

# Transcript

The Ohio Department of Transportation Employee Newsletter  
May 2003

## Team Up **ODOT**

*PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
DELIVER QUALITY SERVICES*





# State Targets High-Crash Locations

## Gas Tax Increase Means \$30 Million More for Safety Programs

**Michelle May**  
Central Office

Congestion is a peak-hour problem for most of the 40,000 motorists that pass through state Route 32 and Bauer Road in Clermont County. In recent years, development has slowly crept across the countryside east of Cincinnati, bringing big-city problems including more accidents.

Over the past three years, 142 crashes have been reported, mostly rear-end collisions caused by stop and go traffic as a long line of cars and trucks pass through the intersection each day. Not surprisingly, transportation officials are struggling to keep up.

"It's typical of suburban areas where growth has occurred but the roadway network hasn't kept pace," said Jay Hamilton, traffic engineer for ODOT District 8 in southwest Ohio. "We keep making incremental changes to keep traffic flowing and crashes low, but now we need more capacity."

Thanks to a recent increase in the state gas tax, the Ohio Department of Transportation is breathing new life and new funding into these high-crash, congested highway locations. Beginning next year, ODOT will increase its annual Highway Safety Program by \$30 million to a total of \$65 million each year.

In addition, ODOT plans to pump \$15 million more into its safety program this year, spending the money on low-cost, short-term solutions to reduce highway crashes.

And over the next decade, ODOT will spend hundreds of millions more on high-cost, long-term solutions, such as adding lanes and rebuilding outdated interchanges and highways.

Studies show more money is needed. According to recent crash statistics, almost 20 percent of all rural crashes occur on just two percent of the highway. Likewise, the department found 42 percent of freeway crashes occur on only 12 percent of the freeway system – the most congested segments statewide.

"If we can focus our attention on these areas, the overall number of crashes in Ohio could fall dramatically," said Jennifer Townley, program manager for ODOT's Safety and Congestion Program.

The new safety program represents a shift in philosophy for the department. For years, the department relied heavily on crash rates to prioritize projects. As a result, high-crash locations on heavily traveled routes like freeways often ranked low.

"You could have 600 crashes on a stretch of I-71, but it would never qualify for funding because the problem was masked by the high-volume of traffic overall," Townley said. "By focusing on both rate and frequency we can address a variety of locations and reduce the overall number of crashes on both rural and urban highways." Townley said the department recently conducted a preliminary study of each high-crash/congested location and every district office has put together a work plan for reducing accidents at these "hot spots."

ODOT will begin this summer by spending \$15 million on low-cost, short-term

fixes including new signs, pavement markings, skid-resistant pavements, and drainage improvements. The department will also work with local law enforcement to crack down on speeding and other dangerous driving behavior.

The department will spend at least \$30 million annually to pursue mid-cost, mid-term solutions such as adding turn lanes, widening and realigning interchanges, and incident management programs designed to detect slowdowns and remove them quickly. ODOT is also studying high-cost, long-term fixes including widening and rebuilding interchanges, adding lanes and Freeway Management Systems to monitor and regulate traffic flow. In the meantime, safety advocates say motorists must do their part to reduce crashes by driving responsibly.

"Simple things like preparing for sudden stops in congested areas and allowing motorists to safely merge at intersections and interchanges can go a long way in preventing crashes," said Greg Murphy, an engineer with ODOT's Safety/Congestion Program. Regardless of the approach, ODOT says it will be monitoring each location to gauge success.

"Right now we've reached a plateau," Townley said. "Overall, accidents aren't getting any worse on Ohio highways, but they're also not getting better. Clearly, we need a new approach and new partnerships if we want to make a difference."

# Ohio Quick Clear:

## Move Traffic Crashes Fast, Save Lives

**Ron Poole**  
Central Office

More than half of all highway congestion is caused by incidents, such as crashes, disabled vehicles, and spilled loads. Worse, crashes and congestion can cause additional incidents, accounting for 13 to 20 percent of rush hour traffic accidents.

These chronic and growing problems led to the creation of Ohio's "Quick Clear" program by ODOT, the Ohio Department of Public Safety and other state agencies and advocacy groups. Unveiled for the first time in March, Quick Clear recommends policies and procedures for emergency responders to efficiently clear crashes and other incidents from the roadway.

When accidents happen, police and fire departments treat and remove the victims, tow trucks clear the scene. The average driver does not think twice about such activities. But in reality, clearing crashes involves a multitude of agencies and interest groups, whose agendas sometimes conflict with the goal of quickly clearing crashes and restoring traffic flow. Clearly, a set of guidelines and procedures was needed to improve emergency responses.

