Cleveland hosts Mid America Association of State Transportation Officials, pg 4
After more than three years and $80 million of work, the Interstate 71/Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive interchange overhaul was completed and opened this August. The completed project included a new bridge spanning the freeway.

“The increased travel efficiency and access provided by the new interchange into the Cincinnati area’s second largest economic generator will help with business retention, expansion and attraction,” said ODOT Director Jerry Wray. “This investment will continue to benefit the Cincinnati economy and job creation for decades.”

Those are not just words: MLK Drive is one of the city’s major cross-town connectors, linking both interstates 71 and 75 and connecting Avondale, Walnut Hills, Evanston and Clifton. Generally referred to as Uptown, the area is the city’s second biggest job center after Downtown.

With the final ramps connecting MLK and I-71 now open, the new interchange also shortens travel times to the region’s only Level 1 trauma centers: Children’s and University hospitals. Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley said the $80 million project opens up seven Cincinnati neighborhoods to economic development.

“I’m willing to bet you that ten years from now,” he said, “20 years from now, we’re going to say: ‘Wow! This was the amazing catalyst for the reinvestment of these great historic neighborhoods,’ and it will be the future of the city.”

The work we do is inherently hazardous and worker safety is our top priority. Our role as a department is to provide our people with the right resources, training and tools to ensure they work safely. However, we have no control over what the motoring public does while they are behind the wheel. I think about this issue nearly every day on my drive into Central Office.

Since the Move Over law was expanded in 2013 to include all roadside workers, ODOT has promoted and sponsored numerous campaigns and events all over the state. Here are just a few of the things we’ve done to bring awareness to the law:

- Ongoing, multi-year social media campaign: Every Monday districts take turns posting a video or photo on social media highlighting our highway workers with the hashtag #MoveOverMonday.
- Ohio hosted the National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week in 2016 to encourage safe driving through work zones. Part of the messaging was around distracted driving and “slow down, move over.”

Safety is always our number one priority. Therefore, promoting and making people aware of the Move Over law is important. If you or any ODOT people have thoughts or suggestions regarding how we can improve our efforts, please offer your ideas.

Time has passed and the Central Office creation continues to progress. It is a mural located on the lower level of the building and was conceived and created by members of the Grove City garage, who work on the project only when other duties permit. It grows to include more shape and color with each session. Transcript will continue following its progress with more about the artists and their inspiration.
Conference attendees ‘Rock This Way’

Marissa McDaid, District 12

The call went out and they came; Transportation professionals gathered from across the Midwest for the annual Mid America Association of State Transportation Officials (MAASTO) meeting in Cleveland this July. Hosted by ODOT, attendees immersed themselves in discussions and workshops on snow and ice technology, trucking management, environmental processes, transportation policies and more. Guests spent time at Cleveland’s Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, inspiring the conference theme.

MAASTO’s annual meeting also included the presentation of America’s Transportation Awards. Projects from Minnesota, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas and Indiana departments of transportation all took home prizes. The grand prize winners for the region will be announced later this year.

Want to drive safe?
Follow your ABCs

Ron Poole, Central Office

The month of September has been set aside to focus on safe driving awareness in Ohio. It’s a great idea and an important one. Today’s drivers have more tools than ever to travel safely. To better remember how, just think of the motorists’ ABCs.

A = Attention paid: Devote full attention to the road, always. No phone calls, no texting, no problems. Attention also includes driving the correct direction on the highways. This is no joke: Four wrong-way drivers in southwest Ohio took ten lives over a recent 16-month period.

B = Buckle up: This includes passengers in the back seat as well. When a car crashes with a passenger in the back seat who isn’t using a seat belt, the unbelted rear-seat passenger can slam into the driver’s seat, pushing the driver into the airbag and steering wheel with a 35-mile-per-hour impact. The issue takes on special importance given the popularity of ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft, plus taxis.

C = Control: When driving, be in control at all times. That means driving sober. It’s never okay to drink and drive, and no one can gauge how much alcohol or other substances can impair them. Designate a sober driver or plan to use public or on-demand transportation services to get home safely. Control also means planning trips ahead, allowing extra travel time and being knowledgeable of traffic safety laws.

As of this writing, Ohio has recorded 769 traffic deaths; down about one percent from last year. Remembering and following the ABC’s will help keep that downward trend going.

‘Throwback’
Archival photos of damage in the Muskingum County area during the Great Flood of 1913.

HARD RAIN

A rainfall of nearly five inches hit Licking County and the surrounding area on July 13. The torrential rain caused severe flooding in several parts of District 5 by the following morning. As water continued to rise, Licking County work crews were keeping an eye on Interstate 70 near Buckeye Lake and eventually closed the freeway in both directions. Two of the ramps at the State Route 79 interchange were also closed.

