



September President's Message

Here we go! Your new Washington State Section ITE Board is in place and ready to begin a new year. We look forward to a year of interesting programs, professional development, growing our student chapters, and fun.



David Alm

Officers: This year's WA Section President Board is comprised of **Nick Ching** as Vice President and Treasurer, **Jim Bloodgood** as Secretary, **Kerensa Fromherz** as the Past-President, and yours truly as your President. We are greatly augmented by the several members who will volunteer their time to help with our several committees, as follow:

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ITE Washington Section presents:

Evaluating Congestion Relief Using HOT Lanes

Have you ever wondered how we are going to manage our free-way system in the year 2030? What about converting our existing and planned HOV lanes to HOT lanes? Or even adding a second HOV lane and making them both HOT lanes? Or HOT lanes and full congestion pricing? How would these strategies manage the traffic demand we expect and what would the costs and challenges be. Find out about these interesting strategies and more at our September meeting when we discuss Congestion Relief using HOT lanes.

SPEAKERS Don Samdahl, P.E., Mirai Associates
Shuming Yan, P.E., WSDOT

LOCATION Salty's on Alki
1936 Harbor Avenue SW
Seattle, WA
(206) 937-1600

DATE Tuesday, September 11

COST Payable by cash or check to "ITE Washington Section"
ITE members: \$35
Students: \$5

TIME Social — 11:30 a.m.
Lunch and Presentation— 12:00 p.m.

MENU Pasta Salad Buffet and Home-made cookies for dessert

RSVP By Friday, September 7 to Iris Cabrera at
ITERegistration@ci.kirkland.wa.us

(Continued from page 1)

Newsletter: Sanjeev Tandle (Parametrix)
Programs: Sherman Goong (City of Bothell)
Hospitality: Iris Cabrera (City of Kirkland)
Scribe: Paul Cho (City of Redmond)
Membership: Jan Cignak (KPG) and Hidemi Tsuru (KPG)
Webmaster: Gary Costa (City of Issaquah)
Annual Meeting: Bill Love (CH2M Hill) and Jamal Mahmoud (King County)
ITE/IMS A Meeting: Tim Newkirk (CH2M Hill) and Lawrence Guan (Parsons Brinkerhoff Q&D)
Student Activities: Megan Powers (DKS) and Scott Lee (Transpo)
University Liaison: Yinhai Wang (U of W)
Golf Tournament: Terry Gibson (Gibson Traffic)
Directory: Matt Nolan (King County Metro)

Upcoming Board Meeting: At last count, the Washington Section of ITE can boast 702 members. Interest in our monthly meetings is increasing. Financially, I am pleased to inform you that our ITE Washington Section is very strong, strong enough that the Board will be considering a significant direct endowment from the Washington Section to the District 6 Student Endowment Fund. We will be discussing this potential grant, topics and venue for upcoming meetings, and other business items at our upcoming Board meeting. Please, therefore, forward any of your thoughts and suggestions to one of your officers soon.

Student Priority: For the past several years, our Section and District 6 have put a priority on developing student initiatives. The resulting growth in student participation at ITE meetings is invigorating. I hope we can continue this great work. Thank you to those members who contributed to our local Student Fund, and to the others who mentor or otherwise help develop our future transportation professionals.

Call for Newsletter Articles: There have been many members who have contributed technical articles to our monthly newsletter through the years. These articles have helped us all grow. Now, we want more. The Board will be greatly encouraging all members to share your project endeavors or other professional thoughts and considerations with articles long or short. Here's your chance to tell us all about your project, and a chance for recognition for you and your team! You can anticipate me to call and prod you in the next few months for your pledge to contribute an article for our newsletter.

Directory: The new membership directory is almost ready for publishing. If you have moved recently, this is your last chance to notify our Directory Chair Matt Nolan (matthew.nolan@metrokc.gov) of your new contact information. We are also still selling advertising space in the directory if your company is interested in a great marketing opportunity.

Upcoming: Be sure to check our fine web site for newsletters, announcements, or to link. The address is <http://www.westernite.org/Sections/washington/index.htm>. Our first meeting of the season will be in September out at beautiful Alki Point in West Seattle. I hope to see you there if not before.

