Ohio Department of Transportation

Ohio Contractors Association

Don Conaway Partnering Award

2026 Nomination

Nomination Deadline: Friday, January 2nd, 2026

1980 West Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43223

www.transportation.ohio.gov

www.ohiocontractors.org

DON CONAWAY PARTNERING AWARD CATEGORIES

A project team, consisting of the Contractor and ODOT, will be recognized in each of the following project categories:

- **Category 1 – (Under $5 Million)**
- **Category 2 – ($5 – $20 Million)**
- **Category 3 – ($20+ Million)**

2025 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Projects must be substantially complete by December 31, 2025.
- All ODOT let construction projects are eligible.
- A project can only be nominated once for consideration of this Award.
- **Projects must be nominated jointly by both the Prime Contractor and respective ODOT District.**

AWARD PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Nomination Deadlines and Submittal Information

Nominations to be sent/ emailed to:
Chase Wells, ODOT Partnering Coordinator – **by Friday, January 2nd, 2026**
1980 West Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43223
Mailstop 4090

For questions contact:
Chase Wells, 614-466-4789, Chase.Wells@dot.ohio.gov

Selection Criteria (No particular order)

- Establishment and achievement of goals.
- Management of Key Stakeholder and Subcontractor relationships.
- Challenges encountered and overcome.
- Utilization of the Dispute Resolution Process.
- Mitigation Efforts to reduce the risk of claims.
- Demonstration of Partnering Values.

Selection Process

The Don Conaway Partnering Award selection process is conducted by the ODOT/ OCA Partnering Steering Committee which is comprised of ODOT Central Office and District employees, OCA representatives, and Contractor members. The Committee oversees the award process and has final eligibility and award determination.

The Award recipients are recognized each year at the annual Don Conaway Conference.

The evaluation and selection process is:

1. The ODOT Partnering Coordinator reviews submittals for eligibility.

2. Committee reviews nominations.

3. The Committee may ask the Project Team to present more information that will be used to determine the award assignment.

4. Finalists selected for each project category with the possibility of an added "Honorable Mention" category.

5. Awards presented at the annual Conaway Conference.

Note: Any Committee member who has a business relationship with a potential winner will be excused from participating in the determination of the award.

2026 Don Conaway Partnering Award Nomination

Nomination Form

Check only one project category below:

- ☐ Under $5 Million (Category 1)
- ☒ $5 Million - $20 Million (Category 2)
- ☐ $20+ Million (Category 3)

Application Information

Project Number: 249006 Project Location (C-R-S): HAM-471-0.00 PID: 122820

Project Description

On November 1, 2024, an arson-induced fire beneath the southbound approach span of the Daniel Carter Beard “Big Mac” Bridge caused severe damage to seven steel plate girders and approximately 7,600 square feet of deck. The fire warped steel, detached girders from the deck, and compromised the structural stability of the span, requiring emergency closure of the bridge — a critical commuter and freight corridor linking Cincinnati, Ohio, and Newport, Kentucky.

Under the Governor’s emergency declaration, ODOT immediately engaged The Great Lakes Construction Co. and E.L. Robinson Engineering to stabilize, demolish, redesign, fabricate, and reconstruct the structure at unprecedented speed. Through a design-assist partnering model, the project team jointly selected available materials, optimized girder design, simplified fabrication details, and executed winter demolition and reconstruction activities — ultimately reopening the bridge on February 9, 2025, just 100 days after the fire. What would ordinarily require 2–3 years of traditional delivery was achieved in just over three months through exceptional collaboration, transparency, and shared purpose.

