Have app, will travel . . .
In your recent quarterly message, you mentioned the 2016 Quality of Work Life Survey report is available. What does it tell us about ODOT, and how we compare to other organizations?

Understanding the health and culture of ODOT is vital to becoming a long-term, reliable, professional and highly productive organization. If we don’t know where we are, we certainly won’t know where we are going. And the Quality of Work Life Survey (QWLS) allows us to better understand how employees feel about the work they do, the environment in which they work in, and the department’s overall strategic issues. In comparing us to other organizations, we are doing quite well. Now, we might not be exactly where we want to be, but we are improving. According to the 2016 QWLS results, our Work Life Index is 72.1 percent, up from 71.3 percent last year. So what does this mean? It means we are in the Top 26 percent of organizations as it relates to employee satisfaction. As we dig a little deeper, the results also tell us that employees care mostly about three major factors which contribute to their satisfaction. This includes; having Valuable Work to do, having Work/Family Balance, and having Advancement/Growth Opportunities. As we continue to work “on” ODOT, leadership will work to improve these three items.

WHAT EMPLOYEES CARE ABOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valuable work</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Family Balance</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement/Growth</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Challenged</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence/Autonomy</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition/Award</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appitude for travel

PROJECT THAT STARTED off as an enhancement to OHGO.com has evolved into the OHGO mobile app. The Office of Traffic partnered with CareWorks Technologies to develop the app, and with DoIT to help oversee the project.

The original idea was to have personalized alerts that users could register for by e-mail and have those alerts delivered where they desired. That idea turned out to be too costly to consider and a heavy load to ODOT’s systems. But with a true mobile app, the user could create a personalized route on their device. They could then receive alerts and see those alerts on the app.

One of the many features that sets the app apart from the web version is the ability to know where you are. Combined with the popular Travel Delay feature, the app can tell users what areas to avoid or how long they could be stuck in traffic. Users can also pick a day and an hour on a particular highway and see what traffic is normally like in an area with the Predictive Traffic function. It’s like seeing into the future and never being in the wrong lane at the wrong time.

ODOT announced the arrival of the App just before the July 4 weekend; it’s available on the App Store and Google Play. What many people may not know is that the notifications are created and sent out by actual human beings monitoring traffic and road conditions from a facility staffed around the clock.

THROUGH NEW EYES

Amanda Moline, District 6

Getting coffee; running errands; making copies. Welcome to the world of college students who wear the “intern” title at many work places. Students who decide to suit up in a hard hat and reflective vest for their summer break, however, have a different experience. Specializing in fields of study such as civil engineering, finance, communications and graphic design, students working at ODOT find opportunities to apply themselves to real world problems, to grow within their field and help launch their careers.

Abbey Zimmer, a second-year civil engineer intern working on the I-71 widening project south of Columbus, has many reasons for returning to ODOT. She notes the timely implementation of coursework allows her to solidify and expand on her school instruction.

“The stuff that we’re doing on the project helps you wrap your mind around the (class) concepts,” explains Zimmer.

For students, it’s not just the content of the work that helps them achieve career goals, but the support and knowledge of employees with experience under their belts.

For finance intern Ryan Seymour, “learning from each of the different employees” serves as a resource to encourage growth within his field and, ultimately, for his future career.

“The drive of ODOT employees provides a professional yet comfortable atmosphere in which everyone supports one another,” PIO intern Savannah Daily explains. “You are constantly learning new techniques or teaming up with others to accomplish any task that may arise.”

Daily and other interns in the fields of communications and graphic design provide new-age insight on evolving programs such as the Adobe Creative Suite and social media platforms that help better serve the motoring public with clear and concise traffic and project updates.

Through collaboration with experienced employees, students are able to put in place techniques from their courses and, in turn, make a positive, tangible impact at ODOT and to the motoring public.

APDOUBLE FOR TRAVEL

Mike Lovins, Central Office

District 6 interns Abbey Zimmer (left), Chris Berg, and Melissa Busdecker at the I-71 widening project, from Strangtown Road to SR 665 in Franklin County.

WHAT EMPLOYEES CARE ABOUT
As part of a realignment and widening project in Allen County, an ODOT contractor was required to drain and fill a local pond located on the southeastern corner of state routes 117 and 501. This presented a problem, because a population of fish call this pond home. But with the help of District 1’s environmental coordinator Nate Tessler, the fish were successfully relocated. ODOT partnered with Mike Durkalec, Cleveland Metroparks aquatic biologist, and the smaller park district of Johnny Appleseed Parks in Allen County to move the fish safely to a new habitat. To accomplish this, park personnel relied on a novel—some would say “shocking”—method to collect the fish.

“The process the parks use is called electro-fishing,” said Durkalec. “Generators attached to the boat release an electrical charge into the water that stuns the fish while still keeping them alive and healthy. The charge is highly controlled and contains 120 volts which is between six to eight AMPS. This charge stuns the fish just enough that the parks can net them and place them into an aerated tank on the boat with no permanent harm done.”

