Feeling the ‘berm’
Ashley Rittenhouse, District 10

Monroe and Vinton Counties are participating in a research project aimed at improving roadbed compaction practices. The goal is to analyze and evaluate the current methods and make recommendations on how to improve the safety, productivity, and cost-effectiveness of the process.

As part of the study, a survey was developed to document ODOT’s current practices and send to all county garages. Monroe County Transportation Administrator Jim Wells and Vinton County Transportation Administrator Dave Molihan submitted the idea. They helped write the Request for Proposals and selected Munir Nazzal, associate professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at Ohio University. They will work closely with Nazzal, who is tasked with finding new alternatives. They will then determine whether any of those alternatives is better and more cost-effective than current practices. Nazzal and District Research Coordinator Jill Martindale with ODOT’s Central Office, saw a District 10 paving train at work in Monroe County in August and also got a firsthand look at the berms.

ASK THE DIRECTOR

Richard Deubler, District 1

We hear so much about how ODOT is working to help achieve the next level of transportation using technology. But, can we really hope to see that big of a change in the years to come?

There is a story I sometimes share about meeting a group of civil engineering seniors at the University of Akron back in the mid-1990s. There were about thirty-five people in the room and I asked them, “How many of you can remember when there was no interstate system?” The only hand in the room that went up belonged to the professor.

Highway infrastructure is a cornerstone of our economy. In a country that makes things and grows things, it is essential to have the ability to move things efficiently and safely. While our modern mobility has brought us freedom, it has also come with a price. With fast vehicles and hard roads came crashes, injuries, and fatalities. By the 1970s, more than 54,000 people died each year on our nation’s highways. Today, that number has reduced to roughly 35,000 thanks to improvements in automobile and roadway engineering and technology, as well as more effective law enforcement.

When we talk about the next wave of transportation technology, smart infrastructure, and smart vehicles, we’re talking about sensors, cameras, Wi-Fi, and fiber. We’re talking about infrastructure that can actually provide information to the vehicle and the vehicle’s operator. We’re talking about vehicles that can warn each other, and emergency responders, about hazards on the road ahead.

These next-generation smart cars and trucks will use radar, cameras, and sensors to monitor conditions around and ahead to a degree that is not possible for human senses. You may already be familiar with some of this technology such as lane departure warnings and backup sensors. Industry experts predict that within a decade, your car will be able to navigate the interstate system without your needing to touch the wheel.

That’s why, in Ohio, we are moving quickly to create “smart mobility corridors” by installing high-capacity fiber-optic cable and sensors along our roadways to help these connected and automated vehicles communicate vital roadway condition information. We are embracing data-driven traffic management techniques that will enhance traffic flow on state highways and keep traffic moving during rush hour peaks. Leaders in both the public and private sectors are working with researchers and companies who want to refine this technology so that we can get these new-age safety improvements to market and start saving lives.

Much like the creation of the interstate system did, this technology will transform the way we move people and goods; and we will experience this transformation sooner than many realize. We talk a lot about the jobs and investments these efforts will bring with them, but arguably the biggest benefit to the coming transportation transformation will be safety.

One day, many years from now, a Department of Transportation director will stand in front of a room of college students. He or she will ask if anyone can remember when used to be crashes, injuries and sometimes deaths on our interstate system every day, and again the only the hand in the room to go up will belong to the professor.

In a departure from the traditional “Bring your child to work day” format, District 1 held a first ever “Mentoring Day” in late July. The event brought 22 kids and young adults for an array of activities and field experiences. In years previous, those in maintenance garages or on construction work sites had to keep children in a contained area, doing tasks like landscaping. However, this year, maintenance and construction personnel got the opportunity to bring mentees on-site and within safe viewing zones, immersing their children in the daily experiences of an ODOT employee.

In the morning, younger mentees explored different departments with the help of structured activities, like clambering into a pristine plow truck and deconstructing old computer towers. The afternoon was left open for mentors to guide their mentees through an individualized job shadowing experience. For those mentors who chose to enroll their mentees in scheduled activities at the district office, the morning commenced with a basic introduction to a few of the departments at the district, granting a wider scope into all of ODOT’s functions and responsibilities.

