Construction Kickoff

President Obama marks Stimulus History in Ohio
Scott Varner, Central Office

With investments being made in every county of Ohio and in every major mode of transportation, Team ODOT is “igniting Ohio’s economic engine” with the largest construction season in state history.

And to officially start the construction season, ODOT noted a unique historic first by holding one of the season’s kickoff media events at the Port of Toledo – the first time an ODOT construction season was officially started with something other than a highway or bridge project.

During the 2010 season, ODOT will award approximately $2 billion in transportation construction projects – outnumbering investments in past seasons by more than 30 percent.

“These investments will put more Ohioans to work building our state’s transportation infrastructure in one construction season than ever before,” said Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, who officially kicked off the state’s construction season in Columbus. “When you add together the projects that are already under construction and those stimulus projects made possible by the Recovery Act, there will be more than $4 billion in active construction projects this summer.”

ODOT and its local transportation partners will have more than 1,600 projects under construction this year, including more than 130 interstate projects, 300 resurfacing/pavement upgrade projects, 290 bridge and culvert modernizations, 30 pedestrian and bikeway improvements, and seven

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maritime projects at Ohio’s water ports along the Ohio River and Lake Erie.

“Ohio’s historic investments in transportation are helping to ignite the state’s economic engine by creating jobs, modernizing our aging infrastructure, and giving our citizens and businesses real choices in travel and shipping,” said ODOT Director Jolene M. Molitoris. “Through these investments, we are creating a true 21st Century multi-modal transportation system that will strengthen Ohio’s competitive position in national and global markets and revitalize our cities and towns.”

The largest project to be awarded this year will also represent the state’s largest single investment in Ohio history: the $450 million Interstate 90 Innerbelt Bridge in downtown Cleveland. Although construction isn’t expected until 2011, designers and engineers will begin work this summer on expedited efforts to replace the Innerbelt Bridge under a unique design-build contract to be awarded this fall.

“I think the contributions ODOT is making to the region will have a huge impact on the economic recovery of our region. Including Cleveland’s Innerbelt Bridge project, we anticipate over $730 million in active construction work in Cuyahoga County alone during the 2010 construction season,” said District 12 Deputy Director Bonnie Teeuwen. “I can’t think of many other projects or agencies that are investing that kind of money in Cleveland.”

Other major construction projects to begin work this season include the $57.6 million second phase of the modernization of I-75 through downtown Dayton.

“These upgrades to our transportation system will facilitate freight movement, make highway travel safer, improve highway access for local communities, and create much needed jobs across the Miami Valley,” said District 7 Deputy Director Rex Dickey.

In Toledo, Director Molitoris was joined by Ohio Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur to highlight a $6.8 million stimulus-funded crane replacement project at the Port of Toledo.

“In District Two, not only do we have the largest highway construction program in our history, but we have completely embraced multi-modal transportation by hosting our 2010 ODOT Construction Kickoff at the Toledo Lucas County Port Authority – a first in the district and at ODOT,” said District 2 Deputy Director David Dysard.

Other major projects across the state include a $14 million stimulus-funded project to better connect the Rickenbacker Airport and Intermodal Terminal near Columbus and an $11 million bridge widening project on I-270 in southern Franklin County; and a $23 million, five-mile major upgrade of I-70 in Belmont County.

New construction will also begin on a $6.2 million pavement upgrade along I-70 near Zanesville; the reconstruction of I-475 in Lucas County; the $38.5 million major modernization of I-90 in Ashtabula County; and the $25 million State Route 4 Bypass “SuperStreet” near Cincinnati.

Among this year’s projects are three intersection improvements to improve traffic flow along Butler County’s State Route 4 Bypass. These so-called ‘superstreet’ intersections – the first of their kind in Ohio – are an innovative solution to the ever-increasing demand on our roadways,” said District 8 Deputy Director Hans Jindal.

Just as important as the number of projects under construction is the number of paychecks these investments are helping to write. A well-studied formula from the Federal Highway Administration shows that every $1 billion invested in highways and bridge impacts 27,800 jobs.

With an estimated $2 billion to be paid out on construction projects this year alone, Ohio’s transportation investments will positively impact an estimated 55,000 jobs, ranging from direct jobs on construction sites, indirect jobs at companies that supply materials and good for construction, and spin-off jobs that benefit from all of the investment.
“Today, I return to Columbus to mark a milestone on the road to recovery,” said the President. “And I think it’s fitting that we’ve reached this milestone here in this community, because what you’re doing here is a perfect example of the kind of innovation and coordination and renewal that the Recovery Act is driving all across this country.”

President Obama was joined by Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez, ODOT Director Jolene M. Molitoris and District 6 Deputy Director Thomas Wester, and members of Ohio’s congressional delegation to recognize the start of work on a $15 million modernization of Parsons and Livingston avenues near downtown Columbus.

The two-year project – paid for entirely with Recovery Act funds – will widen and improve the two highly-traveled streets; add new sidewalks, median and bike lanes; upgrade traffic signals; increase accessibility with new sidewalk ramps; and improve safety with new street lighting.

