

2005 Construction Program

ODOT Takes on 'Mega Projects'

THE WORD IS OUT. ODOT IS TWO YEARS into the governor's decade-long plan to rebuild Ohio's aging interstate system, and motorists will encounter projects on a scale never before seen.

ODOT kicked off its 2005 construction season this month with \$1.3 billion in resurfacing, reconstruction, and major new construction projects, including 68 projects to improve Ohio's interstates.

The 2005 construction program is up from \$1.2 billion in 2004 and \$1.1 billion in 2003, thanks to additional revenue from the 6-cent gas tax, which was phased in at 2 cents per year beginning in 2003.

The amount of work being included in some construction projects today raises them to 'mega project' status, a term the construction industry uses to describe projects exceeding the \$100 million mark.

"Ohio's interstates were built in the 1950s and '60s and are in need of replacement," said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. "Some of our highways and interchanges have outdated designs and can't handle the traffic demands placed on them. While we're reconstructing the

highways, it makes sense to widen the roads, straighten curves, and lengthen ramps."

Of the 89 state, U.S. route, and interstate construction projects scheduled for 2005, six rate as mega projects. Routes affected by mega project construction include interstates 71, 77, 270 and 280, and U.S. Route 30.

More work, however, will not mean longer traffic delays. All of the department's 68 interstate construction projects planned for this year include contract provisions that restrict work to off-peak travel times, speed the pace of construction, or reward or penalize contractors for early completion or delays.

In addition, Ohio requires contrac-

tors to maintain at least two lanes in each direction during the day and on holidays on heavily traveled interstates.

Exceptions are rarely granted.

Portions of Interstate 71 will be widened in Medina and Richland counties. This is a continuation of the Interstate 71 Corridor Reconstruction and Widening Plan, which began in 1998. After this year, only two sections will remain two lanes in each direction on I-71 between Columbus and Cleveland. Projects in 2012 and 2014 will complete the

(see **CONSTRUCTION** on page 4)



Joel Hunt
Central Office

photo by Shawn Timen, Central Office

Governor's Plan

to Increase Truck Traffic on Turnpike is

GOVERNOR TAFT'S NORTHERN OHIO Freight Plan, implemented late last year, has already had a dramatic impact on truck traffic on the Ohio Turnpike and rural routes parallel to the Turnpike. Initial analysis conducted on traffic volumes show truck traffic along rural routes parallel to the Ohio Turnpike are 10 percent to 30 percent lower than last year. In addition, truck volumes on the Turnpike have increased by at least 12 percent.

"To this point, we're pleased with the numbers we're seeing," said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. "Most importantly, we're seeing truck traffic on the Turnpike increase, thus relieving congestion on the parallel routes."

The governor's strategy consisted of lowering turnpike tolls for commercial trucks for an 18-month trial basis, increasing truck weight and speed enforcement efforts on the parallel routes, and increasing speed limits for trucks on the Turnpike from 55 mph to 65 mph.

In January 2005, overall commercial vehicles on the Turnpike increased 17.9 percent compared to January 2004. In terms of the total number of vehicles, Class 8 vehicles, the typical 18-wheeler,

Paying Off

increased 27.9 percent in January 2005 compared to January 2004. In addition, the parallel routes frequently used instead of the Turnpike saw drastic daily decreases in their truck traffic as of February 2005: U.S. Route 20 in Fulton County volumes were down nearly 27 percent; State Route 2 in Ottawa County volumes were down nearly 37 percent; U.S. Route 250 in Huron County volumes were down nearly 36 percent; and U.S. Route 442 in Cuyahoga County volumes were down nearly 33 percent.

The Ohio Turnpike Commission, by resolution, implemented the speed limit increase in September 2004. Since then, ODOT statistics show truck speeds have remained constant at an average of 66 mph.

A 27 percent toll reduction took effect on January 1, 2005. The reduction represents a rollback of between 58 percent and 60 percent of the toll increases that were phased in from 1995 to 1999 for Class 7 and 8 trucks, which represent nearly half of the truck volumes on the Turnpike. For

these trucks, the new rates are lower than they were back in 1982. In order to implement this trial reduction, the department received legislative authority to make a one-time payment of no more than \$23.4 million to the Turnpike.



