

Transcript

Ohio Department of Transportation ★ Employee Newsletter

September 2007

ODOT Responds Quickly to Bridges in Wake of Collapse

Ryan Larzelere, *Central Office*

NEARLY TWO MONTHS AFTER THE collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis, MN, intensified the national spotlight on the nation's aging highway structures, attention has not waned on the safety of bridges in Ohio – where an inventory of more than 42,000 bridges places the state second in the nation.

And for many at ODOT, the public focus on bridge safety has added a new sense of importance to the work they do.

The day after the collapse, Tim Keller, P.E., administrator of ODOT's office of Structural Engineering, and his staff began collecting data and reviewing inspection reports on structures in Ohio with similar designs.

"The tragedy in Minnesota brought infrastructure to the forefront of the traveling public's thinking," said Keller. "We wanted the public to know that we at ODOT take our responsibility to keep our infrastructure safe very seriously. It is our number one priority."

Of the 4,891 bridges maintained by ODOT as part of the state highway system, only 12 share the under-deck truss design of the Minneapolis bridge. ODOT Director James Beasley ordered inspectors to revisit each of those bridges.

"We wanted the public to see ODOT inspectors looking at bridges – to let them know we are out inspecting bridges every day to ensure that our system remains safe," said Keller.

In cooperation with the state's county engineers, the office of Structural Engineering was able to refine the inventory of county-maintained under-deck truss



Photo by Justin Chesnic, D-4.

ODOT bridge inspectors examine the State Route 8 under-deck truss structure over the Little Cuyahoga River in Summit County on August 18.

(see **BRIDGES** on page 5)

Just Crazy Enough to Work:

A local Cincinnati Metro Silverton Park bus takes a demonstration ride for the media on the left-hand shoulder of Interstate 71 prior to the start of the pilot program in July.

Partnership Creates Bus on Shoulder Program in Ohio

Ron Poole, Central Office

COMMUTERS STUCK IN TRAFFIC ON Interstate 71 in Cincinnati may feel some envy of the riders of local transit buses. That's because public buses are being allowed to bypass congestion by using the highway shoulders to zip alongside the lanes.

The Cincinnati Metro Transit Agency, in partnership with ODOT and the Federal Highway Administration, began operating buses on I-71's left shoulder in late July. The program is designed to attract more commuters to public transportation and to make the most of state highway capacity.

"I saw the idea in action ten years ago in Minnesota," said Carla L. Cefaratti, deputy director of Local Programs in Central Office. "They were the very first to start the program in 1991. They expanded its use later when several major highways were closed due to flooding. We began the pilot last year, when the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) became interested in the idea."

Cooperation and involvement were stressed from the beginning of the pilot effort. ODOT formed a team with representatives from COTA, MORPC, the Ohio State Highway Patrol, the city of Columbus, Central Office and District 6 to begin testing the concept. An ideal stretch of highway in Columbus was selected, and the right shoulder of Interstate 70 (east side) between Miller/Kelton av-

enues and State Route 256 became the first to open to bus traffic in November 2006.

The Columbus pilot has been very successful: the I-70 shoulder has proven ideal for use, and with an emphasis placed on training drivers and observing safety guidelines at all times, there have been no accidents. Bus service has become more dependable for users, too.

"Using I-70 in this pilot cost ODOT nothing – we simply had to put up the signs," said Cefaratti. "The state high-

ways have plenty of other shoulders ideal for this program. This is a way of thinking outside of convention to create low cost ways to increase the value of our highway system without resorting to construction."

"Creating a true partnership between all of the departments and agencies involved is the key," she added. "One police officer told me: 'This idea is just crazy enough to work.'"

ODOT and the other partners in the Cincinnati pilot will continue to evaluate the performance of the Bus-on-Shoulder practice to determine its effectiveness and safety. The department is looking to introduce a third pilot in the Cleveland area.

Besides Minnesota, there are now nine other states using or testing the idea, including Washington and California. Buses are using the shoulders of highways in Canada, Ireland and New Zealand. ➤



Cincinnati Metro's Bus On Shoulder partners (l-r): Susan Springer (ODOT Project Manager), Tim Reynolds (Metro Project Manager), Carla Cefaratti (ODOT Deputy Director of Local Programs), and Mike Setzer (Metro CEO).

Photos courtesy of the Cincinnati Metro Transit Agency.

As the Waters Receded: ODOT Helps Weather the Storm

Rhonda Pees, *District 1*
and Brian Stacy, *District 3*

Crawford County photos by Al Baker, D-3. Aerial photo by Bruce Hull, C.O.

A CRISIS CAN TEST THE BONDS OF CO-operation. If the bonds are strong, than even the worst of circumstances can be overcome.

