



INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SECTION

NEWSLETTER

2008 – 2009, Issue No. 5

February 2009

President's Message

Carlos Ortiz, PE, TE, PTOE



The first meeting of the year was our annual joint meeting with California Traffic Engineers (CTE). **Ms. Monica M. Suter**, District 6 President and Senior Engineer with the City of Santa Ana provided us with a great presentation on how to improve our communications with the community and elected officials. Please see the Scribe Report for more details.

Earlier this month we held our annual joint meeting with the Central Coast ITE Section. Our guest speaker was **Mr. Darren Kettle**, Executive Director, Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). **Mr. Kettle's** presentation was entitled "The Transportation Funding Crisis at the Federal, State and Local Level: Rules of the Game and How to Stay in the Game". Mr. Kettle discussed some of the projects and programs that Ventura County may need to consider for an effective 21st century transportation system in Ventura County.

Our newsletter co-editor position is still available. We encourage our members to get involved with our Southern California ITE newsletter. Please contact myself or Steve Itagaki.

Please mark your calendar for upcoming events.

Our next meeting will be on Friday, March 13, 2009. The meeting will be a joint meeting with the San Diego ITE Section. The meeting will be a workshop meeting and will be held at El Adobe Restaurant in the City of San Juan Capistrano. Also, the ITE 2009 Technical Conference and Exhibit will be held in the City of Phoenix, Arizona on March 22 – 25.

Also, the joint ITE Southern California and Orange County Traffic Engineers Council (OCTEC) Annual Golf Tournament will be held on Friday, May 15 at the Green River Golf Club in the City of Corona, please see the attached flyer for details.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

Meeting Announcement

Mini-Workshop

Friday, Mar. 13, 2009

@ 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

El Adobe Restaurant

31891 Camino Capistrano
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
(949) 493-1163

For Reservations Contact:

Lisa Martellaro-Palmer at

lisa.martellaro-palmer@lacity.org

Ph. (323) 957-6823

By 12:00 pm on Monday,

Mar. 9th, 2009

(E-mail preferred)

See Flyer for More Details

Inside This Issue:



Cell Phones And Motorists
Article

page 2

Scribe Report

pages 3 & 4

Announcements
Sponsorship

pages 4 & 5

Legislative Analysis

pages 6 - 8

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Cell Phones and Motorists, A Bad Combination?

By Lisa Martellaro-Palmer



Improving safety on our public roadways is a priority for all of us in the transportation profession. Unfortunately, statistics from the U.S. Department of Transportation Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) continues to report that more than 40,000 highway fatalities occur each year. That's why it is important to be aware of the adverse effects cell phones have on motorists.

The American Automobile Association's (AAA) Foundation for traffic safety released a report in December written by Dr. Steve Bloch that claims drivers on cell phones are four times as likely to crash. The report cites cell phone usage as the worst driving offense because drivers spend a tremendous amount of time on their cell phones. Cell phone usage is worse than shaving or applying mascara relative to time on the road.

The AAA report states that when motorists are using their cell phones, their perception reaction times (PRT) are delayed by 0.23 seconds, which is significant because most collisions occur when a driver is distracted for 3 seconds or less. The report states that safety on our roadways is becoming a serious issue due to the distractions that motorists experience while on cell phones and the growing number of motorists purchasing cell phones and using them on the road.

On July 1, 2008, Californians could no longer drive while using their cell phones held up to their ear. California Highway Patrol officers can issue fines of \$20 for the first offense and \$50 thereafter. But the report also suggests that hands-free cell phone usage is really not safer and it gives motorists a false sense of security. Our challenge, as transportation professionals, may be to realize that we are designing our traffic control devices for a growing number of drivers distracted by cell phones. ♦

January 2009 Scribe Report

By John A. Dorado II



The first luncheon meeting of the year for the **ITE Southern California Section** was held on Wednesday, January 21, 2009 at the Monterey Hill Restaurant in the City of Monterey Park. The sponsor for this meeting was "**South Coast Lighting and Design**", and our guest speaker was **Ms. Monica Suter, P.E., T.E., P.T.O.E.**, Senior Civil Engineer with the City of Santa Ana, and current **ITE District 6 President**, presented "**Engineering Recommendations: Getting to "Yes" With the Public & Elected Officials**".

