FINDING YOUR WAY

Nationwide initiative seeks to create designated bicycle routes across the country
Finding your way
Julia Poling, District 1

Looking for a way to explore your county, state or nation? Something to do that is healthy, safe and a break from phones and e-mails? A nationwide initiative to create a designated bicycle route system may be calling you. ODOT is part of this effort which uses as much of the state’s extensive trail system as possible to help cyclists plan the safest, most effective routes from coast to coast. While no additional construction is needed here, signs designating the new routes must be put in place in Ohio as further plans and construction take place elsewhere.

“These routes will be for cyclists what the interstate system is for motorists,” said Beth Clark, District 1 program coordinator. “The initiative aims to establish a network of designated and signed U.S. and state bicycle routes. The bike routes will help direct cyclists across the state through points of interest, like park systems, small villages and historical sites.”

Ohio previously established USBR 50, a designated bike route, through the state. Once completed, USBR 50 will run from California to Washington D.C. In Ohio, there will be a system of five designated U.S. and 18 designated state bike routes. Together, there will be an estimated 4,000 miles of such routes for bicyclists to enjoy.

Julie Walcoff, ODOT’s point person for the initiative, works with bike advocates throughout the state to plan the safest, most effective routes from coast to coast. While no additional construction is needed here, signs designating the new routes must be put in place in Ohio as further plans and construction take place elsewhere.

“What makes ODOT a great place to work? Freedom to take time away from work when it is necessary. That has been a valuable perk that can never be taken for granted.”

Dave Braden
District 6 Safety and Health Inspector

ON THE COVER: Beth Clark (left), District 1 contact for the U.S. and Ohio Bike Route Designation Project; and Julie Walcoff, program manager for bike, pedestrian and Safe Routes To School, hold a sign that will designate U.S. Bike Route 50. ODOT is currently in the process of presenting legislation to villages and cities throughout the state which would permit the department to place signs along existing roads and highways to designate state and federal bike routes. 

ASK THE DIRECTOR

Q. I saw that ODOT recently participated in a news conference that talked about driverless vehicles. Do you really think this will occur in our lifetime?

A. I do. We already have two pilot projects in Ohio that are experimenting with this technology. ODOT is partnering with Honda, the Transportation Research Center, Ohio State University, and the cities of Dublin and Marysville, along with Union County on a 35-mile “Smart Mobility Corridor” on U.S. Route 33 northwest of Columbus.

We will be embedding high-capacity fiber optic cable along the route this construction season. This will allow dedicated short range communications to relay data back and forth between vehicles, researchers and ODOT. These devices will provide frequent and accurate traffic counts, weather and surface condition monitoring and incident management. We plan to use this data to allow automotive innovators to test and refine new job creating technologies and improve traffic flow and safety. ODOT is also working with our colleagues at the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission on another pilot program. They are using previously installed high-capacity fiber optic cable that will connect sensors installed along the highways’ six lanes and 241 miles. It’s an opportunity to study self-driving and connected vehicles on a continuous, uninterrupted roadway.

Though this technology requires a large investment, it is vital to improving safety and travel flow as well as reducing congestion and making our system work better. And as you already know, the solution is not to build our way out of congestion, as it’s very expensive and requires vast amount of resources. Using technology is the next wave of transportation innovation. Current research shows that 90 percent of all crashes are caused by human error. You now imagine a future where autonomous and connected vehicles are seamlessly integrated into our society. It’s a remarkable picture, as the estimates are that nearly 80 percent of all human error crashes would be virtually eliminated. And for Ohio, that equates to a reduction of approximately 200,000 crashes each year. You can’t have that kind of impact with adding new lanes or interchanges.

WHAT MAKES “A Great Place to Work?”

“... the employer of choice for a well-informed, well-trained, well-equipped and well-empowered professional workforce... an enthusiastic group of coworkers who are enjoying life... doing their best for the team... and adding value for others each day through their work...”