PHOTOS BY MORGAN OVERBEY, DISTRICT 5
Jack Marchbanks has been named the assistant director of Business and Human Resources, replacing Anne Fornshell. We sat down with the former District 6 director and asked him about his long history with ODOT and his new job.

YOU HAVE WORKED FOR THE DEPARTMENT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS AND HAVE HAD A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT POSITIONS. CAN YOU REVIEW THOSE FOR ME?

I was hired in August of 1991 by Michael Flynn who was then the District 6 deputy director. I came in as the district administrator. I ran human resources, labor, IT, facilities, finance and safety.

BACK THEN, IT REALLY WAS THE NUMBER TWO POSITION IN THE DISTRICT.

Yes, it was. It was seen as almost an assistant deputy director. Ironically, some of the statewide duties I have now mirror those that Mike Flynn asked me to do 26 years ago. My second job came in November of ’91. Director Wray found out I had a background in EEO and minority business as a young man in the Rhodes Administration. The director asked me to step in as the acting director of the Office of Equal Opportunity. I did that for about six months. We put together a plan to hire more women and minorities. When we were done, I returned to District 6 as the district administrator.

When we re-engineered the department in ’95, I applied for and won the position as district planning administrator. But there was still one more side trip. I went over to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to serve as state compliance coordinator for Governor Voinovich and DAS Director Jim Conrad. After that I returned to District 6. In 1997, Director Wray appointed me as District 6 deputy director. I held that job for almost ten years, until the end of the Taft Administration.

I came back to ODOT is 2016 when Director Wray named me District 6 deputy director again. I loved that job. It’s one of the best jobs I’ve ever had in my life. In my current position, I’m very excited about using my skill set and experience over the decades to help ODOT continue to improve through the end of this administration. We hope to make this an even better place to work. We have a great team.

YOU WERE ONE OF THE FIRST DISTRICT DEPUTY DIRECTORS THAT WAS NOT AN ENGINEER. HOW WAS THAT?

It was challenging. In some cases I was second-guessed because I did not have a PE behind my name. What people didn’t realize is that Michael Flynn taught me a lot about construction and maintenance. He taught me things like life-cycle cost analysis, what constitutes a strong safety program, how to construct a sturdy bridge, pavement strategies, etcetera. I feel confident that I can serve as an administrator in an engineering organization. Flynn used to say that 10 percent of it is engineering, 90 percent is management and judgement. I have an MBA, a master’s degree in planning and an undergraduate degree in political science. I’m confident I can add value to ODOT in this new position.
EVERYDAY HEROES

ODOT highway workers probably don’t wake up expecting to be heroic at work. Like most of us, they get up and go about the daily routine of doing what needs to be done. But sometimes, the unexpected can lead ordinary people to do extraordinary things. And though it could seem minor at the time, the smallest above-and-beyond action can have big consequences: maybe even save lives. The stories of two such incidents are featured here, where three highway technicians stepped up from being everyday public servants to become everyday heroes.

ODOT Employee Saves Elderly Man
Mandi Dillon, District 7

It was around 5:30 am on a Monday, July 10th, and District 7 Highway Tech Dennis Hensley was on his way to work. He noticed an abandoned vehicle along Interstate 70 near Huber Heights. He passed by, figuring someone had car trouble over the weekend.

Several hours passed, Hensley happened to find himself on the same stretch of interstate when he noticed the car was still there; it looked like someone had car trouble over the weekend.

When police arrived on the scene, they ran the license plates and discovered the man was listed as a missing adult out of the Columbus area suffering from Alzheimer’s. Medics took him to a local hospital for treatment, before returning him to his family. Hensley says what he did is all part of the job.

“If you see someone on the side of the road and it’s been that long,” said Hensley, “you check them out. We’re here to help the public.”

Paying Attention
Nick Buchanan, District 1

While highway technicians Larry Schroeder and Mike Gerding were flagging traffic around state Route 190 in Putnam County during an episode of flash flooding in mid-July, an elderly woman in a damaged car stopped to ask for directions around the flooded highway.

“The front end was all banged up. It was a really nice, expensive car, but it was missing the bumper,” Schroeder said. “She just acted real disoriented. She said she wanted to go somewhere in Alabama. The more I talked to her, the more I realized something was up.”

As she drove away, Schroeder took note of her license plate number. Gerding called the sheriff, who said he had been looking for a driver involved in a hit-and-run incident a few miles south of where Schroeder and Gerding encountered her.

Suffering from dementia, the woman had driven toward Kalida from Lima when she ran a stop sign, hit another motorist and continued. Within half an hour of Schroeder’s call, authorities were able to stop the woman and call her son to pick her up.

Tim Maag, transportation administrator in Putnam County, made a follow-up call to the sheriff, who told him that Schroeder’s quick thinking was appreciated.