Ladies and gentlemen: Kronos has entered the building!

Greg Pore, Central Office

It’s been a long time coming, but the final launch day of the new ODOT time-keeping system, Kronos, is at hand and at the forefront of exciting new changes throughout the state.

Assistant Director for Business & Human Resources Michael Cope has had to deal with the cumbersome AU-15 system since he began with the department in June of 1977. Back then, this method of time-keeping was perfectly acceptable, and possibly even advanced for the time. Some 35 years later, though, it seems as slow as chiseling time in tablets of stone.

Not often at a loss for words, Cope was most enthusiastic about discussing Kronos, the stellar team that put it all together, and the meaning of the new system for the future of the department.

“We challenged them — and they came through,” said Cope. “In what essentially came down to a less than five-month time period, a dedicated team of around 25 individuals were able to get the new time tracking system up and running and into a successful pilot group to be tested. This is a remarkable feat considering the necessary steps for planning, designing, gathering resources, and configuration.”

Cope believes this hard work will assuredly pay off as time and money saved from the use of Kronos will be able to go right back into the cost of road maintenance.

“Kronos will allow us to cut back on the amount of paperwork being done, thus providing more time for value added activities,” he said. “This project is a testament to the hard work by ODOT employees and speaks volumes about their ability to achieve any goal set before them.”

With the launch of Kronos comes the end of phase one of the TEAMS program and a new focus on the Equipment Inventory Management System in phase two. EIMS will simplify and streamline inventory management by doing away with the current forms now in use for tracking road projects and implementing a new, easy-to-use fuel management system.
Adam Gyde
Auto Mechanic
Ron Poole, Central Office

Adam Gyde joined District 2’s Northwood Outpost in 2006 as a highway technician I, and has been an auto mechanic 2 there for the last four years. Though not currently working on any big projects, keeping mowers in working condition, plus a variety of maintenance and repair jobs means he is busy and happy.

“I really like what I do because it is always different,” he said. “It’s not the same thing over and over again. I have always liked working on stuff, so this job is perfect for me.”

Happily married, Gyde’s mechanical interest also extends to his favorite hobby: working on and maintaining a collection of antique tractors. It’s a pastime that runs in his family.

“Between me, my brothers, and my Dad, we have a lot of them,” said Gyde. “We like to show them at antique shows.”

Maintaining Excellence
Ron Poole, Central Office

The maintenance forces within the department are upping their game.
Last April they held the first ever conference to focus on improving efficiency; getting a half-hour more of productivity out of everyone, every day, their goal. A County Manger Taskforce is currently analyzing survey results on 63 county maintenance issues:

“There were a lot of differing opinions among our county managers,” said Brad Mayes, county manager for both Wayne and Ashland counties. “We need to improve communications between our field offices so everyone is striving for the same performance goals.”

Maintenance is also focusing on improving core functions, such as snow and ice removal and pavement repair:

“It’s about removing redundancy and refining what we do well,” comments Sandy Knott, Hardin County transportation administrator. “It’s about doing the right things, for the right reasons, right now.”
MEET THE DDD
Vaughn E. Wilson, District 9
Kathleen Fuller, District 9

VAUGHN WILSON IS A VETERAN OF ODOT District 9, beginning his career with the department in 1971 by working in various positions with the bridge and traffic departments. He was named District 9’s highway management administrator in 1995 and served in that role for 12 years. His work experience also includes consulting for private engineering firms and in the Ross County Engineer’s Office.

He is a graduate of Ohio University with a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering, and he is a registered professional engineer for the state of Ohio.

Wilson resides in Chillicothe with his wife, Laura. They have two grown sons and one granddaughter. He is an avid golfer, and would enjoy traveling to Scotland to play at St. Andrews.

Bits - n - Pieces

“There is more to life than increasing its speed.”
— Mahatma Ghandi

The Tanganyika laughter epidemic
In 1962, in the African country now known as Tanzania, a few schoolgirls began laughing uncontrollably. Their laughter soon spread to people in neighboring communities, and schools were closed to keep others from catching the laugh bug. The epidemic subsided after six months, having affected 1,000 people and causing 14 schools to be closed.

Now and Zen
Duct tape is like the Force: It has a light side and a dark side, and it holds the universe together.

No rest for Rest Areas
Steve Faulkner, Central Office

ODOT IS EXPLORING DIFFERENT WAYS TO GENERATE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR SOME OF THE OHIO’S LARGEST AND MOST EXPENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS. One such means is moving forward with a plan to explore the commercial development of five non-interstate rest areas into service plazas similar to those along the Ohio Turnpike.

The five areas being targeted will include two on U.S. Route 50 in Athens County, two on U.S. Route 33 in Hocking County, and one on U.S. Route 23 in Pickaway County.

