Oregon Department of Transportation

Transportation agency boosts quality and quantity of report data available to employees and the public while reducing costs by tens of thousands of dollars with Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF

A freeway's condition affects many people, from commuters to developers wanting to build along the road. Realizing this, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) began creating a comprehensive corridor plan for the Interstate 5 corridor, a 300-mile, north-south artery that is the state's busiest highway. Midway through the project, a budget cut forced ODOT to reevaluate its approach and seek ways to lower expenses and still deliver a useful report. Rather than producing a full corridor plan with improvement recommendations, ODOT produced a comprehensive report describing current highway conditions and future conditions should I-5 not be improved.

A lot of information had been developed when the decision was made to create a conditions report instead of a full plan for the corridor. Consequently, reducing paper was a top priority because paper reports are expensive to produce, store, and deliver. By using Adobe Acrobat software and Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format) to distribute materials on CD-ROM and over the Web, ODOT is streamlining the distribution of information, providing improved access to data, and reducing document handling costs by tens of thousands of dollars.

Reduced costs, more data

The Transportation Conditions Report for the I-5 corridor covers a range of topics, from crash histories and traffic congestion to environmental factors. While it does not present possible solutions to problems, state and local government officials such as planners, engineers, and project
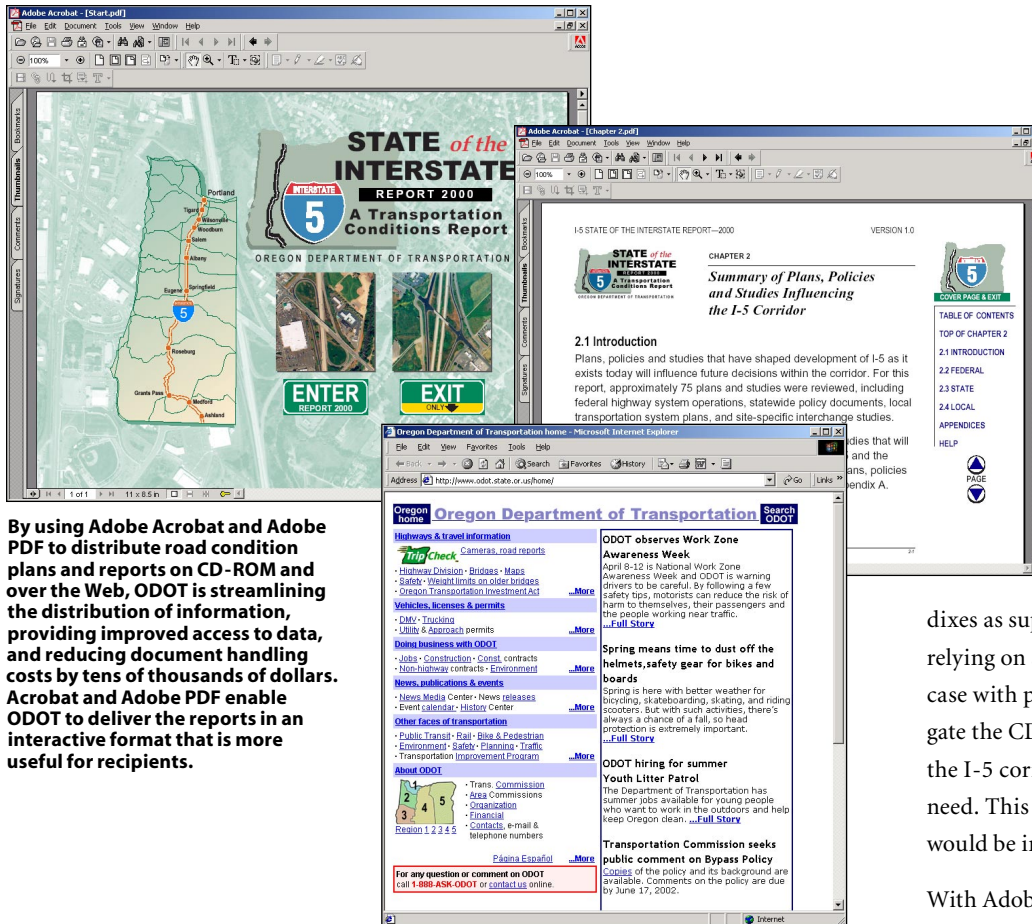
managers can tap into the data to prioritize problems and support the planning needed to identify necessary corridor improvements.

ODOT typically distributed transportation plans and reports on paper. Terry Cole, special projects coordinator for ODOT's Region 2 office in Salem, estimates that the I-5 Transportation Conditions Report would have cost from $350 to $400 to print the 3,000-page document in its entirety. The high costs meant it was unlikely full printed copies would be available. In contrast, by converting the Report to Adobe PDF, the agency can provide interested parties with a CD-ROM containing the complete Report in Adobe PDF, an executive summary, and a user guide for less than $20.

Adobe Acrobat Reader® software is included with the Report on the CD-ROM, enabling anyone with a CD-ROM drive on his or her computer to view the Report in Adobe PDF. Says Cole, "The universal accessibility, compact file sizes, and hyperlinking capabilities of Adobe PDF make it an ideal solution for transmitting large amounts of information in an interactive format." For example, viewers can search for topics in Adobe PDF files and move easily among related topics by clicking hyperlinked information displayed on their PCs.

Quick conversion of long documents

To complete the I-5 Transportation Conditions Report, ODOT worked with specialized consulting firms, including CH2M Hill as the primary

By using Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF to distribute road condition plans and reports on CD-ROM and over the Web, ODOT is streamlining the distribution of information, providing improved access to data, and reducing document handling costs by tens of thousands of dollars. Acrobat and Adobe PDF enable ODOT to deliver the reports in an interactive format that is more useful for recipients.

Easy access for everyone

The move to electronic distribution in Adobe PDF enabled ODOT to reduce costs while increasing information quality and quantity. The compact Adobe PDF files fit easily on CD-ROM, allowing ODOT to append a variety of useful materials. Engineers and planners, for example, can view a full set of aerial photographs of all of I-5. Entire companion reports can also be included in appendixes as supporting information, as opposed to relying on selected excerpts, which is often the case with paper documents. Recipients can navigate the CD-ROM through maps of sections of the I-5 corridor and quickly find the details they need. This level of information and interactivity would be impossible to deliver on paper.

With Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF, more frequent Report updates are now possible. Because the Report is composed of hundreds of small, subject-specific files, it can be updated selectively. ODOT can easily revise information by editing documents in Microsoft Word and then converting the updated files to Adobe PDF for delivery on CD-ROM. "Acrobat and Adobe PDF allow us to provide better information for better decision-making," says Cole. "All this, while substantially reducing costs."

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Terry Cole
Special projects coordinator
Oregon Department of Transportation

contractor. David Parisi of the transportation consulting firm Parisi Associates oversaw the technical work produced by ODOT and the contractor team. Parisi and Cole worked with ODOT and the contractor team to determine how to organize data into a unified report. Many types of documents, including maps, Microsoft Word documents, CAD drawings, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, were converted to Adobe PDF with Adobe Acrobat 5.0.

Explains Parisi, "We needed a unifying format that let us combine numerical data in tables and matrices, text-based summaries, maps, and other elements into a common electronic format that offered universal access to information. Adobe PDF was the natural choice."