In addition to creating 325 construction jobs, this transportation investment will contribute to the broader economic development effort underway in the area around Nationwide Children’s Hospital – undergoing its own improvement project, with a new main hospital building and a new research facility. When completed, Nationwide Children’s will be the nation’s second-largest pediatric hospital.

“Now, 10,000 road projects underway from a single stimulus – that’s an accomplishment right there,” wrote Secretary LaHood on the White House website. “But how about the fact that DOT helped get all of those projects underway in just the 16 months since President Obama signed the Recovery Act into law?”

“Remember that every single one of those projects creates many, many job opportunities,” added Secretary LaHood, “with some single projects employing thousands. In fact, in the first quarter alone, Recovery Act funded highway projects created 17,000 jobs.”

According to the White House, the Recovery Act has already funded tens of thousands of projects and put about 2.5 million Americans to work, but summer 2010 is actually poised to be the most active Recovery Act season yet. There will be six times as many highway projects underway in July 2010 as in July 2009 – projects will surge from 1,750 last summer to over 10,000 this summer nationwide.

ODOT mourns loss of team member

Kate Stickle, District 5

Flags were flown half-staff from sunrise to sunset on Tuesday, May 11, 2010 in District 5 and at Central Office in observance of the life of Shawn Blubaugh, one of our own. Shawn, who was a Highway Technician since 2002, was tragically killed while in a work zone along U.S. Route 36 in Knox County.

Mourning the loss of a member of the ODOT family, the District 5 ODOT Team showed support by crews and co-workers lining the route from the church to Shawn’s final resting place, with vests and hard hats held close to their hearts in appreciation of his service and honor to his family. Shawn will be greatly missed.

District 5 would like to thank those counties across the state who have kept Shawn’s family in their thoughts and prayers. Those still looking to donate to the trust fund for Shawn’s children, Taylor and Marshawn, may go to any First Knox National Bank branch and make a donation. The trust fund is at the First Knox National Bank at 1 Public Square in Danville, Ohio 43014.
IMMED AT REDUCING THE 5,000 ACCIDENTS IN construction zones last year, drivers in Ohio are being urged to look up, hang up cell phones, and go “slow for the cone zone” during this summer’s historic construction season.

With help from public and private partners across the state, ODOT joined departments of transportation in all 50 states in April to recognize National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week, a coast-to-coast effort to reduce accidents in highway construction zones.

To bring attention to motorist and worker safety in construction zones, ODOT’s Central Office headquarters in Columbus, several office buildings and county garages across the state glowed in bright orange light throughout the week, as a visual reminder that work zones need undivided attention.

In addition to the orange lights at night, several ODOT facilities displayed 13 orange cones – paying tribute to the 13 motorists killed in work zone crashes last year.

Teaming with ODOT this year was the Ohio Chapter of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), whose members printed hundreds of posters and provided numerous message boards to relay the “Slow for the Cone Zone” message throughout the state.

ATSSA also donated 6,000 orange wristbands – one for each ODOT employee – as a sign of the team’s shared commitment to make work zones safe for employees, contractors and citizens.

Also this year, Cleveland State University’s Transportation Center hosted a rally for students, road workers and engineers. CSU’s Transportation Center, one of four such centers at state universities in Ohio, has a unique focus on work zone safety.

“I believe we are the only civil engineering program in the country where construction highway safety is part of the curriculum,” director Stephen Duffy said, noting that his team of researchers are studying causes of crashes and developing a sensor network to collect data about traffic, including speed and density.

Orange cones placed on 214 chairs in the back of the auditorium for the rally represented the number of lives lost in northeast Ohio work zones over the past 10 years.

One of the featured speakers at the CSU event was construction foreman Greg Wood. During the early morning hours of March 28, 2009, he was working within the construction zone for the Interstate 77 widening project just south of downtown Cleveland when he was struck from behind by a car that swerved into his work area.

“I felt like I was on a landmine, like a bomb went off and I was thrown 26 feet in the air,” said Wood.

The impact left him with both of his legs broken, his left foot crushed, broken ribs, and teeth were chipped. The driver of the car who struck him never stopped.

Wood told the crowd at CSU that when traffic starts to slow down, people start multitasking. He wants people to look up, hang up cell phones, slow down, and pay extra attention.

In 2009, there were 5,012 crashes in work zones along Ohio’s roadways. 13 people lost their lives. While the numbers are down from the year before, it still represents one work zone crash every two hours in Ohio.

An ODOT analysis shows that the causes of most work zone related crashes are speeding, vehicles following too close together, and drivers making improper lane changes.

*Photos by Amanda Lee, District 12*
ODOT kicks off litter events ‘Clear Across Ohio’

Joel Hunt, Central Office

ODOT kicked off its annual spring litter cleanup event to prevent litter “Clear Across Ohio” at Union Terminal in Cincinnati on March 27. More than 160 participants picked up 22 tons of litter during the two-hour event.

The annual kickoff event is held in conjunction with the national “Great American Cleanup” event (March 1–May 31) sponsored by Keep America Beautiful.

ODOT districts Clear Across Ohio participated in the State Roadway Cleanup Event with the help of hundreds of volunteers from neighborhood groups, businesses and organizations, Adopt-a-Highway groups, and ODOT highway technicians.

