TEAM UP ODOT, DIRECTOR’S CUP ROADEO & TOP AWARDS
Showcasing the best of ODOT pg 2

HOW WE ROLL
(It isn’t our first time to the rodeo.) pg 7
From maintaining Ohio’s transportation infrastructure, to promoting the use of bicycles, there’s a whole lot more to ODOT than roads.

NELSONVILLE BYPASS COMPLETE pg 4
FROM SHARING BEST practices and innovations to truck and front end loader operators showcasing their maneuverability skills, ODOT employees from around the state converged at the Ohio Expo Center to participate in the department’s 2013 Roadeo, Team Up and TOP Awards event.

Held this September 11, the annual Team Up ODOT featured educational display booths and equipment demonstrations focused around this year’s theme, “One Team, One ODOT.”

First initiated in 1986, this year’s Director’s Cup Roadeo featured 24 truck operators and 24 loader operators from the districts who previously qualified during the districts’ events.

Prior to running the obstacle course, each operator had to demonstrate their knowledge through classroom tests and safety inspections of their vehicles. Dana Missler of District 2 took first place in the truck category with a score of 2,515 out of a possible 2,875. Chris Vermillion of District 1 took first place in the front end loader contest.

ODOT Director Jerry Wray spoke at the event about the HT series, providing boots for HTs, MARCS radios, Kronos, the perfect truck and force accounts.

“We are all public employees,” he said to the crowd. “We work for ourselves and our families, and we work with ODOT.”

A special tribute video was played in memory of Lee Rizor, the highway technician in District 6 who was killed on the job this past April. A special thank you was also paid to Sandy Trout.
New salt purchasing approach saving millions
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Each year, ODOT spends from $10–to-$20 million or more for salt, depending upon the season’s weather. Thanks to changes made by the office of Maintenance Administration, the average cost per ton has dropped by over 35 percent the last three years. In 2011, ODOT’s statewide average for a ton of salt was $58.59; this year it will be $35.83 per ton.

“We used to bid by county,” said Maintenance Administrator Thomas Lyden, “now we bid by district. The larger quantity means a volume discount. We also made the vendors keep all of their salt in Ohio.”

Program Administrator Dean Alatsis says ODOT now requires salt vendors to guarantee the price for the length of the contract.

“Once we’ve established the price, it keeps the vendors on their toes, because they know we can turn to the next company if they can’t keep up,” he stated.

continued on page 4
**Statewide News, cont.**

The results have been impressive. Ashtabula, Trumbull, and Mahoning counties bordering Pennsylvania will pay $27.50 a ton this year. Pennsylvania counties across the state line will be paying $48.37 per ton.

**Ask the Director**

“During your presentations at the annual meetings, you said you want to change the culture at ODOT. How are you trying to change the amount of in-house politics that often goes into hiring and promoting people? Is this one of the issues you plan to address?”

“A “Who we hire and promote are among the most important decisions we make and have an enormous impact on the performance and culture of the organization. Whenever there is a hire or promotion, there is a good chance someone will be unhappy. However, our intention is to have a competitive professional process that is open, honest and thorough. We don’t want a phantom process or a ‘just for show’ process. In most cases, it will involve panel interviews and a selection. Everybody who is qualified will have a shot at the position.

That said, sometimes there is somebody who stands out as the most qualified and capable person by virtue of their experience, past performance and qualifications. When that is the case, it is best to make the selection with an abbreviated process and move on. The problem is that people who’ve been around state government for any length of time have seen so many crazy things over the years that they just don’t have confidence in the system. Our challenge is to change the system for the better, along with the attitudes and culture.”

— Director Jerry Wray

**Local News • Special Report**

**Decades in the making**

**David Rose, Central Office**

After nearly 50 years, the wait was over. On a beautiful October day, hundreds gathered to witness what many thought would never happen in their lifetime: the opening of the U.S. Route 33 Nelsonville Bypass. Motorists can now travel faster, safer and easier to southeast Ohio, thanks to the $160 million, eight-and-a-half-mile bypass.