To better engage all disciplines, the Ohio Quick Clear initiative convened the leaders of all Ohio organizations with a stake in solving the problem. Participants included the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Asso-

ciation, Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, Ohio Insurance Institute, Ohio Trucking Association, and the Towing and Recovery Association of Ohio. They created Ohio Quick Clear as a set of best practices in incident clearance which have been reproduced as a checklist for incident responders to carry with them. A best practices guide has been created for general and classroom distribution to educate the public. A computer-based PowerPoint presentation for easy instruction of the quick clear concepts has also been created and made available as a

learning aid. The program has been implemented in Dayton since March of this year.

"We believe Ohio Quick Clear will reduce roadway congestion and closures due to the increased emphasis on coordination and cooperation between agencies at a crash scene," said Col. Paul McClellan, Ohio State Highway Patrol superintendent. "In the short time Highway



File Photo

Patrol troopers have been utilizing the Ohio Quick Clear methods on Interstate 75 in Dayton, we have seen positive results."

For all of the difficulty in coordination, the quick clear concepts are very simple, and all agencies can improve their practices. ODOT is deploying "freeway service patrols" on the most-congested freeways around the state, including Akron, Dayton, and Toledo in addition to the patrols in Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus. All districts are also developing pre-planned detours and action plans for freeway closures.

Howard Wood, major program coordinator for ODOT, has noted the effects the program has begun to have around the state: "In Cincinnati, local officials are setting limits on the amount of time abandoned vehicles can remain on the freeway shoulder," said Wood. "And in Columbus, officials placed more signs urging people to move fender benders from travel lanes, instead of waiting for police officers to arrive on the scene."

# Attendance Up at Team-Up 2003



**Ron Poole**  
*Central Office*

The annual ODOT Team-Up event held this month saw a standing-room only crowd of more than 400 people. The event included a morning program and awards for the Total ODOT Performance (TOP) winners, as well as 58 team and informational booths prepared by participants.

Now in its third year as a part of Team-Up, the TOP awards were created to recognize ODOT employees making notable contributions to the department's on-going quality efforts.

The booths at this year's Team-Up were the highlight of the event. All 12 districts and Central Office were represented, demonstrating ideas to improve the many diverse duties of transportation. A quality team at the Utica Outpost in Licking County built a small, inexpensive machine for creating salt water for snow removal, while a Central Office team focused on creating a streamlined process for environmental project approval. Other groups created and implemented new ideas in project development, litter control, community outreach and customer service.

ODOT Director Gordon Proctor commended his fellow ODOT employees for their initiative and energy on behalf of the department and its mission:



"There are times that meeting the requirements of Ohio's vast transportation system can seem overwhelming," said Proctor. "However, through your efforts, we continually overcome these challenges with innovation and creativity."

Ron Alexander of OCSEA, also spoke at the ceremony. For a complete list of the TOP winners please go to the Quality and Organizational Development intranet site.

## New Duties



Rich Martinko was named Assistant Director for Highway Management May 1. Rich served as District 2 Deputy Director where he was noted for doing an outstanding job with internal ODOT operations and with external ODOT relations. His leadership in all areas of district operations make him an excellent addition to the Central Office team.



Bob Campbell replaced Andrew Gall May 9 as the Director's Executive Assistant. Andrew left the Director's Office to take a position in the private sector. Bob will remain involved in project management duties, assist the director with major constituent issues, and serve as a liaison with Governor Taft's office.

# Seminar Brings Focus to ODOT Research Agenda

**John Hackley**  
*Central Office*

Breaking decisively with policies that do not produce tangible benefits for Ohioans, the ODOT Office of Research and Development has retooled its approach, and a recent seminar gave hints of the results to come.

A group of nearly 200 people, consisting of researchers, transportation professionals, and transportation industry representatives, converged at the Cooperative Research Seminar in Columbus to exchange ideas about projects that can resolve challenges faced by ODOT. The seminar was the culmination of a three-year effort to target transportation research funding to the projects that will create the greatest benefit for Ohioans. These boons will be felt in the form of better roads, less congestion, increased safety, and more efficient use of tax dollars.

"By pooling our efforts and experience we can be more successful in producing information that can be used to improve the current and future state transportation network," said Office of Research and Development Administrator Monique Evans.

During the seminar, a 10-year plan for ODOT research projects was presented. More specific research proposals covering the next two to five years, developed using input from divisions and offices throughout the department, were also presented. Depending on the division involved, the plan for these short-term proposals can cover either an entire division

or individual offices within ODOT. "In the Division of Planning it's one plan because each of the offices interact a lot and there is not one single office covering so much

research that it needs to stand alone," said Evans. The Division of Highways, however, is an example of a division that requires a large enough volume of research to separate the short-term proposals by office.

All of the research proposals generated from the ODOT divisions and offices were specifically targeted to address eight key areas designated by the department's leadership as pivotal to maximizing the services ODOT provides to the state.