“What makes a workplace great? A place where people are friendly, respectful and feel free to express ideas, opinions and concerns. What makes ODOT a great place to work? Freedom to take time away from work when it is necessary. That has been a valuable perk that can never be taken for granted.”

Submitted by: Dave Braden
District 6 Safety and Health Inspector
CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS UPDATE

CSF SPOTLIGHT:

PEOPLE

Worklife Index

Based upon the Quality of Work Life Survey, it combines the overall scores from three main areas of the survey, including Employee Satisfaction, Strategic Direction, and Working Environment.

Making ODOT A Great Place to Work

Having a high quality work-life balance is essential to any workplace. For ODOT, it’s more than a desire, it’s part of the overall strategic plan and critical to achieving our vision of becoming a long-term, reliable, professional and highly productive organization. Over the years, the department has done a lot to improve its work-life quality. And the first step was having a baseline, or measurement, for employee satisfaction and engagement. Thus, the Quality of Work Life Survey (QWLS) was developed. And since 2012, the department’s Work Life Index has incrementally improved. However, as you know, the real value in any survey is not just the results, it’s what is done with the results. Executive and senior leadership have translated responses into tangible results, all to make the department a great place to work. Last year, a diverse group of employees from the districts and central office were asked to submit Action Plans (based upon the responses from the QWLS) on ways to improve the three areas of the Work Life Index. The following pages highlight the positive changes made in improving Employee Satisfaction, communicating Strategic Issues and enhancing the Work Environment within ODOT.

(The information provided is just a small portion of the district action plans and strategies developed to improve overall quality of work life at ODOT.)

‘Roads’ Scholars

Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

ODOT recently awarded three Mid-American Association of State Transportation Officials (MAASTO) scholarships to three Central State University students. The ODOT Diversity Scholarship focused on broadening the number of traditionally underrepresented groups in the management and operation ranks of the engineering and transportation industry.

The scholarships are intended to assist students with their higher education costs. Students must have a minimum GPA of 2.5. They must pursue an engineering degree or something closely related, and they must be a member of an underrepresented group and be able to demonstrate financial need. Applicants must include personal statements about how winning the award will help them attain their educational goals.

The scholarship winners were Sabrina Smith, an engineering major from Maywood, Illinois; Imani Moorman, a water resources management major from Columbus; and Roshay Timmons, a manufacturing engineering major from Farmington Hills, Michigan. ODOT Diversity Recruitment Manager Traci Luers says the scholarship is a one-time program funded by MAASTO.

“It’s exciting to get the opportunity to make a difference to these students,” Luers says. “This money is going to have an immediate impact on their education.”

Each received $2,500 towards their tuition at Central State, with another $2,500 donated to the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math club at Northland High School in Columbus.

“We always enjoy reading the many tweets and Facebook posts from people who have noticed the catchy signs on their drive, especially those who note that it prompted them to take action,” said Press Secretary Matt Bruning.

“The messages, while sometimes humorous, have a purpose.

“When we have people reacting to and thinking about a message, that’s a conversation maybe we didn’t have before,” said Highway Safety Program Manager Michelle May. “The one thing that I’ve noticed the past year and a half when we’ve been using the freeway message signs is that people will stop me and say, ‘so many people ask me about those signs, what’s on them and the number of traffic deaths.’ Those are the kinds of conversations that lead to actions to save lives.”

Both May and Bruning serve on a committee with the Ohio Department of Public Safety to determine the highway safety messages. May said feedback from employees is an important part of the process, and she welcomes suggestions through email.

Safety: Here’s your sign

Emily Hanson, Central Office

“That seatbelt looks good on you,” and “Santa sees you when you’re speeding,” are just a couple of the creative messages travelers have seen recently on Ohio highway signs. These signs have gotten people talking and have created buzz on social media.
WORKING ENVIRONMENT

**CHANGING THE CULTURE**

- We are One ODOT, working toward the same mission.
- Tapping our diverse workforce to bring new ideas, perspectives, and problem solving.
- We will create a working environment based on trust and mutual respect.