“Today, we keep yet another promise to the people of southeastern Ohio as we cut the ribbon on the final phase of the Nelsonville Bypass,” said ODOT Director Jerry Wray during the official opening ceremony.

U.S. 33 through Nelsonville – where it narrowed from a four-lane highway to a two-lane local road – was heavily congested, with a history of serious injury crashes. In fact, from 2010 to 2012, injury crashes along this U.S. 33 stretch rose 47 percent.

“The completion of this historical project improves safety for motorists and enhances the flow of commerce to and from southeast Ohio,” said ODOT District 10 Deputy Director Steve Williams.

As the largest transportation project ever constructed in southeast Ohio, the Nelsonville Bypass is the last piece of a limited-access corridor between Columbus and Charleston, West Virginia. Since the 1980s, more than $330 million has been spent to upgrade the U.S. 33 Corridor. The new four-lane highway travels through Athens and Hocking counties and consists of two interchanges into historic Nelsonville.

Nearly five miles of the bypass bisects Wayne National Forest (WNF). This unique alignment prompted ODOT and WNF to implement several wildlife and environmental mitigation techniques never before seen on a transportation project in Ohio.

U.S. 33 is also a major route extending from the southeast corner of Michigan to Richmond, Virginia. The highway carries over 73,000 vehicles per day. Of those, 1,700 are trucks on some stretches between Columbus and Charleston. This makes it the eighth busiest
truck route in the state.

Besides Director Wray and Deputy Director Williams, honored guests who spoke at the ribbon-cutting ceremony included Ohio University President Roderick J. McDavis, Wayne National Forest Supervisor Anne Carey, local businessman and former TRAC member Kenner Bush, and Master of Ceremonies, Athens City Manager Andy Stone.
Looking out for nature
Brent Kovacs, District 4

Ed Deley is a 24-year veteran of ODOT. He has worked exclusively in the Environmental Section following his graduation from the Youngstown State University with a Civil Engineering degree. Deley’s job as environmental coordinator means he is constantly busy fulfilling the district’s environmental mission: ensuring the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and waterway permits are in compliance with all department projects before they are sold. Deley also oversees environmental inspections during project construction.

“What I enjoy the most about my job is the uniqueness that every project brings to the table,” said Deley. “We address every challenge encountered throughout the environmental process. It constantly changes with new rules and regulations that projects need to adhere to. The one constant is that the NEPA process is always changing.”

The Environmental Section truly has their hand in every project, whether it’s a bridge replacement, resurfacing or a new salt dome in a county. They study how a project may impact its surroundings such as ecological and cultural resources, hazardous waste sites and how a project may affect a community.

The environmental process starts from the project’s inception, providing input to define the need for the work. Then a project study area is established to complete the environmental field work and determine the presence or absence of environmentally sensitive resources. This is followed by the preparation and approval of the environmental documents, including resources to be avoided during project construction. After funding is secured for a project, permits are submitted, reviewed and verified by the federal government. Once the project is sold, the environmental coordinator has to make sure the contractor is compliant with all the permits and address any changes during construction.

When Deley first started in Environmental, the reports and documents for projects had to be sent to federal offices through the ODOT Pony and postal service and could take weeks to be reviewed and approved. Today the ODOT Online Categorical Exclusion system tremendously decreases this review and processing time. The office of Environmental Services in Central Office can also speed up the process by issuing waterway and wetland permits when needed, rather than going through the Army Corps of Engineers.

“I oversee the NEPA and waterway permit process for numerous projects,” Deley notes, “and once each step is completed, I enter that information into the exclusion system. Thanks to the three environmental specialists and three environmental interns on my team, this process is much easier.”

One project that was especially challenging for Deley to work on was the State Route 531 shoreline revetment project. SR 531 in Ashtabula County is just feet away from Lake Erie. This project will be placing large rocks in Lake Erie and along the coast to prevent roadway erosion. The project also includes drainage work and resurfacing. Numerous permits needed to be attained so the project could be sold on time this quarter.