In District 6, Adopt-a-Highway volunteers from the Hilton of Columbus at Easton kicked off the district’s Spring Litter Cleanup by picking up litter at the Easton interchange. This marks the third year that Hilton Hotel employees have picked up litter on Interstate 270.

“It’s a shame that trash accumulates the way it does,” said Alan C. Howe, Hotel General Manager. “However, our team at the Hilton Columbus at Easton is proud of our beautiful city, and are committed to help keep it clean for all to enjoy.”

As part of District 7’s kickoff, volunteers entered Disney’s “Give A Day, Get A Disney Day” contest. The contest promotes volunteerism across the nation by letting volunteers trade a day of their time for a day at a Disney Park. Two groups won tickets in Logan County as well as several in Montgomery County.

“Gathering together to pick up litter along roadways gives Ohioans cleaner and safer roadways, helps to foster pride in communities, develops relationships among neighbors, and positively affects healthy economic development,” said Halle Jones Capers, ODOT deputy director of the Division of Highway Operations.

On average, Ohio spends more than $4 million picking up litter each year, enough to pave a 40 mile two-lane, apply 347 miles of pavement markings, install 323 culverts or 340 miles of guardrail, or buy 28 new plow trucks.

Last year, ODOT crews devoted nearly 188,000 labor hours picking up 342,552 bags of litter from highways and interchanges.

Nearly 10 million pounds of trash mar Ohio’s roadways each year. Litter collects along roadways in one of two ways: people intentionally throw trash from their vehicles, or trash falls from trucks whose loads have not been properly secured.

It’s time to register . . .

for Team Up ODOT! This year is the event’s 12th anniversary, and the theme is “Teaming Up for Safety.” The accomplishments of ODOT’s individuals, work units and improvement teams will be showcased, and it is a great opportunity for networking and benchmarking.

Team Up ODOT will be held Sept. 1 – the same day as the ODOT Rodeo – at the Rhodes Center at the Ohio Expo Center, from 9 a.m. to Noon. The TOP Awards and Roadeo Awards ceremony will begin at 1 p.m.

Registration is open to all individuals, teams or work units with an accomplishment or improvement to share. Equipment demonstrations are welcome. Registration ends August 10.

Anyone may attend the event. Attendance does not require registration but does require the approval of your supervisor. If you have questions about Team Up ODOT, please contact Willa O’Neill at 614-466-9967 or Carol Schubert at 614-752-5722.
District 12 engineers accommodate nesting falcons
Jocelynn Clemings, District 12

W hile the Cleveland Innerbelt Project is one of the largest and most complex projects in northeast Ohio, it’s the smallest details that make this project so special. Since repairs began on the Interstate 90 Innerbelt Bridge, a team from ODOT’s District 12 and Office of Environmental Services has been working with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to mitigate any disruption to a pair of rare Peregrine falcons which have made their home beneath the structure.

Peregrine falcons are about the size and weight of a crow. According to the Department of Natural Resources, Peregrines normally grow to 15 inches in length with a 40-inch wingspan. The diving speed of Peregrine falcons has been known to reach more than 175 mph.

The Peregrine population dwindled during the 1960s after it was found that a pesticide known as DDT interfered with the formation of egg shells in meat- and fish-eating birds. By 1968, the Peregrine population was completely eradicated east of the Mississippi River. After the use of DDT was restricted in the early 1970’s, a recovery plan was developed to restore the Peregrine population to the eastern United States.

Now, according to a May 15, 2010 article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Peregrine falcons are nesting in record numbers – especially in Northeast Ohio. The region is home to half of the 26 nests with eggs or chicks spotted this spring in Ohio.

The pair which make their home beneath the Innerbelt Bridge recently produced one hatching. The bird was tagged on May 25, 2010 and is expected to leave the nest in about 40 days.

ODOT’s Innerbelt project team – including engineers Julie Meyer and Mike Vrabel – prioritized bridge repairs in order to mitigate disruption to the nesting birds. The birds typically nest on the west end of the structure, in an area over the Cuyahoga River, however, this year, the falcons chose an area near the center of the bridge. “We were all very surprised,” said Meyer. “We never guessed they would choose a different area to nest. We had to reevaluate our plan for repairs.”

Peregrines mate for life, and “Bolt,” the male falcon, and “Newton,” his mate, have nested beneath the structure for about 10 years. The pair have amassed a small following including Chad and Chris Saladin – a husband and wife team and volunteer “nest monitors” – who keep a watchful eye on all the nesting birds in the region.

“The folks at District 12 have been extremely accommodating for the pair of nesting Peregrine falcons on the Cleveland Innerbelt Bridge,” said Matthew Perlik, Green Project Manager for ODOT’s Office of Environmental Services. “They have been working well with ODNR and deserve recognition for their efforts.”

To learn more about Peregrine falcons in every area of the state, log on to www.ohiodnr.com/wildlife/dow/falcons.

Ohio State Fair volunteers needed

I n recognition of ODOT’s historic construction season, the department’s 2010 Ohio State Fair booth will resemble a work zone, complete with heavy equipment.

The department needs volunteers to staff the booth during the fair’s July 28 - August 8 run. Shifts will be from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., or from 1:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. with 30 minutes for lunch.

