



Transcript

The Ohio Department of Transportation Employee Newsletter

April 2001

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ODOT Budget Passes Both Houses Unanimously

Steps to Getting the Budget Bill Passed:



By Julie Walcoff
Central Office

The vote was unanimous: the Ohio General Assembly approved ODOT's 2002-2003 transportation budget bill. Each biennium, or every other year, a variety of ODOT offices work with legislative officials to pass legislation necessary to authorize ODOT's budget, which ensures payroll and project delivery demands are met. While funding for ODOT's highway programs comes primarily from the state and federal gas taxes, the ultimate authority to spend the funds comes from the Ohio Legislature. The ODOT Aviation and Public Transit programs are funded separately through the General Revenue Fund budget which will be approved later this year.

Daryl Weininger, chief budget analyst in Central Office, works year round to review ODOT's receipt and use of funds. Every two years, he is ready when it is time to request a new budget. "In September, we submitted our proposed budget to the state Office of Budget and Management," said Weininger. "We worked with them to craft our request into the bill we submitted to the General Assembly in February."

Once the bill was submitted, it was sent to committees in the House and the Senate where a small group of legislators heard testimony on portions of the bill, or on proposed amendments that needed further explanation. Director Proctor testified in both houses, giving an overview of the entire budget and stressing the priorities of safety, preservation, and major new projects. Members of the committee want to make sure the bill represents the best interests of their constituents. "Getting the budget passed is a comprehensive process; anyone in Ohio can request additions to our budget bill, and any office in ODOT might be asked to testify in order to explain our position," said Michelle Holdgreve, deputy director for Legislative Services.

One issue in this year's budget debate was highway maintenance. A small group of contractors wanted to specifically allocate \$35 million of ODOT's funds to preventive maintenance. In order to show the department's long-standing commitment to preventive maintenance, testimony was given to a Senate committee detailing the current planning and forecasting process for bridge, pavement and general maintenance conditions. Members praised the process, stating repeatedly how they wished local governments would follow ODOT's example. Following the testimony, the amendment was omitted.

Each state agency must submit a budget during the biennium, and it is unusual for a budget to pass through both houses unanimously as the ODOT budget did this year. "The unanimous support given by the General Assembly is a tribute to all ODOT employees," said Director Proctor. "That

support recognizes the increased productivity, efficiencies, and accountability ODOT has worked hard to achieve."

ODOT's Transit and Aviation programs are funded, along with other state agencies, through the state income and sales taxes. The budget bill will be approved by June 30. The bill represents a commitment to transit, emphasizing service to rural communities and people moving from welfare to work.

The transportation budget bill was signed by Governor Taft March 30, and is effective July 1.

Amendments to HB 73:

- ❖ Limits the transport of three steel coils on a single truck to 92,000 pounds on a pilot basis
- ❖ Reduces the number of projects with a warranty provision from 20 percent to up to 20 percent
- ❖ The ODNR Waterway Safety Fund will receive an additional \$3.5 million annually
- ❖ Authorizes county engineers to use design-build contracts for no more than 15 bridge projects statewide
- ❖ Requires the director to submit a report to the General Assembly outlining a plan to increase the rate of delivery for federally-funded local projects

Where The Money Goes:

State Highway Funds for FY 2002 and 2003:

Category	2002	2003
Payroll	\$ 402.5 million	\$ 410.5 million
Maintenance & Materials	\$ 177.0 million	\$ 180.6 million
Equipment & Buildings	\$ 55.2 million	\$ 55.4 million
Highway Construction	<u>\$ 280.1 million</u>	<u>\$ 210.4 million</u>
Total	\$ 914.8 million	\$ 856.9 million

*These amounts do not include federal funds or bond funds also used in highway construction.

