

# Building Bridges



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*"Roundabouts are becoming more prevalent throughout Central Ohio...due to their outstanding record of safety, efficiency and lower environmental impacts."*

I think most of us would agree that the past year has been a difficult and challenging one. The recession and rising unemployment have impacted virtually every individual, every family and every business on some level. Government agencies are not immune from these impacts either. Like many other public and private organizations, our office is experiencing decreases in revenue in the midst of significant increases in cost. The county road system is funded primarily from a share of the State of Ohio gas tax, motor vehicle registration fees and a portion of the county sales tax. These tax revenues have stagnated, decreased or grown at a lower than expected rate over the first 8 months of 2009. At the same time, construction material prices have continued to increase steadily. The Ohio Department of Transportation is projecting that construction costs will increase by about 22% between 2010 and 2014. And not surprisingly, state and federal agencies that administer grant programs are feeling the same economic pressure, making grants for local governments more competitive and more difficult to obtain.

In response to these circumstances, we have done what many businesses have done and what many of you have done personally. We have targeted and redirected our resources to the most important areas and we have reduced the size of our staff. We are determined that this reduction in resources will not translate to a reduction in the safety of our

county highway system. And we are resolved that the difficulties of these times will not limit our vision for the future.

There are a number of financial analysts and economists with varying opinions on the prospects for and timing of our economic recovery. I'm not sure whose crystal ball is right, but I am convinced of the importance of planning now and positioning ourselves to make the most of this recovery whenever and however it occurs. One thing is certain: a strong and viable infrastructure system is vitally important to our economic recovery. Investment in our Federal, State and Local highway systems has helped generate wealth in our country through the transportation of important commodities, goods and services. We strongly believe that now is not the time to divert our resources away from investments that are so integrally connected to our economic recovery.

This edition of *Building Bridges* highlights some of the current projects we are working on and some important projects that have just been completed. More detailed information on our projects can be found at our website: [delawarecountyengineer.org](http://delawarecountyengineer.org). Thank you for taking the time to read this edition of our newsletter and we look forward to any questions or feedback that you may have.

## ROUNDABOUTS: KEEP IN THE LOOP



The Delaware County Engineer's Office recently partnered with the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission, the Franklin County Engineer and cities of Dublin, Hilliard, and Gahanna to produce a short educational video called *Roundabouts: Keep in the Loop*. The video provides instruction on how to drive through modern roundabouts and discusses the many benefits of roundabouts over traditional intersections. As we discussed in our Spring 2007 newsletter, roundabouts are becoming more prevalent throughout central Ohio and other regions due to their outstanding record of safety, efficiency and lower environmental impacts.

The County's first roundabout at the intersection of Sawmill Parkway and Hyatts Road recently opened to traffic. The City of Delaware currently has three roundabouts on Glenn Parkway and one on Mill Run Crossing. Dublin maintains several roundabouts including one at

Glick Road and Jerome-Manley Road.

Planned roundabouts in the county include another in the City of Delaware on Glenn Parkway, three on E. Orange Road by Orange Township, five on the Sawmill Parkway extension to US 42, one on W. Orange Road at SR 315, and two on Home Road at Section Line and at SR 257.

The video reviews the "Rules of the Road" as they pertain to driving roundabouts. There are a few principles that everyone should remember when driving any modern roundabout:

1. Slow down when approaching roundabouts
2. Choose your lane before reaching the roundabout, just like you would at a traffic signal
3. Yield to pedestrians and bicyclists
4. Yield to vehicles already in the circle
5. Give trucks space and do not pass them
6. Clear the roundabout then pull over for emergency vehicles to pass

We encourage you to take a look at the video by visiting the link on our webpage at [www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org](http://www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org).

## SPEED LIMITS EXPLAINED



Speed limits are possibly the most misunderstood traffic control concept on the road today. While speed limits serve an important role in maintaining safe roads, there are a host of misconceptions that make speed limits one of the most contentious issues between public agencies, law enforcement and the public.

First, it is important to understand where the concept of speed limits came from. Most of our laws, including traffic regulations, are based on observations of the way reasonable people behave under most circumstances. Few would argue that the normally careful and competent actions of *reasonable* persons should be considered legal; therefore, laws are created to regulate the *unreasonable* behavior of a few individuals. Driving is an extension of social attitude and the majority of drivers behave in a safe manner as demonstrated by their favorable driving records. In the case of speed limits, the safe speed on a roadway should be able to be determined, in large part, by observing how the majority of safe, prudent drivers are currently driving. Public acceptance of this concept is normally instinctive, but in some cases emotion can cause individuals to reject this principal and rely, instead, on more comfortable and widely held *misconceptions* such as:

1. Reducing the speed limit will slow down traffic and increase safety.
2. Raising a posted speed limit will always cause an increase in the speed of traffic.
3. Any posted speed limit has to be safer than an unposted limit, regardless of traffic and prevailing roadway conditions.
4. Drivers will always go 5 mph higher than the posted speed limit.