Working at the fair will count in place of your regular work shift; however, volunteers will not be eligible for overtime. Weekend shifts may be substituted for a regular workday during the same week (flex policy applies). Supervisor approval will be required for any fair shift.

To volunteer, contact Joel Hunt at 614-466-7173, or by email at joel.hunt@dot.state.oh.us.
Two weeks after severe weather and deadly tornadoes tore through the Northwest Ohio town of Millbury, the traffic lights at State Route 795 and Lemoyne Road were working once again.

“It’s just one step closer to getting one of the hardest hit areas restored,” said District Two Deputy Director David Dysard. “Damage to the signals were extensive, the base of the signal was ripped from the concrete and thrown into the Lake High School yard.”

In the early morning hours of Sunday, June 6, a tornado touched down and destroyed several homes west of Toledo in Fulton County.

The tornado then skipped over the southern edge of the city and came down again in Millbury, destroying dozens of homes and an emergency services building.

Six people died from the storm, one of Ohio’s strongest in eight years. Lake High School took a direct hit and was a total loss.

Following an emergency declaration by Governor Strickland, ODOT crews from across an eight-county region worked around-the-clock to clear debris and repair damaged safety signage along the state highway system in Fulton, Wood, Lucas and Ottawa counties.

Just days after the devastation, ODOT Director Jolene M. Molitoris toured the areas hardest hit and pledged continued help to restore safe transportation for residents and businesses.

Most attention was focused on restoring access along State Route 795 near the town of Millbury in Wood County. ODOT crews were also deployed to assist local efforts to clear debris, using heavy equipment along the town’s Main Street.

Over a two-week period, ODOT crews hauled away more than 225 total loads of debris from the hardest hit areas. ODOT’s total investment of labor, equipment and materials will likely exceed more than $300,000.

ODOT was also in contact with the CSX freight railroad, whose yards at Walbridge and Stanley sustained heavy damage with approximately 40 cars derailed.

The Toledo Executive Airport, formally known as Metcalf Field, located close to the heavily-damaged area near Millbury, also sustained minor damage. Flights were able to continue with little disruption, allowing for additional assistance to access the region.

The Ottawa County Transportation Agency also provided updates to ODOT. The transit agency offered bus service to emergency crews and volunteers assisting with the recovery efforts.

Crews from Wood County Garage clear large debris from the right of way along SR 795 near Lake High School, Monday, on June 7. SR 795 at this location was closed for two days in order for crews to remove the large debris from the high school, area homes, farms and the police station.

Don Satkowski, Northwood Outpost lifts large piece of steel onto the truck. Debris like this covered a three mile stretch of SR 795.
State agencies team up to tackle inactivity and obesity

JOINING THE FIGHT AGAINST INACTIVITY AND obesity, members of ODOT’s Office of Multi-Modal Planning teamed with federal, state and local advocates to hold Ohio’s first statewide conference focusing on how to build healthy communities and encourage active transportation, such as biking, walking and transit.

The Healthy Communities Active Transportation (HCAT) Conference in March featured experts in transportation, environmental policy, land use and economic development. Joining ODOT were the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, the Ohio Association of Regional Councils, the Ohio departments of Health and Natural Resources and the Federal Highway Administration.

Many of the presenters talked about the need to move public and private projects toward sustainable investments in order to help make Ohio a more competitive state in the 21st Century.

Another aspect highlighted at the conference was “Complete Streets” – a guiding principle for integrating walking, biking and transit into Ohio’s transportation planning.

Under this principle, all transportation plans provide for needed sidewalks, bike lanes, special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible transit stops, frequent crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions and more, where safe and appropriate.

The event’s keynote speech by Mark Fenton, entitled Building Healthy Communities in Every Sense of the Word, featured a rallying cry by Harriett Tregoning, Washington DC planning director: “Referring to walking, bicycling, and transit as ‘alternative’ modes of travel is like referring to women as alternative men.”

Historic $15 million investment results in ‘Clean and Green’ Buses for Ohio Transit

AIMED AT INCREASING THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE fuels to connect Ohio’s cities and decreasing the operational costs facing Ohio’s transit agencies, ODOT is making an historic $15 million direct investment to purchase forty-one environmentally-friendly, clean-fuel buses for eleven local and regional transit authorities across the state.

“Never before has ODOT made this type of direct investment in our state’s transit agencies to bolster our commitment to promoting travel choice and cleaning the air we breathe,” said ODOT Director Jolene M. Molitoris.

The $15 million Clean and Green Transit Program was part of the 2010–2011 State Transportation Budget. According to Marianne E. Freed, administrator for ODOT’s Office of Transit, the department received nearly $33 million in applications from local and regional transit authorities across the state.

With the $15 million dollars in state funding appropriated under the Clean and Green Transit Program, forty-one clean fuel vehicles will be awarded to eleven local and regional transit authorities.

The largest investment will be made in the Toledo area. ODOT will partner with the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority to purchase eight new 40-foot diesel-electric hybrid buses.

Investments are also being made in Ohio’s rural transit systems, including 8 light transit vehicles and smaller buses.

