “Whether its project development, contract administration, traffic operations, maintenance strategies, testing, or material research, they have a hand in everything.”

ODOT currently has 646 engineers on its payroll, which represents 13 percent of the department’s workforce. In all, there are over two dozen different types of engineers with the department. They include members of the CADD and mapping services, construction management, consultant services, contract administration, roadway services, testing, traffic engineering, environmental services, equipment management, estimating, facilities operations, geotechnical engineering, hydraulic engineering, materials management, pavement engineering, planning, roadway engineering, structural engineering, and technical services.

The National Society of Professional Engineers sponsors National Engineers Week, which is observed by more than 70 engineering, education and cultural societies and more than 50 government agencies and corporations in the United States. This year, National Engineer’s Week will be observed February 22–28.

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn.”

— Benjamin Franklin

EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT
First section of Opportunity Corridor to start

Amanda McFarland, District 12

At a cost of $20.9 million, major work on the long awaited Cleveland Opportunity Corridor will begin this spring.

The purpose of the Opportunity Corridor Project is to improve the transportation system and support planned economic development in the areas between I-490/1-77 and University Circle in Cleveland. This area includes a part of the city known as the “Forgotten Triangle” due to the lack of economic activity. Aside from the transportation benefits it could bring to this part of Cleveland, this effort opens the potential for new economic development, new jobs and a new identity for the community. The project will widen the existing East 105th Street, from Quebec Avenue to north of Chester Avenue in the city of Cleveland. This first phase of the project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2017.

The work is expected to impact traffic on East 105th and surrounding local streets during construction. ODOT will be working closely with the local community development corporations and respective councilpersons during construction to keep residents up-to-date on progress.

Future phases of the project will include the construction of a new roadway on a completely new alignment between Quebec Avenue and I-490. Section two is expected to begin in late-spring 2015, with section three starting in 2017. The entire project is expected to be completed in 2019.

On the night shift

Mandi Dillon, District 7

This snow and ice season will include a change in the work schedule for the Montgomery County Garage: it recently added a night shift. A six-person crew and a supervisor are now available 11:30 p.m. to 8 a.m. Sunday through Friday. Now, no matter the hour, ODOT employees will be on hand around the clock.

Montgomery County has a large number of interstate miles, and crews are often limited to closing lanes primarily at night. Having a night crew will help the Montgomery team get more pavement repairs done throughout the year.

“We used to have to patch together crews for the summer for several weeks just to get our pavement repairs done at night,” said Montgomery County Administrator Bob Lenser. “Now we have a crew that can do them.”

The night crew gives ODOT a 24-hour presence on the roads during the work week. This is especially needed during the winter months, when evening or overnight storms hit the area.

“This new schedule is very advantageous for snow and ice as well,” said Lenser.
Better research, better results
Ericka Pfeifer, District 5 and David Rose, District 10 and Central Office

With more than 20,000 of them located throughout southeastern Ohio, the maintenance and replacement of culverts can be complex and expensive for the state, and inconvenient to drivers. But thanks to some collaborative efforts, a new process is helping to simplify culvert replacement, saving time and money.

The auger boring machine, commonly referred to as “jack and bore,” is a type of horizontal earth-mover used for installing new cased pipe under existing roadways. What is unique about the device is that it does the job without creating an open trench: no trench means no road removal and no need for closures, detours or delays.

The standard culvert replacement process requires coordination between several offices and a maintenance team of seven to eight individuals to install the new culvert while closing a highway for several days.

Solving this problem became the focus of research conducted by the Office of Statewide Planning and Research and Bowling Green University. Using federal money, the $350,000 jack and bore was purchased to test if it could improve the process. In the spring of 2014, District 5 HMA Tom Bradford reached out to District 10 Roadway Services Manager Bob Zwick, inviting him to join the research panel.

“ODOT used to have a statewide contract for jack and bore, but decided to move in a different direction,” said Zwick. “I helped oversee about 15 projects through the old contract and was excited to further study this process, to see if we could do it cheaper and faster.”

Bradford and Zwick, along with District 5 Roadway Services Manager Todd Gottke and roadway service crews from both districts, received a three-day training on the new machine. Though some were skeptical, the advantages of the new process soon became clear.

With the jack and bore method, the machine drills a hole under the road while simultaneously putting a 20-foot section of pipe into place. This process is repeated with additional sections that are welded together from the inside. Eventually the full culvert is in place underneath the roadway without a disruption of the surface; Traffic is maintained the entire time with only the occasional flagger on duty. Culvert replacements once requiring five days can now be accomplished in half that time. Indeed, crews have been able to install up to 140 feet of culvert in a single day. So far, District 10 has completed two projects and District 5 has completed three projects in 2014 using the jack and bore. Ten more projects are planned for 2015, with more requests submitted for additional projects daily.

The machine, along with another innovative pipe bursting machine born out of this research, has traveled to several other districts around the state helping to improve the work they do. Although the results have been very successful, the research findings will not be completed until November 2015. The project is distinctive in that it connects members of academia directly to ODOT employees in the field.

“In the past, there was disconnect between research studies and the employees in the field,” said District Research Coordinator Jill Martindale. “The new focus on collaborating with the teams performing the work has been very successful. We are seeing real, tangible results.”
Since its inception just two years ago, ODOT's statewide “Paint the Plow” community outreach program has been growing in popularity. ODOT garages have been delivering snowplow blades to schools where local students have been decorating them with painted murals. The newly adorned blades are used to clear highways all through the winter months.

Students have used their artistic talents to represent their school mascots, teams, clubs, or ODOT’s snow and ice efforts. It is the goal of the program to promote safety and raise public awareness about ODOT’s snow and ice removal operations.

Transcript is proud to showcase a few of these creations that are hard at work on the highways.