"Before and after" studies consistently demonstrate that there are no significant changes in traffic speeds or accident rates following the posting of new or revised speed limits, though saturation enforcement efforts by police can cause short term reductions.

*Realistic speed limits* serve as a clear reminder of reasonable speeds for nonconforming violators or drivers unfamiliar with the area and help inject logic into an otherwise arbitrary and often emotional issue.

This article is based on the publication: Establishing Speed Limits - A Case of "Majority Rule", published by the Arizona Department of Transportation

Conversely, *unrealistic speed limits* work against the welfare of the public because:

1. They do not invite compliance because they do not reflect the reasonable behavior of the majority of prudent drivers.
2. They make the behavior of the majority of ordinary, good drivers unlawful.
3. They maximize public antagonism toward police, since they are enforcing a "speed trap."
4. They create a bad image of the community in the eyes of the traveling public.

In your own neighborhood, you want other drivers to travel slowly. But when you're driving through someone else's neighborhood, you want to be able to travel quickly and efficiently, and so naturally there is a balance that must be achieved.

Speed limits are a 24 hour, 7 day a week condition and can only be enforced if the majority of drivers voluntarily comply, for the sake of their own safety and that of other motorists. Police agencies rely on reasonable speed limit laws to control the unreasonable violator whose behavior is clearly out of line with the normal flow of traffic. They do not have the resources to patrol every road at every hour and give citations to every normally careful, competent driver who violates an unreasonable speed limit, either knowingly or unknowingly.

So who sets speed limits and how is it done? In Ohio, the process for changing the speed limit is set forth in the Ohio Revised Code. In most situations the authority to establish speed limits lies with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), though the County may request ODOT to change a speed limit on a county or township road. Before making a request for a speed limit change, the County Engineer must conduct an engineering and traffic study for the road in question. The study includes objective factors such as highway features, 85th percentile speed, accident history and highway development or number of access points. Once that study is complete, and if the study shows that the speed limit may be considered for changing, it is sent to the Department of Transportation for review and approval. In the end, ODOT must ensure that a speed limit means the same thing in Delaware as it does in Columbus, Cleveland or any other city, and a normally careful and prudent driver should not be considered a law breaker for violating an unreasonable speed limit. Read more about speed limits on our web page at [www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org](http://www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org).

## PROJECT UPDATES

### Sawmill Parkway Now Open to Hyatts Road

The Delaware County Engineer's Office completed construction of the 1/2 mile extension of Sawmill Parkway to Hyatts Road on August 25. This \$2.9 million phase of the parkway extension provides another link and improves mobility in this area. The roundabout is the first built by the County Engineer's Office and is one of at least 10 roundabouts planned for the next several years.



### Orange Road Bridge Over the Olentangy River Now Open

The Orange Road bridge over the Olentangy River opened on August 19, completing Phase 1 of this project. The \$2.7 million construction project restores this important connection between State Route 315 and U.S. 23 in Liberty and Orange Townships. A planned roundabout at the intersection of State Route 315 is scheduled for construction beginning in spring/summer 2010.



## DELAWARE COUNTY STORM WATER PIPE PROGRAM



The goal of the Delaware County Storm Water Public Involvement Public Education (PIPE) Program is to serve as an educational and involvement tool to improve storm water quality within Delaware County. This program is one of six Storm Water Management Plan compliance measures identified

within the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Storm Water Regulations, a Federal regulation aimed at improving storm water quality.

The PIPE Program is administered by the Delaware County Engineer's Office with assistance from the Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District. A few of the outreach elements of the PIPE Program are presentations, education materials and workshop

opportunities. The other half of the PIPE Program is a public involvement component. The intent of the public involvement component is to allow for public input to the storm water program. Residents of Delaware County are encouraged to submit complaints, inquiries, and historical background relating to known sources of storm water pollution and flooding. This information is utilized in the planning and implementation of drainage and water quality projects.

Other public involvement opportunities of the PIPE Program are provided in the form of public notices and the dissemination of information that could potentially improve storm water quality throughout Delaware County. Much of this educational and public involvement information can be found at our website ([www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org](http://www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org)) or at the Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District's website ([DelawareSWCD.org](http://DelawareSWCD.org)). Please contact Brett Bergefurd for further information relating to the Delaware County PIPE program or other storm water quality topics at 740-833-2400.

## RAIL SAFETY TASK FORCE URGES DRIVERS TO 'LOOK, LISTEN AND LIVE!'

When a group of regular visitors gets together in a meeting room at the County Engineer's Complex on the third Wednesday afternoon of each month, the jokes are usually bad, and the homemade cookies are usually good.

But the jokes stop when the *Delaware County Railroad Safety Task Force* starts its monthly meeting. This group of mostly retired Delaware County residents is deadly serious about preventing tragedies at railroad tracks.

