



# Transcript

The Ohio Department of Transportation Employee Newsletter

December 2001

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# TASK FORCE PREVENTS TRAFFIC TANGLES

Joel Hunt  
Central Office

ODOT is not in the business of opening malls, but when Polaris Fashion Place's grand opening threatened to back up interstate traffic, the department stepped in.

The mall opened late October in north Columbus at Interstate 71 and Polaris Parkway. Mall officials expected to draw 100,000 additional vehicles to the area during opening weekend. That translated into an estimated 20,600 additional vehicles per day on the already congested Polaris Parkway.

ODOT became concerned the additional traffic would bottleneck the newly-expanded I-71, creating delays and safety concerns. To calm drivers' fears, ODOT formed a task force in September to develop a comprehensive plan for managing traffic opening weekend and throughout the holiday shopping season.

Task Force Leader Thom Slack of District 6 said, the operation was a team effort, drawing upon the expertise of state and city traffic engineers, highway designers, local law enforcement, community and business leaders, and public relations professionals.

"Managing traffic at an event as big as this can't be done without the participation of local agencies," Slack said. "By working together, we developed a plan to handle more traffic than we ever thought we could."

The task force worked in four smaller teams to develop the plan: traffic monitoring, traffic management, short-term improvements and communications.

The traffic monitoring team took a hands-on approach to monitoring and responding to traffic problems during opening weekend.

To monitor additional traffic generated by the mall, the team used traffic counters and cameras. Engineers at the city's Traffic Management Center downtown used the cameras to dispatch response crews as needed.

The traffic management team worked with local law enforcement, Columbus Traf-

fic Engineering, and Mall Operations to direct mall traffic into and out of the mall. Cones guided mall traffic, freeing up the inside lanes of Polaris Parkway for through traffic.

To maximize traffic signal efficiency, engineers were on site opening weekend to adjust traffic signal timing when back-ups occurred.

The team placed additional signs around the mall before opening weekend to direct motorists leaving the mall onto interstate, state, and U.S. routes.

The short-term improvements team implemented changes to ease congestion around the mall and prevent back-ups on I-71.

The team recommended a fourth lane be striped on the I-71 north exit to Polaris Parkway, utilizing shoulder pavement, to add storage capacity on the ramp.

Changeable message boards were placed on I-71 to encourage shoppers to use the multiple entrances.

The communications team met with the mall's marketing staff to discuss ways to prepare motorists for opening weekend.

The team organized a tour for traffic reporters, wrote and distributed news releases and produced and distributed a flier for area businesses to share with their employees and customers.

A Web site also provided motorists with real-time travel information via camera images posted on the site, as well as travel tips for reducing congestion.

Slack said the measures the team took allowed traffic to flow as smoothly as possible throughout the weekend.

"Although traffic wasn't as bad as expected for the grand opening, we learned a lot about the overall traffic patterns in the area. We have a better idea of what we can and can't control."



Photo/ Leslie Dellovade

*Traffic engineers from ODOT and the city of Columbus made preparations for an additional 20,600 vehicles per day on the already congested Polaris Parkway in Columbus.*

# Improving Construction Plans

**Lora Young**  
Central Office

Maintaining the safety and mobility of Ohio's highway network in a cost-effective manner is one of ODOT's highest priorities, as seen by the adoption of this year's Strategic Initiative Six – ODOT Will Improve the Quality of Its Construction Plans.

The initiative goal is to expand the project delivery process, to include involvement by all key individuals. Plan quality, cost effectiveness and management of departmental resources will all improve and make project delivery more effective and cohesive.

A committee representing all aspects of project delivery, including production, construction management, environmental services, planning, engineering and external agencies including the Federal Highway Administration, the Ohio Contractors Association, and consulting firms, has been formed to oversee the implementation of the initiative.

The committee has outlined objectives to meet the initiative goals. One objective is to implement a full circle communication and project development process strategy which integrates the overlapping involvement of planning, production, construction and operation units to achieve timely delivery of plans meeting the intended scope of design work and within the calculated budget. This 360-degree operating goal is critical to the success of projects because it is important for all involved to understand both the role their team plays and how it connects to all other aspects of a project.