“In our larger cities, many of our transit partners are already making these environmentally-friendlier investments. ODOT’s efforts will further leverage these investments – both in our urban and rural regions – to create a safer, greener, more multi-modal transportation system,” said Director Molitoris.
New rumble ‘stripes’ being installed on secondary system

Joel Hunt, Central Office

NATIONALWIDE, APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT OF traffic crash fatalities occur when vehicles run off the road. To reduce the number of such crashes, ODOT will begin installing rumble strips on the state’s secondary system.

Drive over a rumble strip and your car will vibrate; your tires will make noise. Rumble strips act as alarms for drivers, letting them know if their vehicle has veered out of its lane. They "sound the alarm" and get drivers’ attention, before it’s too late.

Between 2010 and 2011, ODOT will invest $25 million on systematic safety improvements. These are safety improvements that can be installed across hundreds of miles for a relatively small public investment.

As part of the program, edge line rumble ‘stripes’ will be installed on 1,625 centerline miles of rural, two-lane roads at a cost of $3.6 million. They are called ‘stripes’ when the edge line of pavement marking is placed on top of the rumble strip. This method increases the reflectivity of the pavement marking, making it easier to see the edge of pavement, especially at night and in wet weather.

“Rumble strips have been used in Ohio and across the U.S. for years, typically on shoulders of freeway systems,” said Halle Jones Capers, deputy director of Highway Operations. “In recent years, some states have begun the use of rumble stripes. Due to their smaller size, rumble stripes can be implemented on the two-lane system as well.”

Edge line rumble stripes are a proven method to prevent run-off-road crashes, or fixed-object crashes, which occur when motorists veer from the travel lane and collide with objects such as trees, ditches, or utility poles or cause nearby property damage.

Fixed-object crashes are one of the leading causes of serious injuries and deaths in Ohio. These crashes represent about 35 percent of all fatalities and 30 percent of all serious injuries in Ohio each year.

National studies have shown that rumble strips and stripes can decrease crashes by 20 to 35 percent.

‘Plow through Hunger’

ODOT employees exceed goal in first-ever food drive

Joel Hunt, Central Office

FACED WITH A CHALLENGE TO COLLECT ENOUGH food to fill an ODOT plow truck for the department’s first-ever statewide food drive, ODOT employees stepped up and raised 37,000 pounds: nearly twice the goal.

By partnering with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, ODOT was able to identify one pantry in each of Ohio’s 88 counties to be the direct recipient of food or money collected during the Plow through Hunger campaign. The food and money will stay in the community in which it was donated making a real difference in the lives of the people ODOT serves.

More than 30 Plow through Hunger coordinators across the state organized the campaign by sending district-wide emails, scheduling representatives from local food pantries to speak at worksites, holding contests and special event fundraisers, and sharing stories about how the food drive has changed them.

One coordinator, District 3 Public Information Specialist Joyce Miller, said, “As I dropped off the food at the Pump House Ministries food pantry in Ashland, I was amazed at the good works this organization provides the people in the Ashland community. Twice a month, the food pantry provides Ashland area residents with bags of groceries, and each of our donations will help them tremendously.”

To boost donations, Seneca County Transportation Administrator Steve Fortney and transportation managers Sue Enders and Greg Glover – all from Seneca County – matched their employees’ donations.

District 9 Deputy Director James Brushart announced at the start of the campaign that the county who raised the most food would win a home-cooked breakfast, prepared by his management team. He later upped the ante by offering the same prize to the winning office at the district’s headquarters. Lawrence and Highland counties tied by raising $400 each and the Office of Production won by raising $300.

At the Plow through Hunger news conference in Columbus, Director Jolene Molitoris said, “As they go about their daily duties as the fine professionals they are, the people of ODOT will know that although they didn’t end hunger in Ohio, at least for a while they put a stop to some of it.”

Photo by Kathleen Fuller, District 9

ODOT District 9 employees (clockwise from left) Chris Fulton, Andrew Zink, James Brushart and Tim Roades help Highland County Community Action’s Amanda Fraley unload groceries donated to the food pantry.
Making the rounds: The transportation conversation continues

Brian Stacy, District 3

ODOT’s mission of “MOVING Ohio INTO a Prosperous New World” took another strong step forward with the commencement of the first District Transportation Development Roundtables.

The roundtables are a series of meetings with local and regional citizens, officials and merchants designed to help future transportation innovations better serve their needs.

District 3 sponsored three such meetings in March, and District 1 started theirs this April. Other districts within ODOT have had their own gatherings and are planning more in the coming weeks.

The meetings are part of a directive to make the department more “business friendly” as defined in ODOT’s 2010–2011 Business Plan. By establishing these roundtables, the department wants to assure an ongoing conversation with local and regional development stakeholders that will truly make them partners in an economic investment for the future.

At two of its Economic Engine Round Tables held in March in Huron and Shelby counties, District 3 introduced the ODOT business plan and community outreach efforts to guest attendants. About 45 government and business representatives from nearby Richland, Ashland, Crawford and Wayne counties attended and talked at length about job creation and economic development.

