

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

SUMMIT COUNTY
ENGINEER

ALAN BRUBAKER, P.E., P.S.

Winter 2010

2009 Year-in-Review

When I took office on January 5, 2009, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what to expect when I walked into the building. It turns out there were some pretty big surprises in store for 2009. It was a tough year to be new to an office, with the tax revenues down due the economy and economic stimulus applications due almost as soon as we took office. We also had to contend with Issue 4, which proposed eliminating the County Engineer, being placed on the November ballot. Overall, 2009 was filled with many challenges, successes, new policies and hard work. I wanted to compile a brief list to inform you of the changes the year has brought the Summit County Engineer's office and how that might affect you. Happy New Year!

ing culverts, driveway pipes, dredging retention or detention ponds, providing snow and ice control or providing pavement markings. The new name encompasses all that they do for Summit County.



Alan Brubaker, P.E., P.S., Summit County Engineer

- **Mission Statement:** When we first took office, we adopted a new Mission Statement to match our goals: *Our mission is to serve the Summit County Community by maintaining and improving our region's infrastructure, encouraging economic development, and ensuring a safe and efficient transportation system while protecting the environment.*

- **Staff Reorganization:** We worked hard to save money on personnel costs at the top of our organization. Some positions were eliminated, one was added and others were merged. As a result of changes made on the Senior Staff level, the Summit County Engineer's office saved \$100,000 in 2009 when compared to 2008. In addition, the Engineer's office eliminated 13 positions through attrition due primarily to retirements.

- **Department of Public Works:** We changed the name of the Maintenance Department to the Department of Public Services, a name that better defined the operations of that office. The men and women in the Public Services Department are most often the public face of this office. They do so much more than just maintain the roadway. They are often rebuild-

- **ARRA/Economic Stimulus:** In January requirements and application guidelines were put forth for eligibility to get economic stimulus funds from the Federal government for transportation projects. In total, we submitted 31 projects representing all of Summit County's townships. Unfortunately, we did not receive funding for as many projects as we wanted, but we did receive economic stimulus funds in the amount of \$660,000 for our Waterloo Road project, which will be complete in 2010.

- **Fiscal Year 2010 Appropriations Requests:** In February we submitted projects to all three of our Congressional representatives, including a replacement of the Akron Cleveland Road Trail Bridge and money to construct the Springfield Lake Trail. Because of the Economic Stimulus dollars, Congress has yet to pass the Appropriations Bill for 2010, wanting this funding to stretch out recovery dollars as long as possible. However, we are confident that our Representatives will champion our projects as they work their way through the Congress.

What's Inside:

2009 Year in Review
Continued

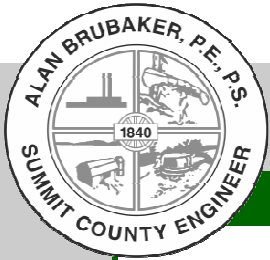
**Note the
changes!**

SCE has a brand new
website!

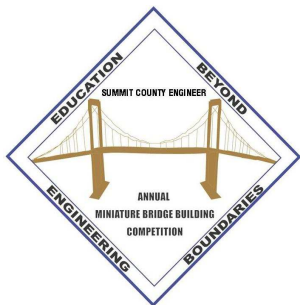
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2009 YEAR-IN-REVIEW CONTINUED



- **The Miniature Bridge Building Competition (MBBC):** MBBC continues! It was a great year for the contest; we had more students and schools involved than any other year. A snow storm postponed our scheduled competition in January, but, the students finally got the chance to show off their engineering skills in March. We look forward to the next MBBC on January 29, 2010.
- **Clearlane Deicer:** Our Public Services Department is making snow and ice control more “green”, figuratively and literally. Clearlane is a type of road salt that has a coating with a green tint. The coated salt sticks to the road surface better and scatters less, the snow plow drivers can see how evenly distributed the salt is on the road, it is less corrosive to our roads and bridges, and is safer for plant life. In addition, we should be able to save money because we will be using less salt.
- **Upgraded Security:** Our Department of Public Services and our IT specialist spent a considerable amount of time in 2009 making the employees, the materials, and the public safer at the Engineer’s office. Doors are now all equipped with locks that only open when an employee swipes their ID card. The gates around the office now close from 6pm-6am and the front gate is now motorized and can open automatically.
- **New Website:** Our office rolled out a new website in 2009. The website still includes all of the functions of the previous website with additional features that will increase both public and private industry efficiency when utilizing the records and forms available online. The new design makes the website more user friendly. Content was reorganized in a streamlined fashion so citizens will need to spend minimal time and effort finding the information they need. In addition, the website also offers news and traffic alerts that can be set up in a RSS feed, allowing the public to get real time updates about road closing and construction projects. The “projects” section now utilizes Google Maps in order to show the exact parameters of any construction project planned or in progress.

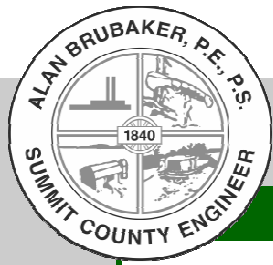


Engineer Brubaker gathered with colleagues to receive the Akron Area Engineer’s Week proclamation from the City of Akron.



The Summit County Engineer’s office hosted Cub Scout Pack # 3300 (Copley) on Wednesday, November 4, 2009.

