

KAIZEN RESULTS

Goodbye microfilm, hello efficiency!

New process for managing crucial records aims to cut costs from \$705 to \$1 per box

IN BRIEF: Right-of-way acquisition records are needed when planning for road construction and other big projects. Records are needed by ODOT staff, the AG's Office, surveyors, local government agencies, and others. Over the years, the volume of records grew bigger and bigger, and managing the system and retrieving files became time-consuming and frustrating. Until now. Thanks to a Kaizen event, the system is undergoing major change that will put those needed files at people's fingertips.

SIMPLY BETTER: The new process, from preparing acquisition files to storing everything at Central Office, will involve just 11 steps. That would be down from 61 – an 82% reduction!

A LOT FASTER: The new process fully implemented would move up to 12 months faster.

WORKING SMART: Staff will be spending much less work time to process each box of documents. When all the improvements are in place, the wage equivalent per box is expected to drop from \$705 to \$1. Given the historic volume of incoming records, that would add up to \$190,404 per year – time and money that can now be redirected to work activities that add value and benefit customers.

DIRECT SAVINGS: With the new paper-free approach, it's projected that \$14,900 will be saved each year on paper and printing that are no longer needed.

WAGE COST EQUIVALENT PER BOX OF RECORDS

With an efficient process that minimizes paper handling, the wage equivalent per box would drop significantly.

So staff time can be redirected to areas where it adds more value.



Team projection based on all improvements being implemented.

DETAILS

ODOT's Office of Real Estate retains and manages all right-of-way acquisition records. People rely on these records when developing ODOT and Local Governmental Agency project plans, so the info needs to be complete and easy to access.

Historically, paper records have been compiled at the 12 District offices – and then sent to Central Office for filing and storage in the Records Section. Paper and microfilm became the media of choice, but over time, the collection of records grew to gargantuan proportions. It became increasingly difficult to manage all this information, and increasingly time-consuming for staff and customers to retrieve needed records.

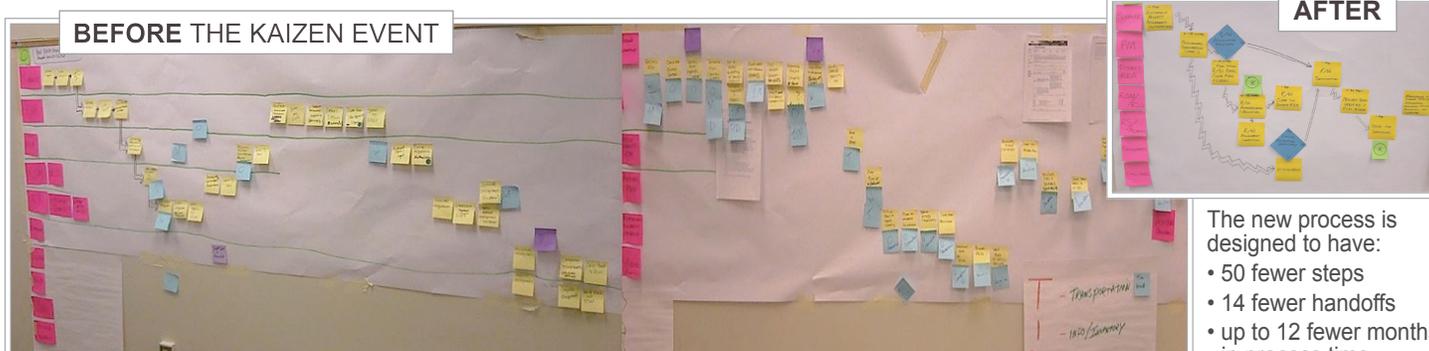
What's more, a backlog of 353 boxes had accumulated in the Central Office (146 boxes) and district offices (207 boxes). Still needing to be microfilmed and properly filed, these records are from current projects dating back as far as nine fiscal years.