The department started the Sponsorship, Maintenance, Advertising and Revenue Targeted program in May to permit advertising and sponsorship opportunities at interstate rest areas and welcome centers throughout Ohio. Money saved or generated could be put directly into the agency’s capital budget. Millions of dollars may also be generated from the sponsorship and naming rights of bridges, interchanges and sections of highway.

Vaughn Wilson
Kathleen Fuller
Innovation + Efficiency = more $$$ for TRAC Projects

Steve Faulkner, Central Office

“We have talented people at ODOT who are going to amaze us and it's happening right now,” said ODOT Director Jerry Wray. “Our people are working at a rapid pace to reduce our cost of doing business and improve service to the state's motoring public.”

The comment made at the Transportation Review and Advisory Council (TRAC) on June 6 was about ODOT’s investment of an additional $400 million into the budget for major new construction projects over the next five fiscal years. As a result, some construction projects will see future delays significantly reduced or eliminated.

The TRAC approved a revised funding list at the meeting for about 35 major projects. The new timeline moves the demolition of a bridge over Interstate 90 on Cleveland’s Innerbelt from 2019 to next year. Work on Interstate 75 in Hamilton County will also begin in 2013 instead of six years later, and the second phase of the reconstruction of the Interstate 70/71 interchange in Columbus will begin in 2020 instead of 2026.

ODOT will invest the first $200 million in savings in the 2013 fiscal year, with $50 million added to each of the next four fiscal years.

The money includes reduction in the work force through attrition, funds returned from district offices, plus higher than projected gas tax receipts and the elimination of federal earmarks. There was also significant savings as a result of improved agency efficiency on the part of the members of the agency.

“We're innovating and approaching the delivery of services in a new way,” said Wray, “and all of this is allowing us to save millions of dollars that we can put into our major construction budget.”

In January, ODOT announced a $1.6 billion budget hole that forced the department to push back by decades some of the state’s largest construction projects. Since then, the agency has been seeking new ways to aid in the funding of major transportation projects throughout the state.

A copy of the TRAC list detailing the approved projects and their estimated construction timeframe is available on ODOT’s website: www.transportation.ohio.gov.
Legislative update

Paul Staley, Central Office

ODOT’s Legislative Services introduced three important changes in House Bill 487, part of the governor’s mid-biennium budget review. Having passed the House and Senate, the bill is expected to be signed soon by the Governor.

To make road construction safer, the director is now permitted to establish speed limits within construction zones based on the work being conducted and any other appropriate criteria.

It also allows the director to set new standards for the use of colored lights on snow plows and oversized vehicles. More distinctive lighting will help identify the vehicles and increase safety for highway technicians.

HB 487 also gives the director the flexibility to establish ODOT divisions as needed and eliminates the current statutory organization. The Office of Public Transportation will be replaced with the Office of Transit with the responsibility for administering public transportation grants.

Agreement preserves roadways in modern energy rush

Becky Giauque, District 11

As the exploration of natural gas and shale in Ohio continues, local communities will need ways to deal with the influx of truck traffic on their roadways. Last summer, officials from ODOT and ODNR began meeting with dozens of county and township leaders and members of the oil and gas industry to develop a standard Road Use Maintenance Agreement (RUMA) to protect and preserve local road and bridge systems. The agreement was completed last December and is now part of recently passed legislation in the Ohio Senate.

In recent weeks, ODOT Director Jerry Wray, District 11 Deputy Director Lloyd Macadam, Director of the Governor’s Office of Appalachia Jason Wilson and representatives from ODNR have been traveling across eastern Ohio, telling stakeholders and the media about RUMA and fielding their questions.

Recently-passed senate legislation would help local communities deal with increased truck traffic that can damage their road and bridge pavements.

As seen on Facebook

Thank you Ohio Department of Transportation - Columbus District 6 - for added capacity and safety! Motorists on I-71 south exiting at SR 665 will use the new ramp and traffic signals that split SR 665 traffic so westbound and eastbound drivers are not waiting at the same traffic signal.

— City of Grove City
An old strategy for new results
David Rose, Central Office

In one of the most important military strategy books ever written, The Art of War, author Sun Tzu wrote, “If you do not seek out allies and helpers, then you will be isolated and weak.”

For ODOT, seeking allies and helpers means developing open dialogue and strong relationships with its partners as well as its employees.

Inspired by the Conaway Conference, ODOT held the first-ever ODOT/American Council of Engineering partnering conference. The goal was to facilitate new ideas and further reinforce respect and trust among the engineering consultant community.

“Aligning ourselves strategically with the consultant industry ensures a strong and sustainable working relationship,” said Assistant Director of Transportation Policy Jim Barna. “Feedback from the conference encouraged us to update some of our policies and procedures. These changes have led to enhanced project delivery.”