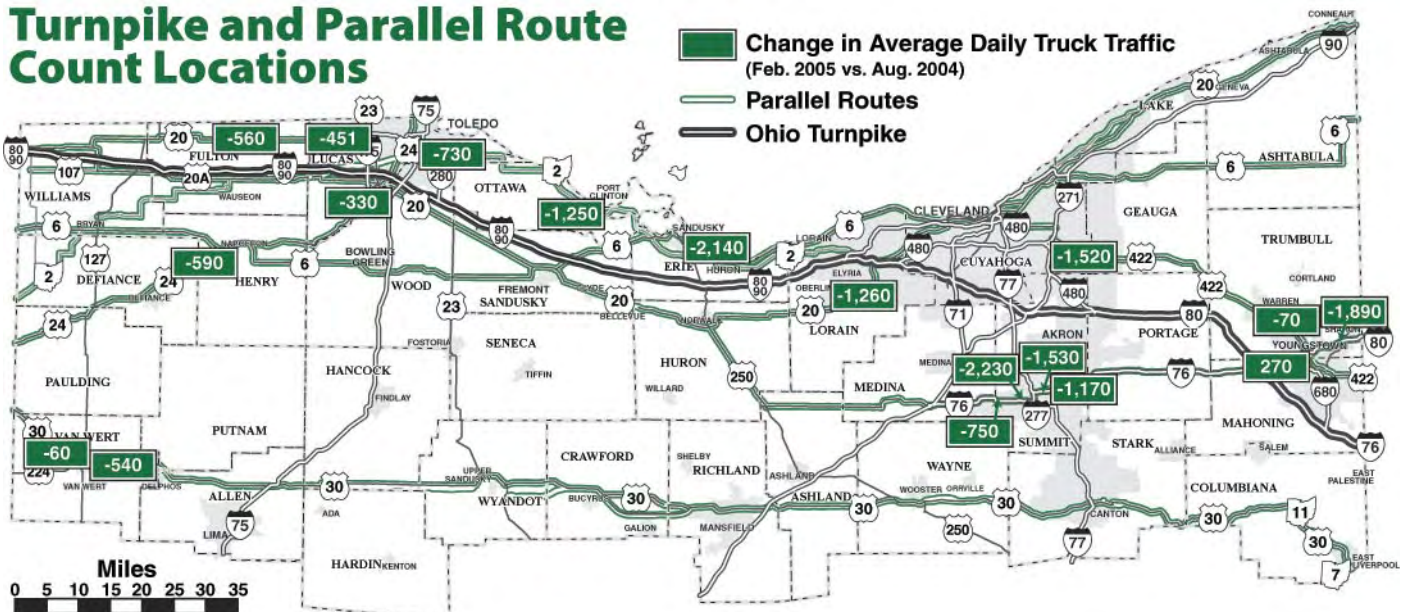
Ryan Larzelere
Central Office

In terms of increased enforcement, ODOT agreed to provide \$2.5 million for 25 additional Ohio State Highway Patrol troopers to be used solely for increased enforcement on routes parallel to the Turnpike.

"The initial results illustrate the strategies that have been implemented have helped to improve safety and quality of life for dozens of communities, and thousands of drivers, across northern Ohio," said Howard Wood, deputy director for the Division of Planning. "We will continue to monitor the traffic volumes and speeds to ensure this plan is effective."

Governor Bob Taft toured these routes in August 2004, and was able to see firsthand the congestion and safety issues caused by trucks not using the Turnpike as their east-west route across northern Ohio. As a result, the governor announced the Northern Ohio Freight Plan to improve safety and mobility throughout the region by redirecting trucks to the Turnpike, thus reducing traffic on the smaller routes. ➤

Turnpike and Parallel Route Count Locations



High Marks

RECENT EDITIONS OF TWO NATIONAL trade publications – *Governing* and *Overdrive* magazines – awarded Ohio high grades from both researchers and truck drivers on highway conditions, rest stops and roadside services.

