



Transcript

External Edition

July 2000

ODOT Innovates Work Zone Congestion Policy

by Robin Grant

EARLIER THIS MONTH THE OHIO Department of Transportation announced its new Maintenance of Traffic Policy, one of the nation's first, aimed to reduce highway congestion caused by construction work zones. Developed by ODOT engineers and highway operations administrators, the policy will ensure highway project engineers plan ahead to improve traffic flow during construction.

"The maintenance of traffic concept is a new approach to the design of highway construction projects," said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. "Project planners will now address possible congestion problems long before construction begins, allowing ODOT to implement measures to prevent or reduce congestion. With the fourth largest interstate system and fifth highest traffic volume in the nation, this policy is vital to efficient travel on Ohio's highways."

The department's Maintenance of Traffic Policy, according to Jim Buckson of the Federal Highway Administration, is one of the first of its kind to be instituted on a statewide scale. Included in the policy are cutting-edge practices such as ODOT's system to measure and quantify traffic backups, then apply the data to congestion mitigation planning.

"ODOT has been recognized nationally as an innovator in maintenance of traffic practices," said Buckson. "Ohio is one of the first states to implement policy requiring measures to reduce de-

lays, and it has set the benchmark for others in that respect. We have worked closely with ODOT for some time on this issue, and we are impressed with the innovation Ohio has shown."

Bill Lozier, ODOT deputy director of Highway Operations, explained how Ohio's policy differs from most other states: "ODOT is using what we call queue lengths - the measure of how far traffic is backed up in a particular area - to quantify the effect of work zones on congestion. We use computer software and engineering expertise to analyze predicted queue length and plan ahead to reduce potential delays, before

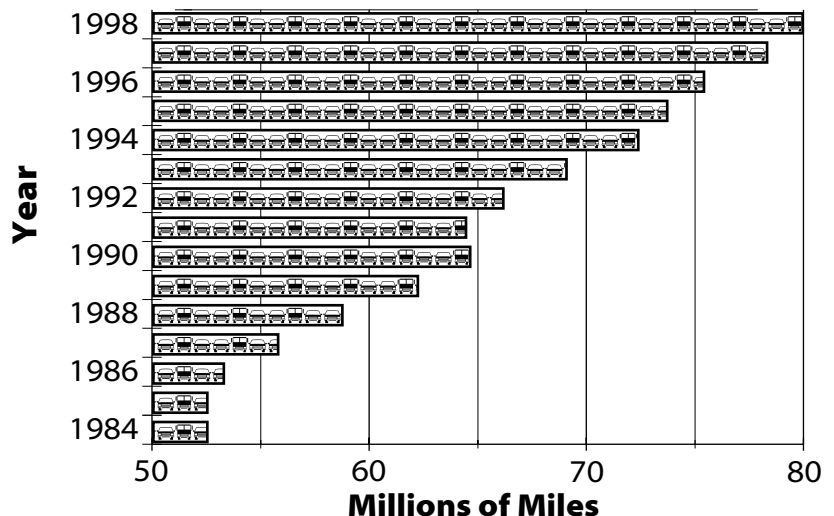
they happen."

Delay-reducing solutions to be implemented include consideration of providing two lanes of traffic in each direction during daytime construction, and scheduling lane closures according to a "permitted lane closure map." This map will geographically designate where lanes may be closed based on factors such as traffic levels and time of day.

Maintenance of traffic measures will be developed on a project-by-project basis, allowing the designers to consider the individual circumstances of each

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Daily Vehicle Miles of Travel on Ohio Interstate System



New Ranking System Improves Highway Safety

by Robin Grant

A NEW RANKING SYSTEM FOR SAFETY projects, instituted by the Ohio Department of Transportation, will revise ODOT's Highway Safety Program (HSP) to ensure projects are performed based on priority and need. Formalized this month in ODOT's Highway Safety Program Policy, the selection process for safety projects is modeled after a similar system used by the Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) to rank major new projects.

"The Highway Safety Program analyzes crash statistics on Ohio's state and local highway system to identify high-crash locations," said ODOT Assistant Director of Highway Management Mary Ellen Kimberlin. "Through the revised policy, these locations will be ranked and selected based on a more detailed review process than previously used, allowing the department to maximize safety funding by addressing the most-needed projects first."

A prioritized list of 1,500 statewide high-hazard locations, based on three-year accident statistics provided by the Ohio Highway Patrol, is published annually. Of these sites, the top 350 are divided according to the ODOT district in which they are located, then programmed into the Safety Annual Work Plans in each of the 12 districts.

To improve safety in these locations, the District Safety Review Team, appointed by the district deputy director, will evaluate the engineering studies of each ranked location and devise measures to reduce hazardous conditions and add highway safety elements. Once the priori-

tized locations have been studied and solutions devised, the projects can be submitted to the HSP for consideration for funding.

"Although the budget of the Highway Safety Program is limited, this ranking system will help the department address the highest priority locations first," said ODOT Highway Safety Program Manager Jennifer Townley. "Whereas the previous system was first-come, first-served, the new policy will allow ODOT to maximize the HSP funding to improve safety where it is most needed."