"No one office operates in a vacuum," said Bill Ujvari, administrator Office of Production. "In order to successfully execute project development, we have to understand projects require cohesion and seamless movement from one step to the next."

Tony Vogel, major initiatives coordinator, added, "Communication is the primary objective of Strategic Initiative Six. We have the strengths and expertise within ODOT; the goal is to better communicate through the process and utilize these strengths to increase the plan quality."

Some objectives include creating a process to meet FHWA requirements, developing

constructibility reviews, expanding the application of preliminary engineering, and improving the usage of value engineering processes. The committee has also set objectives for successfully implementing the initiative internally.

Strategic Initiative Six goals will be met through a variety of actions. The new project development process that will be instituted incorporates the National Environmental Policy Act and planning processes into one cohesive process to streamline project development efforts. An institutional flow chart depicting the new process has been created to illustrate the change. The process itself will operate on the full-circle premise, so all elements are intertwined and must work together.

Best practice information obtained from the department's six-state audit will be incorporated, building upon project delivery processes other states use and putting them to work at ODOT.

Specifically, the processes associated with preliminary and value engineering and constructibility reviews will be defined so they can be explicitly explained in later reference materials.

The new plan process will be reviewed internally and by external customers before it is implemented. Once approved, the plan process will be introduced to all affected groups via an internal communication plan and accompanying reference guide. The committee hopes to have the reference manual completed, with a new plan delivery process by June 2002. Operating Procedure Index and Quality Assurance Review criteria will be developed to evaluate the process for quality and cost saving.



*Strategic Initiative Six will improve construction projects by working to prevent modifications to construction plans.*

FilePhoto



Rhonda Pees  
District 1

# Employee Organizes Fund Raisers for St. Jude's Children's Hospital

Charlie Weidel, a District 1 project inspector with 18 years service to ODOT, has been giving his time and his heart to St. Jude Children's Hospital since 1985 when a friend asked him to help with the hospital's fund raising telethon.

The hospital, located in Memphis, Tenn., houses the largest cancer research center in North America. Since 1962 the hospital has treated catastrophic diseases in children from infancy to 17-years-old. The hospital was founded by the late Danny Thomas, who when struggling to make it as an entertainer, prayed to St. Jude Thaddeus – the patron saint of hopeless causes – and asked him to show him the way in life. Thomas promised to build a shrine in return. Instead of a shrine, he built a hospital.

After becoming involved with the hospital through the telethon, Weidel began working with special projects for St. Jude acting as the events coordinator for the Lima Mall.

"It was a good job to have, but it wasn't raising money," said Weidel. As he saw money from the fund raisers roll in, Weidel felt he wasn't part of it.

In 1994 Weidel found a way to combine his interest in country and western dancing with helping St. Jude. Some of his fellow dancers were interested in becoming involved with a charity, and Weidel told them, "I have just the charity."

He organized the first Dance for the Child fund raising event which was held at a downtown Lima dance club. The group gathered sponsorships, danced for four hours and raised \$8,400. In 1995 the dance was held at the Veterans' Memorial Civic and Convention Center in Lima which agreed to let them have the facility for free in exchange for the proceeds from liquor sales.

The event included a dance workshop and an open dance. "We brought in world-renowned instructors," said Weidel. There was also a celebrity auction and food booths with all food being donated. The second year the event raised \$18,000. Weidel then became involved with organizing a fund raiser called Captured for Kids which is held each February in Findlay, Lima and Defiance. The event raised more than \$57,000 this

year. And in November Weidel organized a concert with country singer Neal McCoy with part of the \$4,800 raised going to St. Jude.

So far this year more than \$128,000 has been raised combining the proceeds from Dance for the Child and the Captured for Kids event. Since Weidel has been involved, more than \$600,000 has been raised locally since 1985.

Why is he passionate about the St. Jude cause? Weidel believes it began when he was in the sixth grade. He recalled his 18-month-old neighbor, who died of leukemia. When Weidel was 13, the two-year-old son of his dad's co-worker died of leukemia. When Weidel was a senior in high school, a personal friend died of cancer.

Weidel and many others find St. Jude worthy of their efforts because the doctors willingly share their research with other hospitals. Research conducted at St. Jude has helped increase the chances of surviving leukemia from 5 percent in 1962 to 85 percent today.