During the same time ODOT was working with its outside partners, it began cultivating stronger internal relationships with its project managers through the newly developed Project Manager Training Program.

More than fifty planning, engineering and construction project managers were selected to participate in the initial training program which focused on risk assessment and decision making techniques to boost efficiency of project development.

“The new training program empowers me to take educated risks and make quick decisions that are in the best interest of the project,” explained District 5 Project Manager Joe Smith. “Knowing executive management not only supports our efforts but also provides the resources to be productive encourages me to work even harder.”

In keeping with Sun Tzu’s vision, expect leadership to continue seeking allies and helpers.
What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger

Ron Poole, Central Office

Getting in exercise sessions whenever possible can contribute to a healthier life. But there are those who find greater rewards in more committed and structured sessions.

Amanda Heade in Accounts Payable with the Division of Finance began a journey to greater fitness in May, 2011. She began attending an indoor boot camp at a nearby gym, going to 45-60 minute classes of low impact cardio at a non-stop pace:

“The classes had all kinds of people of different ages attending, which was really nice for me,” said Heade. “I felt comfortable enough to keep going.”

After three months, Heade started adding kickboxing and weights to her routine, then running outside of classes. Along the way, she made some changes to her life, giving up cable and eating more protein while avoiding fast food and sodas. To date, she has lost 75 pounds and completed her first quarter marathon this past May. She is currently training for a half-marathon in Columbus this October. Though not for everyone, Heade has found what works for her:

“Constantly challenging my body — that’s what keeps me interested,” she said.

“The occurrences of injuries and fatalities at ODOT work places are facing imminent eradication following a massive wave of good sense engulfing the department in late June.

“With the department embracing new safety practices,” stated Deb Bateman, statewide transportation safety administrator, “the full force of effort is proving to be too much for the species to be expected to survive.”

The extinction-level event began June 20th, when every ODOT county manager met with their members and informed them of the department’s new zero-tolerance policy for workplace accidents. In what was described as a shockwave rolling across every district, department personnel suddenly realized a vision of their personal and collective responsibility to see to their own and their coworker’s safety in each and every task, backed by the full support of the department.

“I saw it for myself,” recalls Fulton County Manager Frank Phillips, Jr. Phillips held one of the safety meetings on the morning of that fateful day. “I informed them they would always have full protective gear and the right to make decisions on site for greater safety. Now workers will be expected to take the time to fully go over and implement all safety procedures before switching to any new task, and a work team will have the right to shut down a job and regroup if they do not feel things are right.”

Experts from an anonymous California institute traced the source of shockwave to a gathering of county managers in central Ohio the day before the event. Deputy Director of Operations Sonja Simpson explained it as a meeting in which the managers were exposed to new ideas on safety practices and directed to introduce them to the rest of their staffs.

“The previous assumption was that safety was the responsibility of the managers or safety coordinators,” she said. “But in the private sector, safety is a part of everything their workers do every day. That is how it is going to be at ODOT.”

Authorities say there is no cure known to science for the discovery of intelligent practices.
A cool event for a hot day

Kathleen Fuller, District 9

EVERY GROUNDBREAKING event is a special occasion, complete with pomp, circumstance and shovels. To say that the Ironton-Russell Bridge ceremony was no exception is an understatement. That hot, humid day in early May found the city of Ironton welcoming not just one, but two governors, as well as numerous state and local officials from both sides of the Ohio River.

In short, the ceremony to celebrate the start of an $81.3 million bridge replacement project was, in a word, cool.

With ODOT Director Jerry Wray serving as the master of ceremonies, those in attendance included Gov. John Kasich, his Kentucky counterpart, Gov. Steve Beshear, Ironton’s Mayor Rich Blankenship and Russell’s Mayor Bill Hopkins. Other elected officials in the audience included Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Secretary Mike Hancock, District 9 Deputy Director Vaughn Wilson, and his counterpart from KYTC’s District 9, Bart Bryant.

The crowd of more than 200 visitors included a marching band, a dance squad, and students from two local schools. The gathering gained the attention of many more cities and communities up and down the river.

The groundbreaking ceremony was also a day to pay tribute to the existing bridge. Serving as the backdrop for the event, the 90-year-old structure is a landmark in the area. At the time of its construction in 1922, the original structure was the only Ohio River crossing between Parkersburg, West Virginia and Cincinnati, Ohio.

But since the first feasibility study in 1999, the replacement project has been long-awaited and much-anticipated by both communities. Although the groundbreaking marked the start of ODOT’s single largest project to be awarded this year, the construction will actually culminate years of hard work, patience and diligence by a district, a department and a city.

And that, as Gov. Kasich said, “Is really cool.”


The Ironton High School Marching Tigers performed prior to the start of the day’s groundbreaking ceremony.

PHOTOS BY ANDY ELINE, CENTRAL OFFICE