Governing Magazine gave Ohio a grade of A- for infrastructure in the results from their 2004 Government Performance Project released Jan. 31. The project involved the study and grading of each state in the country based on the examination of two agencies per state, and on the key government management areas of money, people, infrastructure and information.

The project analysis credited ODOT with completing major restructuring efforts, developing a detailed strategic planning process and adopting comprehensive performance measures to track the condition of the state transportation system. The article points to these efforts for the continuous and methodical reduction of pavement and bridge deficiencies and an overall reduction of roadway fatalities enjoyed by Ohio in recent years. In addition to highways, the infrastructure category included school facilities and state buildings.

The results of the Highway Report Card survey sponsored by *Overdrive* Magazine were announced in February. The readers, primarily truck drivers, were asked to rate the best and worst road conditions in the continental United States.

Ohio made the top five in four categories. The state was rated fifth by the drivers for best roads and for best truck stops. Ohio also ranked fourth for best rest stops, and ranked second as toughest on truck inspections. ☺

E-Books: New Way to Research

THE LATEST IN COMPUTER INFORMATION or technical manuals is now available in the form of electronic



Ron Poole
Central Office



books and journals though the OhioLink Web site. As of last November, the state system had 4,500 titles provided by Safari, a vendor of information technology instruction.

“The progress made in the computer field means information becomes obsolete fast,” said Janet Bix, ODOT librarian. “E-books contain the very latest information from major computer companies. And e-books are quickly replaced with updated text.”

Those with computer access can use the ODOT library Intranet page to access the state library catalog. From there, an employee can select the OhioLink Database, and then select the “S-T” under “All Databases” heading. Safari tech books will appear, providing entry into the selections. Electronic journals are also available. For more on e-books, contact the ODOT Library at 614-466-7681. ☺

Team UP ODOT Registration

ENTRIES FOR TEAM UP ODOT, THE annual showcase of process improvements and employee innovation, are now being accepted by the office of Quality and Organizational Development. The event will be held May 11 in the Rhodes Building on the Ohio State fairgrounds. All teams that have made improvements are invited to attend and share their accomplishments. In keeping with this year’s theme, “Measuring for Excellence,” special recognition will be given to teams that have improved Organizational Performance Index (OPI) scores. There will also be an increased focus on teams that have implemented ideas based on opportunities for improvement that were identified in their

district’s feedback reports from the Ohio Partnership for Excellence.

“I’ve heard Director Proctor call Team-Up ODOT his favorite day of the year many times, and I can understand why,” said Steve Wall, deputy director of the Office of Quality and Organizational Development. “It is one of the best atmospheres I’ve ever seen for sharing outstanding results, and learning from each other.”

Those interested in registering a team for the Team-Up displays can contact their quality coordinator or register online: at http://intranet.dot.oh.us/QOD/team_up_odot_2005.htm. Registration ends April 15, 2005. ☺

TOPS Award Nominations

THE OFFICE OF QUALITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT is also accepting nominees for the Total ODOT Performance (TOP) Awards, recognizing the outstanding performance of ODOT employees and teams in such areas as customer service, communication, facilitation, mentoring, humanitarian service and process improvement.



Nominations for the TOP Awards can be made by any ODOT employee who would like to see a co-worker recognized for outstanding work. TOP awards can be obtained by deputy directors, administrators, quality coordinators or the Quality Web site. All nominations must meet the form criteria and be submitted

to the office by March 31. Those interested can contact Carol Schubert at (614) 752-5722 or Willa O’Neill at (614) 466-9967 for more information on the Team-Up ODOT event and TOP awards. ☺

photo by Barb Elliston, D-7



photo by Cindy Brown, D-5



Construction of a cable stayed bridge over the Maumee River continues in Lucas County. This work is part of seven construction projects on Interstate 280 between Interstate 75 and State Route 2 in Toledo. The main span project is the largest and most expensive single project ever undertaken by ODOT at a cost of \$220 million. Work began in 2001 and is scheduled for completion in 2006.