The parks usually return to the same pond two or three times to collect as many fish as possible. As the water is drained, the fish become more concentrated which allows the equipment to be used more effectively. The parks can collect anywhere from hundreds to thousands of fish during this time, which makes these projects extremely cost-effective for them.

The fish collected from this pond will be dispersed into Johnny Appleseed parks and Wallace Lake, a 17-acre lake within Cleveland Metroparks.

“It has been a neat partnership growing with ODOT,” Durkalec said, “I absolutely would like to build this relationship.”

Cleveland Metroparks is one of the only parks in the state with this kind of equipment. They are able to go as far as reasonably possible in order to collect and release the fish in one day.
Feed the need
Julia Poling, District 1

Since 2011, ODOT has been using its right of way lands along highways to help with a wider problem of the disappearing populations of beneficial pollinator insects. Monarch butterfly populations have been reduced due to environmental threats. Ohio has recently lost over 50 percent of the state’s honey bee colonies. Pollinating insects help the country produce $40 billion worth of agricultural products annually. The Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative (OPHI) was established to increase pollinator habitats across the state and to increase pollinator conservation awareness for all Ohioans. Now ODOT is further expanding its efforts by creating more pollinator sites.

Three of ODOT’s newest pollinator sites—at the interchanges of Interstate 75 and U.S. Route 30 in Allen County; U.S. routes 68 and 30 in Hancock County; and at U.S. routes 30 and 23 in Wyandot County—are being treated with herbicide spray as a first step. Once cleared, they will be planted with native grasses, black-eyed Susan, and nodding bur-marigold. ODOT will maintain and keep an eye on the progress of the plots, which together comprise more than 90 acres of land. Over the course of two years, travelers will begin to see the changing landscape as these plants thrive and grow.

Currently, ODOT has completed six pollinator habitats in Darke, Fairfield, Licking, Perry, Preble and Ross counties. In addition to the new District 1 sites, habitat locations are also in progress in Auglaize, Butler, Hamilton, Logan and Montgomery counties. ODOT is accomplishing this with the help of other statewide agency partners, such as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Together, the statewide agencies have set a goal to establish 7 million acres of pollinator habitat over the next five years.

Energy is moving
Becky Giauque, District 11

The view from atop a hillside just off State Route 9, about two-and-a-half miles north of Carrollton, has changed drastically in the last year. It used to be just another rural field with crops. Now it’s a giant worksite filled with more than 200 tradesmen, scores of earth-moving equipment and mountains of dirt and gravel. It is the foundation of what by the fall of 2017 will be an $899 million electricity generation plant. And ODOT is helping to ensure the easy movement of people and goods from place to place as part of the project.

A District 11 team met with representatives from Carroll County Energy to discuss their transportation needs and potential impacts on the area’s roads and bridges. To keep the operation’s 40-plus oversized loads of material moving, ODOT’s Carroll County maintenance crews patched the bridge deck on SR 9. Between 15 and 18 superloads will be off-loaded just north of the structure at a temporary railroad site and put on a large centipede truck to haul the equipment to the Carroll County Energy Plant. Many of these loads are 18 feet wide and travel at a speed of 2-5 mph with a scheduled travel time of two hours from rail site to plant site.

“We wanted to make sure this bridge was in good condition prior to these superloads,” said ODOT Carroll County Manager Vince Carter. “The Carroll County facility is a 700-megawatt, natural gas-fired electric generation facility. It produces electricity to power 700,000 homes.

Virtue rewarded
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Each August, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) asks all 50 states their progress in spending that year’s federal highway appropriation in advance of the federal fiscal year that ends on September 30. If a state DOT has failed to obligate funds for a project, the FHWA takes the money back and redistributes the cash to states who have begun projects and are ahead of the game.

Ohio is one of those states. Since 2008, Ohio has received about $500 million dollars in additional federal highway funds in August, thanks to this redistribution.

“ODOT has done a great job because we’ve always managed our capital program so aggressively. We demonstrate we can use the additional money,” says ODOT Deputy Director of Finance Rich Winning.
To those who know her, Central Office Program Administrator Carol Schubert is a woman of action. A member of the office of Employee Development and Lean, she has been an enthusiastic student and performer of Jazzercise for more than 30 years. But some persistent physical problems led her to a new discovery: yoga.

“I started practicing yoga four years ago because of my own hip and back problems,” she said. “It is a way to pay more attention to what is going on within the mind, body and spirit. For me, it became a stress management program, a healthy mind program, and a healthy body program all in one.”

After 18 months of practice, Schubert entered formal training and became a certified Hatha Yoga trainer two years ago. She teaches classes at a Jazzercise studio, offering relief to her fellow Jazzercise students with issues. While taking the occasional yoga class can be beneficial, she stresses that anyone can learn from books, videos or on-line instruction. “All you need is a chair or a mat,” she laughs.

Currently in the middle of a major home renovation, Schubert also enjoys spending time with her friends and traveling the country and the world with her husband.

Carol Schubert demonstrates the Half Moon pose, or Ardha Chandrasana, whose therapeutic applications, according to Yoga Journal, include anxiety, backache, and fatigue.