



By Paul Pegher
Contributing Author

Partnering up

Ohio elevates its game to revive bridge network

For having the second-most number of bridges in the nation, Ohio is in a relatively strong position as its more than 44,000 structures score better than the national average in most reports. However, many county and city bridges require costly repairs that local authorities are challenged to fund.

In October 2013, Ohio Gov. John Kasich and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) announced a first-of-its-kind response to the issue: the Ohio Bridge Partnership Program. Through it, \$120 million will be made available to fully fund the rehabilitation or reconstruction of about 200 county and 20 city bridges in the state. These bridges are not on ODOT's interstate or state highway system, but they are still part of Ohio's transportation system and therefore are priorities for the state's economic development, according to Kasich.

"When we took office, Ohio faced a \$1.6 billion shortfall in our highway budget," said Kasich in his announcement of the program. "ODOT tightened its own belt, freed up more than \$600 million, and then



In November, Ohio opened Phase 1 of the George V. Voinovich Bridge, which carries I-90 through Cleveland. Photo courtesy of HNTB.

30 county and municipal bridges to be repaired or replaced beginning as early as spring 2014. ODOT will work with local officials to determine which bridges will be repaired or replaced in the following two years.

Morrow County Engineer Randy Bush is among the many who are thankful for the Bridge Partnership. "Morrow will receive funding for more than 20 bridge replacements," he said. "If we didn't get this money, the bridges would have probably eventually closed." Bush added that the money freed up from the program will be used for paving, and it will put Morrow County in a better place.

The Bridge Partnership is being conducted in addition to several large interstate bridge projects in Ohio. These include the \$566 million construction of the George V. Voinovich Bridge on I-90 in downtown Cleveland, which replaces the 1959 Innerbelt Bridge; the \$88.1 million replacement of Ohio's tallest bridge, the Jeremiah Morrow on I-71; and the developing plans to partner with Kentucky on the renovation and expansion of the Brent Spence Bridge, which carries I-71 and I-75 traffic across the Ohio River. **R&B**

For more information about this topic, check out the Bridges Channel at www.roadbridget.com.

Ohio Bridges

Total number: 27,045

Structurally deficient: 2,462

Functionally obsolete: 4,311

Source: FHWA

we leveraged the turnpike to generate an additional \$1.5 billion, which grows to \$3 billion when paired with federal and local funds. That innovative thinking and that careful management of our resources is why we can deliver the Bridge Partnership Program. In the past ODOT hasn't really helped counties or cities address these kinds of needs, but fortunately we're in a strong enough position now that we can and we will."

Kasich directed ODOT to collaborate with the Ohio County Engineers Association on a three-year plan to conduct the program. The partnership has identified



Pegher is a project manager, Division of Communications, with the Ohio DOT.