Such a test happened during widespread flooding in northern Ohio after heavy rains fell August 20 and 21. The department was one of several agencies that responded to the natural disaster and proved it could be counted on as a partner in a time of chaos and need.

During the two days of rain, the Blanchard, Auglaize and Ottawa rivers swelled beyond the flood stage. The most severe flooding occurred in the city of Findlay and in the village of Ottawa.

Interstate 75 at the Bluffton Quarry in Allen County became the state's most significant closure. The swelling of Riley Creek caused all four lanes of the highway between Bentley Road and State Route 103 to flood.

With a tunnel beneath the highway at the quarry, and with two bridges over the creek, the I-75 flooding could have meant extensive structural damage and long-term closure of the highway. Once water levels receded, engineers with ODOT were able to assess any damage to the pavement and nearby bridge structures on I-75.

"Once we determined the structures had not been damaged by the flooding the roadway was then reopened," said Tim Burkepile, ODOT deputy director for District 1. "This was a unique occurrence, and we appreciate the cooperation of motorists who were involved in the lengthy detour which was required in order to move traffic out of the flooded area."

At one point during the emergency, ODOT had 28 road closures and 11 restricted roadways throughout the state. Help with the clean up efforts came from everywhere, with the people and

equipment from ODOT often leading the way.

"We had people here from as far away as Akron," said Ron Kear, Hancock County manager. "Districts 2, 4, and 6 sent people and equipment. Allen County provided a semi-dump trailer and driver to make moving debris more efficient."

In nearby District 3, Crawford and Richland counties were among those hit hard by the stationary storm front. At one point in time, there was high water on portions of every road in Crawford Coun-

(see **FLOODING** on page 6)



ODOT crews working to clean up the aftermath of the August 20-21 storms in Crawford County.



ODOT's Presence Felt at State, County Fairs

Ryan Larzelere, Central Office

ODOT CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE most popular exhibitors at the Ohio State Fair and at various county fairs across Ohio.

This year, the displays gave fair-goers a chance to learn about the department's achievements in technology and highway construction. The crowds could not be kept from the ODOT display at the Ohio State Fair held from Aug. 1 to Aug. 12.

A highway camera, mounted high on a support pole, captured the movements of fair visitors on a 42-inch flat screen plasma television with precision accuracy. This demonstration of the camera

used to monitor traffic was a clear hit, especially among youngsters who seized the opportunity to practice their dance moves.

Some notable features included a new device called a Road Grip Tester that gauges pavement traction under slippery conditions. There

was also a full-scale recreation of a Continuously Operating Reference Station, and a 14-foot-long-by-6-foot-high culvert that housed reflective material which could be seen by a mounted light inside the culvert.

Despite all of the flashy technology on display, the new 2007 state map was still the biggest attention getter: More than 60,000 maps were handed out by 46 ODOT workers over the 12-day event at the Ohio Expo Center.



Photo by Ryan Larzelere, C.O.

Visitors to the ODOT display at the State Fair got a close look at some of the department's latest transportation technology, including a LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) fly-through demonstration and a Road Grip Tester.

ODOT district offices participated in several of the county fairs this summer. District 4 set up a booth at the Mahoning County Fair in Canfield – one of the larger county fairs in the state. District 9 is attending seven county events, using the more significant operations they have undertaken for the public as themes for some of their displays. And District 12 had nearly 8,000 visitors at their displays set up at all three of their area county fairs. ☺



Photo by Kathleen Fuller, D-9.



Larry Burns, a survey technician from District 9, talks with customers and hands out brochures in ODOT's Highland County fair booth.

Photo provided by D-12.



The District 12 County Fair Committee, seated: Vince Armenti (left) and Faye Callahan (right); standing: Don Barth (left) and Rick Green (right).



Photo by Justin Chesnic, D-4.

ODOT's display at the Mahoning County Fair in District 4.

BRIDGES (from page 1)

bridges, narrowing the list to just four: three bridges under county authority, and one bridge under municipal authority. The significantly reduced number came from eliminating through-truss and “pony-truss” bridges from the county list.

ODOT’s bridge inspector Mike Loeffler worked with officials in Columbiana County, site of one of those similarly-built structures, using the state’s “snooper truck” to inspect the bridge.

Fairfield County has asked for ODOT support next year when it comes time to inspect its similar structure.

Meanwhile, media interest in Ohio’s bridge program has also remained constant.

In the days and weeks following the incident, news outlets across the state – as well as several national and international reporters – sought information from ODOT’s office of Communications and the Public Information Officers (PIOs) in each district.

Photo by Becky McCarty, D-11.



Under-deck truss bridge inspection of the County Route 843-Willard Rd. Bridge in Columbiana County on August 20.

“With so much confusion surrounding the collapse in Minnesota, it was important for our folks to take the time to get useful information out to the public,” said ODOT Deputy Director of Communications Scott Varner.

