COME SAIL AWAY

ready for the race!
what a crew
ahoy!
beautiful day on the lake

February 2016
"Ask the Director

Q: “I would suggest" year. Many of our current web pages are stale and updates seem inconsistent. As we move toward improving our communication tools, an updated, current web presence will strengthen the ODOT brand and enhance the user experience.”

A: "Your suggestion is excellent, and we are actually working on this. Over the past six months, a web advisory team of ODOT people from the districts and Central Office employed a Request for Proposal process to hire a web design firm to advise the department on the best way to redesign our website. The advisory team of a dozen people includes district and Central Office communications personnel, representatives from IT, engineering, and other disciplines. After a thorough search, the team hired Cleveland-based Paragon. The firm is currently working with the web advisory team to make recommendations for the site redesign. This is ODOT’s first website redesign in almost a decade. Since then much has changed in the Internet world. User expectations are more demanding. The fastest growing segment of the market is now mobile users. People expect to get to our website by phone, tablet, laptop, and desktop computer.

ODOT’s current website has over 95,000 pages. It attracts nearly four million unique visitors a year. Our goal is to streamline the site and make it easier to use. In addition, we want to use the site to tell ODOT’s story by humanizing our brand as a department. Most people don’t know everything ODOT does. We have thousands of professionals dedicated to maintaining the many components of our transportation infrastructure.

All of this will take time, money, effort and cooperation from across the Department. You can expect to see the website redesign by the end of this year. I hope ODOT people will feel good about it.”

Connection = Protection

Sharon Smigelski, District 8

So, Mother Nature – what’s it going to be? Freezing snow or warm rain? Winter boots or tennis shoes? Please construe windbreakers? So far, the first weeks of the 2016 winter season have been anything but typical. No matter how unpredictable it may seem, ODOT has to be prepared for the kind of severe winter that can sneak up on us all.

Take District 8. This season, the district will utilize two brand new facilities to improve efficiencies in its snow and ice operations. In Greene County, the district and Wright State University partnered to construct a new shared-use maintenance facility on what was once a soccer field on the Wright State campus. In Butler County, a similar shared-use agreement between ODOT and Ross Township resulted in the construction of a 2,000-ton capacity salt barn near the village of Millville. The fabric-covered structure also contains brine and calcium tanks.

Under the long-term cooperative operating agreement with Wright State, the new Greene County facility relocates ODOT winter operations to a more centralized location. ODOT’s current website has over 95,000 pages. It attracts nearly four million unique visitors a year. Our goal is to streamline the site and make it easier to use. In addition, we want to use the site to tell ODOT’s story by humanizing our brand as a department. Most people don’t know everything ODOT does. We have thousands of professionals dedicated to maintaining the many components of our transportation infrastructure.

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Highway Technician Guy Baker operates a loader to fill a salt barn at the new ODOT/Wright State shared use facility. Photo by Brian Cunningham, District 8.

On the Cover For District 2 Bridge Engineer Jim Bradley, sailing is a family tradition. This month’s front and back covers feature Bradley and his son, Bryan, sailing around the Cleveland water intake on Lake Erie. See story on page 8. Photos courtesy of Jim Bradley, District 2.

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New leadership, new division
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Instead of auctioning off an old tractor jet truck that was in disrepair, District 4 mechanics have transformed it into an effective snow and ice fighter. They started by removing all of the old holding tanks and pumps, then added a new 3,500 gallon tank.

Next came a retrofit to accommodate a pretreating system—a large stainless steel brine tank and a new brine sprayer bar to direct the spray over the road. The truck frame was then sandblasted and painted. The result: A like-new truck ready for action in Summit County.

“I am proud of our garage for recycling this old truck so it can now become a useful tool in our snow and ice fleet,” said Bob Pallo, highway management administrator.

Contract Sales Administrator Lauren Purdy has been promoted to be the first deputy director of the Division of Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). Kimberly Watson has been named assistant deputy director and administrator of the office of Equal Opportunity, while Deborah Green has been named administrator of the office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and Terry Bolden has been named administrator of the Office of Outreach.

Last July, the department created ODI to promote diversity and provide equal opportunities both internally and externally for small, minority, and women-owned businesses. Their goal is to certify more disadvantaged, small and minority business enterprises, while encouraging and advising companies on how to do business with ODOT.

“I’m very excited about this position. It’s brand new and I have a lot of ideas about how we can make positive changes to help Ohio’s small and disadvantaged businesses work with ODOT,” Purdy says.

Residents of the west side of Cleveland are ecstatic after the opening of the West 73rd Street Extension. The road opened Saturday, December 12 of last year, and residents took their first bike and car rides down the extension to experience the new passage to Lake Erie. For many, the $24-million extension is a true community blessing.

“This project is for all of the west side area,” said Deborah Pawlus, a local resident, “as many generations of families are still living here. We are finally able to access our beloved Lake Erie without obstacles. Edgewater Beach is now a bike ride or walk away from our houses.”

West 73rd Street now extends under the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks, along the Cleveland Memorial Shoreway (State Route 2) to connect with existing access to Edgewater Park in Cleveland. It is part of the $95 million, three-phase Lakefront West Project. The project also includes new bike facilities, lighting, landscaping and other improvements.

“The greatest cities in the world take advantage of their waterfront,” said Cleveland City Councilman Matt Zone. “For decades and generations, Cleveland has turned its back to the lakefront. Now, finally, we’ve woken up as a community. This project will create new connections between the Gordon Square neighborhood and our greatest natural resource—Lake Erie, bringing public spaces and pedestrian walkways that will benefit current and future generations.”