Team Members

- **ODOT Project Engineer: Chris Tuminello, P.E.**

Telephone Number: (513) 615-5559 Email: Chris.Tuminello@dot.Ohio.gov

- **Prime Contractor: The Great Lakes Construction Co.**

Contact Name: Tom Hackett Telephone Number: (330) 635-6164
Title: Project Manager
Email: THackett@GreatLakesWay.com
Mailing Address: 2608 Great Lakes Way, Hinckley OH 44233

- **Number of Sub-Contractors: 13**

A&A Safety
Armstrong Steel Erectors Inc.
Buckeye Concrete Company
DOT Diamond Core Drilling
Evers Steel Construction LLC
Genesis Structures
Glenwood Electric Inc.
HJ Hauling Service Inc.
J&B Steel Erectors
Maxim Crane Works
Palmer Engineering Co.
Professional Service Industry, Inc.
Security Fence Group

- **Designer: E. L. Robinson**

Contact Name: Mike Malloy, P.E.
Title: Senior Bridge Engineer
Email: MMalloy@ELRobinson.com

- **Was PN 111 assigned? No**

- **If yes, Partnering Facilitator: N/A**

Project Data

Project Bid Date: 11/1/2024

Project Award Date: 11/4/2024

Original Completion Date: 11/15/2024

Substantial Work Complete Date: 4/30/2025

Original Project Bid Amount: $1,000,000

Final Project Amount: $6,775,370

What goals were established and how were they achieved?

1. Goal: Reopen the Southbound I-471 lanes safely and as quickly as possible.
Achievement: Through daily coordination calls, accelerated material procurement, design optimization, and 24/7 operations, the team reopened the bridge in 100 days, far exceeding even the most optimistic early projections.

2. Goal: Perform demolition, stabilization, fabrication, erection, and deck replacement safely in harsh winter weather under compressed timelines.
Achievement: Continuous engineering support, robust shoring tower design, heated enclosures for deck work, and disciplined coordination resulted in zero OSHA recordables and zero lost-time incidents for Great Lakes employees.

3. Goal: Build public trust and communicate transparently to manage public and political pressure.
Achievement: ODOT and Great Lakes held twice-weekly PIO strategy meetings, supplemented by daily progress briefings, virtual shop-fabrication tours, onsite media days, and coordinated press conferences. Public sentiment shifted from frustration to confidence.

4. Goal: Deliver High-Quality Work Under Accelerated Schedule.
Achievement: Collaborative design-assist engineering, material testing, optimized girder details, and rigorous QC during cold-weather concrete placement ensured a durable, permanent repair.

How did Subcontractors and/or Key Stakeholders contribute to the Project's success?

Steel Fabrication – Stupp Bridge Company

- Provided immediate onsite assessments before being formally awarded the contract.
- Identified available plate material, enabling accelerated design decisions.
- Began fabrication before receiving a formal PO, based solely on trust.
- Delivered all seven girders between January 12–15, ahead of schedule.

Material Suppliers – Nucor & Cleveland-Cliffs

- Pre-rolled plate steel in anticipation of national emergency needs.
- Supplied steel for both primary and miscellaneous members under compressed timelines.

Engineering – E.L. Robinson

- Performed real-time design adjustments to match available materials.
- Conducted "over-the-shoulder" shop drawing reviews to eliminate weeks of processing time.
- Collaborated daily with ODOT and Great Lakes on design refinements.

Subcontractors (Demolition & Shoring Design, Electrical, etc.)

- Executed "surgical demolition" design under structurally compromised conditions in a compressed time frame.
- Designed and delivered shoring towers on 3-ft-thick pads within the first week.
- Worked through winter conditions to support steel erection and deck placement.

External Stakeholders

- City of Cincinnati and Kentucky Transportation Cabinet adjusted traffic signal timing and routing to mitigate congestion.
- Public Information Officers from multiple agencies coordinated communications.
- Cincinnati Reds organization publicly honored the project team with a ceremonial first pitch, recognizing community impact.

Subcontractors and stakeholders were integral partners from Day 1. This team embodied a unified mission: reopen the Southbound I-471 lanes safely and as quickly as possible.