Staff members from **The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Office of Senior Health** asked attendees to complete a survey entitled, "A Survey of Transportation Engineers on Policies and Procedures for Pedestrian Signaling". Currently, the Department of Public health is studying pedestrian safety and how they can partner with cities and transportation professionals to promote utilitarian walking as a practical form of exercise. The increase in obesity and chronic disease among children and adults has prompted health officials to search for ways to promote physical activity. We thank the **Los Angeles County Department of Public Health** staff for their attendance and look forward to their results.



Jon-Eric Santanello and **Matt Keller** with **South Coast Lighting and Design** presented their product line and services on "Sustainable Designs through Outdoor Lighting", which builds Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) credits by using sustainable products such as their *StressCrete* concrete poles, energy saving light emitting diode (LED) fixtures, and wind/solar powered solutions. In addition, they provided an overview of their miscellaneous pole selections (street lighting, traffic signal, street signage, bollards, etc.), and lighting assemblies that can change existing poles into decorative fixtures. For more information visit www.southcoastlighting.com

Ms. Suter, who's always enthusiastic and entertaining, began her presentation by posing the question, "How can we build better consensus with the public and get elected official support for engineering recommendations?"



Now, this is a pretty common question in the public arena when responding to public requests/complaints. As engineers, our answers may be short and concise. The public may not understand, take offense, and ultimately take their issues to their elected official. As engineers, we prefer that these issues do not go to the elected officials and prefer to resolve the issues by using our engineering standards and practices.

If these issues go to the elected official level, engineering standards and practices may be overruled politically.

Then the question is asked, "How does this happen? or How can it be avoided?"

With that said, she identified some other underlying issues that may prevent us (engineers) from keeping such issues at the engineering level, which includes the following:

1. A Training Gap: Engineers and transportation professionals are not typically trained in "softer" sales and communications. These skills are critical to their success in the public arena.
2. An Interest Gap: Some engineers and transportation professionals who need "softer" sales and communications skills may actually avoid such training.

To overcome these obstacles, she summarized the following strategies and potential outcomes:

1. Believe in Our Principles: Our engineering training and principles are solid. Politics may fluctuate, but science and facts are what they are. Our licenses and knowledge should align with our ethical duty to the public.

Scribe Report Continued on Page 4...

2. Communications Training: Once we acknowledge this training gap, we can obtain communications training and “softer” skills. These new skills will help us get results.
3. Proactive Outreach: With new soft skills, we can reach-out and explain/sell why our recommendations are actually in the interest of the citizens!
4. Results: Happy Citizens = Supportive Elected Officials!

All of this sounds great, but how do we accomplish this? Then, **Ms. Suter** schooled us on her “Communication Tools 101” techniques, which begins with the three “F’s”... Whoa there! It’s not what you think!!...but really, the three “F’s” are: **Feel, Felt, Found**, and she identified how to apply this method by the following:

1. I think we understand how you **Feel** about _____. (Put yourself in their shoes with sincerity)
2. We **Felt** similarly to about _____. (Re-explains understandable misperception)
3. Then we **Found** that actually _____. (Explains the engineering reason why...)

Once you put yourself in the citizen’s shoes and identify with their concern, it may be more apparent to you (engineer) about why this is such a concern to the citizen. This can create dialogue that at least makes the issue “talk-able”, and can lead into an engineering discussion.

To apply this technique (or under any circumstances for that matter), it may be confrontational; therefore, **Ms. Suter** suggested the following recommendations, which also falls under “Communication Tools 101” class:

- Don’t take it personally, but do make it personal
- Their anger is NOT about YOU
- Remain calm and diffuse the situation and thank them for caring
- If they are really aggressive, picture something funny
- As part of the feel, felt, found...make a general example “for the greater good of the community”, rather than the individual situation
- Draw “visuals” to “bring it home”

Then, **Ms. Suter** followed up with real-case situations where these techniques were applied and successful:

- Case 1: Access Management Controversies
- Case 2: All-Way Stop Signs (When Not Warranted)
- Case 3: Realistic Speed Zones & Proper Sign Postings

After the real-case examples, the following key points were identified:

- Public support leads to elected official support
- Remind everyone of the greater good and safety
- Take the “heat” and offer to reach out to citizens to explain the justifications directly to the public. By handling the tough questions for elected officials, we’ll be less likely to lose their support

Lastly, **Ms. Suter** followed up with some final words of wisdom:

- While we may be the best engineer, until we can also better sell and communicate our engineering recommendations and principles, we aren’t yet a fully successful engineer. Otherwise, non-Engineers are selected to “manage us”. We can learn these new sales skills without selling out our principles!!