**LOWEST RANKED RESPONSES (2016 QWLS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>How Are We Improving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Strong feeling of teamwork and cooperation.”</td>
<td>“ODOT attracts, develops, &amp; retains diversity.”</td>
<td>Cross-district sharing and collaboration. Employing mentoring and job shadowing initiatives. Improving communication at every level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ODOT attracts, develops, &amp; retains diversity.”</td>
<td>“Individuals &amp; groups are recognized for achievements.”</td>
<td>Providing recognition programs and initiatives. Personalized thank you notes sent to individuals/teams. Promoting speaking engagements for individuals/teams.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EMployee SATISFACTION**

**CHANGING THE CULTURE**

- Employee satisfaction comes from being engaged, having ownership and providing new ideas to make ODOT better. This philosophy has been implemented throughout the organization.
- Every district and division has been tasked with creating an “action plan” for tackling lowest ranked results.
- Provide the right resources and infrastructure to perform great work and foster employee development.

**LOWEST RANKED RESPONSES (2016 QWLS)**

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I feel respected and valued.”</td>
<td>“I have opportunities to showcase my work.”</td>
<td>Improving safety practices and recognition programs. Modernizing facilities. Creating a “thank you” culture. Updating equipment throughout the department and ensuring employees have the right tools for the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have opportunities to showcase my work.”</td>
<td>“Opportunities for me to develop.”</td>
<td>Providing opportunities for sharing best practices, ideas and innovations. Communications is focused on the people, not just the project. Participating in conferences, annual meetings, workshops, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**STRATEGIC ISSUES**

**CHANGING THE CULTURE**

- Communicate the strategic plan and CSFs to all levels of management and employees. Show CSF connection to daily work.
- Encourage diversity and collaboration, realizing the best ideas come from those doing the work.
- Provide guidance, technology and tools that position the department to be a long-term, reliable, professional and highly productive organization.

**LOWEST RANKED RESPONSES (2016 QWLS)**

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<td>“Clear understanding of strategic plan.”</td>
<td>“Management involves appropriate people.”</td>
<td>Highlighting CSFs in various communication channels. Publishing CSF website. Encouraging administrators and supervisors to better inform employees of CSFs. No “gotcha’s.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Management involves appropriate people.”</td>
<td>“ODOT is a long-term, productive organization.”</td>
<td>Implementing modern, cutting-edge technology to be more efficient. Focusing on research that impacts real work. Focusing on succession planning and cross-training.</td>
</tr>
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QUALITY OF WORK LIFE SURVEY is coming again April 17, 2017 and will now be paperless.
Ashley Rittenhouse, District 10

Those who are involved in roadside vegetation management projects aren’t formally trained in “arboriculture:” the practical skill and science of caring for trees and shrubs or removing them if they become dangerous. For the first time, ODOT HTs will receive arboriculture training. Multiple members in District 10 are signed up to learn how to become “tree surgeons” through courses taught by Davey Resource Group from Kent.

“The need for the training was realized through a research project we had done with Davey Resource Group from Kent,” said Scott Lucas, administrative officer in Central Office. “The research project covered a large amount of vegetation management practices and noted that ODOT staff would be well served with arboricultural training.”

There are two separate trainings scheduled. The first is a two-day course, with one being held in the winter and the other in the summer.

“The course covers tree identification, tree hazard recognition and proper arboricultural cuts,” said Lucas.

The second training is a four-day course that will cover a large amount of information designed to prepare a person to take the certified arborist test. Organizers say empowering ODOT staff with arboriculture knowledge will make state highways safer, trees healthier and more aesthetically pleasing, and should reduce complaints about poor tree care practices.

ABOVE: Hocking County HT Emery Biggs uses a chainsaw during a tree trimming operation on US 33 in Hocking County.