List any teambuilding activities or unique motivational activities:

- Daily multi-stakeholder coordination calls created a unified “one team” environment among ODOT, Great Lakes, designers, fabricators, and subcontractors.
- Twice-weekly ODOT–Great Lakes PIO messaging meetings strengthened cross-discipline collaboration.
- Fabrication Shop Media Day hosted by Stupp allowed public transparency and appreciation of the workforce.
- Joint field and office decision-making, where issues were resolved collaboratively in real time.
- LaRosa’s Pizza Truck came to site to feed ODOT, Great Lakes, and vendors to celebrate arrival of the girders and reward the team for working through harsh winter conditions.
- Shared milestones (first girder delivery, deck pour, reopening announcement) were acknowledged jointly across organizations and was widely broadcast across multiple media outlets.
- Cincinnati Reds ceremonial first pitch honoring the entire team served as a morale booster and a celebration of collective achievement.

These activities fostered trust, shared ownership, and a deep sense of mission.

Safety Record of the Project:

Great Lakes incurred zero OSHA Recordable Incidents and zero Lost-Time Injuries.

- Safety excellence was achieved despite:
    - Winter operations, including sub-zero working conditions.
    - Complex demolition with instability risks
    - Night and weekend shifts
    - Heavy lifting and girder setting in snow.
    - Accelerated schedule pressures

Safety success resulted from rigorous planning, coordinated risk reviews, robust engineering controls, clear communication during daily calls, and unified accountability across organizations.

What challenges or obstacles were encountered and how were they overcome?

1. Structural Instability & Unknown Damage

- Warped, detached girders created collapse risks.
- The team executed a surgical demolition plan with shoring towers installed within the first week.

2. Public & Political Pressure

- Bridge closure caused significant congestion and frustration. City of Cincinnati Councilman Seth Walsh publicly admonished D8 Deputy Director, Tammy Campbell, for the appearance of not working "fast enough".
- Coordinated PIO messaging and media transparency helped rebuild public trust.

3. Maintaining Schedule Under Emergency Pace

- Real-time engineering, shop drawing approvals, and field decisions were enabled by daily alignment and shared priorities.

4. Steel Availability & Long Lead Times

- Traditional lead times of 10–12 months were unacceptable.
- Stupp, Nucor, and Cleveland-Cliffs coordinated material availability, enabling girder delivery within six weeks. E. L. Robinson used available material to design the girders and chose thicker steel sections to eliminate shop cutting and welding which helped speed up fabrication.

5. Absence of Plans & Compressed Decision Timelines

- Original 1976 as-builts lacked sufficient detail.
- Teams conducted LIDAR scans, material sampling, thermal imaging, and structural testing to define repair limits collaboratively.

6. Winter Weather Impacts

- Arctic air masses, freezing temperatures, and snowstorms demanded:
    - Heated enclosures
    - Accelerated concrete admixtures.
    - Weather-adapted sequencing
    - Continuous QC adjustments

Through exceptional collaboration, each challenge became an opportunity for innovation.

How was the Dispute Resolution Process used?

Was a Dispute Resolution Board or Dispute Resolution Advisor used?

# of Verbal Notices: 0 **# of Early Written Notices:** 0

# of Step 2 Disputes: 0 **# of Step 3 Claims:** 0

The project had zero formal disputes or claims, an extraordinary result for a fast-tracked, complex emergency bridge repair. Issues were identified and resolved immediately during daily coordination calls, enabling continuous progress. When impacts exceeded the authority of the field team, both ODOT and Great Lakes collaboratively elevated the matter outside the project team to maintain focus on project delivery.

The design-assist model minimized traditional scope gaps, eliminated ambiguity in plans, and fostered transparent, real-time collaboration that prevented issues from escalating. As a result, the dispute-resolution process functioned as a preventative partnering mechanism, not a reactive claims process.

What mitigation efforts were taken either before or during the Dispute Resolution Process?

- Daily issue resolution prevented formal disputes from materializing.
- Design-assist eliminated most causes of disputes (i.e. scope gaps, design omissions, ambiguity, etc.).
- Early problem elevation ensured field crews were never delayed by administrative issues.
- Public messaging coordination mitigated political and community pressure.
- Vendor partnering mitigated submittal review delays.

If applicable, list the number and savings from the Value Engineering Change Proposals:

There were no formal VECPs.

