Governor Kasich praises ODOT process team
Ron Poole, Central Office

Friday, Jan. 27th was memorable for John Maynard, administrator for the office of Real Estate: He and a team of his coworkers from all over ODOT had assembled at Don Scott airfield to put the finishing touches on a new and improved work process for retaining records. In walks Ohio Governor John Kasich, curious about their project and results.

“We briefed him on everything,” Maynard recalled. “We explained our solution to a long standing backlog problem, and he really took the time to thank us and express his support. He brought in a video crew to interview us, and wants to use our team as an example to other agencies.”

Maynard and his “Out of the Box” process team on the final day of their brainstorming session at Don Scott Airfield. The governor questioned members about their process and problem solution.

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Governor Kasich visited the “Out of the Box” team on the final day of their brainstorming session at Don Scott Airfield. The governor questioned members about their process and problem solution.

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TRAC: Balancing needs vs. wants
David Rose, Central Office

Imagine your income decreased by 10 percent. Although you now have less money coming in you must still maintain your current assets, including your house and vehicles, while at the same time invest in your family’s future, such as college for your children, retirement and other endeavors. To better manage your family’s finances you must make sacrifices. Maybe you wait a few more years to update your dream kitchen to ensure you can make the mortgage and car payment or maybe you decide to purchase a used car instead of a new car. Either way, you make the difficult decisions necessary to balance your family’s finances.

ODOT is experiencing a very similar situation, but on a much larger scale: the department is responsible for 48,770 lane-miles of highway, as well as 10,348 bridges which are maintained by the Capital Program. Faced with declining revenue, ODOT must first focus on maintaining and repairing its current transportation system and delay investment in very expensive large-scale projects funded through the Transporta-
TRAC: Balancing needs vs. wants

This February has an added 24 hours or “Leap Day,” making the year 366 days long. Nearly every four years is a Leap Year in order to keep our modern Gregorian calendar in alignment with the Earth’s revolutions around the sun. People born on Leap Day (February 29) are all invited to join The Honor Society of Leap Year Day Babies. The concept of a Leap Year has existed for more than 2000 years, and without them, we would lose almost six hours every year or 24 days every 100 years!

A pessimist sees the glass as half empty. An optimist sees the glass as half full. An engineer sees the glass as being twice as large as it needs to be.

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On Jan. 31, the nine-member TRAC unanimously approved a new project list which ODOT Director and TRAC Chairman Jerry Wray described as an “honest and fiscally responsible list of current and new construction projects.” Prior to the new list, TRAC was overcommitted by nearly $12 billion.

The newly released list shows that projects scheduled to begin construction in the next few years will now be delayed by nearly two decades.

“Unfortunately, this is Ohio’s new reality,” said Wray. “We know transportation is the lifeblood of Ohio’s economy and we cannot sit back and do nothing about this dire situation.”

So what happened? Well, there are two factors at work. The first is that there is less revenue from the gas tax. ODOT is funded completely with state and federal motor fuel tax, but those funds have been shrinking over the past several years, due to the increasingly fuel efficient vehicles being introduced. With fuel consumption decreasing, so does the amount of revenue generated to pay for Ohio’s infrastructure.

The second factor is construction inflation. The same amount of work which once cost $100 in the year 2000 now costs $158. This means that a $20 million dollar project in 2000 now costs more than $31 million today.

To fill this gap in transportation funding, ODOT must look at new and innovative ways to reduce costs and generate additional transportation funding for large-scale economically vital projects. For example, the department is currently studying and evaluating the use of public-private partnerships (P3) for costly projects such as the Portsmouth Bypass, Brent Spence Bridge and the I-75 Corridor. All these projects are currently on the TRAC draft list.

In addition to the study, ODOT selected KPMG to evaluate all options regarding how best to leverage the Ohio Turnpike. Finally, the department is also investigating revenue generating opportunities with non-interstate rest areas, from sponsorships to maintenance contracts. These innovative financing tools will help supplement the funding of projects which have the greatest return and further position Ohio for future economic and job creation opportunities.