"Nine and a half percent of the money raised is used to raise more money, three and a half percent is used for administrative costs and all the rest goes to research," said Weidel.

No patient has ever paid for their treatment at St. Jude. "You never get a bill from St. Jude," said Weidel.

Visits to the hospital have also given him reason. "They're so resilient," he said, "These are remarkable kids. They go on to do things, and a lot of the things they do help other people." The greatest day to me would be to hold an event to celebrate the fact that we don't have to have fund raisers any more because we've found a cure."



*Charlie Weidel, District 1 project inspector, holds a mock check for the total amount of funds he helped raise locally for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in 2001.*

Photo/Rhonda Pees

# Job Profile

## WELCOME to Ohio



**Sara Davis**  
*Central Office*

More than 1.2 million people from all 50 states and a dozen countries visited ODOT's 13 Travel Information Centers (TIC) last year, and many were greeted by Phyllis Smith.

Smith serves as a travel counselor for the TIC outside of Marietta in Washington County. The Washington County TIC opened in 1988 with 11 others around Ohio, and Smith has been there every step of the way.

Smith, along with two other travel counselors, keeps the Washington County TIC up and running. Keeping track of visitors who come through the door of the TIC is just part of her job. Depending on the day, Smith will serve as a travel agent for newlyweds making honeymoon plans, a grief counselor showing sympathy to a family who has just lost a loved one and is looking for the funeral, give directions to a truck driver who is lost, or help plan a family's vacation.

"Every day brings something different," said Smith, "It is so refreshing to get to be a part of these peoples lives and to be able to help them."

Advancements in technology have allowed the TICs to have increased access to the Internet and ODOT Intranet. This access has benefited the TICs by providing minute-by-minute construction updates, information on local activities, and putting the answers to many other questions at the finger tips of Smith and other travel counselors.

"When I first started, it was more difficult to help the traveling public because we weren't as experienced and didn't have the access to as many brochures and the technology that we do now," said Smith.

While it is important for Smith to use tools like the Internet and brochures, her most crucial skill is her ability to relate to people. An annual training course is held where Smith and other travel information counselors receive instruction about customer service and listen to speakers representing local attractions, hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other activities within the area. Smith also visits attractions in her area so she knows first-hand what is offered and if it is something the public would be interested in.

"We serve as sales people and promoters for the state," said Smith. "Not only do we let them know about or attractions and hotels we like, but we also work hard to try and get them to stay longer and to come back to our state."

The Washington County TIC, one of the five most visited in the state, experiences its busiest times during the summer and holidays. In recent years, Smith has noticed an increase in tourism in Ohio. "I feel travelers are becoming more aware of attractions in rural Ohio and are interested in seeing what we have to offer," said

Smith. "We meet a lot of people who want to see Amish country."

Smith has seen a growing increase in motorists passing through the area since the Sept. 11 tragedy. "Many travelers are afraid to fly or simply don't want to deal with the hassle of the airports so they opt to drive," she said. "We wel-

come them to Ohio and try to make their travels as pleasant and hassle-free as possible."

Smith said the same frame of mind she uses to serve Ohio's travelers makes the Washington County TIC an enjoyable place to work. "The morale here is so great; if we need a day off everyone is willing to work together, or if there is a death in a family, or an illness, everyone is there to lend a hand," said Smith. "I could not ask for a better job or better coworkers."

At the age of 56, Smith plans to stay at the Washington County TIC until she retires. She resides in Marietta with her husband of 38 years, Chuck, who works for the city of Marietta.



*Smith provides literature and assists a traveler with vacation plans.*

Photo / Leslie Dellowade

# Innerbelt Web Site Wins PRSA Award

Paul Wasilewski  
District 12

ODOT's District 12 recently received an Honorable Mention for Community Relations in Government for the district's Cleveland Innerbelt Study Web Site during the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual East Central District Round-Up Awards conducted by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

The Round-Up Awards recognize the best public relations programs in a six state region, and the competition attracted 98 entries from some of the

nation's top public relations firms and corporate departments. Entries were judged on specific criteria including research, planning, execution and results.