However, the project functioned as a design-assist emergency contract, allowing the team to incorporate continuous, real-time value engineering that significantly reduced schedule and cost. Examples include:

- Contractor dictated Buildable Unit packages and design schedule to accelerate overall project schedule.
- Selecting readily available steel to eliminate procurement delays
- Reducing stiffener counts for fabrication efficiency.
- Eliminating non-essential hinge fabrication details
- Designing around winter constructability and closure windows
- Accelerated shop drawing reviews

These decisions directly enabled reopening in 100 days and mitigated substantial schedule and cost impacts.

How did the project finish in relation to critical milestones?

The project surpassed all major milestones. The southbound bridge was expected to open in Summer 2025 but opened on February 9th, 2025; a feat that even the Governor publicly acknowledged. The bridge opened 100 days after it closed.

How did the Project Team demonstrate that Partnering added Value to the Project?

Partnering reduced schedule risk, eliminated claims, minimized cost growth, improved public sentiment, and delivered a 3-year project in 100 days.

This project is a model of how partnering transforms outcomes:

- Daily, fully integrated coordination calls accelerated decisions.
- Twice-weekly PIO meetings ensured unified, accurate public communication.
- Design-assist engineering removed design/fabrication/constructability barriers.
- Shop drawings were reviewed “over-the-shoulder” to eliminate months of processing time.
- Vendor partners operated on trust, beginning fabrication before formal paperwork.
- Multi-agency collaboration reduced community impacts.
- Transparent media engagement restored public confidence.

Were partnering meetings held?

Yes.

Partnering occurred through:

- Daily coordination meetings involving ODOT District 8, Central Office, Great Lakes, E.L. Robinson, Stupp, consultants, and subcontractors.
- Twice-weekly ODOT–Great Lakes–PIO meetings for public messaging and media coordination.
- Additional ad-hoc technical partnering sessions on design optimization, material availability, demolition planning, and winter concrete strategies.

List any Quality Awards the project has received (e.g., Smooth Pavement Award).

None to date.

Please share any innovative ideas, lessons learned, or additional facts from the project that could provide insight in helping other teams improve their projects.

- Design-Assist Emergency Delivery
  This method accelerated structural repairs dramatically and should be considered for future emergency declarations and other schedule driven projects. The design-assist feature also mitigated disputes which ordinarily occur on design-build or design-bid-build projects.
- Material-Driven Design Optimization
  Designing to available steel (rather than designing first, purchasing later) can reduce months of delay.
- Real-Time Multi-Party Coordination
  Daily decision-making involving owner, contractor, designer, fabricator, and subcontractors prevented bottlenecks.
- Over-the-Shoulder Shop Drawing Reviews
  Eliminated traditional submittal delays and ensured designers and fabricators were fully aligned.
- Transparent Public Messaging
  Taking the public “on the journey” through media events and updates transformed public sentiment and minimized frustration.
- Winter Concrete Innovations
  Heated enclosures, accelerated mixes, and strategic sequencing enabled high-quality pours despite freezing conditions.
- Trust-Based Vendor Engagement
  Fabrication began before paperwork was finalized — a testament to cross-industry trust.

By submitting this application form, all materials become the property of ODOT's Statewide Partnering Committee and may be used in education, marketing, and promotion for the Don Conaway Conference.

Prime Contractor

Name: Tom Hackett

Title: Project Manager

Organization: The Great Lakes Construction Co.

Phone: (330) 635-6164

Email: THackett@GreatLakesWay.com

ODOT District

Name: Chris Tuminello, P.E.

Title: Area Engineer

Organization: District 8

Phone: (513) 615-5559

Email: Chris.Tuminello@DOT.Ohio.Gov

When submitting project photos, please keep such separate from this nomination document or present in a manner that maintains quality and allows for ease of extraction. JPEG images are preferred, and photos will be used to present projects at the 2026 Conaway Conference. For submission questions, please contact Chase Wells at chase.wells@dot.ohio.gov or 614-466-4789.

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