

County Update

Volume XXVI, Issue 10
October 25, 2016

Fred's Desk



THIRD DECADE - 1996-2005

During this 10 year period, we had many floods, roadway slips and snowfalls. We also saw the construction of many county buildings.

1996 began with over a foot of snow on the ground. This was followed by a winter thaw, and then another 13" of snow. On Jan. 19th, there was a major flooding of the Ohio River, cresting at 10' over flood stage. This closed many of our local and state highways.

During the spring and summer, construction continued on the new county garage located on Roscoe Road, west of Airport Road. The county also built a new jail, new 911 Operations center and a new animal shelter. Several bridges were replaced and about 15 miles of county highways were resurfaced.

In December, I was elected and installed as the president of the County Engineer's Association of Ohio (CEAO).

During my term as CEAO's president in 1997, I made many trips to Columbus and other locations attending meetings and working with the state legislature on issues which concerned county engineers. It was quite an honor to be chosen by the other 87 county engineers in Ohio as their president.

Also during 1997, the price for a ton of blacktop picked up at the plant was \$23-\$27 per ton. (today it's about \$65 per ton). We also had three bridges collapse that year by overweight equipment being moved by a coal company.

In June of 1998, heavy rain cause flash flooding in the county. This is the same storm that shut down portions of I-70 between Columbus and West Virginia, and portions of I-77 between Marietta and Cambridge. One fatality occurred on Barton-Colerain Road when a car was swept away by the raising waters.

During the first two weeks of 1999, we recorded more snow than all of the previous year. It was a very good year for construction where we bid 19 projects totaling \$1.8 million.

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Late in the year of 1999, the commissioners enacted an additional ½ cent sales tax with an additional \$250,000 when available, set aside for roads and bridges. During the summer, a national historic bridge conference was held in Wheeling which showcased not only the Wheeling Suspension Bridge (built in 1849), but also the 3 span stone arch bridge located in Blaine (built 1828). Both bridges were built as part of the National Road.

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During December, many people became concerned that all computers would crash when we entered the 21st century. Do you remember Y-2K?

As we entered the year 2000, computers did not crash, and life went on. In May, another bridge collapsed when a low-boy carrying a large track-hoe weighing 116 tons tried to cross a bridge posted at 18 tons. In December, a portion of Willow Grove Road was closed when a major landslide occurred caused by coal strip mining above the road. The coal company rebuilt the road, and it was opened to traffic the following summer.

During 2001, Belmont County celebrated its 200th birthday. The county was created in 1801, two years before Ohio became a state. That year, three new county garages were built, one at Lloydsville for the bridge crew and GIS office, one at Tacoma and one at Neffs, both for the road crews.

The winter of 2002 was very mild, with only about 10" of snow. In June, we did have flash flooding on Little McMahan Creek causing damage to some of our highway system. That year, the Ohio Legislature named the historic Blaine stone arch bridge as Ohio's Bi-Centennial Bridge.

2003 was Ohio's Bi-Centennial year. On February 17, 2003, over 24" of snow fell, making it the second largest snowfall on record for Belmont County. The record was set on Thanksgiving weekend in 1950 with over 36" recorded. This was declared a natural disaster by the president, and FEMA and OEMA provided assistance to local governments for snow removal. We also had a very snowy December in 2003.

New Year's Day of 2004 started with 4" of snow, followed by heavy rainfall. This caused a lot of damage to our roadways. A federal disaster was again declared, and FEMA and OEMA again provided assistance.

On Sept. 4, remnants of Hurricane Frances dropped over 6" of rainfall causing county wide flash flooding which caused a lot of damage to our roadways and bridges. This was followed on Sept. 17 by Hurricane Ivan which dropped another 9" of rainfall, causing more damage. Because of the widespread rainfall, the Ohio River flooded, cresting about 12 feet over flood stage. Again, another disaster was declared and FEMA, OEMA and the Federal Highway Administration, along with ODOT, provided assistance. Extensive damage occurred to many county highways and bridges. Many roads were closed for weeks before they were safe to open. There was one fatality caused by this flooding on Barton-Blaine Road,

2005 began just as it did in 2004, with heavy rainfall, which again created a lot of damage to our roads and bridges. Again FEMA was here to assess the damage which again was extensive. This was the third federally declared disaster in a 13 month period. There was over \$25 million in damage to our roads and bridges was caused by all three disasters.

During 2005, \$2,318,576 in contracts was let by the commissioners to begin repairs to the damaged roads and bridges. Also, another \$919,311 in other constructions projects not related to the floods was let, totaling \$3,227,877 for the year. It took another 3 years to complete all of the repairs. In May, work began on the rehabilitation of the covered bridge near Ohio Eastern University, and work was completed on the rehabilitation of the historic Blaine Bridge.

Next month I will update you on the events of 2006-2016.

Photographs 1996 Through 2005



Roscoe Garage 1996



Historic Blaine Bridge 1996



Downtown Bridgeport 1996 Flood



Klee Crossing 1996 Flood



Willow Grove Road Landslide 2000



Willow Grove Road Landslide 2000