News crews from NHK Broadcasting out of Japan have been to Ohio twice since August to interview ODOT’s bridge experts and PIOs on the department’s re-

sponse to the Minneapolis collapse.

Also getting media attention is the search for more federal funding for bridge preservation. A congressman from Minnesota has proposed a five-cent gas tax increase to fund a national bridge program.

The proposed legislation would establish a \$25 billion trust fund to fix or replace 6,175 of the most deficient bridges in the National Highway System. But according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, government at all levels would have to spend more than \$65 billion to repair all existing bridge deficiencies.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is still investigating the August tragedy in Minneapolis, which killed 13 people and injured 144. The agency says some of its investigators are likely to work at the collapse site until at least November.

Keller says once the report is finalized and a cause for the collapse is determined, ODOT will then be able to focus its response. ☺

2007 ODOT Director’s Cup Rodeo

September 12, 2007, Ohio State Fairgrounds, Columbus

Truck competitors



Loader competitors



TRUCK COMPETITION

- 1st Place:**
Matt Lust, Crawford Co., D-3
- 2nd Place:**
John Rinker, Hancock Co., D-1
- 3rd Place:**
Phil Cook, Logan Co., D-7



Winners from both categories with Director Beasley and Union representatives.

LOADER COMPETITION

- 1st Place:**
Doug Andolsek, Lorain Co., D-3
- 2nd Place:**
Darren Dietrich, Clermont Co., D-8
- 3rd Place:**
Jason Naus, Wood Co., D-2



Photos by Christina Hines, C.O.

FLOODING (from page 3)

ty. Major flooding to cities like Bucyrus in Crawford and Shelby in Richland resulted in several roads closing at once.

At the intersection of Erie and Huron counties, flash flooding hit Bellevue and shut down U.S. Route 20 and State Route 113. Bellevue Mayor David Kile declared a state of emergency, as all the local streets were flooded and getting in and out of the city was extremely difficult.

ODOT's District 3 crews had to close off access to the city of Bellevue during both days of rain to prevent motorists from driving into an already dangerous situation.

An even greater challenge lay in the cities like Bucyrus and Shelby. Highway

shutdowns meant no detours available for traffic. Work crews had to clean up roads and open them as quickly as possible as the receding waters permitted.

The day after the rains stopped, Gov. Ted Strickland declared a state of emergency for Allen, Crawford, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, Richland, Seneca, Van Wert and Wyandot counties. The Governor wanted to ensure that state resources would be used to help affected Ohioans recover from this disaster as quickly as possible.

ODOT crews stayed on clean-up duty, helping to restore transportation to the affected counties.

"With ODOT, you really saw a good group of people who stepped up to do



Flooding of State Route 96 at State Route 598 in Crawford County.

Photo by Al Baker, D-3.

a job that was pretty tough," said John Kindt, ODOT transportation administrator for Richland County. "Our people worked with the city authorities, the Red Cross and ordinary citizens to restore things back to normal."

With the flood waters receded, the highways have reopened and the people affected have set about repairing the damage. But ODOT's impact during the crisis will not be forgotten.

When Hancock County Manager Kear was introduced at a recent Emergency Operations Center Committee meeting, he was applauded.

"They weren't applauding for me, they were applauding ODOT," said Kear. ➤

Photos by John Kindt and Matt Blankenship, D-3.



Water in the streets of Shelby in Richland County



Be the One to Make a Difference

Joel Hunt, Central Office

THE COMBINED CHARITABLE CAMPAIGN is wrapping up, but it's not too late to give.

Each year, state of Ohio employees use the campaign to give to more than 2,000 charities that assist individuals and families at home and abroad.

"Ohio's state employee campaign ranks among the best supported in the nation both in the number of participants

Photo by Cheryl Jenkins, C.O.



Members of the Office of Environmental Services help run their OSU themed Bake Sale: (l-r) Kristin Walls, George Poulos, Kevin Davis, Larry Hoffman.

and the amount they donate," said Gov. Ted Strickland. "Last year, state employees contributed



more than \$5.2 million, far surpassing the fundraising goal."

The campaign gives state employees the opportunity to strengthen their communities by supporting programs dealing with health, human services, education and the environment. By designating gifts to charities of their own choosing, Ohio's state employees can contribute to the causes, issues and programs they most care about.

The campaign runs through Oct. 18. ODOT's goal is \$442,372. Last year, ODOT raised \$491,525, with an average gift of \$212. ➤

Wetland Brings New Life to Dawes Arboretum

Joel Hunt, Central Office

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION INEVITABLY impacts the environment, but the State Route 161 widening project in Licking County had an effect not often seen by the public.

The roadway is being moved to a new alignment and, as a result, five acres of wetlands had to be destroyed. However, the ODOT District 5 office replaced those five acres with a much larger plot of new wetlands at the Dawes Arboretum in Newark.