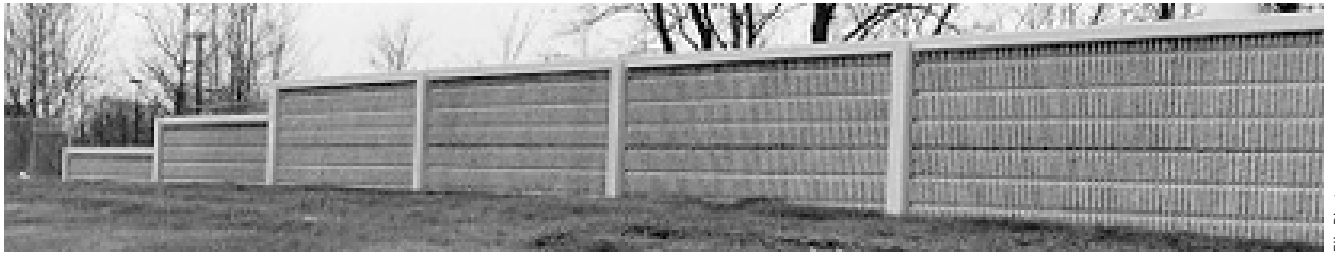
Check Out the Web for More Information Concerning the Budget Bill:

To view the entire bill HB 73: www.legislature.state.oh.us

To hear the testimony: www.oll.state.oh.us

Check under these dates: House: February 28, 2001- Senate: March 21, 2001

A Great Wall



File Photo

By Janis Cravens
District Eight

The ODOT Design Aesthetics Initiative – the department’s pledge to build projects that enhance area surroundings while improving function – has yielded some significant successes. A recent installation of noise walls along Interstate 71 in District 8 demonstrated the department’s commitment to making pleasing design an integral part of ODOT’s service to the public.

The walls were part of a major widening of I-71 between Interstate 275 and Kings Island. The original plans called for the noise wall sections to be of different heights. The uneven walls were not especially attractive.

Scott Campbell, technical services engineer in District 8, reviewed the original plans for the project in Feb. 2000, to consider how the barriers would look when completed. “I noticed the plans for the walls did not meet the director’s aesthetic policy,” said Campbell. “I knew this project was a great opportunity to demonstrate our seriousness about the guidelines.”

Campbell brought these concerns to the attention of the District 8 Production and Planning administrators, Rex Dickey and Diana Martin. He also spoke to major new coordinators Karen Young and Bob Campbell, and Noise and Air Quality Coordinator Elvin Pinckney in Central Office. Director Proctor also reviewed the plans. All agreed the walls did not meet the department’s goals, and discussed the need for change. But, since the project was by this time already underway, making these late changes to the plans would be difficult.

“There had to be a great deal of cooperation between the district, Central Office, the manufacturer of the sound wall panels (Soundcore), the contractor (John R. Jurgensen Company), and the Hamilton County Engineer,” said Campbell.

Members of Central Office and District 8 worked together to determined the

look of the walls. They were figuratively racing against time, as the change order for the walls had to be issued before the fabricator was too far along in casting the panels. Soundcore and the John

R. Jurgensen Company worked together to develop the final design and drawings.

“All the design elements we had in mind – thick concrete posts, a deep-fluted panel design and a top panel coping or cap for a more finished look – were added to the project,” said Pinckney. “The roadside face of the barriers

would be made of materials designed to absorb sound, while the side facing the homes would be a stamped, ashlar stone pattern to reflect sound. We used cranes to put the panels in front of existing trees on the slope, to preserve as much of the natural vegetation as possible.”

The panels have been in place on the completed project since June 2000. The redesigned walls added just 2 percent to the projects ultimate price of approximately \$35 million. Members of the public say the new walls look better than older ones located farther south. Area residents are happy with the way the barriers function as well as their appearance. “Before the walls were installed, we often talked about the highway noise,” said local homeowner Matt Swanson. “Now that they have been up for a while, we actually forget I-71 is out there.”

“I noticed the plans for the walls did not meet the director’s aesthetic policy.”

Scott Campbell



Janis Cravens/District Eight

A section of the redesigned noise wall on I-70 in Hamilton county.

Adams County Employees Achieve State Honors



Jeremy Grooms and Scott Edmisten load signs onto the reconfigured truck.

By Kathleen Fuller
District Nine

Scott Edmisten and Jeremy Grooms, highway maintenance workers from ODOT's Adams County Garage, have joined the ranks of other state employees making the grade for Innovation ODOT and Innovation Ohio. Their suggestion, to purchase a 12-foot, single-axle trailer and install sign racks on trucks for transportation of new signs, materials and tools, saved their district more than \$20,000 a year by eliminating unnecessary damage and replacement of signs and equipment.