- **Twitter:** The Summit County Engineer’s office became the first Engineer’s office to utilize “tweets” regarding traffic advisories, road closings, and construction updates in real time. We hope to continue using the latest technologies to communicate with the residents of Summit County.
- **New budgeting and fiscal policies:** Proper management of the Engineer’s office requires keeping the office in good fiscal order. The policies listed here provide the basis for making future financial decisions. They also assist the office in determining whether immediate spending reductions are needed as well as the issues that need to be resolved in future budget cycles.
- **Budget Formulation Policy:** In prior administrations, the practice was to budget only the net cost to the County. Revenue from other major funding sources was not tracked as part of the budget process. These sources include money that is regularly received from the state and federal government for highway funding that may be paid directly to contractors. As a result, prior budgets did not adequately represent the value and/or cost of the improvements administered by the Engineer. In the future we will account for all costs and funding sources to provide a complete picture of available financial resources and actual project costs to the County Council and the public.



2009 YEAR-IN-REVIEW CONTINUED

- **Minimum Fund Balance Policy:** The Motor Vehicle Gas Tax fund is managed by the County Engineer to assure that maintenance and road improvements are properly funded. The financial integrity of the fund is paramount to our continued ability to provide services. Maintaining a reasonable fund balance is required to ensure that we are not spending beyond our means, but we are also planning to fully utilize the tax dollars we collect on the improvements for which they are intended. Going forward, the Engineer will work to maintain an unencumbered fund balance of 10% to 15% of net fund expenditures with 12.5% being the target level.



South Main Street, Phase IV—Construction is now complete.

- **South Main Street, Phase IV:** Phase IV of our South Main Street reconstruction is complete. This leaves only one more phase to complete the “missing link” on South Main. This project required cooperation from many entities, the City of Akron, Coventry Township and the Ohio Department of Transportation. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved and hope we can do it again for the final leg of the project.

- **Complete Streets Committee:** ODOT has started a new “Complete Streets Committee”. I am honored to serve as a member of this committee as well as being tasked with providing the “Urban County Engineer” perspective. Complete Streets are streets that are designed with safety, comfort, and convenience in mind for all users – cyclists, pedestrians, motorists and public transit riders.

- **Issue 4:** Summit County’s Issue 4 called for the elimination of the County Engineer’s office. Issue 4 was a tough time for our office. I feel very deeply that an independent engineer is best for all citizens. Thankfully the voters agreed and turned down the proposal and we are extremely relieved and happy to continue to represent Summit County, protect its roads and bridges, and continue our emphasis on safety.

- **GPS units:** Our Public Services Department installed GPS units on snow plow trucks. This serves several purposes and has the potential to save this office money. We now can look at what routes are the most efficient, can tell the public when the last time their road was plowed or salted and when they can expect the plows to come through again. In the future with upgrades in the technology we will be able to tell when the plow blade is up or down and how much salt is being applied to the road, which could potentially cut back on salt usage.

- **New Phone System:** Our tech guys worked around the clock to find the best phone rates available. As a result, we have a newer, better, updated phone system that costs less and let’s us do more. We can even get our voicemail through our e-mail! It’s predicted that this phone system will pay for itself in eighteen months. Special thanks to Cory and Kevin for making it happen.

- **WRDA Funding:** Stormwater has been a hot topic in Summit County this year. As the stormwater engineer for the County, I have been working tirelessly to fund a stormwater study and to implement improvements. Just recently we applied for Federal funding through the Water Resources Development Act for \$3.5 million dollars to fund this study and get a program together that will prevent erosion and protect our environment and waterways. All three of our Congressional representatives have submitted the project for funding and we are very hopeful that we will secure some funding for this effort.

2009 YEAR-IN-REVIEW CONTINUED

- **Emphasis on Timetracking:** Our engineering staff and technology staff have been working to find a better, more efficient way to track the time spent on different projects. We are now working to modify our new system to fit with the existing technology of the office. Being diligent and consistent with tracking our time spent on projects will yield more money for the Engineer's office, most often in the form of reimbursements and invoicing to other municipalities or political authorities.
- **Dedicated Engineer for each Township:** We assigned members of our staff to work directly with each township. Our assigned engineers attend township meetings and are available to township trustees, staff, and residents for any questions they may have regarding transportation projects in their area. By assigning staff members to become experts in the needs and concerns of each township, we hope to improve cooperation and foster better working relationships with all of the townships we represent.
- **SR 91:** Early in my term, we met with Munroe Falls' officials to discuss resurfacing SR 91. Through cooperation and collaboration, we were successful in helping them secure funding to complete the road's resurfacing.
- **Updated agreements:** The Engineer's office holds many agreements with other political entities for road maintenance. One of our first projects was to go through all the old agreements and update them. Each road maintenance agreement was reviewed and updated to everyone's satisfaction and it looks promising that we continue to work closely with cities and villages to best serve the public.
- **New Maps:** We have updated the Summit County maps. The new features include updated road names and township, city and village contact information. Maps are available for free at your local Summit County library or at our office on E. South Street.
- **Contract with Norton:** We developed a contract with the City of Norton to provide engineering services. This is a win-win situation for both our office and Norton. Norton will have a dedicated City Engineer at a lower cost for them and our office will save money in personnel. Also importantly, it helps foster cooperation and regionalism around Summit County.
- **Snow plowing in New Franklin:** Along the line of regionalism and cooperation, we have updated and formalized our contract with New Franklin to provide snow and ice control. Using proper ODOT standards, we now have an official and legislatively approved contract with the City of New Franklin. Similar to the contract with Norton, this contract works in favor for both our office and New Franklin.

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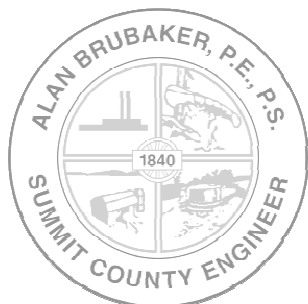
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