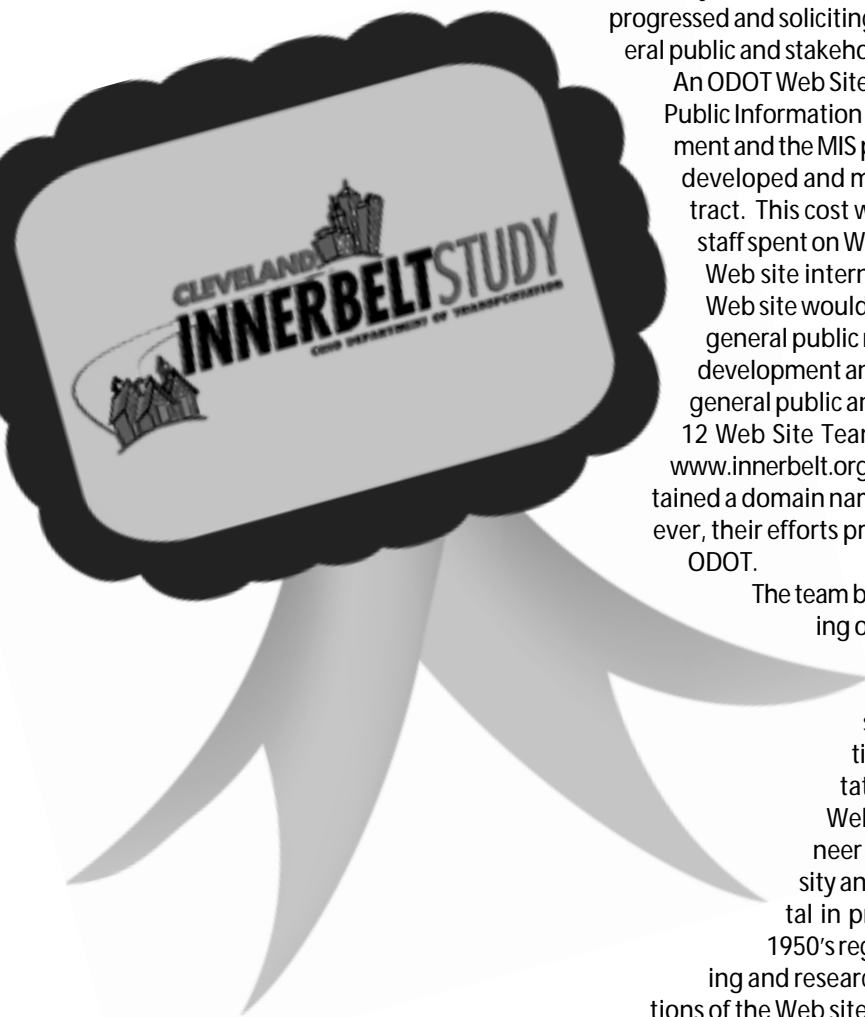
"In addition to saving the district more than \$81,000, this Web site is what can be accomplished through ODOT's efforts to adopt a comprehensive communication strategy," said Innerbelt Study Project Manager Craig Hebebrand.

The district determined the need for the Web site when it began a review of the \$7.2 million two-year contract to be awarded for the Major Investment Study (MIS) of the Cleveland Innerbelt Corridor. Upon reviewing the details of the public involvement process of the contract, the contractors, consultants and sub-contractors were seeking \$89,629 to develop and maintain a Web site for the MIS. The Web site would serve the study two-fold: dissemination of timely and accurate information as the study progressed and soliciting input, comments and suggestions from motorists, the general public and stakeholders.

An ODOT Web Site Team was formed, comprised of members from District 12's Public Information Office, Information Technology Office, Construction Department and the MIS project manager. The team determined the Web site could be developed and maintained at a cost of \$8,000 over the two years of the contract. This cost would be limited to the man hours and labor cost District 12 staff spent on Web site design and maintenance. Further, by maintaining the Web site internally, the dissemination of the information provided on the Web site would be timely, thereby increasing the informational value to the general public regarding the MIS. Coupling the \$81,629 savings of Web site development and maintenance, along with the determination to provide the general public and stakeholders timely and accurate information, the District 12 Web Site Team initiated the Cleveland Innerbelt Corridor MIS web site: [www.innerbelt.org](http://www.innerbelt.org). Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff Co. (HNTB) had obtained a domain name as part of their effort to secure a bid on the contract; however, their efforts proved unsuccessful and HNTB donated the domain name to ODOT.