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Trees, Please
Brian Cunningham, District 8

The permanent travel configuration on the two new Jeremiah Morrow bridge spans was finalized and opened to traffic in November 2016, but the project is not yet fully complete. During the next two months, more than 200 trees will be planted along the Little Miami River in Warren County as part of the $88 million project. The combination of maple, oak, sycamore, dogwood and buckeye trees will stabilize the river bank. They will also help to enhance the beautiful landscape in this area, while providing food and shelter for the various wildlife that make this river bank home.

“We are conscientious regarding the environment and work to minimize the impact our projects have on it,” said ODOT District 8 Deputy Director Tammy Campbell. “The tree plantings will ensure the surrounding area is returned to a natural condition that is better than when we started the project.”

The project to build the new Jeremiah Morrow bridge spans, Ohio’s tallest standing at 239 feet above the river, began in the summer of 2010.

The Sport of Kings
Melanie Cercone, District 11

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A polished diamond
Rebecca Dangelo, District 2

Everyone knows one of the most basic principles of driving in America: drive on the right side of the road. But that’s not the case with the opening of Ohio’s second diverging diamond interchange at State Route 25 and Interstate 475 in Perrysburg.

These interchanges work by having the non-freeway traffic cross to the opposite side of the bridge. This allows for simple or “free” left and right turns from all directions, decreasing motorists’ wait times, and improving capacity by 15 to 25 percent.

Diverging diamond interchanges increase safety for motorists by reducing conflict points—from 26 in a conventional design to 14—and create shorter, safer crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists. Studies show that diverging diamond interchanges reduce crashes by up to 46 percent and, further, make wrong-way entries to freeway ramps difficult.

The Perrysburg configuration was also cost-effective because the existing bridge is reused.

One lane of the new interchange opened in each direction in September, and all lanes opened in October.

On average, there were more than 1,000 crashes each year from 2012 to 2016 because of one, almost entirely preventable cause: debris. There were an average of 28 injuries for each of these years because of debris-related crashes.

“We really just need people to pay attention when they are hauling things and make sure they’re secure,” said Matt Bruning, press secretary with the division of Communications. “When you’re hauling a load of scrap, or a load of trash, or even picking up new furniture at the store or a mattress, you really need to tie that down and put a tarp over it. That’s what we’re really trying to get people to understand.”

Drivers also need to know how to deal with debris while driving, according to the American Automobile Association. Motorists should continually search the road 12 to 15 seconds ahead for objects. Don’t tailgate, and maintain at least 3 to 4 seconds of following distance with the car ahead to see objects in the road ahead easier. It’s about to make contact with debris, safely reduce speed as much as possible prior to collision. And always be aware of open space around your vehicle and maintain an open space to the front and at least one side of the vehicle at all times.
Cleveland’s west side neighborhoods have always desired increased access to Lake Erie and nearby Edgewater Park, but have been restricted by railroad tracks and U.S. Route 6/State Route 2. The Lakefront West project has been working since 2010 to connect Cleveland’s west side neighborhoods with the lakefront by creating multi-modal connections.

The project began with the renovation of two pedestrian tunnels, followed closely by the West 73rd Street extension which built a new roadway under the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks to connect with existing access to Edgewater Park.

In spring 2015, reconstruction of U.S. 6/SR 2 between Clifton Boulevard and the Main Avenue Bridge into a 35 mph, tree lined boulevard as well as installation of a new multipurpose trail and safety improvements on West 45th, West 28th and West 25th streets began. All major work was complete this fall and only minor operations will continue through summer 2018.

In 2015, the first section of the much-anticipated Opportunity Corridor project kicked off. The Opportunity Corridor is a planned boulevard that will run from East 55th Street at Interstate 490 to East 105th Street in University Circle on Cleveland’s near east side. This project is the first step in revitalizing the area known as the “Forgotten Triangle.”

Section 1 included widening the existing E. 105th Street between Quebec and Chester avenues. Crews spent this summer finishing up work between Euclid and Chester avenues, which included removal of existing pavement and abandoned power duct, install a new power duct, signal conduit and drainage facilities all to widen East 105th Street to the east and west and slightly widen Chester Avenue to the south.

In October, final paving and pavement markings and activating new LED street lights and traffic signals completed the project.