Alas, poor Yorick.

Human Resources’ Mark Villavicencio considers the flamingo.

See related story, page 4
ASK THE DIRECTOR

Q: When will ODOT provide electric vehicle chargers at Central Office? This is an easy first step prior to considering an electric ODOT fleet.

A: You are really asking two questions: Providing electric vehicle chargers could be considered in the future if there is demand for it. In addition, our facilities people would have to evaluate the chargers on the market to ensure ODOT did not pay for the electricity. We would have to find a way to charge the vehicle owner for the electricity.

As for an electric ODOT snow and ice fleet, we don’t believe the technology is there yet. A lot of infrastructure is involved. When you think of our department’s mission, snow and ice control is one of the most important things we do. During the winter our trucks can be operated between 12 to 24 hours a day. Pulling them off the road to charge them for hours would be impractical.

We’d also have to consider the expense an electric fleet could cost. If it costs more than our current gas-powered fleet, we would have a tough time convincing legislators and taxpayers that it would be worth doing. That said, as technology continues to improve, it could be something worth considering in the future.

Lean and Clean

Rhonda Pees, District 1

Wally Westrick of Ayersville, just turned 90 in March. He takes only supplements (no medications) and he walks often. He’s the oldest member of the ODOT Adopt-A-Highway group from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local #8 in Defiance.

The group joined the program in 1993 and is one of the longest standing Adopt-A-Highway groups in District 1. Westrick has been a participant in the program for 24 years, and has missed only one or two group outings in that time.

“It’s good camaraderie to work with people to clean up the highway. I just enjoy helping out,” said Westrick. “It gives you something to do and I get to see the fellows a few times a year.”

The group picks up a two-mile stretch of State Route 66 north of Defiance which has been their adopted route for the duration of their time with the program. There have been no unusual finds for Westrick. He says he has picked up a lot of pieces of rubber tires, and is bothered by deliberate littering and the lack of respect some show for Ohio’s highway landscape. He also says he plans to keep on working with his group.

“I’ll do it as long as I can,” he said. “I do a lot of walking. I stay in pretty good shape. I’m blessed, I guess.”
Ron Poole, Central Office

Kelly Nye and Caraline Griffith with State-wide Planning had family members at work with them for several weeks this spring. They were the proud mama birds to 150 inflatable pink flamingos that appeared and disappeared in cubicles and offices throughout West Broad. The flamboyance was all part of this year’s Operation Feed campaign.

“I knew people did this to yards, so I thought, why not desks?” said Nye. “For a donation, we populated a targeted cube or office with our adorable pink offspring. There were a little or a lot, based on the size of the donations. The victim could keep the little visitors for two days, or make a second donation to have them removed sooner.”

According to Nye and Griffith, their tiny hoards were well-received everywhere they went. It helped that those ordering the attacks were allowed to be anonymous from those targeted—sort of:

“We could be bribed,” Griffith admitted candidly. “For another donation we would reveal names. Then it would be their turn. Heck, some people paid to have their own cubes visited—for charity, of course.”

Statewide Planning raised just over $1,200 for the campaign.

Kelly Nye, left, and Caraline Griffith surrounded by their ‘children.’
PHOTO BY LAURYN MUNIZ

Ron Poole, Central Office
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PHOTO BY LAURYN MUNIZ
In 2011, Central Office began work on a master plan to better use its services in all corners of the state; it quickly grew into more than that.

“Our facilities master planning process started gathering and analyzing information statewide to make more logical decisions about what kind of facilities would be constructed in what areas of the state, then let that guide the kinds of upgrades and replacements we would need,” Deputy Director of Facilities and Equipment Management Steve Masters.

Based on the master plan, the department is using an allotment of $200 million in bond money to make improvements in facilities in more than 25 locations across the state. Since 2011, ODOT has either completed or will complete more than 40 major projects costing nearly $350 million.

At the same time Facilities was working on its planning approach, maintenance sections in districts 1, 2, and 10 started working on a concept for improving winter maintenance. The districts sponsored a research study using digital data collection to determine the optimal routes and fleet sizes needed to better service their counties during snow and ice events. The study is still under way, but it could mean work crews will be allowed to clear snow from routes across county boundaries because it is more efficient and effective to do so.

Masters started to speak to the districts about his facilities planning and learned about the route optimization efforts and study. The two ideas were combined, and it is clear that this growing initiative has the power to change how all work at ODOT is approached: effectively matching facilities, equipment, materials, funding, workforce and routes to the needs of specific areas.

“The changes caused by the master plan can be pretty dramatic,” said Rod Nuveman, highway management administrator with District 1. “But this is not about telling anyone how to do their job day to day. It is about providing them exactly what they need where and when they need it.”

Next Up: A deeper look at the new facilities in a future issue of Transcript.
Economic Growth Permitted

Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Thanks to Ohio’s burgeoning economy and the development of the oil and gas industry in the past six years, ODOT’s Division of Operations’ Permit Office is issuing more freight permits than ever before. Recently, they broke a record by issuing over $4 million worth of permits in one month.

The ten-member staff is now averaging 300,000 permits for oversize and overweight vehicles and loads every year. The staff is issuing nearly 1,500 permits daily and nearly 24,000 a month.

“Our people are taking 800 telephone calls a day. They are going home tired,” says Permits Supervisor Mike Moreland.

Moreland says Ohio has a very healthy trucking economy with oversize loads moving daily from and through the state. Thanks to the Rover Pipeline interstate natural gas project which moves from West Virginia to Michigan, the number of permits have skyrocketed in eastern Ohio.