Edmisten and Grooms drive a pick-up truck to transport equipment to job sites. They found the room for materials in the vehicle was too limited for their purposes. The truck could transport only 20 signs and some miscellaneous equipment per load, making it necessary to make several trips to do one job. They also found any new materials, like signs, were often damaged on the truck.

"It was taking too much time to switch out signs and replace damaged ones," said Grooms. "We thought the use of a trailer could really save us the extra trips."

Edmisten and Grooms had another idea. They approached their supervisor in late 1999 with the request not only to make the purchase, but to mount a hydraulic driver and sign post puller on the new trailer as well. The altered trailer allowed them to carry more items each trip, while reducing the damage done to signs and equipment during transit.

"The time saved alone is unreal," said Grooms. "We have what we need, and we don't have to return to the garage to get more equipment. This is much more efficient."

Taking into consideration time, labor, equipment maintenance and other costs, the two highway workers estimated the district saves more than \$22,000 annually. At a cost of \$700, the trailer paid for itself within four days. Edmisten and Grooms were each awarded \$571 by the Innovation Ohio program for their suggestion.

"I am really proud of Scott and Jeremy's accomplishment," said Bob Osman, Adams County manager. "Their useful suggestion will help get the job done."

Both Grooms and Edmisten were first-time entrants in the Innovation ODOT/Ohio program, and are pleased by the way things turned out. "It's nice being recognized for improving the workplace and job performance," said Grooms.



Steve Fry performs a visual inspection of one of the m

By Michael Cull
Central Office

If you want to bet on a sure thing, put your money on an ODOT bridge... any one of ODOT's 14,960 bridges. They are safe to drive over, walk on or boat beneath because of a crew of about two dozen ODOT bridge inspectors who check them routinely, methodically and expertly, to eliminate "surprises," which are – in the bridge business – almost always bad.

Your hot dogs should get such attention.

Not all bridges are easily recognized by non-experts as bridges. In this comparatively technical world, a bridge does not need to arch high over a highway or a river. A structure is a bridge if it carries traffic between supports, and is 10 feet or longer.

While most people think only of bridge safety ("Will it fall down while I'm on it?") the department has to consider the economics of bridges: Bridges that are closed or have severe restrictions are barriers to the movement of goods and people. In fiscal year 2001, ODOT will spend \$185 million for routine bridge maintenance and construction; in 2002, it will spend \$190 million.

Annual inspections of Ohio bridges are required by law. The department has two special vehicles, called snoopers, that travel to districts and use their 50 and 60-foot arms to help with the inspection of the department's bigger bridges. Every five years, bridges with underwater parts are inspected by divers hired by ODOT.

Sally Lewis/District Nine



Leslie Dellovade/Central Office

more than 1,000 bridges in District 7.

Beauty in Form and Function

By Abigail Ersford
District Two

Many people in ODOT District 2 know Steve Colony. They know he has worked at ODOT for 13 years and is the technical services manager. They know he has a wife, Christy, and two children, Stephen and Jennifer. They even know he has a dog named Rosie.

What most people do not know is that Colony also has a fascinating talent – he crafts pieces of wood into objects that are not only beautiful, but useful too.

His interest in wood crafting evolved from another hobby: whittling. While he enjoyed using a knife to carve figures out of pieces of wood, Colony developed a desire to make something more practical and useful. About 10 years ago, he got involved in wood crafting.

“Traditional wood crafting is a mixture of woodcarving and cabinet making,” he said. “I just picked up the skills as I went along.”

Over the course of time, Colony has produced many useful items out of wood:

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Colony's Swedish lunch box and walnut dough bowl.

Abigail Ersford/District Two

ing 45 pounds. The creations he is most proud of are a Swedish Tine box – or lunch box – made out of cherry wood, and a walnut dough bowl. The dough bowl was made from the largest piece of wood he has ever worked with.

According to Colony, one of the more important skills to develop in wood crafting is the ability to choose what type of wood is appropriate for each project. Though difficult, making these selections is part of the learning experience.

“My favorite type of wood to work with is green maple,” said Colony, “because it is easier to carve the wood while it is still green.”

Colony participates in the annual Harvest Festival held at the Wolcott House in Maumee. He demonstrates traditional wood crafting techniques and answers questions. “I like going to one show a year,” he said. “It keeps my hobby enjoyable, without it being too much work.”