Thank you Professor Suter ☺. ◇

Announcements

Let’s Carpool to Our Monthly Meetings

ITE Southern California Section would like to offer carpooling to our monthly meetings.

In order to coordinate, please provide the following information to our board members:

1. Name and contact information (cell phone preferred).
2. Whether you are looking for a ride or if you are driving and have room in a vehicle.
3. Location (e.g., downtown LA, Santa Monica, etc.)
4. How many seats available in your car if you are driving.
5. Ability to travel to a central meeting point.
6. Any other accessibility concerns (e.g., in a wheelchair, etc.)

For those interested in joining a carpool in the **Santa Monica/LA vicinity**, please contact:

Sam Morrissey, PE
 Principal Transportation Engineer
 Planning and Community Development/Transportation Management
 City of Santa Monica
 Tel: (310) 458-8291
sam.morrissey@smgov.net

Job Announcement

Wilbur Smith Associates has an opportunity for an Associate in Charge for its Los Angeles office. This position supports WSA operations in California and has responsibility for day-to-day office management, including oversight and mentoring of professional and support staff; oversight of all project work; financial and business operations; recruiting; and leadership in business development activities. The position will offer opportunities for the management of major project efforts in the following areas; transportation planning studies; parking; rail and transit projects; and traffic studies in southern California and elsewhere.

To apply online visit www.wilbursmith.com and reference job id # MS10930.

ADVANTEC is a consulting firm based in Diamond Bar & Ontario, CA. We have immediate job openings for:

Senior Engineers: Candidates shall possess suitable degree with 7+ years experience. Engineers will be involved in managing projects involving ITS, traffic engineering design, traffic signal synchronization, transportation planning, business development and project management. Professional Engineer license desired.

Traffic Engineers: Candidates shall possess civil, electrical or traffic engineering degrees with 3+ years experience in planning, design or traffic signal synchronization. Engineers will be trained in business development and project management. EIT desired, Professional Engineer license a plus!

Apply online through our website: www.advantec-usa.com

Iteris, Inc. leads the traffic management market in the development and application of advanced technologies that reduce traffic congestion, minimize environmental impact and improve the safety of our surface transportation system.

This **Senior Transportation Engineer** position will function as an **Assistant Manager** for our office in **Ontario, California**. Duties include managing transportation projects, budgeting, design and planning activities, client interface and technical expertise. **BS/MS/PhD in Civil Engineering or equivalent with 10+ years of increasingly responsible experience** as a Manager of Transportation Studies and Area-Wide Transportation projects required. *EOE*

Confidential resumes or letters can be sent to Anne Bologna: amb@iteris.com. <http://www.iteris.com/>

Newsletter Sponsorship

This newsletter is a perfect venue for advertising your products and services, as it is circulated nine (9) times a year to more than 700 ITE recipients all over Southern California. Advertisements are priced reasonably for the benefit of our members.

There is no charge for brief job announcements or course announcements (about 100 words) that would be of interest to our members. Free announcements may be edited or condensed as necessary, though.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to the ITE Southern California Section.