At more than 20-acres, the man-made plot known as Dutch Fork is four times the size of the wetlands it replaces. Dutch Fork had once been a natural wetland, but was drained years ago for farming.

“It’s fortunate ODOT found a site that could be restored to its natural state rather than creating a wetland where one never existed,” said ODOT Transportation Technician Chris Yoder. “Wetland restoration is preferable to wetland creation, as it increases the likelihood of a successful project and is usually less costly.”

Generally, a plot of land is known as a wetland if the soil’s saturation by water is that soil’s dominant characteristic. The high water content in the land determines the types of plant and animal communities living there.

Once considered “wastelands” by many early pioneers, wetlands were

drained for agriculture and development. Now it is understood that wetlands are important to a healthy environment.

“Acting in some ways like a sponge, wetlands protect against flooding by absorbing water runoff from rain and melted snow and then slowly releasing it,” said Yoder.

“Water slowly percolates the soil, instead of rushing to ditches and streams. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, one acre of wetlands can store nearly 1.5 million gallons of water.”



Photos courtesy of the Dawes Arboretum.



In addition, wetlands filter out phosphates, nitrogen and other chemicals used in agriculture and industry from ground water. These potentially harmful chemicals are absorbed by plant roots or soil particles before they are able to enter drinking water.

During the creation of Dutch Fork, five permanent pools were created with varying levels of water to mimic a natural wetland. Since its completion over a year ago, Dutch Fork has become home to many different species of mammals, birds and insects.

Wetlands are prime sites for bird watching, photography and hiking. Dutch Fork includes hiking trails and an observation platform for visitors, as well as educational and research opportunities for local students. 🌿

FYIs from the Ohio Rail Development Commission

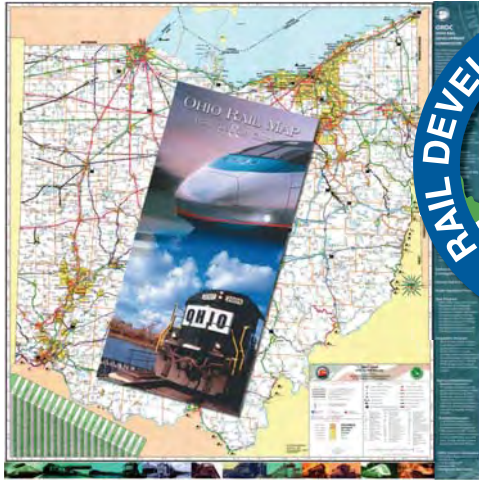
The 2007-2009 Rail Map Available in Print and On-line

THE OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (ORDC) debuted the latest edition of their Ohio Rail Map at the Ohio State Fair last month. Among its features, the map contains detailed sections on the almost six thousand miles of active rail lines running through the state, color-coded to easily identify ownership and/or operators of the various railroads.

The 2007-2009 edition also includes localized rail maps of Ohio's major metropolitan areas and the designated locations of many historic rail tourism sites, including museums.

"The new rail map clearly shows the links between highways, rail, air, all water and inland ports," said Stu Nicholson, public information officer with the ORDC. "The Ohio Rail Map also connects you to information on Ohio's initiative for high-speed passenger rail and increased freight rail capacity: The Ohio Hub Plan."

The ORDC is making the map available on-line at: www.dot.state.oh.us/ohiorail. It can also be reached through links on the ODOT website and the Ohio Hub (www.ohiohub.com) web pages. The addition of an on-line map is expected to increase its distribution and usefulness. 📍



Matt Dietrich Named ORDC Executive Director

MATT DIETRICH was formally named executive director for The Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) this month. Dietrich has been serving in this capacity as an

acting executive director following the retirement of James Seney in August of 2006. His full appointment was approved in an unanimous vote by the ORDC commissioners.

Prior to his appointment, Dietrich had served as secretary-treasurer of the ORDC since 2000. In that position, he oversaw the administration of loans, grants and federal funds for rail rehabilitation, acquisition and preservation, economic development and safety projects.

Before joining the Commission, Dietrich worked at several public agencies including Metropolitan Planning Organizations and the Ohio Department of Development. He received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Toledo. A native of Amherst, Dietrich now resides in Upper Arlington with his wife and children. 📍



Photo by Stu Nicholson, ORDC.

featurephoto



Photo by Bruce Hull, C.O.

Aerial view of the Interstate 75 flooding near Bluffton, August 21, 2007. See page 3 for a statewide flood article including details on this location.

Transcript

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

Visit our Web site at
<http://www.dot.state.oh.us>



Ted Strickland,
Governor

James G. Beasley, P.E., P.S.
ODOT Director

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Scott Varner, Deputy Director
Ron Poole, Managing Editor
Andy Eline, Layout/Design Editor

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