Determined to bring about big improvement, and to do it quickly, ODOT called in Kaizen. Over the course of five straight days, an ODOT team used the Kaizen approach to analyze every aspect of their default way of doing things – from when the acquisition files are prepared by the districts and submitted to the Office of Real Estate, to when the records are stored for record retention. Team members dug into data regarding parcels, proj-



Team members: Back row, left to right: John Maynard, Central Office (CO); Cheryl Everett, District 4; Marna Mulrone, District 1; Tammy Boring, District 6; Lori Spencer, CO; Cheryl Sears, District 8; Robin Castle, District 7; Lavone Cunningham, District 12; Michael Buerger, CO; Dwight Neely, CO. Middle row, left to right: Shell Miller, District 1; Claudia Swartz, District 11; Donna Stewart, CO; Jayne Barker, CO; Jaclyn Noirot, District 2; Daveen Goodman, CO; Stephanie Castner, CO. Front row, left to right: Denae Kotheimer, CO; Katie Wood, CO; Michele Sines, District 5; Kim Allensworth, District 3.

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ects, times, delays, and so on. They brainstormed better methods, filtering the possibilities to find actions that would work best. Then they developed an entirely new process that makes wise use of technology. And they assembled a package of plans to guarantee prompt implementation.

The newly designed process is efficiency in action. It entails 50 fewer steps (from 61 steps to 11 – an 82% reduction), 14 fewer handoffs (a 64% reduction), and up to 12 fewer months in start-to-finish process time (up to a 40% improvement).

Several big changes will fuel these projected results. Chief among them is a switch to electronic storage in place of paper records and microfilm. Documents will be scanned as soon as they come in, and the paper will be destroyed. Electronic files will be saved and secured using a newly established directory structure and naming convention that make it easy to locate needed documents. There will be one shared statewide drive instead of the multiple drives located in various districts.

Thanks to this paper-free approach, the changes would eliminate the need for an estimated 700,800 sheets of paper (\$4,400 per year) and printing (\$10,500 per year). Also, because staff would no longer have to prep hard-copy documents and then archive them using labor-heavy microfilm recording equipment, they would spend far less work time per load of documents. According to team estimates, the amount of potentially saved work time has a wage equivalent of \$704 per box of records, which adds up to \$190,404 per year. That's time and money that would be redirected to other work activities that have a direct benefit to customers.

Several high-priority actions are being taken to ensure success with all of the above. Every step of the new electronic scanning procedure is being fully documented. The acquisition manual is being revised to reflect the new system. And the retention schedule is being updated to show which documents need to be kept going forward – and which no longer have to be retained.

Meanwhile, equipment is being inventoried to ensure that districts have adequate scanning capabilities. Real Estate staff plan to meet with district staff to talk about the new process, how it will work, how it will be supported, and so on. There will even be an e-mail that's

regularly sent to interested parties keeping them up to date on present and pending improvements to the system.

As for that backlog of 353 boxes, there's a plan to clear it up quickly. The first step is to take stock of what's already scanned. If some of the documents for a project have already been microfilmed, the rest will be microfilmed. If nothing has been microfilmed for a project, all will be scanned. Next up are 4,100 boxes sitting in a warehouse from pre-1970 projects. The team plans to tackle those next, with only needed documents being saved.

To say the least given all these improvements, the Kaizen team had an extremely busy week. By Friday, team members were getting ready for their capstone presentation when Gov. John Kasich stopped by for an unannounced visit.

After being briefed on the newly designed process and projected results, the Governor congratulated the team and encouraged more people and more agencies to put Kaizen to work. The Administration's top priorities include increasing efficiency, removing barriers, saving money, and providing citizens with the greatest possible value for their tax dollars – which is what Kaizen and Lean are all about.

At the team's concluding presentation, ODOT's Lori Spencer admitted that she began the week with healthy skepticism, but that the Kaizen event turned into "a great experience. We came in as 22 people and we're leaving as a team – and that's cool." ●



Governor John Kasich visited the team on its final day of work. He received a briefing on the new process and projected results, thanked the team for a job well done, and encouraged wider use of Lean and Kaizen in state government.