Technically speaking, the George V. Voinovich Bridge cost $566 million. The bridge is actually two bridges and is part of Interstate 90 in downtown Cleveland. The bridges cross the Cuyahoga River, replacing a single bridge that opened in 1959. However, in order to tear down the old Inner-belt Bridge, we bid the new bridges separately. The Southern Ohio Veterans Memorial Highway was bid as a single project in 2015. The cost was about $435 million.

At the opening of the east-bound George V. Voinovich Bridge in November 2013, Governor Voinovich and his wife were there to help us cut the ribbon. As a former member of his cabinet when he served as Governor, I was glad he got to see the first bridge completed before he passed away this year unexpectedly. Governor Voinovich dedicated over 40 years of his life to public service, and I think naming these bridges after him was a wonderful idea. He served ten years as Cleveland Mayor, eight years as Ohio Governor and twelve years as a U.S. Senator from Ohio.

I recently read that the George V. Voinovich Bridge was called the largest project in ODOT’s history during its September dedication. However, I also recall reading that the Southern Ohio Veteran’s Memorial Highway in Scioto County was called the largest project in the department’s history when construction began last year. Which project is the largest?

S
imply put, Travis Avery and Keith Bantner in District 1 had had it! A mechanic and machinist, respectively, they were tired of having to repeatedly fabricate hitches to enable trucks to latch onto the chipper box in chip seal operations. Trucks come equipped with a standard hitch which did not work in these operations. Improvising substitutes from scratch had become a common practice, with each hitch different according to the truck. Making them for every truck took two days. It had been going on for decades. Enough, already!

Fortunately, frustration with a process can sometimes be enough to make you find a better way. In this case, the two co-workers used some innovative thinking to design and fabricate a universal connector, dubbed the “Buckeye Hitch,” to make this problem a thing of the past. Already experienced at creating such connectors, they decided to alter the design so an operator can easily unbolt the standard hitch, slide it out, and replace it with the new hitch. The swap can be done in minutes, and makes every ODOT dump truck easily adaptable for chip seal operations.

The Chillicothe Correctional Institution, where ODOT’s trucks are fabricated, has agreed to produce the hitches for District 1 and any district on request.

I recently read that the George V. Voinovich Bridge was called the largest project in ODOT’s history during its September dedication. However, I also recall reading that the Southern Ohio Veteran’s Memorial Highway in Scioto County was called the largest project in the department’s history when construction began last year. Which project is the largest?

Frustration: The father of invention

Rhonda Pees, District 1

PHOTO BY RHONDA PEES, DISTRICT 1
This construction season saw the completion of many vital projects. Here, we offer some of ODOT’s 2016 milestones.
Start Talking!
Building a Drug-Free Future

No, drug abuse is not an issue of transportation; it’s a public health epidemic, here and across the nation. And whether directly related to our mission or not, it is something all citizens can help combat. Governor John Kasich has kicked off a new drug abuse prevention initiative in Ohio, and he is asking everyone in and out of state service to help reduce the likelihood of youth drug use before it even starts.

The “Start Talking!” initiative is inspired by research that shows youth are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs when parents and adults talk with them about it. In 2011, drug overdoses were the leading cause of accidental deaths in the state, with one Ohioan dying from a drug overdose every five hours.

“Start Talking” pulls together different programs designed to provide methods for helping parents, youths and other adults. These tools include providing instructions on how to talk to your kids about drug use, organizing community discussions, and encouraging positive lifestyle choices.

“We’re making real progress in fighting prescription drug abuse in Ohio, because we made up our minds to fight the problem head on,” said Gov. Kasich. “But we still have more work to do because illicit drug abuse remains a huge problem in our state…. It’s a tough problem that calls for an even tougher fight. But it’s a fight we must win, because our future—our children—are at stake.”

For more information about Start Talking and how to get involved, visit StartTalking.Ohio.Gov.

ODOT has a technology council?
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Established in 2014, ODOT’s 11-member Technology Council evaluates and recommends investments in tech that will increase the department’s effectiveness. They also manage the performance of ODOT’s technology program.

“The Technology Council is a cross-functional representation of ODOT,” said Missy Anverse, the administrator of the Division of Information Technology’s Office of Project Management. “It’s not just IT professionals: There are no voting members on the council from Central Office Divisions.”

The current goal is to create a five-year technology plan for the department, updating that plan annually. The council reviews and approves requests for new IT projects, and any new IT hardware or software. Robin Traxler, the Technology Council liaison, works to build a bridge between the Council, IT, and business users requesting a new technology.

“Whenever possible we are looking for one solution that fits the needs of many,” she says. Recently, Director Jerry Wray and the ODOT Governance Board announced three new members to this group: District 10 Construction Administrator Cary Betting; Infrastructure Specialist with CADD and Mapping Services Jack Kerstetter; and Wayne County Garage Manager Matt Walter. The council meets monthly.
Small tablets equal big savings

Breanna Badanes, District 6

Times are changing for Highway Technician Tony Lewis. Gone are the days of his truck overflowing with stacks upon stacks upon stacks of paper documents for a project like the I-270/US 33 interchange reconstruction in Dublin. For the last two months he has been using an LG Android tablet on the project site; whether he’s referring to ODOT specs, CAD drawings or maintenance of traffic notes, Lewis can access it all on the go.

“I’ve got all the plans downloaded onto that tablet so in my truck, I don’t have to carry around every last one of the plans,” said Lewis. “It saves a lot of time and paper.”

With 86 projects and counting, District 6 is testing a plan is to provide all project inspectors with a mobile device. This will allow them to answer contractor questions on site, instead of traveling back to their offices for answers. The tablets allow them to quickly research topics and better identify problems. It is also easier to document day-to-day activities and create reports. District 6 has a total of 24 devices deployed, with more coming.

“It’s a great way to use today’s technology to create a truly mobile workforce. It allows our field workers to spend more time where they’re supposed to be: in the field,” said District 6 Network Administrator Jill Jones.