Aside from wood crafting, Colony enjoys photography, fly-fishing and tying his own flies. He also likes to spend time at his lake cabin north of Bay City, Michigan.

The bulk of the work is done by district bridge inspectors who climb all over structures to measure and record their health and looks. They rate a bridge's overall structure, its floor, wearing surface and paint. They then pass the information to a designated engineer who is able to sign a certificate, in essence, on the bridge's health and fitness.

In general, ODOT's bridge inspectors are not rookies. To do their job, they have to absorb pages of technical information (ODOT's Bridge Inspection Manual alone is 79 pages), and be healthy enough to clamber around structures in all kinds of weather.

Bill Baxter, bridge inspector in District 1, is a good example: He has been with ODOT 19 years and is a second-year inspector. He works year-round, inspecting eight to 10 bridges a day in order to visit all 1,000-plus bridges in his district.

In March, he was one of more than 100 inspectors from across the state, who attended an ODOT-sponsored bridge seminar. He is 49, and lives with his wife Pam in Elida.

District 7's Steve Fry, 35, works with Wes Elsner to monitor 1,400 bridges and loves his job. “We're outside every day, and every day it's something new. You could be planning one thing, then get a call on accident damage. People don't realize it, but it's one of the most important things ODOT does.”

Fry lives in DeGraff with wife Pam.

Safety is Highlight of Week

By Robin Grant

Central Office

Every year thousands of people nationwide – both motorists and highway workers – are injured or killed in construction zone crashes. In Ohio alone, there were 6,600 crashes and 24 fatalities in work zones in 1999. Across the nation and here in Ohio, Work Zone Safety Awareness Week was commemorated April 9-13.

Nationwide, 120 to 130 workers die each year in road construction activities. Of that number, approximately 23 percent of fatalities are due to pedestrian workers being struck by traffic vehicles.

"You worry about it constantly," said District 3 Highway Maintenance Worker Brett Wirick. "It is scary. You can do everything in your power to be safe, but we rely on the motoring public to use common sense. We see motorists on laptop computers, cell phones, reading books...Drivers wait until the last minute to slow down or move over. It is frightening. I've never been in war, but it must be something like that."

Wirick is no stranger to the dangers of driver inattention. While spreading salt on Interstate 71 in Richland County, his truck was rear-ended by a semi-truck whose driver had fallen asleep with the cruise control set at 65 m.p.h. Wirick's truck, traveling only 25 m.p.h., was knocked across oncoming traffic and into the guardrail of the on-ramp on the opposite side of the highway. The impact knocked the bed of his salt truck off of the vehicle.

"You can do everything in your power to be safe, but we rely on the motoring public to use common sense," Wirick said. "We can put out the orange barrels, cones and arrow boards, but in the end we can't make drivers pay attention."

The work zone safety awareness

campaign arrives in Ohio amidst one of the state's largest construction seasons to date. The program aims to save lives and prevent injury to both highway workers and motorists, by raising public awareness concerning the dangers of inattentive driving in work zones.

"We want to make everyone aware that speeding and driver inattention can endanger their safety," said Dave Holstein, administrator, office of traffic engineering. "By following a few simple rules, motorists can keep themselves and our workers safe."

ODOT is partnering with the Federal Highway Administration and Ohio Department of Public Safety to spread safety tips to Ohio drivers. The agencies are spreading the message of increased safety by following guidelines, such as:

- ❖ Stay alert and give driving your full attention
- ❖ Follow all posted signs and obey flaggers
- ❖ Don't tailgate; most crashes in work zones are rear-end collisions
- ❖ Expect the unexpected; work zones are changing environments
- ❖ Be aware that normal traffic patterns may be shifted
- ❖ Don't speed

"There will be a great deal of people and equipment along the highways this year," said Mary Ellen Kimberlin, assistant director of Highway Management. "Great precautions are taken while we are working on the roadway to ensure the safety of all involved. In a split second, however, driver inattention can create tragedy."

National Work Zone Awareness Week is commemorated the second week of every April with activities held on national and local levels to educate America on work zone safety and the hazards that can be encountered when driving through a roadway construction zone.