Sincerely,
David Alm,
President, ITE Washington Section



contact Dave Alm
400 112th Avenue NE, Suite 400
Bellevue, WA 98004
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Mark Skaggs

Seattle, Washington

Phone: 206.251.0300
markskaggs@alltrafficdata.net

Trafficcount, Inc.

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President

Traffic Counts for
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4820 Yelm Hwy S.E. Ste B PMB195
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Tel: (360) 491-8116
Fax: (360) 491-1079
Cell: (360) 239-6005
E-mail trafficcount@msn.com

Debbie Wick, P.E., PTOE
President



6830 NE Bothell Way, Ste C411
Kenmore, WA 98028

(w) 206-440-0755
(f) 206-440-0757
(m) 602-540-0341

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Scribe Report

By Paul Cho, City of Redmond

As I crested Snoqualmie Pass and settled into a steady pace along eastbound I-90, I wondered what this year's annual meeting would be like. Held at the Red Lion Hotel in Yakima, the program schedule was packed with topics ranging from planning to design to daily operations to emergency traffic management. Being heavily involved in traffic operations, I couldn't wait to attend the programs; especially ones entitled "Traffic Signal Operations."



I promised myself that I wouldn't take notes, but rather enjoy each of the presentations. That didn't last very long. Each technical session was brimming with information that could have been pages from a reference manual. How is it that we have such talented professionals, yet for the most part go unnoticed? It's all I can do to refrain from referring back to my notes on each of the speaker's topics and provide a reader's digest version of the presentation. But I wouldn't do them justice. If you were there, you know what I mean. If your schedule didn't allow participation, you missed out.

Even during the luncheon, we were treated to a presentation on the history of Snoqualmie Pass and recent emergency response following slides along I-90. I realized that I had passed the very area several hours prior. Although outside my specialized area of expertise, I found it so fascinating to recap the efforts to restore safe passage in the midst of weather and travelers' demands.

Following the technical presentation, we were herded towards the patio area to enjoy a social hour before the dinner. Maybe we were lacking fresh air. Maybe it was the warm sunshine accompanied by a cool breeze. Or maybe it was the local wines we tasted. But it brought out the color in a room full of engineers. I found myself learning more as I got to know the professionals that made up our Washington section. I learned that someone's son was heading off to military training. I found someone had recently taken up golf. I found someone is expecting their first baby. I met real people behind the technical brilliance. The 60 minutes before the deep pans of buffet dinner was served afforded a time to learn about the people that comprised our section.

Spending the time to get to know some of our members helped me to understand what ITE is to me. At that moment, I was not the scribe reporter. I was a real person. I was the driver of the minivan in the lane next to you at the stop light. I was the person at a neighborhood park. I was the person that picked up a flat on the freeway. I was Joe Public. And so were the rest of the members in the room. Even so, our common goal was to serve other's with the same name. Whether it involved traffic modeling to convert four lanes to 3 lanes, or ensuring that signals are operating efficiently or surveying the hurricane damaged communities, our hope was to improve the quality of life for the Public Family.

Heading into our summer break, I was able to reflect a bit on the activities and programs of the past year. The quality of the venue and programs put together by the Board and Committee members was extraordinary. The quality of the presentations was not to be missed. Whether as an organizer, speaker or participant, individual members made 2006/2007 a great year. And the best part for me was getting to know a little bit more about the individual members that make up this great section. I look forward to continuing on as the Scribe for the next year. See you at September meeting.

Positions Available

KPG is seeking a civil engineer with basic experience in the traffic engineering field. Ideal candidates will be familiar with preparing signal, illumination, and channelization plans, and related specifications and cost estimates. Knowledge in traffic operational analysis is a plus. College graduates with interests in Traffic Engineering are encouraged to apply. Please email resume to jan@kpg.com.

Reader-Friendly Environmental Documents - The Problem and Solutions

By David Mattern and Stephanie Miller, Parametrix

Is there a problem?