Through the HSP, an analysis of hazardous locations is conducted using accident information, roadway geometrics, traffic volume data, and the location of hardware and obstacles on the roadside to determine high accident areas, as well as which locations would most likely to benefit from safety improvements.

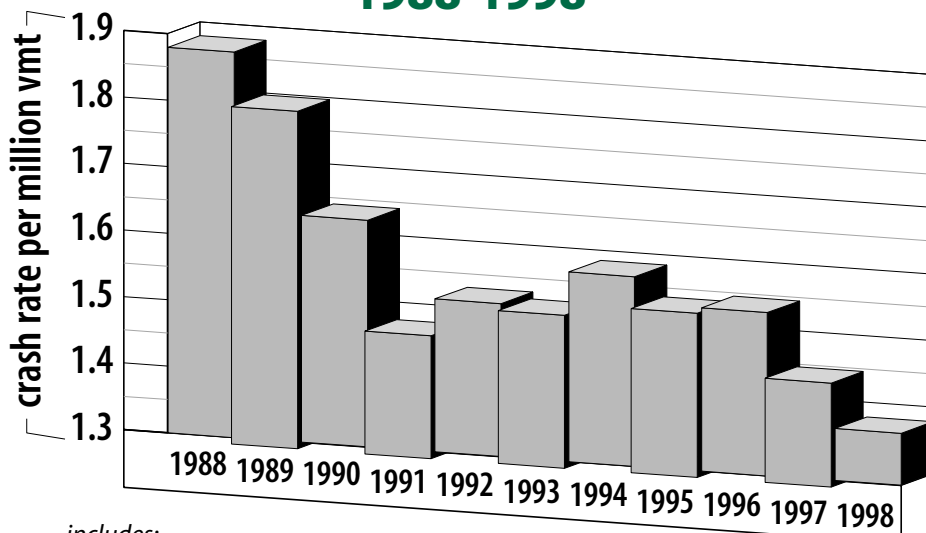
"Safety has always been a top prior-

ity of this department," said Kimberlin. "We constantly strive to ensure safety components are incorporated into our construction operations. Through the District Safety Review Teams, we can review high-crash locations and determine whether safety projects will improve the areas. This process is vital to continuing ODOT's commitment to highway safety, and to improving travel for Ohio."

Although ODOT already had a safety program in effect, the department determined the need to improve the ranking system for safety projects, and establish the district elements which would allow for more efficient review and implementation of safety efforts.

"The highway safety policy enables the department to more accurately implement our safety program," said Townley. "With the improved ranking system of the policy, we can maximize the benefit of ODOT's Highway Safety Program for motorists who travel Ohio's highways."

Rural Statewide Crash Rate Per Million Vehicle Miles Traveled 1988-1998



*includes:
Interstates, U.S. and State Routes outside incorporated limits, excluding Turnpike*

