Where's the 'Puck?'
Grading the District Deputy Directors

'Almost Famous'
How Dianne Kahal-Berman’s choices took her from music to motherhood to engineering

A Day in the Life
Webcasters
Milbaugh & Zigarevich

The wait is over
A township road gets upgraded

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The Ohio Department of Transportation Newsletter
Transcript
STE Credit Union has changed its name to Bridge Credit Union. The name change represents the culmination of a large-scale rebrand as the organization expands to serve the private sector of the transportation industry while continuing its legacy of serving the department's employees and their families.

“The new brand embodies the essence and values of who we have always been and who we will continue to be,” said Bridge President Christy Leslie. “Our name ‘bridges’ the gap between employees within the public and private sectors, as well as symbolizes how we help connect members to their financial dreams.”

As part of its continued commitment to department employees, Bridge Credit Union added new checking account options and has expanded mortgage, business and student loan offers.

Bridge also has a new logo and new website presence. To read more or obtain information about all of Bridge Credit Union’s services, visit bridgecu.org.

The Ramp Clear solutions are designed to quickly address safety concerns to allow the project to finish up within one construction season. Any simple adjustment that ODOT can make at problem interchanges, such as the timing of traffic signals off the exit or the construction of a designated turn lane, and costing less than $2 million, will qualify as Ramp Clear.

“While a more permanent, but more involved, solution would be ideal in these situations, the Ramp Clear program is able to lessen major traffic backups until ODOT is ready to provide the ultimate fix,” says James Young, deputy director of Engineering.

Ramp Clear projects underway now include the Interstate 270 and Sawmill Road interchange in Franklin County and the State Route 32 and U.S. Route 68 interchange in Brown County.
Dry runs dry out
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

At a recent meeting of district and Central Office Public Information staff members, Assistant Director of Field Operations Mike Flynn announced that the annual dry runs, a long standing tradition at ODOT, are going to be eliminated. They will be replaced by a series of random inspections, with the county garages given a 24-hour notice.

Most of the PIOs were not happy with the news: “There are two times a year when we get good media coverage,” lamented one public information officer, “the dry runs and the beginning of construction season. It’s an easy story for them to cover, and it enhances ODOT’s image.”

Despite their misgivings, Flynn insists that eliminating dry runs will save money and lead to better efficiency. He assured them they can still hold media events for snow and ice readiness without including equipment and facility inspections.

Truck Improvement Team:
The saga continues
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

The 26 members of the Dump Truck Improvement Team met for several hours with ODOT Director Jerry Wray to talk about what they think would be the perfect dump truck. The team consists of auto technicians, auto mechanics, and highway technicians from all 12 districts. Team members complained that the truck motors are underpowered because of new emissions standards.

“You can’t merge onto the freeway when you’re fully loaded. We don’t have the engine to power the truck,” said one team member.

Others complained that they have little input with the district office when it comes to which truck is purchased. A consensus was reached that one truck design would not work for all 12 districts because of the different set of highway variables each has. The Dump Truck Improvement Team will meet at least two more times with the Director prior to the 2015 Dump Truck Run.

“We’re not attempting to standardize one truck configuration for all 88 counties,” said Director Wray, “Instead, we’re asking the team to help develop the optimal, best value truck for each region of the state. Involving the mechanics and operators will greatly improve our chances of getting it right.”

Local News

Districts get new camera trucks for culvert inspections
Brent Kovacs, District 4

ODOT personnel will soon have access to new remote pipeline inspection equipment that looks as if it comes out of a movie. The new pipeline inspection trucks being gradually introduced to all the districts look like ordinary commercial vans, but they come equipped with three TV monitors, external cameras, a generator, a water tank and an air compressor. The operator can use a...
small camera from the truck to record pictures from small pipes, or drive the entire vehicle through a large pipeline for close footage. The recorded material can be saved for use at a later time.

“The pipeline inspection truck will save ODOT money by inspecting pipes, rather than the department replacing them,” said Jeff Lindsey, special projects manager.

The first four trucks will be shared by three district offices per region.

A game of hurry up and wait

David Rose, District 10

Working in transportation can be rewarding and frustrating at the same time. Completing the widening and upgrade of Morgan County Township Road 209 (Monastery Road) to the newly designated State Route 607 illustrates how satisfying, yet trying, it can be to finish a project.