NEPA environmental documents have gotten a bad reputation of late, and there is general consensus that it is largely deserved. The public, agencies, and NEPA practitioners agree that most environmental documents are difficult to understand and hard to use. In a recent survey by conducted by jointly by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC), 78 percent of respondents said there was a problem with the overall quality of environmental documents. Common problems cited include the length, organization, failure to reach conclusions, and poor writing.

Researchers at the University of Illinois studied how environmental documents related to how well laypeople understood a project. The results, in the authors' words, were "atrocious". On two measures of understanding over 70 percent of readers scored no better than chance. The results improved only slightly with higher reading ability.

Its not just NEPA practioners and citizens who can be frustrated with poorly written documents, there is also case law on the subject. In [Oregon Environmental Council v. Kunzman](#) the court found, apparently with some reluctance, the document was inadequate because it was incomprehensible. "An EIS must translate technical data into terms that render it an effective disclosure of the environmental impacts of a proposed project to all of its intended readers."

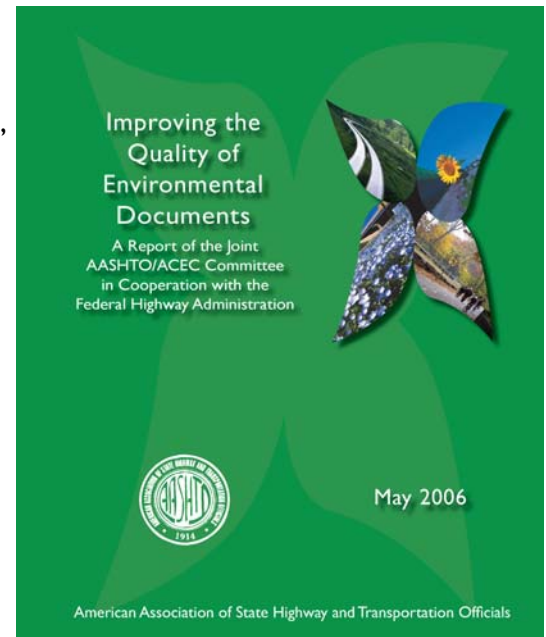
So there is a problem with the readability of environmental documents. The irony is this is not what was intended. NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1500) are replete with directions like "EISs shall be written in plain language and may use appropriate graphics so that decision makers and the public can readily understand them.", "EISs shall be analytic rather than encyclopedic.", and "EISs shall be concise, clear, and to the point...". Just a casual reading of the regulations governing NEPA shows clear intent for environmental documents to be short, clear, and to the point.

Is there a solution?

The readability and quality of environmental documents can be greatly improved and we can do a better job of meeting NEPA's clear intent. To do so, build a thorough, solid technical understanding of your project and think about what really matters for the decision at hand. Next decide who your primary audience is and write your document for them.

For many projects the primary audience is the public and decision-makers, not NEPA specialists. In these cases put more technical information in your appendices and write for the average citizen. In all cases provide clear links to supporting information contained in appendices or references. The design of each document should be unique and tailored to each project. There is no prefabricated approach, rather you need to think clearly about your project, asking what is important and why, then explaining that to those who care. That's what NEPA asks. The result will be a reader-friendly document that is more engaging and understandable.

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What other tips can help me create reader-friendly documents?

We've developed four common principles that will help you to create reader-friendly documents:

- Tell a story: write in clear, simple language and explain the problem from the reader's perspective. Organize the document to create a narrative flow.
- Engage the reader: Use question-and-answer headings, with sidebars to provide supporting information. Lay out the document with plenty of white space and easy-to-read fonts.
- Make it visual: Use well-designed graphics to convey quantitative and spatial relations. Don't duplicate information in graphics, tables, and text.

Make it brief: Approach the document with a commitment to consider the relative important of each subject and how they actually bear on the decision at hand.

While a reader-friendly document is specifically written for the public and decision-makers, we suggest including features to satisfy technical readers. Sidebars can be used throughout the document to refer readers to technical appendices that contain a more detailed discussion. All appendices are included with every document on a CD-ROM. For readers used traditional EIS we provide a table mapping a "normal" organization so technical readers can find the information they are looking for..

What lies ahead?