Since it was formed in the 1990s, the Task Force has worked to improve safety at rail grade crossings throughout Delaware County. Task Force members, volunteering under the auspices of the County Engineer, also have worked to educate residents on how they can avoid becoming railroad accident statistics.

Hundreds of residents, from preschoolers to senior citizens, have heard Task Force members implore them to always "Look, listen, and live!" before crossing railroad tracks. Why always? Because, as any Task Force member will tell you, "Any time is train time!"

Those slogans come from the nationwide Operation Lifesaver rail safety education program administered locally by the Task Force. They take the Operation Lifesaver messages to community groups large and small, school classrooms, and public events such as fire department open houses and the Delaware County Fair.

The Task Force also has had a big hand in physical improvements to local grade crossings. It oversaw more than \$2 million in improvements along the CSX railroad corridor across west-central Delaware County, including the installation of gates and lights at all of the public crossings previously lacking them.

While delighted with the new gates, Task Force members will be quick to tell you that drivers, not gates, are the key to preventing car-train crashes. Far too many crashes at crossings occur be-

cause drivers go around gates or otherwise ignore warnings of oncoming trains. Trains usually cannot stop in time to avoid a collision with a vehicle on the tracks.

Task Force members share lots of other safety advice at their Operation Lifesaver talks. Never

walk on railroad tracks or railroad property, they say - it's dangerous and it's trespassing, a ticket-able offense. Never try to beat a train across a crossing, they say - you really can't tell how fast it is approaching. If your car gets stuck on a crossing, get out and run toward the train, they say - so you won't get "collected" by your vehicle when the train hits it.

The task force's members include Tom Fathbruckner, an active railroad engineer who has experienced the helpless reality of being unable to stop a train to avoid crashing into a vehicle on a crossing. Train accidents have occurred near land farmed by Steve Thomas of Radnor, the Task Force's co-chairman. Stan Haas, the other co-chair, is a retired railroad employee. Township trustees, safety and law enforcement specialists, and retired ODOT and emergency personnel also serve on the Task Force.

The Task Force is interested in recruiting new members. Anyone interested is invited to contact Steve Thomas at 740-595-3380, Stan Haas at 740-363-9105, or the Engineer's Office at 740-833-2400.





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**We're on the Web!**

[www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org](http://www.DelawareCountyEngineer.org)

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## PROJECT TIMELINE

Listed below is the current schedule for county road construction projects through the rest of 2009 and 2010. Visit our website at [www.co.delaware.oh.us/engineer/design/currentprojects.htm](http://www.co.delaware.oh.us/engineer/design/currentprojects.htm) for more information and updates.

- ◆ South Old State and Lewis Center Road Intersection – *May to December 2009*
- ◆ Red Bank Road Bridge over Hoover Reservoir (north of Smothers) – *July to November 2009*
- ◆ Carter's Corner Road Bridge over Little Walnut Creek (south of Twigg Hupp) – *August to Nov. 2009*
- ◆ Giehl Road Bridge over Leatherwood Run – *October to December 2009*
- ◆ Home Road Grade Separation at CSX Railroad – *April 2010 to November 2011*
- ◆ Liberty and Home Road Realignment – *April 2010 to November 2011*
- ◆ Centerburg and Porter Central Road Intersection and Bridge Improvements – *April to August 2010*
- ◆ South Old 3-C Hwy. Bridge over Hoover Reservoir (Galena) – *May to August 2010*
- ◆ Green Cook Road Bridge (north of Center Village Road) – *November to December 2009*
- ◆ Green Cook Road Bridge over Duncan Run (south of Center Village Road) – *April to July 2010*
- ◆ Radnor Road Bridge over Scioto River – *July to November 2010*
- ◆ Horseshoe Road Bridge over Indian Run (at Bishop Road) – *Summer/Fall 2010*
- ◆ Warrensburg Road Bridge over Delaware Run (just west of SR 37) – *Summer/Fall 2010*
- ◆ Panhandle Road Bridge over Horseshoe Run (north of Case Road) – *Summer/Fall 2010*

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## ASCE INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARD

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) *2009 Report Card for America's Infrastructure* gave the nation's roads and bridges a score of **D-**. The report estimates that Americans spend 4.2 billion hours stuck in traffic each year at a cost of \$78.2 billion in wasted fuel and time. Motor vehicle crashes cost U.S. motorists an additional \$230 billion each year in medical costs, lost productivity, travel delays, workplace costs, insur-

ance costs and legal costs. This underscores the need for changes in how we think about transportation and how we prioritize funding for infrastructure maintenance and improvements. ASCE estimates that \$930 billion in capital investment will be needed over the next 5 years to restore the nation's highways to acceptable levels. Read more about this at [www.infrastructurereportcard.org](http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org).