“Upgrading the township road has been discussed since the early 90s,” said ODOT District 10 Deputy Director Steve Williams. “It’s wonderful to see this project finally completed.”

District 10 Planning and Engineering Administrator Debbie Fought remembers being approached by the Morgan County Commissioners asking if the department wanted to build a new county garage on Township Road 209 from land donated by AEP. In turn, ODOT would give its old garage to the Community Involvement Corporation, a county economic development organization.

“A few of the engineers and I met with the Morgan County Commissioners and AEP to walk the entire length of Monastery Road,” said Fought. We were desperately in need for a new county garage with a better location and the county wanted to turn this area into a business corridor; it was a win-win for everyone.”

Although the new garage was up and running, funding was still needed to upgrade the road. The district waited two years, when it came in the form of a $3.3 million earmark. But ODOT did not receive the funds for Township Road 209 until 2005.

With money in hand, ODOT began surveying and preliminary engineering on the project as well as holding public meetings. Once complete, ODOT
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“IT SEEMS THAT SOME ODOT MANAGERS THINK THAT OVERTIME IS NOT permitted except during snow and ice season. However, if we complete a maintenance job by early afternoon we usually call it a day, even though with a couple more hours of overtime we could complete a second job. Instead, we wait until the next day. Is this department policy?”

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“NO, IT IS NOT DEPARTMENT POLICY. OVERTIME IS A VALUABLE TOOL that should be used judiciously. There are times when it’s appropriate and there are times when it is not. It’s a tool just like a grader or a computer. Our obligation is to efficiently utilize overtime. For example, if we can accomplish a ten hour job in one day why would we split it into two days with an additional set up and tear down. It takes a little more planning, but that’s part of our responsibility, it’s our job. It should be arranged in advance so that employees will know what to expect. After all, many of them have children and evening plans. Careful use of overtime can result in us being much more productive. For example, crews from Muskingum and Licking counties in District Five set a record a few months ago by laying 740 tons of asphalt in a single day. They worked from sunup to sundown. There was overtime involved, but a lot was accomplished. It was a very productive day.”

— Director Jerry Wray ©
We’ve all been there...you sit down at your desk, look at your calendar, and realize that a meeting you’ve got in fifteen minutes slipped your mind. And worse yet, your meeting is at Central Office, and you’re not.

In situations like these, you need help. You need friends. You need Bill Milbaugh and Bill Zigarevich and the DoIT webcasting service.

“Webcasts save the day when the weather is awful or when information needs to get out to a lot of people in real time,” says Milbaugh. “When a client finds out their employees can view a meeting at their desk rather than having to drive to Columbus, they’re thrilled.”

Zigarevich served as the first webcaster for Central Office. Mr. Milbaugh recently stepped in to assume the primary tasks of the position, but Zigarevich remains heavily involved in the process, lending technical support and covering webcasts when Milbaugh is unavailable. The two men have evolved a strong partnership.

“Webcasts are so varied,” said Zigarevich. “With all of the different topics, I’ve gotten to see a lot of different aspects of ODOT that others rarely get to see.”

Milbaugh and Zigarevich have installed equipment to allow presentations to be broadcast online, allowing webcast attendees to enjoy a very realistic interaction. Video and audio feeds are transmitted alongside data files such as a PowerPoint presentation. Attendees can submit questions via email which presenters can respond to in real-time. In addition to eliminating unnecessary travel time and expenses, online gatherings can be archived and replayed to reach more people.

Milbaugh and Zigarevich have become go-to resources for webcasting needs of clients such as the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and Bridge Credit Union. A former Employee of the Month award winner, Milbaugh’s professionalism and dedication provides for an exceptional user experience:

“I have always had a passion for good service,” he said. “Our internal and external customer service reviews are over 95 percent in client satisfaction, largely due to Bill Zigarevich generously taking the time to help me learn the technical details. I want to make all of us in DoIT look good, because I know we are proud of the work we do.”

Life away from work keeps both men very busy. Zigarevich and his wife have two sons, ages 12 and 14, both of whom play soccer. When he finds spare time, Zigarevich enjoys gardening and working in his yard.