At the national level we participated in a joint effort by FHWA, AASHTO, and ACEC to develop guidance on creating quality environmental documents. The report, completed in May 2006, addresses both document formats and legal sufficiency. Washington State DOT is continuing to strive to make its environmental documents more reader-friendly. To assist this effort, we prepared a "Reader-Friendly Document Toolkit" and have offered training on clear writing skills. Widespread interest in improving the quality of environmental documents, whether they are called "reader-friendly" or not, appears to be spreading outside of the transportation sector. For more information about the Tool Kit or the May 2006 joint FHWA, AASHTO, ACEC report go to <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Environment/ReaderFriendly.htm>

How to become a Member of ITE:

"When becoming a first time local member of the Washington State Section of ITE, fill out the application online at <http://www.westernite.org/Sections/washington/index.htm> (Click on the "Membership" link) and send a check for the annual dues to the Membership Chair. Once the Membership Chair receives the application and annual dues, he/she will forward this information to the ITE National Headquarters in Washington, DC. For subsequent years, each member will be billed for his/her annual local dues by the ITE National Headquarters. If you are interested in becoming a National and District member as well, contact ITE National directly to fill out an application form (<http://www.ite.org/>)."

Newsletter Contact Info

If you have any changes in your contact information, please let us know so you continue to receive monthly ITE e-mail announcements and newsletters. To update your information, click on the "Membership" link on the Washington State Section ITE website: <http://www.westernite.org/Sections/washington/index.htm>

“The Campus Corner”

By Scott Lee and Megan Powers

This summer we sent six students from the University of Washington and Seattle University to the ITE District 6 Meeting in Portland, OR. They competed in the James H. Kell Student Competition to design a bridge out of newspaper, string and masking tape. Five of the students were on winning teams for either the strength or aesthetics of their design. All of the students were excited to attend the conference and enjoyed the technical sessions and tour of the streetcar and aerial tram. Overall the trip was a great success.



Our thanks go out to the City of Bothell for letting us use a traffic calming project for the Student Night this last spring. The students did a great job in developing a concept plan for the neighborhood, and we received positive feedback from the professionals who attended. We are hoping to use another demonstration project again for this year's Students Night and are looking for ideas from the cities and counties within the region. If you have a project going on in your jurisdiction that you think would be interesting for the Student Night, please contact either Scott Lee or Megan Powers.

Student Activities Committee Co-Chairs:

Scott Lee, Transpo Group – (425) 821-3665 or scottl@thetranspogroup.com

Megan Powers, DKS Associates – (206) 382-9800 or mcp@dksassociates.com

2006-2007 Washington ITE Membership Directory

Preparation of the 2007/2008 Washington Section Membership Directory is underway! We are working to update contact information for our members and solicit advertisers for the directory. If you have changes in your contact information please update the Membership Committee; more information is available on the ITE Washington Section website under the membership tab. A limited number of full page color advertisements will be available as well as black and white advertisements in full page, half page, quarter page, and business card sizes. The advertisements in the directory are used to offset the cost of directory reproduction. We hope to keep the advertisement rate the same as the previous directory. We will be able to confirm advertisement costs when we have a better idea of advertising interest. If you are interested in advertising, please contact Matt Nolan of the Directory Committee (matthew.nolan@metrokc.gov) for more information.

WA Section ITE Board

President

David R. Alm
INCA Engineers
400 112th Ave NE, Suite 400
Bellevue, WA 98004
425.635.1000
425.635.1150 Fax
d.alm@incainc.com

Vice President/ Treasurer

Nick W. Ching
HNTB
600 - 108th Ave NE, Suite 405
Bellevue, WA 98004
425.456.8551
425.456.8600 Fax
nching@hntb.com

Secretary

James Bloodgood
Snohomish County
2930 Wetmore Avenue
Everett, WA 98201
425.388.6419
jim.bloodgood@co.snohomish.wa.us

Past President

Kerensa Swanson Fromherz
The Transpo Group
11730 118th Avenue NE, S 600
Kirkland, WA 98034
425.821.3665
425.825.8434 Fax
kerensas@thetranspogroup.com



c/o James Bloodgood
Snohomish County
2930 Wetmore Avenue
Everett, WA 98201
425.388.6419
jim.bloodgood@co.snohomish.wa.us