Conversation in most of the groups focused on the 3C Quick Start Passenger Rail effort. Some expressed excitement about the possibilities of additional transportation traffic to their areas; others were concerned about how businesses along the I-71 interstate could be adversely affected.

Participants recommended ODOT work more closely with local entities in developing and implementing construction plans, and take more of a leadership role in the process, guiding local authorities through the state system.

ODOT will compile the suggestions made during these and other district sessions across the state and use them in making future decisions as to how to best invest transportation development.

Nelsonville Bypass putting Ohioans to work

David Rose, District 10

Construction is well underway – and ODOT is putting a large number of Ohioans to work – on the U.S. Route 33 Nelsonville Bypass.

As a result of nearly $150 million in federal stimulus funding, this project will connect the existing four-lane sections of U.S. 33 with a new four-lane highway, removing a major bottleneck in Southeast Ohio and making travel safer and more efficient to and through the Appalachian region.

The investment of federal stimulus funds enabled Phases II and III of the project to begin nearly six years ahead of schedule.

According to Kokosing Construction Company and Beaver Excavating – the contractors for the stimulus-funded projects – the Nelsonville Bypass is creating and retaining more than 300 on-site construction jobs alone.

The Nelsonville stimulus project has received national attention. Victor Mendez, administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, visited the construction site and has often commented on the jobs saved by the work.

The construction of the U.S. Route 33 Nelsonville Bypass is well underway. Ohioans are being put to work as a result of nearly $150 million in federal stimulus funding. This project will connect the existing four-lane sections of U.S. 33 with a new four-lane highway, removing a major bottleneck in Southeast Ohio and making travel safer and more efficient to and through the Appalachian region.

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New project management system, ‘SiteManager,’ launched
Ron Poole, Central Office

Thanks to hard work and diligence, ODOT is beginning this construction season with a transition to a new project management system known as SiteManager. Governed by AASHTO and used by DOTs around the country, SiteManager will monitor the activities involved in the various phases of highway construction, such as construction materials, testing data, and tracking daily construction activities.

The implementation of the new system is all due to the work of the SiteManager team, which includes employees from the offices of Contracts, Construction Administration, Materials Management and Estimating; the divisions of Finance and IT; and districts 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11.

“The kick-off event April 8 was held between a construction site in District 7 and the participating Central Office departments,” said Missy Anverse, the DoIT project manager for SiteManager. “In order to be included in the SiteManager pilot, a project must have an award date in 2010 and a completion date of 2012 or greater. We will begin with a few large, multi-year projects.”

This selection criterion was chosen to allow for CMS, the current project management system, to be shut down by July 1, 2012. This will minimize the number of projects that may have to convert from CMS to SiteManager.

The team will be loading projects into SiteManager and running the same parallel project in CMS. Anverse expects some initial problems as users learn this new system, but the team will work through them.

“As SiteManager becomes more established and set in place, it will gradually phase out the use of CMS,” she said. “Its full implementation will be achieved over the next two years.”

The SiteManager installation and pilot is being handled by DoIT personnel. Although ODOT could have hired a contractor to handle this phase of the operation at additional taxpayer expense, the division opted to handle this in-house with great success:

“Two representatives from Info Tech were at ODOT recently to review our infrastructure for SiteManager, and they were amazed by what we had done,” reported Anverse. “They found only a few minor configurations that needed to be changed, and commented that we’ve been able to accomplish in a year and a half what has taken most other DOT’s 6 to 7 years to complete.”

The SiteManager implementation will involve some changes and improvements from the original system. SiteManager’s structure is such that when updates are released, there will only be one client to upgrade: ODOT will no longer have to push updates out to the districts and project sites will no longer have to download these updates. Other applications used in conjunction with CMS have been revised to work with SiteManager.

Training for SiteManager is well underway, with instruction for the pilot project completed in districts 6, 7, and 8, and upcoming training dates planned for districts 2, 3, and 12. As ODOT prepares for and meets the challenge of change, Anverse is confident that the project’s strong progress will continue into the future:

“This success was possible because of the great team of ODOT employee’s who have worked at a rapid pace to ensure this implementation happens,” she said.
Stimulus Investments take flight at Ohio Airports

David Dennis, Office of Aviation

With the 2010 construction season underway, stimulus-funded improvements at two Ohio airports are nearly complete and local leaders are hoping the work attracts new businesses and new visitors to the Buckeye State.

ODOT’s Office of Aviation is monitoring the $24.1 million in competitively-awarded stimulus funds Ohio received through the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Dayton Cox International Airport received $1.2 million to upgrade taxiway lighting. Minor punch list items will be completed by the end of June.

“Our airport is absolutely critical in being able to attract and grow businesses in the region,” said Phil Parker, president of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce, to local reporters. An urban airport is a city’s gateway for many visitors and business executives. Business travelers account for 60 percent of the Dayton airport’s passenger traffic.

Meanwhile, the $4.8 million project to construct a new taxiway at the Findlay Airport is nearly complete, with grading and pavement replacement set to be finished by June. Construction recently began on a $1.6 million runway safety area improvement at the Ohio University Airport in Athens. The estimated completion date for this project is in August.

Work has also started on $16.3 million in construction projects at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. A new taxiway and new holding apron should be completed by next Spring.

