

**Retaining walls:
discovering what we have**

ODOT's GeoEnvironmental and Engineering and Asset Management units have begun a multiyear effort to inventory retaining walls. It's another step in the department's growing and increasingly valuable asset management program. This particular effort involves collecting existing design file information and field data, organizing it into a database structure, and using the information to scope the project and develop policy for short and long term planning.

Counting walls the old way

ODOT inventoried walls whenever required by the federal National Bridge Inventory (NBI) system. Some walls have individual structure numbers; others have the same number as a bridge. Walls were also inspected as a part of the NBI program, and Regions or District Maintenance crews performed any needed repairs. The cost of wall materials such as concrete, steel, and backfill were tracked, and some proprietary wall systems were monitored for cost.

Re-inventing wall inventory

The ODOT Engineering and Asset Management Unit is now responsible for wall design standards, proprietary wall approvals, and wall asset management. A new database categorizes walls into elements and components. The condition assessment of walls is designed similar to the NBI system for bridges, in which a condition rating and rating description are entered into the database during the field location of each wall. Further development of wall life-cycle costs and wall maintenance activities are planned for the future as resources become available.

Moving forward in the initial phase

The initial phase of work for retaining wall asset management includes:

- development of a Retaining Wall Management System (RWMS) database;
- researching bridge and roadway project files;
- acquiring field data collection equipment (laptop and GPS);
- verifying in the field walls that documented in the files and identifying walls not in the files; and
- completing a First Level Condition (FLC) assessment of walls.

Crews are already using the new RWMS database. A system for wall definitions has been completed, in cooperation with the Bridge Section. Field data collection is being performed using a rugged laptop with Bluetooth technology and resource-grade GPS, and crews have received training in condition assessment of walls. The two major interstates in Oregon, I-5 and I-84, are the first priority for inventory data collection. Approximately 600 miles of interstate freeway has been covered, and more than 110 walls have been inventoried. The highest density of walls is in the Portland metro area, and the inventory in that area is estimated to take up to six months to complete. Watch *Inside ODOT* for continued coverage of asset management progress.

Region 2 project improves safety for community

Community leaders and ODOT staff gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the completion of the Oregon 219 Springbrook-Wynooski Safety Project in Newberg in Region 2.

Master of Ceremonies, Newberg Mayor Bob Andrews, introduced Yamhill County Commissioner Leslie Lewis, who discussed the importance of the project in reducing the serious crashes that had occurred nearby. Emergency services personnel looked on as Lewis introduced Jane Lee, Region 2 Manager.

Lee thanked the ODOT staff responsible for the project.

"I would like to thank Project Leader Alan Fox, Roadway Designer Ed Cantrell, Project Manager Shane Otteson and Project Inspector Krag Kanoff," Lee said. "Safety is ODOT's top priority, and now the drivers and passengers in more than 7,000 cars that pass by each day are safer because of everyone's hard work."

"Local roads crossed the highway at various angles making it more difficult for drivers to safely get on and off Highway 219," said Fox. "By creating a square, signalized intersection and rerouting some smaller roads through the new intersection, drivers can more safely cross or access the highway."

Congressman David Wu was recognized "for his tireless advocacy in Washington." Wu thanked local officials and ODOT for constructing the project "at such a low cost," and the group then gathered for the ribbon-cutting celebration.



U.S. Representative David Wu holds up ODOT's ceremonial scissors while Yamhill County Commissioner Leslie Lewis looks on. The project on Oregon 219 will improve safety.

ODOT steps up efforts to include small businesses in state contracting

Mike Long, a veteran in successful project delivery at ODOT, and the newly formed "Workforce and Small Business Leadership Team" aren't wasting any time moving forward with their charge. The team is focused on integrating ODOT's many long-term, successful Civil Rights programs, such as Emerging Small Business (which experienced its best year ever in 2007), across all divisions of the agency.

Still, they've got their work cut out for them – not the least of which is direction from both Director Garrett (see this month's Directors Column) and Governor Kulongoski. The Governor issued an Executive Order in August formalizing his support for state agencies in contracting with minority- and women-owned businesses, as well as businesses certified as "disadvantaged." The Executive Order directs state agencies to include aspirational targets in all contracts under \$150,000 to ensure small businesses have an opportunity to compete for state business.

Putting businesses to work

And ODOT has a leg up – if not a whole body up – on most other agencies. Our units have been putting small businesses to work for years. Unfortunately, it hasn't always been tracked, and that's part of the challenge Long and his team are facing.

Long's WSBLT team is also charged with bringing all parts of the department together to iron out organizational or policy barriers and make it easier to show what we're accomplishing. Director Garrett said he wants "a reporting system that clearly demonstrates ODOT's commitment

and successes in promoting a diverse workforce."

Four programs to help

ODOT has long recognized the value of employing small businesses – which are a huge part of the state's economy. We have four programs in place that will help keep us moving forward:

- The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program
- The Small Contracting Program
- The Workforce Development and Apprentice Program
- The Emerging Small Business Program

In the recent past, ODOT has convened several groups made up of small business owners, minorities and women to provide input on barriers to working with ODOT and the state. The Small Contracting Program – one for professional services and one for construction – are two results from these efforts. Both programs are up and running – and experiencing success.

Work with Civil Rights

Long and the WSBLT will work with Office of Civil Rights staff to establish documented practices, procedures and accountability reports that will continue as part of our operating structure. The team is also working with Central Services staff, Highway staff and other divisions to implement our small business involvement programs across the agency and across the state. Backed by Gov. Kulongoski and Director Garrett, there's no doubt this group of enthusiastic, dedicated employees, along with critical agency-wide support, can show Oregon small business owners ODOT means business!