Whether you manage finances for a family or a billion-dollar transportation program, the basic rules still apply: reduce expenses while finding new ways to increase revenue. It also takes an honest commitment and sacrifice to balance needs and wants. One thing is for sure: the department will continue to do the right thing to ensure Ohio’s transportation needs are met.
Motorists driving southbound on Interstate 71 in Columbus most likely don’t know a 4,300-foot-long storm sewer tunnel is being drilled directly beneath them. A process called microtunneling allows highway workers to perform important maintenance work while avoiding the need to dig long stretches of open trenches for laying pipe and disrupting traffic.

The work is part of the first phase of the Columbus Crossroads project.

“Traditionally,” said ODOT Project Manager Brad Jones, “when constructing drainage on a project, the road is closed to allow for major excavation action. Microtunneling on this project means ODOT does not have to close down I-71 at all.”

WHEN LESS IS MORE

“The process is a digging technique where the workforce does not routinely work in a tunnel. Instead, the work is done through use of small scale boring machines, usually ranging from 2 feet to 4 or 5 feet in length. Operated remotely from the surface, the operator is given constant feedback about the machine’s progress through a computer console. In most microtunneling operations, the pipe is inserted from the entry and pushed into place behind the machine in a process called “pipe jacking.” Thus, the tunnel and the pipe can be laid in a single pass. Microtunneling was developed by the Japanese in the early 1970s as a way to replace open sewers in urban areas. First used in the US on a Florida project in 1984, microtunneling installations have expanded from use in sewer installations to include a variety of projects.

THE START OF SOMETHING SMALL

During the first phase of construction for Columbus Crossroads, microtunneling will be used install pipes to separate storm and sanitary sewer water according to federal guidelines. In September, construction began on a series of shafts along the I-71 corridor, which will serve as access points to the new sewer. The micro tunneling will connect the shafts with drainage pipes from Spring Street to the I-70/71 interchange.

“The existing storm water system on I-71 safely and effectively drains water away from the road,” Jones said. “This new storm sewer will be just as safe and effective.”

THE OUTLOOK

According to John Householder, Kokosing Construction’s project manager, applying the technique has been simple:

“We built a 20-foot-wide, 30 foot-deep shaft and lowered the mining equipment into it,” he said. “It’s a laser-guided system, so we know we’re accurate. We won’t have workers below the surface.”

Householder reports that the work is going well and things are on schedule for completion in the spring of 2012.
Eyeing P3s for the Portsmouth bypass
Kathleen Fuller, District 9

When the Transportation Budget Bill, House Bill 114, gave ODOT the green light to enter into Public-Private Partnerships, or P3s, last year, it opened up an opportunity for the department to develop and deliver major projects that may be stalled or abandoned for lack of funds.

Facing its own financial challenges, the Portsmouth Bypass Project in Scioto County could see the positive effects of the P3 process.

The bypass is a multi-phase, four-lane, limited-access highway project from U.S. Route 23 near Lucasville to U.S. Route 52 near Sciotoville. With the existing corridor through downtown Portsmouth inadequate for the area’s traffic demands, the new roadway is much needed for safety, congestion and potential business development.

As part of the Southeast Ohio Plan, the project has been funded primarily through the Appalachian Regional Commission. But the bypass was divided into three phases due to funding schedules, and while Phase 1 of the project is funded for construction, the remaining two are not and there is no set timetable for their construction. Current cost estimates for all three phases of construction are approximately $530 million.

The department is pursuing a public-private partnership to build all three phases of the project, which could result in the entire corridor being built in far less time than initially projected and at a greater cost savings. The start of Phase 1 of the bypass, the construction of the three-mile middle segment of the roadway, will be temporarily postponed from its originally scheduled sale during the 2012 fiscal year while the partnership agreement is being developed.

