

# Interning at The Ohio Department of Transportation

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## Background

This summer, I had the pleasure to start working for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) as a College Intern in their Environmental Services office. I found this job by searching on job boards online and was specifically interested in working in the transportation industry after I had taken a class called "Transportation and Land Use Planning." The office was located in Columbus, Ohio, West of the city, but I primarily worked from home unless I was working in the field. About sixty percent of my time was spent working from home on the computer equipment ODOT and forty percent was in the field.

ODOT's mission is "to provide the safe and easy movement of people and goods from place-to-place." What is unique about ODOT is that in order to achieve this mission, many steps have to happen prior to any work they can do to build roads or other infrastructure needed for easy movement. There are environmental surveys that need done, cultural resources protection requirements, noise and air quality analysis, and many more factors that need to be accounted for in order to begin building infrastructure.



My fellow interns and myself under a bridge at a project site

## On the Job

The main duties of my job were to perform environmental surveys and write reports on upcoming transportation project sites to understand the natural resources that may be affected under construction. This included assessing water quality of streams that passed under bridges, delineating wetlands to know the acreage that would be affected, conducting mussel surveys in order to remove the species from the project sites, and looking at endangered plant and animal habitats. One of the proudest moments I had throughout the summer occurred when the team I was working with and myself were conducting a mussel survey. On this day, we had found around 100 mussels that we were going to relocate ranging in size from three centimeters to sixteen centimeters. Within the last pass of the stream, I was the one who located an endangered mussel that was a top priority to protect. This was very rewarding as if I did not find it, it would not have survived.

Looking at the types of aquatic species to understand the streams health near a project site



Below is a compilation of pictures taken on one of the mussel surveys I participated in throughout the summer



Looking along the highway right of way at plant species as well as the presence of native snake species



## Reflection

This internship correlated directly with what I want to do in the future. My goal is essentially to do any work that is helping protect the environment and working under Environmental Specialist this summer helped me start this work. I am still employed by ODOT and plan to work for them until I graduate in May. My advice to any student interested in a similar experience is first and foremost not to sell yourself short. Ohio State provides students with excellent educations and employers are aware of this. With that being said, asking questions and making connections is the best way to learn about the industry and a substantial amount of work needs to be put into any opportunity found in order for it to be successful. If you are willing to put in the work, success will come.