After the ODOT research plan was detailed, attendees were invited to provide suggestions to improve the complete 10-year plan and the proposed research projects needed during the next

five years by the various divisions and offices of ODOT. Once these suggestions are incorporated, ODOT will contract with consultants for research projects performed in the near future. According to Evans, a similar seminar will be planned every two years. "We picked once every two years because we are switching to a biennial program for the research so when we advertise for consultants it will be for two years worth of projects," she said.

The diversity of the organizations represented at the seminar may be an indication of the future success of the revamped program. "Not only were there researchers with an established relationship with ODOT, but new researchers who haven't done any work for the department before attended, and they came from public universities, private universities and private research facilities," said Evans. "The more people competing, the better the research will be, and the cost will be lower."

Evans also attributes the ambitious nature of the ODOT research program to the support of the department's senior leadership. "There are a lot of things we are attempting to do that would not be accomplished without their support and assistance, so it's very important that they are interested and involved in the program."

Ultimately, Evans aims to use what she deems an "applied program" to find solutions for each problem addressed by a research project. For those not working in the detail oriented arena of transportation research, that translates to better roads.





# ODOT Enters Era of 'Mega Projects'

**Gordon Proctor**  
*Director*

Fifty feet below the surface of the Maumee River, iron workers inside a huge coffer dam are tying steel for the central pylon of what will be Ohio's most distinctive bridge. Beneath them, a concrete and re-bar foundation extends 22 feet through the river bottom, and 15 feet into the bedrock below. By the end of 2003, the central pylon will stand 250 feet out of the water on its way to its 400-foot peak.

The mammoth Maumee River Crossing is ODOT's most impressive project, dwarfing nearly every other undertaking the department has experienced. Its central pylon will be 400 feet high. It will be sheathed in glass with color-changing lights inside to illuminate the new landmark. Stainless steel cables will radiate from the pylon to hold the concrete bridge deck aloft 120 feet above the navigable river channel.

The bridge is a tribute the engineers, designers, contractors, iron workers, laborers, concrete finishers and others involved. It represents a new way for ODOT to tackle major projects in a way that is cutting edge but also compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

At a total cost of \$387 million for the bridge and four miles of freeway the Maumee River Crossing is huge, but not unique. ODOT is entering the "Mega Project" age. Fort Washington Way in Cincinnati, I-75 in Dayton, the I-75/I-70 Interchange in Dayton, I-670 in Columbus, the Central Viaduct and Inner Belt in Cleveland, the I-70/I-71 split in Columbus are just a few of the "mega projects" that either have been built, are under construction or under development.

ODOT is entering a new era – one where we are reconfiguring our old freeways from the 1950s and preparing them for the traffic demands of 2050. For the rest of our lifetimes, and maybe forever, ODOT will be tackling large-scale urban freeway projects that dwarf our typical project.

Thirty-eight percent of ODOT's projects are for \$250,000 or less. Nearly 60 percent of our projects are under \$500,000. The rural resurfacing, guardrail and minor bridge projects make up the bulk of our program and will not change much.

What is changing is our need to respond to growing congestion. Each of our urban freeways were conceived in the 1950s, built in the 1960s to meet the needs of the 1990s. Now, we are replacing those freeways in a size and scale we have not experienced before.

The Maumee River Crossing on I-280 in Toledo is a good example. I-280 was built before the interstate era and includes a lift bridge – yes, a lift bridge on the interstate. About 500 times a year, the bridge opens to allow freighters into the Port of Toledo.

ODOT needs to upgrade I-280 and its other urban freeways because of the tremendous strain upon them. Ohio has the country's fifth highest volume of traffic, fourth largest interstate highway system and the nation's fifth greatest volume of truck traffic. After four decades of steady traffic growth, our system has exceeded the volumes anticipated in the 1960s. Now, we need to rebuild them for the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The new high-level structure being built on I-280 will allow freighters to pass beneath. Four miles of new three-lane freeway are being built to connect to the structure. Instead of I-280 being a narrow, winding bottleneck, the new route will be a soaring freeway crossing a signature bridge.

Similar efforts are under way in District 7 at the I-70/I-75 interchange. The existing

1960s era cloverleaf, which was state of the art at its time, is now a frightening impediment to the 153,000 people who everyday weave and merge through 37,000 trucks to navigate the short ramps and tight merges. The new interchange will be a safer, more convenient and attractive three-level, weave-free interchange.

This era of the mega project has many implications as each district's construction program will have much greater peaks. Now, District 2 is managing a \$300 million construction program which will return to its normal \$80 million average by 2005.

Our construction program will have to be flexible. We will need to move workers from site to site, year to year. We will need to accommodate these surges of construction in one district, before the surge moves with the next mega project to another district.

These projects compel us to work closely with the neighborhoods – listen to their concerns and accommodate their needs.