The team began the development of [www.innerbelt.org](http://www.innerbelt.org) by benchmarking other Web sites, especially other state transportation department sites dedicated to an MIS or specific construction project. The Innerbelt Scoping Committee, whose membership includes local elected officials, stakeholders, representatives from local development corporations and other transportation entities also provided input during the formation of the Web site. Historical research through ODOT and county engineer documents and the cooperation of Cleveland State University and Case Western Reserve University archives were instrumental in providing a historical context to the decisions made in the 1950's regarding the Cleveland Innerbelt. After the initial benchmarking and research was completed, the team developed the categorical sections of the Web site.

The Web site went online Nov. 15, 2000 and has attracted thousands of visitors.



# Office of Aviation Helps Students Soar

Meghan Martindale  
Central Office

Ohio students and guidance counselors recently learned about aeronautical and aviation education at the sixth annual Aeronautical Career Day hosted by ODOT's Office of Aviation and the Ohio Council on Aeronautical Education (OCAE).

Ninety students attended the event, held at Columbus' Don Scott Airport, which allows high school students, guidance counselors and parents from across the state to receive information about the variety of careers available in the field of aviation. Participants attended workshops, listened to panel discussions and talked to representatives from OCAE member organizations.

The students had the opportunity to talk to members of OCAE including representatives from Bowling Green State University, The Ohio State University, Kent State University, Sinclair Community College, Columbus State Community College and the Experimental Aircraft Association. "Over the last two years the number of attendees has been lower but the number of students that go into the schools has increased," said ODOT Aviation Grants Coordinator Andrew Doll. "The quantity is down but the quality is up."

After visiting booths set up by OCAE



Members of OCAE set up booths at the event.



London High School student, Kurt Shellhouse, takes in the view from his ride in the Cessna Skyhawk.

Photos/Meghan Martindale

country flight.

Eric Hogberg, an aircraft maintenance technician from ODOT, taught the Helicopter Maintenance Inspections workshop. Participants learned FAA requirements concerning the aircraft inspection process and how to keep aircraft in safe condition for flight.

In the Wright Flyer Construction workshop, students learned about basic aerodynamics. They were also able to help build a portion of a wing while hearing how the Wright brothers discovered the secrets of flight.

For parents, a financial aid presentation was offered while students attended the other workshops. Candace Mc Gowan, a Financial Aid Officer from Sinclair Community College, discussed sources of financial aid and where, how and when to apply.

After the morning fog lifted, The Experimental Aircraft Association donated free airplane rides for the career day participants. Students received a 20-minute flight in a Cessna Skyhawk or a Bonanza. "It was great," said London High School student Kurt Shellhouse, "I had never been in a small aircraft like that."

Doll said the career day succeeded in promoting the diversity and magnitude of educational and career opportunities in the field of aeronautics. "Overall, I think it went well," he said. "The day seemed to be an enjoyable and enlightening event to all who attended."

members, the students were able to participate in panel discussions with aviation professionals including an aeronautical engineer, an airport manager and a corporate pilot. Panel members talked about their aviation backgrounds and presented an overview of their job duties before taking questions from the students.

Workshops were also held at the event. In the cross-country flight planning workshop students used aeronautical sectional charts (maps), airplane performance charts and flight computers to plan a cross-

# FYI

## Transcript Survey

More than 2,000 surveys regarding the Transcript have been returned to the Office of Communications. The results are currently being compiled and will be featured in a future issue.

Your responses to this survey will be used to improve articles, layout and design, content, and delivery. It is important that you are informed about the department, and the goal is to continue to improve in this mission. With your help, we will be able to serve you better.

Suggestions for future Transcript articles are welcomed and should be forwarded to the Office of Communications by contacting John Hackley at (614) 644-6353 or via email.

# Fast Facts

Estimated Dollars in Millions to be Received in  
FY 2002:

Townships	67.71
County	125.83
Municipal	144.91
Local Improvement Fund	64.46
Highway Patrol	190.00
ODOT Bond Debit	146.63
ODOT	686.80
Other State Agencies	40.66
Total	\$1,467.00

File Photo

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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/ Bruce Hull