When not at work, Deley and his wife Mary Kay reside in the city of Chardon. They have one daughter, Kathleen. He likes to spend his time bicycling, model railroading, hiking and is a member of the Holden Arboretum in Kirkland, Ohio.
School Essay: What I did this summer

By ODOT (as Dictated to Ron Poole, Central Office)

MRS. LANE’S HONORS ENGLISH CLASS #201
SEPTEMBER 31, 2013

This summer, I and my very large extended family did the same thing we do every year. We were all over Ohio inspecting, repairing, building and maintaining the means of transportation for the state and everyone who lives here. It can be hard work. But, as we like to say, “We’re ODOT, and it’s what we do.”

This particular summer we received some great recognition for our work with bicycle ridership, bridges and highway clean-up efforts.

The Historic Bridge Awards are given each year at the annual Bridge Conference and Trade Show hosted by the County Engineers Association of Ohio in late August. The 2013 award went to two of our projects in Huron and Monroe counties for outstanding bridge rehabilitation and context-sensitive design. Recognizing the preservation of the Jericho Bridge in Monroe County was of particular note; originally constructed by the Works Progress Administration in 1936, only ten concrete arch bridges like it are left in all of the state.

Together with our cousins, the Ohio Department of Public Safety, we’ve been funding and helping to promote a central Ohio program called “How We Roll” since 2011. Developed by a grass roots biking group called “Yay Bikes!,” the program aims to reduce bike/car crashes near the Ohio State University.

We learned the program won an award sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation called the Exemplary Human Environment Initiative. This award recognizes the creative publicity the campaign used to make transportation work for its customers.

The national organization “Keep America Beautiful” (KAB) took notice of our highway clean-up efforts. President and CEO Matthew M. McKenna presented us with a KAB/U.S. State Department of Transportation Partner Award at their recent national conference in Washington, D.C. It was one of five such honors bestowed to state DOTs for their support of KAB through partnership projects.

“To reduce roadside litter and illegal dumping through programs and events, Keep Ohio Beautiful must develop effective public-private partnerships,” said Michael Mennett, executive director. “Our State Department of Transportation Partner Awards represents the fine work that state DOTs achieve with their respective KAB state affiliate partners.”

Of course, my family did much more this past summer, and we have a lot more ahead. All in all, it was a very rewarding season.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL
Susan Burkhardt of Keep America Beautiful presents award to ODOT Administrator of Maintenance Administration Thomas Lyden at her organization’s annual meeting.
Embracing a proud culture
Liz Lyons, District 8

Hamilton County Highway Technician Tom Lane is on a unique journey. He has cultivated a growing passion for learning about his American Indian heritage. “Spirit Hawk” is his temporary Indian name.

“One day, I’ll earn my permanent Indian name and continue growing and learning while teaching others the same,” he said. “It’s in my blood, and it’s a wonderful way to spend time with my wife, doing something we believe in and enjoy.”

Lane attributes his interest and passion to his great-grandmother, a full-blooded Cherokee, and embraces opportunities to demonstrate traditional dances, songs and associated regalia including headdresses, flutes, dance bells and dance sticks, much of which he crafts himself. Lane demonstrated several dances to the young participants at the 2013 “Bring Your Child to Work Day” in District 8. He led the group in performing a snake dance.

One of Lane’s proudest moments, he said, was his performance of a Chicken Prairie Healing Dance for a 14-year-old, Indiana boy named Brennan. The youngster is gradually losing his eyesight to a tumor. Brennan was able to “see” it all through the richness of the feelings and sounds of the ritual. This month, Lane will perform again for Brennan. If he feels up to it, Brennan will sit on stage while Lane dances around him to remove his pain and sickness.

Several years ago, Lane and his wife became involved in the Wolf Creek Habitat near Brookville, Ind. The habitat provides a protected environment for wolves and serves as a center for visitors to learn of the wolf’s importance in the American Indian culture.

“The spirit is always present there,” he said.