This is the second year of Governor Bob Taft's 10-year Jobs and Progress Plan, the largest transportation undertaking since the creation of the interstate highway system more than 40 years ago. As a result of the plan, Ohio will invest \$5 billion over the next decade to rebuild Ohio's

Construction kick-off press conference action from around the state (clockwise from left):

- Bill Harrison, D-7 Deputy Director, being interviewed by WDTN Channel 2, WKEF Channel 22, WHIO Channel 7 and the Dayton Daily News.
- Phil Newman, D-5 Muskingum County Manager, with Abbey Burchman from WHIZTV from Zanesville.
- Jack Marchbanks, D-6 Deputy Director, speaking with Duarte Geraldino of NBC Channel 4.
- Stefan Spinosa, D-8 Brent Spence Bridge project manager, on camera.
- D-4 Deputy Director Mo Darwish talks with Jim Michaels from WKBN Youngstown radio.
- D-11 Deputy Director Myron Pakush discusses the upcoming construction season with a state highway patrol sergeant.

urban interstate networks, address high-crash and congestion locations, and complete the state's rural macro-corridors.

"The Jobs and Progress Plan will stimulate Ohio's economy by generating and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs, reducing freeway congestion, improving road safety, and connecting rural Ohio to the economic mainstream by rebuilding the state's highway system for the 21st Century," Proctor said.

Motorists can find up-to-date information about the 2005 construction season via www.buckeyetraffic.org. The department will also begin distributing its 2005 Interstate Construction Brochure this month at local ODOT district offices. The brochure is a good tool to help motorists plan ahead for local or statewide interstate travel. 🚗



photo by Mike Stout, D-6



photo by Nancy Wood, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet



photo by Jill Lamson, D-4



photo by Becky McCarty, D-17



Hilltop Educare Centre

Extends Childcare

A BABY SLEEPS while a toddler learns his ABCs. During lunchtime, parents arrive to eat with their children. This is all possible because of the Hilltop Educare Centre, located near ODOT's Central Office.

The Educare Centre, which opened in December 1998, recently renewed its agreement with the departments of Transportation and Public Safety at the hilltop complex. The agreement extends the contract for five years.

"This agreement works perfectly for us as well as the hilltop employees," said Patty Ritchey, director of the Educare Centre. "This facility has adequate space for children to learn and play while allowing parents to check in on their children."

Besides classroom instruction, children also have time to play outside, if weather permits. Additionally, they have use of the facility's gym at various times during the day. The gym is available to ODOT and Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) employees at all other times. The Centre also features a room full of toys to spark a child's imagination.

In addition to ODOT and the ODPS, other state agency employees can enroll their children at the Centre. Members of Columbus' Hilltop community who qualify for the Head Start Plus program can also register their children in the Centre. The Head Start Plus program, which will be renamed Early Learning

opened its doors to the Hilltop community. Currently, 60 percent of children enrolled are the sons and daughters of state employees.

Three holidays a year, pre-schoolers from the Centre visit the Central Office cafeteria.

Typically, these holidays are Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day and Halloween. After eating a special lunch made for them by the cafeteria, the children pass out cards, pictures and other holiday related items to employees in the cafeteria. On Halloween, the kids also dress up in their costumes and parade around the cafeteria. "The kids love coming to the cafeteria," said Ritchey. "It is something different and they are able to show off their beautiful artwork."



Jennifer Sradeja
Central Office

Agreement

Initiative in July 2005, provides full-day childcare services to employed parents who meet the income stipulations.

The program is designed to allow children of lower income status the same educational and social opportunities provided to other children. At the Hilltop Educare Centre, children of state employees are accepted before Head Start children when spaces are limited.

When the Centre first opened, only seven children from ODOT and

ODPS were enrolled in the childcare program. After four months in operation, there were still not enough children for the Centre to remain financially intact. It then



Currently, there are 82 children and 26 employees in the Centre's seven classrooms. There are currently openings in classrooms for four and five-year-olds. Although all doors are locked from the outside for safety purposes, parents are allowed to visit their children at all times.

The Centre provides childcare for infants up to pre-Kindergarten children. It features a specially designated potty-training room with several kid-sized toilets. Each room has a daily and monthly schedule in addition to a posted lesson plan. Centre employees are currently working to develop programs that will



photos courtesy of the Hilltop Educare Centre



satisfy the newly established pre-school content standards. "We want learning to be fun and exciting for the children, while at the same time structured," said Ritchey.