Milbaugh is an avid hiker and mountain climber who enjoys spending time with his family. He is a lifetime student of Russian language and culture, and practices American Sign Language.

“My wife is a former Soviet Jewish refugee, who I respect very much for what she has been through,” he said. “We have a hearing-impaired daughter who is very special to me.”

Videographer Bill Milbaugh (right) works with Bill Zigarevich during a webcast session.
CALL TO REPAIR A RAILROAD CROSSING where four Brunswick High School teenagers died just before their high school graduation received widespread attention both in local and even national media outlets, including the USA Today. The answer to that call involved the coordination and cooperation of a number of state and local offices all determined to help prevent such a tragedy from happening again.

Shortly after the crash at Boston Road on June 3 of last year, District 3 started working closely with the Lorain County Engineer’s office to provide them with solar-powered LED flashing stop signs at the rail crossing. Improving the roadway itself, which divides Lorain County to the north and Medina County to the south, would require considerable teamwork.

The Lorain County Engineer’s office and some Central Office staff worked on a preliminary concept to improve the roadway by slightly raising the road to the east and west of the tracks. In a process known as design-acquire-build (DAB), the design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction phases of a project are all combined into one contract. This allows all the partners involved in those phases to work simultaneously on the project while securing the needed right of way. DAB significantly reduced the amount of time and cost in a traditional design-bid-build project. To further speed up the acquisition process, District 3 used transparent boundaries and had District 2 Realty Specialist Mark LaWarre secure the Rights of Entry on the project.

The project was awarded to Beaver Excavating Company, with ODOT providing most of the financing with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Safety funds. Managed by Central Office, these funds can be used on any state or local roadways where safety problems exist:

“Normally, a project of this type would take a minimum of three years to deliver from design to construction under a traditional format,” said District 3 Deputy Director Allen Biehl. “To have this project see construction within one year of the beginning of this collaboration, given the many public agencies involved, is unprecedented.”

Boston Road had to be closed for construction at the start of summer. During the first two days of the closure, the contractor did not work; instead, ODOT made a provision within the contract to allow the Brunswick High School staff the opportunity to remove any existing memorials at the site, prior to construction work. Over the next two months, the contractor worked to decrease the grade of the roadway approaching the rail crossing. Today, the road is reopened to traffic and has area residents pleased.

“They did a really nice job,” said Steven Santell, a resident of Boston Road. “They cleaned it up; it looks nice out here. This will definitely help [safety]. There’s no incline now, so no one can get hurt.”

The rail crossing at Boston Road now has approaches that are much more gradual in grade, increasing safety for those traveling across the tracks to prevent another tragic incident.
Almost famous: District engineer has talent to spare

Kathleen Fuller, District 9

Mild-mannered, soft-spoken transportation professional by day, stirring, intense singer by night, Dianne Kahal-Berman with District 9 has led a remarkable life.

The daughter of an engineer and a nurse, she grew up in Columbus and began singing at an early age, performing her way through local concerts, recitals and shows.

“I think I was born singing,” said Kahal-Berman.

She joined her first band, Fresh Air, while enrolled at Ohio State. Embarking on a career as a rock singer, she toured the states, eventually making her way to Nashville and work as a session artist recording with CBS records. Her big break came when singer Gene Cotton needed her to replace his partner, Kim Carnes, on tour to perform their Top Forty hit, “You’re a Part of Me.”

“I sounded like her, and I even resembled her a little bit,” she said.

She soon began performing with some of the biggest acts of the 1970s and 80s, such as the Captain and Tennille, Neil Sedaka, Dr. Hook, and England Dan and John Ford Coley.

Eventually another love, motherhood, led her back to Ohio to complete a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering and then work as an engineer for private construction firms before joining ODOT four years ago.

“It was a choice I wanted to make,” said Kahal-Berman. “It is incredibly difficult to be a professional musician, traveling all over the country and have a family, so I left the music career to be home with them.”

Now, with her son and daughter both grown and out on their own, Kahal-Berman can be seen performing at area clubs, lending her talents in both pop and jazz acts. She still has the love of performing that had her singing to thousands across this country.

“I guess you could say I was almost famous,” she said.