On behalf of our Newsletter committee, I, Julia Wu, would like to thank you, all currently-committed sponsors, for your support. It is thanks to your help in sharing the production costs that makes the newsletter distribution possible and allows us to increase our student support. I hope the advertisements in our newsletter have contributed to raising your profiles in the local transportation industry. Please note that with the electronic newsletter, the ads are now full-page and in color. To our prospective sponsors, I encourage you to make your companies better known in the community. We have vacancies **after May**. Feel free to contact me, Julia Wu, at jwu@koacorporation.com, to schedule your sponsorship ad. ♦

Jan-09	Iteris, Inc.
Feb-09	Phoenix Highway Products, Inc.
Mar-09	Kunzman Associates
Apr-09	Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
May-09	Al Grover & Associates
Jun-09	(Available)
Jul-09	(Available)
Aug-09	(Available)
Sep-09	(Available)
Oct-09	(Available)
Nov/Dec-09	(Available)

If you find any factual errors, have comments about any of the articles you have read in this newsletter, or have suggestions on how to improve the newsletter, please e-mail our newsletter editor: Steve Itagaki (sitagaki@jmdiaz.com).

Legislative Analysis

By Walter Okitsu, PE, PTOE



A Reality Check on the Stimulus Package

Last month, I was guilty of being overly optimistic on Obama's Federal Stimulus Package. It really doesn't contain that much money for transportation.

However, given California's current financial woes, this could be a life saver for the state, and for our jobs.

No Longer a Transportation Stimulus Package

The stimulus package's emphasis on transportation infrastructure has been diluted a bit in the last month. Less than 10% of the stimulus money will go to highways and transit. Transportation will get about \$40 billion to \$60 billion, out of what could be a trillion dollars. We really shouldn't complain. When a trillion dollars is tossed out for the country to feed on, it means everybody will have to pay for it for years by suffering through inflation or paying off massive debt, so we're lucky to get some benefit. However, this won't be the big windfall for transportation that it sounded like before.

Stimulus funding could hurt the upcoming Federal omnibus transportation bill, the successor to SAFETEA-LU that expires in September 2009. Congressmen might wonder, "Didn't we pass the transportation infrastructure stimulus package earlier this year?" We risk substituting quick off-the-shelf projects for higher priority projects that could be funded with the omnibus bill. But given California's current financial mess, the stimulus package might be more crucial.

California's Budget Mess Stops Projects

As mentioned last month, California can't sell bonds for transportation projects because potential bond buyers are spooked by the State's projected \$42 billion budget deficit. Remember Proposition 1B a couple of years ago that authorized \$19 billion in bonds? The State can't find buyers for those bonds or even for the basic everyday bonds that California relies on to cover

bills and payrolls, because the legislature hasn't come close to balancing the budget in the last few months. The State has shut down about \$4 billion worth of construction projects, about half of them transportation projects.

The legislature is still struggling with the budget. Governor Schwarzenegger killed off a scheme by the Democrats in the legislature to substitute "fees" in place of "taxes". The Democrats would have replaced the 18-cent fuel excise tax and the 5% portion of the sales tax on gasoline dedicated to transportation with a 39-cent per gallon "fee". The difference between "fees" and "taxes" is that fees need a simple majority in each house without needing a single Republican vote, not a 2/3rd majority. Furthermore, reducing taxes on transportation allows an increase in other taxes that can be used for general fund items such as schools, again without Republican participation. The Governor vetoed the idea, not so much because he felt pity for the Republicans, but because it wouldn't have come close to balancing the budget.

Hopefully the budget will be resolved in early February, before the entire State government comes to a halt.

California's Share of the Stimulus Package

California would probably receive about \$4.4 billion in transportation stimulus money, of which \$1.6 billion would go to Caltrans and the rest would go to local agencies. That's not much money. But it comes at a time when it's needed badly.

This money is intended to be spent quickly, within two years, although the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has concluded that money for transportation projects can't be spent that fast. The CBO expects that about 13% of the highway funding nationwide could be spent by September 30, 2009, and less than half of the highway money could be spent within four years.

Legislative Analysis Continued on Page 7...

California doesn't have that problem. One tiny benefit of being in a basket-case state is that the stimulus has a better probability of working here than in financially stable states. That's because we have \$4 billion worth of projects that are not only shovel-ready, but shovel-stalled. All those Proposition 1B projects that are stopped because of the State budget mess could be remobilized with the Federal stimulus money. The bulldozers could start moving right away.

One source tells me that after the Proposition 1B bonding problem is freed up, the stimulus money could be used toward the best stimulus projects nominated. Caltrans would have to get a large number of projects through the Federal Funding & Local Assistance authorization process quickly.

