February Roundtable: "Project Development: Technical Analysis to Reality"

YPT’s February’s Roundtable covered “Project Development: Technical Analysis to Reality.” Marc Williams, P.E., Deputy Executive Director of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and Jeff Webster, Vice President of Business Development (Central and South Texas) for Jacobs Engineering Group, presented to a sold-out room of over 30 young engineers and professionals in transportation. The presentation focused on project development.

In his role, Williams assists the department’s executive director and management team with oversight of all TxDOT functions, including the management and operation of the state’s transportation system. He is charged with ensuring Texas’ transportation system is planned, constructed and maintained in a cost-effective manner to effectively address the state’s growing safety, mobility and reliability needs.

Williams discussed TxDOT’s construction budget of $8 Billion this year comes from state funding by Proposition 1 and 7. He emphasized the importance on knowing where the sources of funding are coming from to identify project priorities and needs at the local level. He suggested engineers attend Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings and Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) meetings to understand the state’s project priorities and funding. Once priority needs are identified and a project is funded, the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is released, and consultants can submit a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) for that project.

As a business developer for over 35 years in the San Antonio and Central Texas market, Webster is not only a trusted advisor in business development but has also served as a former San Antonio City Councilman and former MPO Chairman. Having an extensive sales and political background, Webster touched on strategic partnerships between private and public entities. He emphasized the importance of developing relationships with clients before the RFQ on a project is released.

He also advised that when it comes to private and public partnerships, engineers should put themselves in their client’s shoes first.

Williams tied it all together by pointing out that when it comes to TxDOT projects, it’s important to identify the projects, recognize what’s important to the client, and effectively communicate the project technicalities in the RFQ.
YPT Social

In February, YPT-Austin joined forces with ASCE-YMF, WEAT YP, SHPE, EWRI, and TAWWA to host our third annual civil engineering networking happy hour. We had over 100 engineers, planners, and engineering enthusiasts attend the event in celebration of Engineers Week. The night ended with several members receiving prizes for winning the civil engineering networking bingo!

CITY OF AUSTIN TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT TOUR

YPT-Austin got a behind the scenes look at the technology that improves Austin’s traffic flow at the City of Austin’s Traffic Management Center. Special thanks to our tour guides Robin Osborne, Ben Plett, and Lance Ballard!

Upcoming Events

CapMetro Roundtable
When: May 9, 2019 @11:30 -1 PM
Where: Center for Transportation Research, Suite #4. 11080

Summer Party Barge
When: July 13, 2019 @11AM-3PM
Where: Riviera Marina

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: MADELEINE HIRSCH

1. Tell us about yourself!

I was born and raised in College Station, Texas. And yes, believe it or not, non-college people actually live there! I was planning on going to college out-of-state, but went to Texas A&M University for my first year to save a bit of money because out-of-state tuition is no joke. But low and behold, I ended up loving Texas A&M University so much that I stayed the whole time! I was on the triathlon team all four years while getting my B.S. in Civil Engineering. After graduation, I worked for a traffic/transportation engineering firm near Vail, Colorado and then moved to Austin to work for my current firm, BIG RED DOG Engineering, as a traffic/transportation graduate engineer.

2. What inspired you to pursue a career in transportation?

It started with my general transportation class my junior year of college. I had the best professor and he really made me exciting about the transportation field. That summer, I pursued an internship with Texas A&M Transportation Institute where I did a research project about pedestrians and cyclists at all-way stop-controlled intersections. I loved being able to talk to people about my project because everyone could relate to it! I realized that so many aspects of the traffic/transportation engineering field are that way. Everyone experiences traffic and can give you great insight on to the daily hip-happenings of their area. I also love that traffic engineering is not just black and white; sometimes you have to be inside the mind of a driver and know the area to come up with the best innovative solutions.

3. What has been your favorite YPT event?

I really like the round table events! This year I went to the “Project Development: Technical Analysis to Reality” roundtable with Marc Williams, P.E. (Deputy Executive Director of TxDOT) and Jeff Webster (VP of Business Development at Jacobs Engineering). I found it really interesting to learn about what happens after our technical analysis is finished. I always appreciate learning more about the process as a whole because I feel like I can do my piece better.

4. What has been your favorite project to work on?

My very first project (and one of my favorites) at BIG RED DOG Engineering was a memorandum summarizing closure concerns of West Cesar Chavez Street for Maudie’s Moonlight Margarita Run. Even though it wasn’t a particularly intricate project, I still like knowing that I helped with keeping this fun and very Austin-like event going! I love working on any kind of project that contributes to our community and makes it better.

5. What do you like to do for fun in Austin?

I spend a ton of time at Town Lake and Zilker Park. I love going for runs and walks around the lake and I can’t ever spend enough time at Barton Springs! I’m also a huge dog lover, so I try to run through the Auditorium Shores dog park every time I’m out there!
Thank you!