A national event will be held at The Mall in Washington, D.C. on April 9 to kick off the week. In Ohio, district public information officers will contact the media, arrange interviews and hold events to help spread the message of safety.



file photo



ODNR Photo

By Leslie Dellovade
Central Office

In a cooperative effort with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), the department has helped create recycling centers at rest areas along the highways. This program was designed to reduce litter and to encourage Ohio's motorists to practice recycling by establishing convenient drop-off points for plastic and glass bottles, aluminum and bi-metal beverage containers, and, at two locations, newspapers. ODOT received an Achievement in Excellence Award from the Take Pride Ohio! Program for participation in Ohio's recycling effort.

Last August, ODNR's Division of Recycling and Litter Prevention received a \$5,000 grant from the National and Ohio Soft Drink Associations and Labor and Industry for a Cleaner Ohio to help set up a recycling program. The pilot for the program called for recycling centers to be established at several Ohio rest areas along some of the state's most traveled interstates. In October numerous ODOT employees in Central Office and all of the districts worked to get the program off to a successful start.

"We worked with the ODOT Sign Shop and traffic staff on this project," said Patricia Raynak, program assistance manager with ODNR. "Randy Cattell (transportation technical specialist) worked with us to design the signs for the rest areas, alerting motorists to the availability of the pilot sites. Paul Trapasso (administrative officer) agreed to produce the signs for the pilot locations, and later agreed to accept delivery of the recycling containers. Doug DeMoss (sign fabrication technician) also worked with us to coordinate the deliveries of the containers."

The pilot centers for the program are located in Ashland, Bowling Green, Conneaut, Lebanon, Marietta and Zanesville. In addition to the placement of the recycling bins, visitor survey cards and program brochures were produced to both educate the public and gather information about the success of the program. Surveys were conducted in Bowling Green, Ashland and Conneaut by both ODNR and ODOT Travel In-

formation Center personnel in November and December. According to the results, 99 percent of the participants favored the pilot program, with 95 percent favoring its continuance after the initial trial period.

In appreciation of the efforts of all ODOT employees involved, representatives from each district, Central Office and the West Broad Street complex were honored at the Take Pride Ohio! Luncheon held in Columbus in April 5.

The pilot program will be re-evaluated this summer.



ODNR Photo

Gulf War Illnesses Study

The Cincinnati Veterans Administration Medical Clinic was given a Department of Defense Grant to study Gulf War illnesses. A free medical examination is being offered by the clinic to all Gulf War veterans, whether they exhibit symptoms or not. The clinic will cover travel expenses for the medical exam as well. A separate, voluntary research study is also available to certain qualifying parties. Any Gulf War veterans wishing more information should contact Barbara Rounds at the Cincinnati Veterans Administration Medical Clinic at: (513) 475-6917 or (513) 861-3100, ext. 6917. She can be reached via e-mail at barb.rounds@med.va.gov.

ODOT Fast Facts:

Ohio River Waterborne Commerce

- ❖ Ohio is the 4th largest maritime state in terms of tonnage moved
- ❖ The Ohio River accounts for approximately 1/3 of all U.S. inland waterborne commerce by tonnage per year
- ❖ The Ohio River moves more cargo per year than the Panama Canal
- ❖ Due to lock and dam modernization, the Ohio River is the most efficient river system in the world
- ❖ The Ohio River is utilized at only 30 percent of its capacity
- ❖ One Ohio River barge is equal to 15 jumbo rail cars or 58 trucks; One average tow (15 barges) is equal to 2 1/4 unit trains or 870 trucks

Source: *Ohio Transportation Facts Book*, January, 2001

Julie Walcoff/Central Office

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
1980 W. BROAD ST.
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43223
(614) 614-466-7170 (FAX) 614-644-8662

Visit our Web site at www.dot.state.oh.us



Bob Taft, Governor
Gordon Proctor, ODOT Director

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
J. Brian Cunningham, Editor
Ron Poole, Managing Editor
Julie Walcoff, Layout/Design Editor

PRINTED BY THE ODOT PRINT SHOP

Our mission is to provide a world-class transportation system that links Ohio to a global economy while preserving the state's unique character and enhancing its quality of life.

Cover photo of Ohio Statehouse by
Meghan Martindale/Central Office