The use of P3s are encouraged by the Federal Highway Administration, and along with P3 opportunities, ODOT is pursuing a federal grant through the FHWA’s Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program. The grant provides assistance to finance significant surface transportation projects.

While ODOT explores the P3 option and seeks funds through the TIFIA program, the District 9 Real Estate Department will complete right of way acquisition for all remaining Phase 1 parcels, as well as for total-take parcels in the other phases. Plans for Phase 1 are ready to go, so ODOT can move forward with a traditional bid letting for the project if necessary.

ODOT hopes that through the use of P3, the state could see early delivery and completion of the bypass as a single project.
ODOT begins the New Year with the creation of the Division of Innovative Delivery, a group tasked with developing new and innovative approaches to managing, maintaining, operating, and building infrastructure assets. Their stated goals include the reduction of project delivery and life cycle costs while enhancing efficiency and generating revenue. Deputy Director Jim Riley has joined the department to lead this division, starting with a focus on creating a formal Public-Private Partnership (P3) program.

“I have worked with P3 programs in Virginia, Texas and Georgia,” said Riley. “My team is going to help Ohio move forward with a structured program that will encourage private sector investment and allocate risks as efficiently as possible. The result will be more projects completed to promote economic growth and the creation of jobs.”

Riley’s new division is developing the criteria for selecting P3 projects. Construction that improves safety, reduces congestion, improves mobility, and enhances economic vitality and connectivity will be considered.

A 23-year veteran of the industry, Riley’s background includes many years as a national transportation director for HNTB, an architectural, engineering, construction and planning services firm.

ODOT welcomes new division, deputy director
Ron Poole, Central Office

Joe Rutherford, District 5
Michelle Croom, District 5

District 5 Deputy Director Joe Rutherford returned to ODOT in 2011 following five years as a commercial real estate agent in Toledo. During that time, he also served as a councilman in the city of Perrysburg.

Rutherford’s first stint with ODOT was in District 2, from 1991 to 2005, starting in the District 2 Test Lab as a material controller, and then on to various management capacities in Data Systems, Planning, Operations and Communications. He was the Lucas County manager from 1997 through 2000, and served as the district spokesman and the Interstate 280 Maumee River Crossing spokesman from 2000 to 2005.

Rutherford holds both a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Toledo. He also served in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. He and his wife, Marcia, have four children: Lauren, 14; Olivia, 12; Joey, 11; and Ian, 6.

Jim Riley

Joe Rutherford
A common sense consensus

Justin Chesnic, District 4

A drive for excellence in winter road maintenance was behind a recent effort by District 4 that has resulted in increased efficiency through the easing of district boundaries. At a meeting held last September, districts 3, 4, and 11 reached a consensus concerning an area near the village of Wilmot in Stark County.

The three districts entered into a partnership agreement with Wilmot to use a village storage shed for road salt. ODOT trucks would commonly run out of salt near the end of their routes in Carroll and Tuscarawas counties in District 11, and Wayne County in District 3, and have to return to their respective county salt domes to reload, wasting time and fuel, and leaving the roadways untreated.

The new agreement allows snowplow operators to drive just a few miles into Wilmot to reload at the shed—which can hold 100 tons of salt—rather than returning to their outposts miles out of the way, getting them quickly back to their routes. This has improved the level of service for the traveling public in a four-county region.

“This is definitely a benefit to motorists,” Stark County Manager Mark Griffiths said. “This will help maintain improved winter road conditions on these routes, which have a significant amount of truck traffic.”

MILD WINTER COULD BRING SALT SAVINGS

Joel Hunt, Central Office

Not since 2002 has ODOT used so little salt. As of Feb. 1, the department spread 251,005 tons of salt on roads and highways statewide. The yearly average ODOT usually reaches by this date is more than 400,000 tons.

“Fortunately, this could translate to a cost savings for the department,” said Sonja Simpson, deputy director of the Division of Operations. “We are only contractually required to purchase 80 percent of our $25 million salt contract, which could mean $5 million could go back to our capital program for paving and bridge repair.”

“Regardless of how mild or severe it is,” said Scott Lucas, snow and ice coordinator, “ODOT is prepared for whatever winter will bring.”
Volunteers needed for litter kickoff events

Joel Hunt, Central Office

ODOT AND KEEP Ohio Beautiful (KOB) are currently recruiting volunteers for the state’s two spring litter cleanup kickoff events: one in Athens and one in Ironton.

On Saturday, April 14, hundreds of volunteers comprised of neighborhood groups, businesses and organizations will take to area roadways to pick up thousands of pounds of litter, recyclables and debris between 8:30 a.m. and noon.

On average, ODOT spends $4 million each year picking up nearly 400,000 bags of trash from highways and interchanges. The cost and time involved for crews to remove litter, however, could be used for much-needed equipment or highway repairs.

With volunteers assigned to designated sites in and around Athens in Athens County and Ironton in Lawrence County, ODOT and KOB are inviting individuals or groups to register their team in advance of the event. Those planning to participate in either Athens or Lawrence County may complete their registration online. See this story in the online version of Transcript at www.transportation.ohio.gov/transcript for a link to the registration page.

Heart disease and you

Carolyn Kirkland, Central Office

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. Although certain heart conditions can be caused by genetics or other factors, you do have the power to protect your heart from many dangers by improving your lifestyle. You can begin your commitment by making these healthy changes in your life:

QUIT SMOKING
Heart attacks are more common in smokers than in nonsmokers.

BE AWARE OF HEALTH CONDITIONS
Uncontrolled high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes will directly impact your heart health and increase your risk of heart disease.

EXERCISE
The American Heart Association recommends exercising around 30 minutes a day, five days a week. If this sounds like too much, remember, something is better than nothing!

REDUCE SALT AND SATURATED FAT
Read nutrition labels! Choose foods with less trans fat, dietary cholesterol, added sugars, and sodium.

REDUCE AND MANAGE STRESS
Unrelieved stress in your life may damage your arteries and worsen the other risk factors for heart disease.

Find more information at:
www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth
Dawn Jefferies: Radio Dispatch Operator

Joel Hunt, Central Office

Working into the wee hours of the morning, Radio Dispatch Operator Dawn Jefferies is quite literally the voice behind ODOT.

For more than 25 years, Jefferies has handled radio communications for District 6 and assisted with radio communications in Ohio’s 80 other counties. Located in the Traffic Management Center—a recent departure from the Ohio Emergency Operations Center in north Columbus—Jefferies takes calls from law enforcement and the general public about rollovers, spills, flooding, tornados, snow and ice, and construction. “We are the eyes and ears of ODOT,” Jefferies said, “and we’re always open.”

Jefferies said she takes vital information from callers and gets it to the ‘boots on the ground’ people. She sometimes works 12-hour shifts, rotating nights, and second shifts. “Being a small office we understand,” she said. “We work closely together.”

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Governor Kasich praises process team

team found a way to address a staggering backlog of paper files accumulated by Real Estate. Required by law to maintain records on all ODOT land acquisitions and use for a set time, the office had more than 4,400 file boxes of current and past files not properly accounted. Getting a file processed could take as long as 30 months.

“Each district and Central Office had a completely different way of doing the same tasks,” said Maynard. “We had too much duplication of effort, wasted time and delays.”

Maynard took it upon himself to make changes by going to the people who actually use the system and forming a process team. Careful research led to a week-long brainstorming session in January and a newly designed electronic storage process.

“Files will be electronically available to everyone needing access in Real Estate,” said Maynard. “With one standard way of doing things for everyone, we will eliminate our back log, processes files faster and eliminate all delays. It costs ODOT $751 dollars to process one box of files. Now it will cost only one dollar.”

Real Estate has teams preparing for the new system. A pilot program is expected to begin in March, with a full program expected to be in place in May.