PHOTO BY ASHLEY RITTENHOUSE, DISTRICT 10
The ODOT Way... ...from the motoring public...with deep appreciation

Transcript thought it would be nice to share some e-mails concerning our highway work force and what they do for the public; we recommend you read these anytime you think what ODOT does is never noticed by the public.

From Seneca County Transportation Manager Bryan Spero:

“Last night I received a call from a gentleman Brian Walton whose father Verl had passed days before. We had a crew cutting trees on State Route 231 this past Friday 2/24/17 when the funeral procession went past our crew. As the cars went past the five HTs on the job stood in a line with hard hats off till the procession was past. Mr. Walton stopped after the graveside service and talked to one of the HTs (Jeremiah Lydy) and thanked him and the rest of crew for the display of respect. Mr. Walton told me on the phone that there were numerous comments by many about the crew and their actions after the graveside service. HTs included Jeremiah Lydy, Matt Ritz, Tim Weisenauer by many about the crew and their actions after the graveside service and talked to one of the HTs (Jeremiah Lydy) and thanked him and the rest of crew for the display of respect. Mr. Walton told me on the phone that there were numerous comments by many about the crew and their actions after the graveside service.

From Daniel Myers, Captain with the Greenville City Fire Department, sent to District 7 Public Information Officer Denise Heitkamp:

“Denise, Per our phone conversation today, I would like to take a moment to express our sincere gratitude for the way a few of your employees went the extra mile recently. A retired member of the Greenville Fire Department lost his life in a tragic car accident on U.S. Route 36, east of Greenville, back in November. The vehicle he was in went off the side of the road and through the fence separating the side ditch from a wooded area. On November 29th, his funeral procession went from Greenville to Piqua, driving right by the spot of the accident. It just so happened that there was an ODOT crew repairing that fence as the procession drove by. Being that this individual was a retired member of the Fire Department, the casket was transported on the back of one of our fire engines, which led the procession. As we approached the ODOT crew working alongside the road, we realized they were repairing the fence that was damaged as a result of this deadly accident. As the procession got closer to your crew, we noticed all of the members of that crew calmly stopped what they were doing, turned towards the road, took off their hard hats and placed them over their chests, and paid respects to the man that had passed away just days before in that same spot. They stood there until the procession had passed and we could no longer see them. It was a small gesture that went a very long way. The members of the fire department as well as the family and friends of the deceased gentlemen were very impressed by your member’s thoughtful display of respect during a time of much sadness. Their demeanor that day was a true class act.”

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This year marks the 45th anniversary of the creation of the ODOT logo, dubbed the “Zephyr” in the years since its inception. In recognition, Transcript is reprinting the original newsletter article introducing the new emblem and its origin. The article originally appeared in ODOT’s “Highlights” published in November, 1972:

New ODOT Emblem Selected

A department of Transportation emblem designed by Randy Witherspoon, Bureau of Public Information, has been selected to represent the department from over one hundred designs recently submitted in the ODOT emblem contest.

In making the announcement, Director Richley said, “The decision as to which design would best fit the needs of the new department was a very difficult one to make. The response from our employees was much greater than we had anticipated, and this made the selection process longer than expected.”

The director went on to say, “I am gratified at the interest taken by employees in the contest. There were so many fine entries, and I wish in some way all of them could have been utilized.”

“Many interesting designs were submitted. The emblem designed by Witherspoon, however, captured all the elements a transportation emblem should signify,” Richley said. “I wanted to create a symbol showing mobility without confinement or limitation. On that basis I thought it should be abstract so that like the future of transportation, it would be ageless,” said Witherspoon after learning his design had been selected.

Witherspoon’s emblem exemplifies movement, suggests the future and is consistent with the Federal Transportation emblem and emblems of other state DOT’s.

In offering his personal congratulations to Witherspoon, Director Richley said, “We have selected your design because it represents the concept of total transportation and transportation mobility—not only now, but well into the future.”