Studying the Interstate 75 Corridor

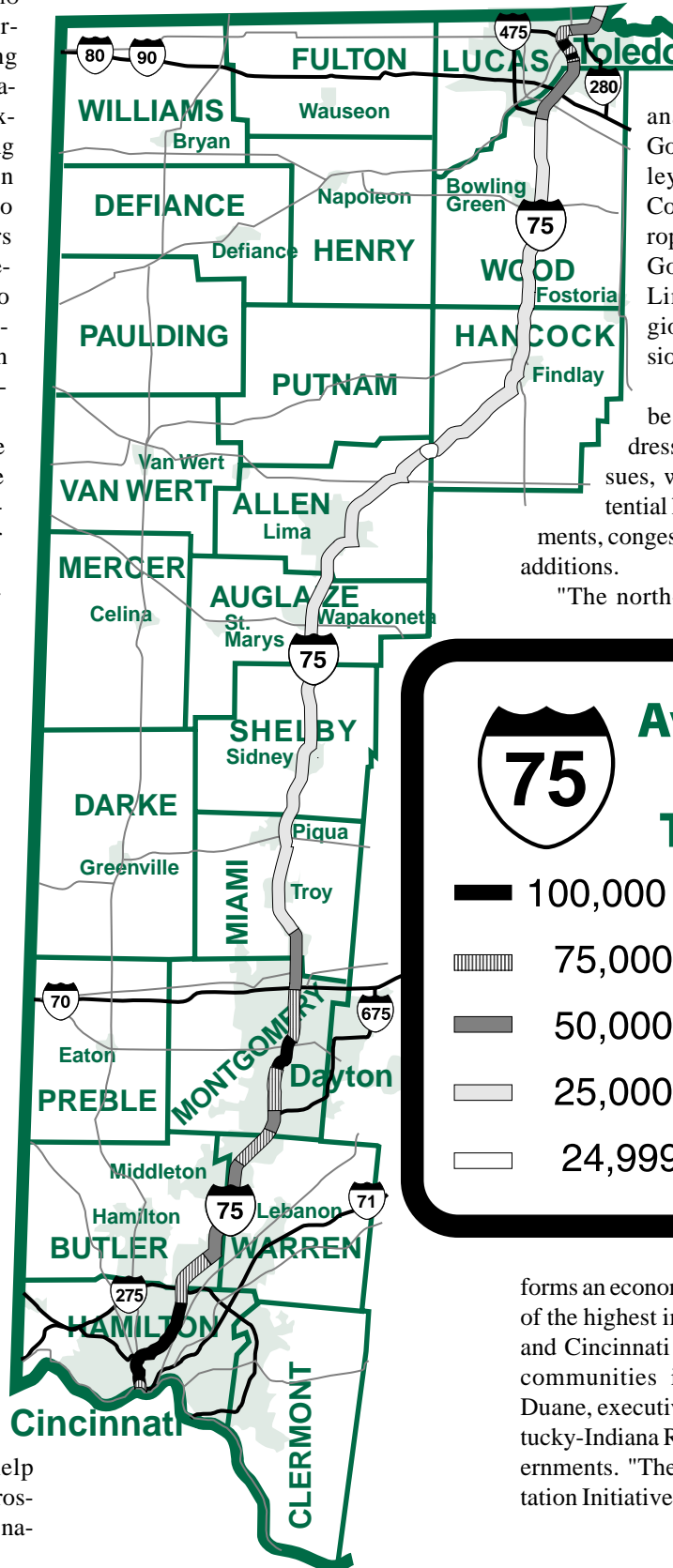
by Amanda Paduchik

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE OHIO Department of Transportation (ODOT) is partnering with four metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to evaluate and examine transportation conditions along Ohio's Interstate 75 corridor. An ODOT team will perform a nine-to-12-month study, analyzing factors such as traffic flow, safety and pavement conditions. The study will also cover the impacts of traffic and population growth, farmland preservation and economic development on the interstate.

"The I-75 corridor study is the first of several proposed studies to be conducted on Ohio's major thoroughfares," said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. "Because I-75 is one of the nation's busiest routes for commerce, we want to ensure adequate infrastructure improvements are planned for future growth and development."

The department is holding public involvement meetings in 11 counties which make up the corridor in the Cincinnati, Dayton, Lima and Toledo areas to gain a statewide perspective of its conditions and needs. Community members, business leaders, freight haulers, special interest groups, local leaders and representatives of area colleges will be invited to discuss the concepts of the study. They will also have the opportunity to share views and suggest changes to the scope and vision of the study.

"This study marks the first time both the public and private sectors have partnered to plan the future of our highway system," said ODOT Deputy Director for the Division of Planning Matt Selhorst. "By uniting these groups, the department can ensure the proper steps are taken in planning for this important corridor. This will help strengthen both Ohio's economic prosperity and the state's position on a national and international scale."



MPOs involved in the I-75 study include the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, and the Lima-Allen County Regional Planning Commission.

Results of the study will be analyzed in order to address highway trends and issues, which could include potential highway safety improvements, congestion mitigation, and lane additions.

"The north-south highway system

forms an economic development catalyst of the highest importance to the Dayton and Cincinnati metro areas, and all the communities in between," said Jim Duane, executive director of Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments. "The North South Transportation Initiative (I-75 study) will address

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work zone. Factors such as traffic pattern, number of access points along the route, time of day of construction, length of work, and cost of congestion mitigation practices will be considered.

Authority to approve any increased cost associated with adding maintenance of traffic practices to construction projects will be given to the ODOT ex-

ecutive leadership, who will work with traffic engineers to determine appropriate congestion mitigation solutions.

“Maintenance of traffic practices will add to the cost of a project,” said ODOT Assistant Director of Highway Management Mary Ellen Kimberlin. “Without it, however, motorists can get stuck in the congestion caused by work zones. For most projects, the department will have options for congestion mitiga-

tion where both the need for construction and adequate traffic flow can be addressed.”

Communities, governments, businesses, the public and the media will be informed of planned construction activities before projects are to begin, thanks to a maintenance of traffic communications strategy developed with the policy. District public information staff will work together with project engineers

“In the end, the maintenance of traffic policy means less congestion headaches for Ohio.”

Gordon Proctor, ODOT Director

and project managers to inform the public of future work, in an effort to ease traffic in work zones.

“In the end, the maintenance of traffic policy means less congestion headaches for Ohio,” said Proctor. “Although we cannot eliminate all backups in work zones, these procedures will greatly improve the efficiency of travel on Ohio’s highways during necessary construction projects.”

I-75 (from page 1)

traffic and congestion issues that have plagued the corridor, and will analyze a variety of options with the goal of improving transportation flow and increasing safety for all travelers in the area.”

Commodities worth an estimated \$24.5 billion are shipped annually by trucks on the I-75 corridor, making it the state’s largest carrier of truck traffic. As an international corridor, I-75 allows major Ohio manufacturers and distributors to ship products throughout the U.S. and Canada.

“Our community relies on the corridor for safe, efficient transportation,” said Don Jakeway, president for the Regional Growth Partnership in Toledo. “Therefore, we want to be sure our needs and those of other affected communities are taken into consideration.”

After completion of the analysis and public meetings, a statewide steering committee representing stakeholders surrounding the corridor, will review the results of the study and provide additional comments and suggestions.



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