Making connections
Danielle Bell, District 12

A new sprayer bar will link to the brine tank here to direct solution on the roadway.
Hitting the road . . . almost
Joel Hunt, Central Office

With only 30 perfect trucks left to be manufactured of the original 163, ODOT managers, mechanics and snow plow operators are in a hurry-up-and-wait mode to evaluate the new trucks’ performance. “Unfortunately, this year’s mild winter is keeping the trucks inside making it difficult for us to evaluate them,” said Doug Burke, transportation engineer. The office of Equipment Management and the 28-member Perfect Truck Improvement Team, consisting of highway technicians and mechanics, was formed in 2013 to determine what they think makes the perfect truck. The group’s chief concerns with the existing fleet were that some trucks are slow to start from a stop, some don’t have enough power to push snow, and some have insufficient acceleration to merge into traffic.

It will take at least five years to collect enough data to determine which truck is the best decision for ODOT. Initial cost, performance and maintenance costs will be some of the factors considered. “It may take longer because the trucks are under warranty for seven years,” Burke said.

Worth the wait
Joel Hunt, Central Office

Ohio’s transportation funding is secure—at least for the next five years—thanks to the new $300 billion Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, or “FAST Act.”

After several years of short-term extensions and uncertainties, FAST Act was passed with overwhelming support in the House and Senate. It was signed into law Dec. 5, 2015. “FAST will go a long way in helping ODOT have a predictable, stable source of funding in order to preserve the state’s roads and bridges,” said ODOT Director Jerry Wray.

The new law, paid for with gas tax revenue and $70 billion in other federal funding, calls for spending $205 billion on highways and $48 billion on transit projects nationally over the next five years.

Rich Winning, deputy director of the Division of Finance said it was worth the wait. “Ohio will receive an increase of 2.5 percent per year from 2017 through 2020 as a result of FAST,” said Winning. “That translates to nearly $600 million in additional dollars which we can use for transportation projects.”

Jennifer Townley, deputy director of the Division of Planning, said, “FAST changes a number of federal transportation programs which will advance Ohio’s critical freight projects, streamline approval of new projects, increase safety resources, and establish new funding programs.”

Bidding freedom
Rhonda Pees, District 1

I was not looking forward to this. Our district is currently engaged in a project to install exterior signs on our facilities to finally, and professionally, communicate the location of District 1 to those we serve. But this meant facing the process of seeking at least three quotes from companies chosen at random, then going with the lowest bidder. Having experienced the ODOT quoting process before, it all seemed so inefficient and limited.

But then, I had forgotten about the eQuote system and one of its key figures, District 1 Auditor Carol Razo. Introduced in September of last year, eQuote is a digital application that offers an easy way to solicit and collect project bids. Each vendor registers under a commodity code representing the type of services that vendor provides. When a project is entered into the system, the applicable commodity code is attached to it, and the system automatically sends notifications to all appropriate vendors. Those interested then submit their best bids for consideration and possible award.

The statewide system was established just in time for our sign project; eQuote yielded bids from nine companies, including firms we hadn’t known existed before. We could now choose the lowest and best quote from a more inclusive list of vendors.

This was all the awesome idea of Razo and some of her classmates participating in the Ohio Certified Public Manager (OCPM) program. Their class required the completion of a group project, and Razo knew the department was searching for a new way to obtain quotes. The new system was the result, and today she helps walk people through this brave new world of efficiency and broader choices.

“The new eQuote system is beneficial in many ways,” said Razo. “It gives more vendors the opportunity to know there’s something out there to bid on. By doing this, it increases competition, avoids targeting the same vendors for every project, reduces the potential for receiving quotes from fictitious vendors, guarantees that everyone receives the same information and it ultimately ensures that ODOT is paying the lowest price.”

Carol Razo
District 1 Auditor

Photo by Rhonda Pees, District 1
“COME SAIL AWAY...”

COMPETITIVE SPORT MAINTAINS, NURTURES ENGINEER’S FAMILY TRADITION

Rebecca Shirling, District 2

When I mention sailing,” muses Jim Bradley, a 20-year ODOT veteran, “many people imagine a calm afternoon cruising peacefully on the lake. Little do they realize the physical demands, the tactical awareness, and the competitive edge required by the sport.”

The District 2 bridge engineer first learned how to sail from his father at just 10 years old. He sails an 18-foot sailboat called an Interlake, an exciting craft that is very responsive to changes in wind direction.

“The smaller boats are more fun, because people travel with them to different competitions,” Bradley said.

The call of the sport knows no seasonal limits. On nice winter days, Bradley enjoys ice sailing on an area of Maumee Bay in northern Toledo. He says there’s usually 50 to 60 boats making their way across ice that’s about four inches thick.

Continuing the family tradition, Bradley has taught the sport to his son, Bryan, and daughter, Sarah. He travels to Cleveland almost every weekend to crew for his son’s 29-foot sailboat, and sails with his daughter whenever she’s available. Last year, his son’s craft won the Cleveland boat of the year award, with Bradley serving as a crew member. Bradley is really looking forward to the next sailing season.

“We’ll be flying a spinnaker (a downwind sail), so we’ll be racing against different boats this year,” he said.

Jim Bradley and son Bryan (below) sail ‘round the Cleveland water intake on Lake Erie.