Ohioans demonstrate pedal power during ‘Bike to Work’ Week

Joining the four-million bicycle owners in Ohio who are demonstrating the ‘pedal power’ of active biking, Team ODOT took to two-wheels to recognizing Bike to Work Week in May.

“Biking and walking are critical components of a thriving, healthy, and complete multi-modal transportation system,” said ODOT Bike and Pedestrian Planner Heather Bowden, echoing Director Molitoris’ comments at Central Ohio’s Bike to Work Week event at the Ohio Statehouse.

Each year in Ohio, the Bike to Work celebration sees an ever increasing number of participants. Events in cities throughout the state included workshops, clinics, tours, and block parties.

In partnership with Ohio’s local communities, ODOT continues to be the state’s leading investor in bicycle accommodations. Since 2002, ODOT has invested more than $118 million in bicycle-specific transportation projects – ranging from the creation of new bike paths and bike lanes to extending and modernizing existing bikeways.

Over the next five years, ODOT will nearly double that total investment, with more than $92.5 million in additional bicycle-specific transportation projects planned through 2015.
Real estate newsletter wins fans, federal recognition

Ron Poole, Central Office

Efforts to help Ohioans displaced by infrastructure projects have earned a team for ODOT’s Office of Real Estate national recognition, and the praise centers on a publication designed to help real estate colleagues better protect the rights of property owners and tenants.

Relocation Unit Manager Andy Teater, along with real estate specialists Jack Hughes and Alana Donley, publish the Buckeye Relocation Exchange, a quarterly newsletter intended for all of the department’s real estate offices. Now starting its third year, the simple two- to four-page creation is a departure from the previous ways information has been passed on to the field.

“When I first started in this job,” remembers Teater, “We were always told to ‘work from the manual,’ if we ever had any questions. That may have worked in the past, but not now. This newsletter has allowed us to correspond with our Relocation colleagues by using an informative and fresh medium.”

“We wanted to create a communication pipeline between the people implementing our procedures and Andy’s desk,” said Hughes. “While we were at it, we wanted to find a fun way to help people understand the program and the way it works.”

The articles appearing in the Buckeye Relocation Exchange deal with very specific issues: details related to reimbursements, determining the displaced person’s ownership status or dealing with cultural differences.

Although the newsletter is sent out to real estate members, who are all approved relocation consultants, it also found an audience outside the department when it was made available on ODOT Real Estate’s website.

“I have been contacted by fellow relocation professionals in other state DOTs or in local transportation agencies who really like the newsletter,” said Teater. They found it surfing the net, and now look for all our issues.”

Administrator of the Office of Real Estate Jim Viau decided to submit copies of the newsletter for consideration by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The result was that the newsletter won an Honorable Mention Award under the FHWA’s Excellence in Right of Way Program.

Meanwhile, the three-person team behind the newsletter continues to brainstorm for their next publication.

“From a displaced person’s perspective, it is never pleasant to learn that you will be forced to move” reflected Hughes, “but we want to make the experience as stress-free as possible and to give them the very best service possible: That is the goal of everything we do.”

KNO B4 U GO: Communications Team tweeting Traffic Updates

ODOT’s Division of Communications is expanding its use of Twitter to help Ohio drivers have a “Worry Free Rush Hour” – by providing information about major traffic delays before motorists hit the road each weekday morning and afternoon.

Followers of ODOT’s Twitter feeds receive rush hour updates when highway traffic is slowed by new construction activities or major traffic incidents – the type that might close more than one lane of traffic for a significant amount of time.

“Social networking websites such as Twitter are becoming a very useful tool in sharing information, especially among our younger populations,” said Division of Communications Deputy Director Scott Varner.

Public information officers in Central Office and in Districts, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 12 send out the traffic “tweets.” That’s what the bite-sized instant information offered on Twitter is called.

ODOT’s expanded use of the widely-popular free Twitter website builds upon the success of a pilot effort this past winter. In December 2009, ODOT initiated its first social networking effort to provide real time winter weather information and updates on ODOT’s snowplowing efforts in Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo.

As of June, ODOT had nearly 7,200 Twitter followers listening in on the updates.

Ohio joins a growing number of states using Twitter to offer updates on roadway conditions before motorists take to the highways. Communications teams in each of those states – and especially here in Ohio – strongly discourage drivers from attempting to read these messages while driving.

“Every tweet includes the same 11-character beginning ‘KNO B4 U GO’ as a reminder that this information is meant to be read before drivers leave home, work, or school,” said Deputy Director Varner.

Photo by Ron Poole, Central Office
Rail spur to enhance shipping and business at Port of Toledo

Stu Nicholson, Ohio Rail Development Commission

A rail spur nearly the length of a football field may seem a short stretch of track, but at almost 300 feet, it will be an important rail link between Toledo Shipyard and the nation’s rail system.

Notice to proceed with construction of the spur has been issued by the Ohio Rail Development Commission, using $119,830 in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Currently the Toledo Shipyard’s immediate neighbor, Kraft Foods, is served by the Norfolk Southern Railroad. Extending a new rail spur from that track will allow for steel and other materials that support Ironhead Marine’s operations to be shipped and delivered by rail.