The current 2005 tuition rates range from \$179 per week for an infant (six weeks to 18 months) to \$148 per week or a four or five-year-old preschooler. A sibling discount of 10 percent off the oldest child's tuition is offered. Each child receives one hot meal and two snacks per day. The Centre is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday with the exception of state holidays.

All employees at the Educare Centre are employed by the YMCA. Since 1998, the state has contracted the YMCA to provide its childcare services. ➤



Highway Tech/Crimefighter?



Battling record-setting snow fall along Cleveland's lakefront and tackling hit-and-run drivers was all in a single day's work for Highway Technician Willie Oates.

Rick Green, District 12

DISTRICT 12 EMPLOYEE WILLIE OATES may not swing from a web like Spiderman. He may not wear a cape or an "S" on his chest like Superman, but Oates, was as much a crime fighter as either superhero – at least for one day.

In mid-February, a woman was changing her tire on Interstate 90, just east of downtown Cleveland, when her car was struck by another car. The incident was witnessed by two motorists following the suspect, and they gave chase when the hit and run driver did not stop.

The driver, aware he was being followed, exited I-90 at E. 55th Street, in an effort to lose the tail. Not being familiar with the area, the suspect turned onto Lake Court, a street that dead-ends into ODOT's Cleveland facility. The hit and run driver, realizing his mistake, tried to back up, but the pursuing motorists blocked his exit with their vehicles.

Oates, a highway technician in the Cleveland Garage, was preparing his truck for snow and ice duties. He heard the commotion, looked up and saw the suspect getting out of his car in an attempt to escape on foot.

"Instinct took over," said Oates. "I never considered my safety at the time, I just thought about catching him!" Oates

ran after the suspect, quickly closing the gap, and stopping the would-be fugitive in his tracks. With the assistance of one of the pursuing motorists, Oates held the suspect until the Cleveland Police arrived.

"He struggled some at first, but when he saw he couldn't get away, he stopped," Oates said. Once the suspect was in custody, Oates returned to prepping his truck. "It wasn't a big deal. I was just glad to help."

Frank Hinkle, transportation manager in the Cleveland facility, described Oates' actions as "Extraordinary! That was very brave of him to do that, because he didn't know what that guy could've been carrying."

The police advise citizens never to attempt to apprehend a criminal suspect on their own; to always contact the local law enforcement authorities. However, because of the heroic efforts of Oates, a hit and run victim will get the justice she could have potentially been denied had the suspect escaped.

Spiderman and Superman are, of course, fictional characters, created for entertainment purposes. However, as the men and women of ODOT's Cleveland Garage can attest, there's a real-life "crime fighter" in their midst, and he goes by the name of Willie Oates. ➤

feature photo



photo courtesy of Aerial Engineering

Aerial view of the new Carr Road and U.S. Route 30 interchange, east of the City of Wooster – part of the U.S. 30 widening and relocation project in Wayne County, scheduled for completion in the Fall of 2006.

EYI

Team Up ODOT Registration

Team Up ODOT 2005 will be held on May 11, 2005 in the Rhodes Building at the Ohio Expositions Center from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.

This year's theme is "Measuring for Excellence," and as always, it is an outstanding opportunity for ODOT improvement teams to exhibit accomplishments that support the department's mission, values and goals.

Registration is open to all process improvement teams. Other groups who wish to provide information relevant to ODOT may also register. Teams do

not have to be completely formed, but should be far enough along to demonstrate some results.



To register please visit the ODOT Intranet. Teams are welcome to register online or they

can send completed registration forms to:
Carol Schubert or Willa O'Neill,
ODOT Office of Quality & Organizational Development
1980 West Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43223
Fax: 614-752-8403

The deadline for registration is April 15, 2005.

Transcript

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

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



Bob Taft,
Governor

Gordon Proctor,
ODOT Director

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
J. Brian Cunningham, Editor
Andy Eline, Layout/Design Editor

PRINTED BY THE ODOT PRINT SHOP
ODOT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER