

OHIO'S TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES THROUGH 2015

Ohio is blessed with one of the world's largest transportation systems which creates opportunities for the state but also creates significant demands upon it. As the Ohio Department of Transportation updates its strategic plans, its efforts are focused on addressing the most significant safety, economic development and mobility needs of Ohio's vast system.

As often noted, ODOT is responsible for the nation's:

- 10th largest highway system;
- 5th greatest volume of traffic;
- 4th largest interstate system;
- 3rd greatest value of truck freight; and
- 2nd largest inventory of bridges.

This large system reflects Ohio's key strategic location in the Midwest, midway between the East Coast and Chicago. Ohio is a crossroads for manufacturing shipments, automotive production, agricultural commodities and international trade. In its own right, Ohio is the world's 20th largest economy and the eighth greatest producer of exports. Ohio is a key logistical center and central crossroads of trade. International trade and Just-in-Time logistics will continually grow in importance, which will further stress Ohio's transportation network.

CONGESTION, CAPACITY AND SAFETY

Dealing with congestion and freight growth will remain a key issue for ODOT through 2015. Truck volumes have grown 90 percent in the past 25 years are expected to rise another 60 percent in the next 20 years. The highway system has expanded by less than a tenth of a percent annually in the past 25 years, creating serious congestion and truck capacity issues across Ohio.

Ohio's need to deal with congestion, freight and safety underlie Gov. Taft's Jobs and Progress Plan. That plan calls for a \$5.6 billion, 10-year new capacity and safety program for ODOT. The program will be focused on rebuilding Ohio's congested urban interstates, completing rural corridors, and addressing highway safety. The plan doubles Ohio's annual spending on high-accident, spot-safety locations from \$30 million to \$60 million. For 10 years, ODOT

will commit \$500 million annually to new capacity and \$60 million annually for safety to address the worst congestion and crash locations in Ohio.

Growing congestion and traffic contributes to fatalities and overall crashes which remain unacceptably high in Ohio. The overall crash rate and the number of injury accidents has improved consistently in Ohio over the past 10 years. However, the total number of crashes has remained at about 380,000 crashes annually and 1,300 fatalities a year for the past decade. This plateau of crashes and fatalities since 1990 contrasts with a steady reduction in crashes and fatalities in preceding decades. The effort to regain the momentum on reducing crashes and fatalities stands out as a top transportation priority for Ohio.

ACHIEVING THE STEADY STATE

Any transportation department's first priority is routine maintenance. Without meeting basic maintenance needs, pavements, bridges, signs, guardrail, pavement markings and other roadway features would degrade to the point of being hazardous. Before Ohio can embark on system improvement plans, it needs to ensure basic roadway needs will be met through the forecast period. ODOT has been fortunate in recent years to have the resources to reduce system deficiencies significantly, to low and acceptable levels. Ohio's priority system pavements are 97 percent acceptable. The department's bridge inventory is sound. Ohio's basic roadway deficiencies in such items as signage, pavement markings and guardrail have been cut by half.

The major maintenance challenge now facing ODOT is to sustain these conditions indefinitely for a predictable amount of money and labor. Achieving this steady state of low and acceptable system conditions gives Ohio unprec-



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edented ability to accurately plan for future responsibilities. Revenue needs for personnel, equipment and basic roadway maintenance, and improvement contracts become predictable. The ability to accurately predict system condition and expenditure levels allows Gov. Taft's Jobs and Progress Plan to have such a long horizon. ODOT can for the first time provide a 10-year planning horizon for new construction because it has a high degree of assurance revenue will exceed maintenance needs over the time period.

Sustaining momentum is easier than creating momentum. It is harder to get a bicycle moving than it is to keep it moving. Now that ODOT has achieved good condition levels, the task will be to sustain the effort necessary to keep those good conditions steady. ODOT's way of ensuring annual levels of effort are sufficient to sustain future acceptable conditions is the Organizational Performance Index (OPI). The OPI consists of 65 major performance indicators. Each OPI measure has an acceptable level, each has a quarterly reporting process and each has broad institutional recognition. By meeting these OPI levels each quarter, all aspects of ODOT's operation will be performing acceptably. These measures apply to items such as bridge and pavement conditions, operating costs, basic roadway appurtenances, personnel levels and so on. An overriding operational goal of ODOT through 2015 will be to sustain a high level of OPI achievement. This ensures system and operating goals are met within the prescribed budget constraints.

REBUILDING OHIO'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM

An important component of sustaining the steady state is the need to rebuild Ohio's interstate highway system, especially the pavements. This system largely was constructed between 1956 and 1975. By 2006, the interstate system will be commemorating its 50th year, having been created by President Eisenhower in 1956. ODOT had been experiencing in the 1990s accelerated rates of decline on interstate highway pavement conditions because of the system's age and high truck volumes. By 2003, the department had replaced only 32 percent of Ohio's original interstate pavements. ODOT spends approximately \$150 million annually on specific projects to rehabilitate the interstate system in a systematic and predictable way. The department is on track to replace 50 percent of the interstate pavements by 2008 and 60 percent by 2015. This effort represents the

largest of all categories of system maintenance within ODOT's system preservation categories.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The trends highlighted here create the greatest challenges for ODOT and serve to focus the department's strategic direction. ODOT is adjusting its strategic direction to address these challenges. The department's efforts are included in three strategic documents. First, these goals are key components of the short-term, two-year Business Plan required for ODOT's Career Professional Service for years' 2004-2005. Second, they are inherent within and integral to Gov. Taft's 10-year Jobs and Progress Plan which has a horizon of 2006 through 2015. Finally, they will be included in ACCESS Ohio, Ohio's federally required 30-year long-range transportation plan. The Business Plan comprises the detailed first two years of the Jobs and Progress Plan and the Jobs and Progress Plan represents the first 10 years of the ACCESS Ohio Plan.

With the Business Plan, the 2004-2005 Strategic Initiatives will be:

- **Deliver Gov. Taft's Jobs and Progress Plan.**
ODOT will enhance its project-management and review processes to expedite delivery of the Jobs and Progress Plan projects. Project teams, expedited review processes and improved tracking systems will be used to keep the Jobs and Progress projects on schedule and on budget.
- **Complete ODOT's Safety and Congestion Program.**
ODOT identified a distinct program of projects and maintenance activities to improve Ohio's top crash locations. Delivering the Safety and Congestion Program remains a strategic initiative for 2004-2005 and enacts the first component of the governor's safety effort.
- **Achieve and Sustain the Steady State.**
This initiative seeks to sustain through the biennium the continued achievement of ODOT's Organizational Performance Index goals. These performance measures address all major areas of the department's operations. Adherence to the OPI goals ensures ODOT operates within its long-range budget constraints, that it achieves its basic system conditions and that it meets its operational objectives. Sustained achievement of the OPI measures will keep ODOT on track to maintain its steady state of high system conditions and operational efficiency.



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- **Adopt a Refined Pavement Management Process.**

An important component of sustaining the steady state is maintaining pavement conditions at the highest level for the lowest possible cost. ODOT will improve its pavement management practices with cradle-to-grave business processes to build and maintain pavements with greater sophistication than in the past.

- **Implement ODOT's Highway Technician Series Training.**

A key element of sustaining the steady state is to have a flexible, well-trained year-round work force. The Highway Technician Series and its training will provide a work force skilled in maintenance techniques, construction inspection knowledge and snow and ice expertise.

