Safety rewarded
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CSF scorecard
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District 4 transportation engineers Amal Goza, right, and Jason Young measure a bridge joint.

PHOTO BY BRENT KOVACS, DISTRICT 4
Statewide News

Major changes in work beginning
Alexandra Buerger, Central Office

Starting this summer, ODOT labor forces began performing different types of day-to-day work responsibilities across the state based on new changes in force account limits. The law now allows the department to perform work based on criteria rather than cost estimates. Work on bridges and culverts can now be part of the department’s regular duties up to certain sizes. Paving or patching asphalt surfaces can be done by ODOT as well, when the amount of asphalt per lane-mile does not exceed 120 tons.

Department personnel must carry out this heightened work according to specifications found in the Construction Inspection Manual. These are the same specs private companies adhere to.

Should a project exceed the new work or force account limits, the project will be subject to the regular competitive bidding process as before.

“The new limits are the best thing that’s happened to this department in years,” said Madison County Highway Technician L. Derrick Maynard. “Our hands are no longer tied.”

ODOT’s Ohio State Fair booth drives home importance of ‘Quick Clear’
Joel Hunt, Central Office

The more than 10,000 people who will visit ODOT’s Ohio State Fair booth this summer will learn what to do if they are in a crash.

“For years, insurance companies have told policyholders to maintain an accident scene,” said Al Phillips, ODOT’s emergency management coordinator. “That’s simply not true.”

Inspired by Ohio’s nationally recognized Quick Clear program, the theme of ODOT’s 2013 booth is “Move. Call. Stay.” This means everyone should move your car, if it’s drivable, to the shoulder, call for help and stay inside your vehicle.

“Poor incident management causes thousands of responders and motorists to be needlessly killed or injured each year,” Phillips said. “Traffic incidents cause millions of hours of congestion delay annually which results in billions of dollars wasted.”

Some facts:
- Nationally, traffic incident delays cost $87 billion in wasted dollars every year;
- Crashes as a result of stopped traffic from an incident are estimated to cause nearly 60,000 secondary crashes in Ohio annually;
- On average, drivers sit in traffic for more than a week each year;
- Faster incident removal greatly reduces risk of more deadly secondary crashes;
- One minute of closure results in eight minutes of congestion delay.

The 40-by-40 foot wall in the back of the booth will be blanketed with images of fender-bender crash scenes as well as backed up traffic. A giant sign which reads: “Fender Bender? Move Vehicles to Shoulder” will also be on the wall.

Several five-foot pink signs which read “Emergency Scene Ahead” will line the booth as well as standing picture frames with facts about congestion and secondary crashes.

ODOT will raise awareness about distracted driving and Ohio’s texting while driving ban with two of its distracted driving simulators.

After making its debut last year, the display will have a “Wheel of Fortune” to test visitor’s knowledge of safety, both on the road and on the sidewalk. Backpacks will be given out for correct answers.

Two volunteers, known as educators, will run the booth throughout the day. The fair runs from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. July 24 - August 4.

ODOT’s booth will be located in the Marketplace Building.
ODOT recently announced the award of 58 Safe Routes to School projects worth $7.2 million to local communities all over Ohio. The projects will help finance programs that will help keep children from walking in the streets and help make it safer for children to walk and bicycle to school.

“Improving safety invites a chain reaction that will allow more children to feel safe as they walk and bicycle to school. These projects will also reduce traffic and pollution,” said Ohio First Lady and Ohio Safe Routes to School Ambassador Mrs. Karen W. Kasich.

Funded infrastructure projects include:
- Lima City Schools - $460,000 to construct new sidewalks and intersection improvements for four schools.
- Sugarcreek Township in Green County - $427,000 to build new sidewalks to the school.
- Village of Peebles in Adams County – $62,000 to add additional sidewalks to a previously funded project.

“We believe that the Safe Routes to School program is a great way to encourage safer behavior by working with these local communities,” said ODOT Director Jerry Wray.

Nearly 60 people gathered in Wooster on a rainy Monday morning in June to take part in history as the ribbon was cut for the new $6.5 million Wayne County Full Service Maintenance Facility. ODOT Director Jerry Wray, District 3 Deputy Director Allen Biehl and the local staff members were on hand to officially open the facility.

“Our employees here in Wayne County have been waiting for this day for more than a decade,” said Biehl, “and I thank them for their patience.”
Sprucing up downtown Cleveland
Molly Leonard, District 12

ODOT District 12 maintenance crews worked hard for three weeks removing overgrown trees, brush, and litter on Interstate 90 in Cleveland for a site beautification project. The district chooses an area along I-90 between the end of the Innerbelt Curve and East 55th Street each year to clear and clean. This year all three District 12 counties had crews working the section every day for almost a month. Clearing the area is part of an effort to improve the quality of life in Cleveland.

P3 procurement options analyzed, addressed and under way for Portsmouth Bypass
Kathleen Fuller, District 9

After more than a year of analysis exploring a number of alternatives using a Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain approach, ODOT has concluded to procure the Portsmouth Bypass as a Public-Private Partnership. The new route will avoid 30 traffic signals, 80 intersections and numerous driveways and save about 16 minutes of travel time when compared to the existing system. The completed corridor will reduce traffic congestion, improve safety and mobility, and increase current and future roadway capacity.

Take me out to the ballgame
Mandi Abner, District 7

The Cincinnati Reds have a tradition of recognizing a hometown hero at each of their home games. Recently, that hero was District 7 permit tech Russ Bertke. He was recognized at the end of the second inning for his sacrifice and service overseas with the Air Force National Guard. He and his family received complimentary tickets to the game.

“It was an honor and a blessing for me and my family,” said Bertke.

An added bonus: the Reds won 13-5.

New outpost coming to Mahoning County
Brent Kovacs, District 4

District 4 has started a $1.7 million project to construct a new outpost in North Lima. The previous outpost burned down due to a plow truck catching on fire. When completed, the new building will make salt more readily available in Mahoning County. The old outpost building was demolished and work has begun on the new foundation. The facility is expected to be completed by mid-October.
“Ask the Director” is a Transcript feature for employees to submit ODOT work life questions to Director Jerry Wray. He will consider questions on ODOT policy and procedures, future infrastructure projects, snow and ice control, and a variety of other issues that are on the minds of the men and women of ODOT. You can submit your questions to Alex Buerger in the Office of Communications, either by email at Alexandra.Buerger@dot.state.oh.us, by interoffice mail (Mail Stop 1420), or by phone at (614) 387-6225. Director Wray chooses which question(s) to respond to in Transcript each month. All names will be kept confidential if requested.

Q “Several Months ago, you asked the Office of Lean to develop the Quality of Work Life Survey. OCSEA partnered with ODOT to market the survey and help compile the results. What is your reaction to the ODOT Quality of Work Life Survey Results?”

A “The results were not bad, though I was hopeful that we’d get a higher response rate. About 44 percent of the people of ODOT responded to the survey. The survey represents a vehicle of communications and feedback at a certain point in time. Our goal will be to continue to survey in the future to see what, if anything, has changed. Are we getting better? The survey gives us a gauge of how we’re doing.

Most of the people who responded said they were satisfied with the work they do. They also believe the department is good at external customer service. Safety ranked high, which is important and is part of our mission, improved safety for both the public and our employees. People know we have a strategic plan, but many aren’t familiar with it. We need to do a better job of communicating the plan. That’s up to the leaders of this department. There were also concerns about accountability and employee recognition that need to be addressed. Our overall Work Life Index score was just under 70 percent, which is about average. Our goal is to get that up to 75 percent by the time we take the next survey.”

— Director Jerry Wray

As of this writing, the department is still awaiting the final version of the Critical Success Factors (CSF) scoreboard. For this issue, Transcript offers a brief overview of what the factors will mean to ODOT people. Once the scoreboard is ready, it will show just how well the agency is doing in regards to the following areas:

People
The metrics associated with this area will show how high work life quality is, as well as the status of the culture here at ODOT. They will also monitor how safely people are performing their duties within the workplace.

System Conditions
The conditions of the pavement and bridges ODOT takes care of will be rated and measured in this CSF area.

Operations
All efforts in the maintenance area in regards to efficiency and effectiveness will be measured here.

Safety
This area reflects the safety on state highways; it will measure how safe the roads are and keep track of the improvements made in regards to safety.

Capital Program
How well ODOT is able to deliver a robust contract construction program will be measured in this area.

Jobs & Commerce
This area will evaluate how much ODOT is directly contributing to Ohio’s economy by completing projects. 

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

Success is a journey that never ends
David Rose, Central Office, District 10

Novelist James Baldwin once said, “Know from whence you came; If you know whence you came, there are absolutely no limitations to where you can go.” For Athens County Transportation Administrator Shawn Flannery, it is this quote that motivates him to succeed, to make others around him better and to push himself to overcome the many challenges of running a district garage.

“Every morning when I arrive to work I remind myself never to lose sight of where I came from or who helped me get here,” says Shawn. “Remembering how I got to where I am today is the passion that drives me to do my best.”

Shawn literally worked his way up the ladder, beginning his career in 2002 as summer help at the Butler County Garage. After completing the summer program he moved between an intermittent and winter seasonal employee until being hired full-time as a highway technician in October 2003. After working his way through the HT Series, Shawn transferred to Hamilton County and became an auto mechanic, and in just two years worked his way up to transportation manager in 2009. Just this past October, Shawn transferred to District 10 and was promoted to transportation administrator of Athens County.

“Mr. Flannery is a team player who is willing to implement and lead positive change within the organization,” said Highway Management Administrator Jamie Hendershot. “I am continually impressed with Shawn’s ability to deal with difficult situations, his ability to act quickly with good judgment and his ability to effectively communicate.”

As a new leader, Shawn has to face a variety of challenges and issues.

“Employees at the garage get used to a certain way of doing things,” said Athens Transportation Manager Scott Sanders. “It’s been a challenge at times to get everyone on the same page, but Shawn has made us a better team. We’re getting more done in a month than we would have all year.”

With a goal to make Athens County the best in the state, Shawn has pushed the highway workers to do more. For example, in 25 working days, Athens County installed 34 culverts on State Route 329. Athens County did it for $110,000, saving the state $70,000. County forces also volunteered on numerous local litter pickup events.

“I love what I do,” says Shawn. “Not a day goes by that I am not thankful for my job and the crew I have working for me. Looking back from where I started and to where I am today I am reminded of all the colleagues I have had the pleasure to work with and all the knowledge that I have gained over the years.”

Shawn lives in Athens County with his wife Nicole of 14 years. When Shawn’s not working or having Nicole take notes of issues he sees while driving the county, he enjoys hunting, fishing and is a professional taxidermist. Coincidentally, the roads in Athens County are remarkably free of dead deer!
New customer-friendly highway access permit process introduced

Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

So you have an address on a state highway, and you want to improve your property. You need access to the side of the road. Oh, boy. That means you have to fill out a four-page, ODOT MR505 application form; you have to submit a dozen documents to support your application, including a map and a deed; all of which you submit personally at the district Permit Section office or by mail. If you did everything just right, it might only take a month to get your Right-of-Way User Permit. If everything is not just right, well it could take even more time.

Yes, that’s how it was for people all over Ohio needing right of way access, but it is about to change for people living in District 6, and perhaps later for citizens in the rest of the state as well. Thanks to a pair of IT professionals and the guy who runs the permit section in that district, the whole process is going online.

“This is a pilot project that we hope will speed up the process and offer easier access to our customers,” said District 6 Network Administrator Jill Jones.

According to Jones, the permit section can respond to an application within 48 hours under the new system. Customers can track their permit application online, almost like a FedEx package. If required documents are missing, customers can be notified by email. They will also be notified every time there is a change to their application status.

The code for the new application was all designed in-house by Matt Larch, a District 6 IT employee. “Our biggest customers are the utility companies,” he said. “They represent about 70 percent of our business. We brought a group of them in and asked them what the best way to redesign the system was.”

The new Highway Access Electronic Permit application recently went live. Jones and Larch say it will eventually be adopted statewide by ODOT.

Charles Duerson agrees. Duerson, who has worked for ODOT for more than 30 years, runs the District 6 Permit Section. He says the three-person section handles 500 to 600 Right-of-Way User Permit applications every year.

“Under the old system, people would be constantly calling in to check on the status of their permit. This will allow them to check on the status in real time online. Our goal is to improve the process for our customers,” he said.

The trio said another advantage of the new system is that the district will have a database telling them how many people have applied for permits and where they are. The information can be analyzed for other uses as district officials make future decisions about the highway system.
From asphalt roads to asphalt shingles

Lauren Holdsworth, District 11

In 2009, Dave Hoffman was offered a full time EIT position at ODOT District 11. He accepted on one condition: that he didn’t begin his new job until the end of summer. At the time, he was about to embark on a 4,000 mile, fund-raising journey—from Charleston, South Carolina to Santa Cruz, California—on his bike.

This fund-raiser was for the Habitat for Humanity, a national non-profit, non-denominational Christian housing ministry. Since its founding in 1976, Habitat for Humanity has built or repaired over 600,000 houses and helped over 3 million people in need around the world.

At the end of his 2009 trip, Hoffman began his career in the Planning and Engineering Department, and became a member of the Tuscarawas Valley Habitat for Humanity chapter. Outside of ODOT, he serves as a project manager for these local home builds.

“I go from asphalt roads to asphalt shingles,” said Hoffman. Homeowners are selected based on their need for housing, their ability to repay a mortgage and their willingness to work in partnership with Habitat. Some of the partnering includes “sweat equity,” with homeowners required to complete at least 250 hours of volunteer time, either at their own home or another participating habitat home.

Recently, the Tuscarawas Valley Habitat group held a “Blitz Build Day” where about 100 volunteers worked together to build a home—from its foundation to frame to being under roof—all in one day.

“This day is particularly special,” said Hoffman. “You see people come together for a cause bigger than them. At the beginning of the day, you start from nothing, but because of the efforts by each volunteer, you see a house take shape at the end of the day which is extremely rewarding.”

Much like designing and building roads, it is necessary to have the correct amount of materials, contractors and coordination with utilities to begin a project.

In 2011, Hoffman brought another Habitat program called “A Brush with Kindness” to the Tuscarawas Valley. This program provides exterior home preservation like painting, landscaping, weather stripping and minor repair services to homeowners in need. It helps low income homeowners impacted by age, disability or family circumstances who struggle to maintain the exterior of their homes.

“It helps to bring dignity to homeowners as well as the neighborhoods they live in, and is also a revitalization initiative for neighborhoods across the country,” said Hoffman. ☛