American Public Wants Good Projects, Not Quick

Frank Luntz, a political pollster, wrote in an editorial to the Los Angeles Times Jan 23rd that his surveys show that "81% of Americans are personally prepared to pay 1% more in taxes for the cause." Even 74% of Republicans surveyed would pay 1% more in taxes. He also found that spending money quickly isn't as important as spending money wisely. The survey showed that accountability ranked as a first or second priority for 61%, while creation of jobs ranked only 34%. According to Luntz, "'Don't Screw It Up' would be a more popular rallying cry than 'get it done'" This runs counter to John Maynard Keynes' General Theory that most economists believe in, that it's better to bury cash in bottles and create employment by having businesses dig them up than to do nothing.

It appears Obama and the US Congress is choosing to listen to the economists, rather than to 61% of the voters. Let's hope they choose wisely.

Gas Tax Increases No Longer Unmentionable

Up to a few months ago, the mere suggestion of an increase in the Federal or state fuel tax was considered political suicide. That's why we've been hearing so much about the need for toll roads, congestion pricing, and VMT taxes. Because those revenue sources aren't exactly

shovel-ready, Congress needed to pass an \$8 billion bailout of the Highway Trust Fund last fall.

The political climate has been changing. In Hawaii, a Republican governor is proposing a 10-cent per gallon fuel tax increase to a legislature dominated by Democrats, so it's likely to pass. But surprisingly, even in the reddest states like Idaho and Georgia, talk of a state gasoline tax increase has been circulating.

In California, ACEC California's Los Angeles Chapter has been sending letters to legislators in Sacramento requesting a 20-cent per gallon increase in the fuel excise tax. Currently transportation receives revenue from a gasoline and diesel fuel tax of 18 cents and an additional 5% sales tax dedicated to transportation. The sum of these taxes generate around \$4 billion to \$5 billion per year, depending on the base price of fuel. With ACEC's idea, if gasoline costs \$2.00 per gallon, before taxes, transportation could receive 48 cents per gallon, meaning \$8 billion per year. If fuel prices rise again, the per-gallon tax rises, even if VMT drops. Sounds like a good idea, much better than the Democrats idea of replacing the excise tax and sales tax with a 39-cent fee. The down side is that it requires two-thirds of the legislature to approve it. A few Republicans must join the Democrats for approval, so ACEC is fighting an uphill battle. What's different now is that mere mention of raising gasoline taxes is no longer a reason to be kicked out of Sacramento.

CTCDC's Speed Limit Meeting

The California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC) will meet in late February in Sacramento to discuss a proposed change the California MUTCD's setting of prima facie speed limits.

The less controversial recommendation is to change the round-off rule in the California MUTCD, which currently requires us to round off the 85th percentile speed to the nearest 5 miles per hour, forcing us to round up just as often as down. The CTCDC's proposal would allow the speed limit to be within 5 mph of the 85th percentile speed, that is, you can round down by more than 2 mph.

Legislative Analysis Continued on Page 8...

The controversial part is whether to have a “soft floor” or “hard floor” to the prima facie speed limit. Currently an agency can take an additional 5 mph reduction for unapparent roadway features. The California Highway Patrol and Caltrans prefer a hard floor requirement that the prima facie speed limit SHALL NOT be less than the 50th percentile speed. CHP in particular is concerned about having to enforce a speed limit that 50% of drivers already exceed. However, the majority of the CTCDC favors a soft floor with “SHOULD NOT” language. Several local agencies, led notably by the Cities of San Jose and Vacaville, complain that some roads have such tightly-packed speed distributions that the speed limit could end up below the 50th percentile just by simply rounding down, even without the reduction for unapparent roadway features.

I had written a couple of months ago that the likely result will be either a relaxation of the round-off rule plus a soft floor, or no change in the current language at all. However, it appears this meeting will decide the soft versus hard floor issue, with the round-off rule probably being relaxed regardless of that decision.

I can understand why municipal traffic engineers would want a soft floor: we constantly have to deal with irate citizens who demand lower speed limits, and the thought of being forced to raise posted speed limits is very unappealing. On the other hand, I’d become very irate myself if I got a speeding ticket for exceeding a 40th percentile speed limit.