“The new rail spur in the Port of Toledo Shipyard effectively connects the shipyard to an intricate rail network which allows large scale production to easily move in and out of the shipyard via rail. We are incredibly pleased to be able to move the timeline on this project up significantly due to this funding,” said Paul Toth, President and CEO of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority.

“We are particularly enthused because the rail spur will directly result in job creation.”

“Bringing public and private parties together to fund rail-based solutions that create or expand business and jobs goes to the heart of what the ORDC does so well”, said ORDC Chairman James Bradley.

The retired CEO of Wheeling-Pitt Steel, Bradley says he particularly identifies with Ironhead Marine’s need for getting timely, cost-effective deliveries of steel and other materials saying “In this case, a rail spur saves a trucking move by getting the shipyard what it needs right to where it is used,” said Chairman Bradley.

According to ODOT’s freight experts, water transportation is one of the most fuel efficient modes to transport heavy cargo. Ohio is investing in port infrastructure to encourage more heavy freight to travel by water.

Increasing rail and highway access for transload maritime facilities opens up shipping opportunities and makes Ohio more attractive to companies wanting to do business.

National Train Day comes to Toledo

Stretching down the main platform at Toledo’s Union Station, nearly 5,000 visitors to Ohio’s “National Train Day” event lined up to tour an Amtrak locomotive and two newly rebuilt passenger cars. Families, retirees and college students were among those who visited a wide array of railroad history and model train displays inside the classic station, the last new train station to be built in Ohio when it was opened by the New York Central Railroad in 1950.

Director Molitoris, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, and State Senator Teresa Fedor were among the speakers at the May 1 event. This marks the 4th year Toledo has participated in Amtrak’s National Train Day, with this year’s turnout easily surpassing the record of 3,500 visitors set just last year.
 District Deputy Director retires, leaves historic impact in southeast Ohio

David Rose, District 10

Having helped Governor Ted Strickland make significant impacts on the future transportation system of Southeast District 10 Deputy Director Larry Woodford announced his retirement in May – after more than three years with the department.

“Larry’s time as a leader with Team ODOT was short but his impact has stretched far across the nine counties of this district,” said Director Molitoris. “Under Larry’s leadership, the District 10 team partnered with communities across Southeast Ohio to advance more than 200 various transportation projects and invest more than $376 million in the region. That includes Ohio’s largest single federal transportation stimulus investment, the Nelsonville Bypass.”

Mr. Woodford’s focus on safety also helped develop a highly-collaborative relationship with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and led to many successful public outreach efforts centered on driver safety in the Marietta area.

“I am honored to have worked with such a great staff and to have served the people of Southeast Ohio,” said Mr. Woodford. “Our investments in transportation infrastructure will connect and serve generations of people who live and work here and those who just wish to explore the natural beauty and rich culture of Southeast Ohio.”

Prior to joining ODOT, Mr. Woodford served 26 years as a Master Electrician for Central Ohio Coal Company. Mr. Woodford also served as an Olive Township Trustee for 11 years in Noble County.

Upon Mr. Woodford’s retirement, Director Molitoris appointed Karen Pawloski to the leadership role of District Deputy Director. She had been serving as the district’s Business and Human Resources Administrator.

“Karen’s commitment to this department and to Governor Strickland’s mission of modernizing our state’s multi-modal transportation system will truly serve the citizens of the District 10 region well,” said Director Molitoris. “Karen has the ability to bring people together and to work with our local government partners and the people and businesses of the region in fulfilling our mission of Moving Ohio into a Prosperous New World.”

Ms. Pawloski has served as the district’s business administrator since 2007. She started her career with ODOT as a public information officer, serving that role from 1987 to 1991. She then spent more than 10 years working as a Congressional case manager in Southeast Ohio for Charlie Wilson and then-Congressman Ted Strickland.

State-of-the-Art ITS coming to northeast Ohio

Don Hensman, District 12

To help northeast Ohio motorists get to their destinations more quickly, efficiently and safely, ODOT’s District 12 and 4 teams – along with the Office of Traffic Engineering – are launching the state’s latest Intelligent Transportation System (ITS).

“This will be a major impact to the traveling public and it’s been a long time coming,” said District 12 Work Zone Traffic Control Engineer Dennis O’Neil.

Construction began this Spring on the $18.2 million project – funded through the Recovery Act – to install a series of traffic cameras, message boards, vehicle detectors and advisory radios throughout the Cleveland and Akron/Canton regions.

The goal of the ITS is to provide real time traffic information to the traveling public with traffic information and updated travel times between destinations. The system will also monitor construction projects, helping ODOT better keep the public informed of ongoing construction project’s and impacts to traffic.

The epicenter for the Intelligent Transportation System will be housed in District 12 Headquarters’ newly renovated Traffic Control Center.

Currently, ODOT has two fully deployed ITS systems: in Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky (ARTIMIS) and in Columbus. ODOT also began deploying a new system in Dayton last year. Along with the Cleveland and Akron areas, planning is underway to deploy sensors in the Toledo area.

Tony Overbey (center) and Jack Taylor of the Central Office Network team working to installation some of the ITS cameras.