Our sophistication on testing and inspection will grow. Our planning for project management and scheduling will have to improve. Our maintenance of traffic will become ever more sophisticated. Our need to communicate to neighborhoods, local governments and the media will evolve.

In the years ahead, the people of ODOT will be proud of the bridge arising from the Maumee. It will be among the brightest of our department's accomplishments but it will not be unique. ODOT is rebuilding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

# District 11 Learns How To Listen

**Becky McCarty**

*District 11*

As part of ODOT's quality journey and external quality assessments over the last few years, District 11 realized a need for more customer feedback. After all, the definition of quality is "consistently meeting or exceeding customer needs and expectations," and in District 11, there was no mechanism in place to ensure quality products and services were being delivered. Customer feedback was random at best.

Being a service-oriented, state agency makes it fairly simple to determine and target customers and stakeholders. In addition to the general public and other governmental entities, ODOT's customers are determined by geographical boundaries and services provided. Internally, District 11 relies heavily on its employee satisfaction and well-being gauges to listen to its customers, such as the Quality of Work Life surveys and 360-degree employee feedback surveys.

In 2002, District 11 implemented a feedback survey for its construction and maintenance products and services. During the summer of 2002, construction and maintenance employees distributed index card surveys to property owners and businesses adjacent to capital improvement and force account projects. Some of the comments received included: "Great Job! Thank You! Roads are great! Job Well Done! Everything was done nice. It will ease traffic flow."

A key to successful customer surveys is asking the same questions year after year, establishing a baseline level and historical data. Over time, trends may develop and opportunities for improvement will become more apparent. If questions change every year, there is no way to know if you have im-

proved in a given area.

Therefore, similar surveys and results were distributed and obtained at each of District 11's county fairs. In addition, the district utilizes a general feedback form on its Internet Web site and distributes general comment cards at public events when possible.

Other sources of customer feedback include: public involvement meetings and public comment periods used to gather input from citizens, residents and nearby businesses on proposed capital improvement projects; and Government Day for all elected officials and stakeholders to provide information on transportation-related issues affecting their respective areas.

District 11 also plans to benefit from survey information gathered as part of ODOT's statewide Access Ohio customer survey and possibly even retrofit it to meet the district's needs for a more detailed external survey. District 11 Deputy Director Myron Pakush said, "By receiving a combination of feedback, we are able to better understand our customer requirements and their priorities."

Although District 11 does not have true competitors, all available barometers indicate customer satisfaction within the district is at a high level. The results of the district's county fair and construction completion surveys indicate overwhelming customer satisfaction, since its inception, ODOT's Snow Spotter Surveys indicate District 11 is consistently meeting and exceeding customer expectations by averaging a 9.39 rating out of a possible 10.

The following excerpts were taken out of letters and survey comments received from District 11 customers:

From Web site: "Having just returned from visiting family in Connecticut, my daughter and I were awe struck by the wonderful conditions of our roads here in Ohio. We were so aware of the excellence of the Ohio highways that when I said I thought you should be commended, she said....you should tell them, people probably only write bad comments not the good ones. Well, this is a really good one. A+ When Ohio decides to fix a road, they DO IT!!! It gets done right, and you make it as easy as possible on the traveler. This is a heartfelt thank you for all the planning and hard work that our ODOT does..."

General Comments: "Thank you for your support. ODOT does an excellent job in our area. Good job, keep it up! Traffic flow during construction is much improved."

ODOT's Goal One states, "We will understand thoroughly the diverse transportation needs of our customers." To understand, we must know.



# FYI

I am happy to announce that we have surpassed this year's goal of 7,407 meals by donating over 20,000 meals to Operation Feed! Central Office donated more than 15,000 pounds of food and \$2,577 in cash. All food items collected for Operation Feed are stored at the Mid-Ohio Food Bank and distributed to 228 pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters in six central Ohio counties: Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Madison, Pickaway and Union.

-Emily Miller, Operation Feed Coordinator



Men and women in the Office of Accounting pitched in to raise the most food. Left to right: Bill Marland, Dave Busack, Gary Ballard, Mike Gaeth and Tyler Bircher.

# Operation Feed Felon

In response to the demands of long-suffering ODOT employees and of humanity in general, public enemy Dave "Baby Face" Busack was taken into custody and placed under cubicle arrest by state officials April 17. Busack was apprehended after a brief struggle while screaming he "would never be taken alive." Officials declined to explain the specific charges against the convict, but sighted his long record of jay-walking violations, and insisted his custody was as necessary as it was entertaining. Visitors were encouraged to keep Busack well fed by throwing him apples and Snickers bars – his normal diet in the wild. Busack remained in custody for a full four hours until more than \$650 in funds were donated to Operation Feed for his freedom. Amnesty International and Greenpeace issued a joint statement protesting his release.



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