Preventing Backover Accidents

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says 221 people were killed in 2007 from backover accidents, of which 99 were children. NHTSA calls these “totally preventable.” We’ll see about that. Federal legislation (S. 694, Clinton) passed last year requiring automakers to provide blind spot avoidance equipment no later than 2013. This could consist of additional mirrors, sensor devices, or cameras. The new DOT Secretary Ray LaHood will need to issue regulations stating the requirements by this summer.

Measure R’s Tax Collection Starts July 1st

In Los Angeles County, the Measure R half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements begins July 1st.

I’m curious to see if the measure will be as popular then as it was last November.

Must You Stop at a Dark Signal?

True or false: when approaching a dark inoperable traffic signal, do you treat it as if the intersection were controlled by all-way stop signs? Answer: False, at least in California since 2002. That’s when an additional sentence was added to California Vehicle Code 21600(d)(1) saying “This subparagraph shall apply to traffic control signals that become inoperative because of battery failure.” Yvetteh Ortiz of City of Concord mentioned to the East Bay Traffic Engineers group that a traffic court threw out a ticket challenged by a driver who drove through a signalized intersection that was dark due to a malfunction. The traffic court interpreted the language as applying only to signals inoperative due to battery failure.

AAA’s legislative counsel has been informed. Until the law is fixed, it appears approaching motorists may react as if the intersection were uncontrolled, yielding to vehicles approaching from the right, but not necessarily stopping.

This analysis is based on the world as it stood January 29, 2009. For comments regarding this article, please contact Walter Okitsu at wokitsu@crainandassociates.com. ♦

Start Your Spring the “ITE” Way...

ITE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA & SAN DIEGO SECTIONS



Present a Mini-Workshop

Friday, March 13, 2009 – 10:00 AM to 1:30 PM

Registration Begins at 9:30 AM

Workshop Program:

“Factors affecting the Pedestrian Environment”

Ryan Snyder, President of Ryan Snyder Associates, LLC

A slide presentation with real life examples of walkability, accessibility, safety and connectivity issues along with solutions and lesson learned.

“Pedestrian Master Planning”

Sherry Ryan, PhD, Alta Planning and Design

A presentation examining the need for pedestrian master plans, the advantages, how to develop them, items to consider in the development stage and lessons learned.

Lunch Keynote Address:

“Multimodal LOS (MM LOS)”

Richard Dowling, P.E., T.E., Chair of Transportation Research Board Committee on Highway Capacity and Quality of Service

Schedule for developing and implementing MM LOS, changes to current analysis, processes in traffic impact study manual and HCM, how this relates to CEQA and how it affects project impact analysis.

Place:

El Adobe Restaurant, San Juan Capistrano

31891 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675 tel. (949) 493-1163

From Los Angeles Take I-5 South, Ortega Hwy/CA 74 exit, Exit 82 toward San Juan Capistrano, turn right onto Ortega Hwy/CA -74, turn left onto Camino Capistrano

Price:

\$35 with Reservation (**\$40** without); **\$20** for Students

Reservations:

Email: lisa.martellaro-palmer@lacity.org

Reservations Due by Noon, Monday, March 9th !

**ANNUAL
OCTEC / ITE GOLF TOURNAMENT**

FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2009

FOUR MAN SCRAMBLE

SHOTGUN START AT 8:00 AM

REPORT IN BY 7:30 AM

GREEN RIVER GOLF CLUB

5215 GREEN RIVER ROAD, CORONA

91 Freeway off at Green River Road

(See Thomas Guide Page 742 B-5, Riverside County)

Telephone (951) 737-7393

Please Dress Appropriately

***\$90.00 ENTRY FEE INCLUDES CART & BUFFET LUNCH
PLEASE HAVE ENTRIES IN PRIOR TO MAY 4, 2009***

***** MAIL ENTRIES TO: JIM SOMMERS *****

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Orange, CA 92868

Telephone (714) 573-0317

FAX (714) 573-9534

jsommers@koacorporation.com

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3)	_____	_____	_____
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Please print clearly and provide e-mail address for each player if possible.