



# NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2017

If you'd like to become a YPT-Austin member or renew your membership, you can register [here](#). We have a lot of great events coming up and we hope that you can be a part of making 2017 a great year for YPT-Austin.

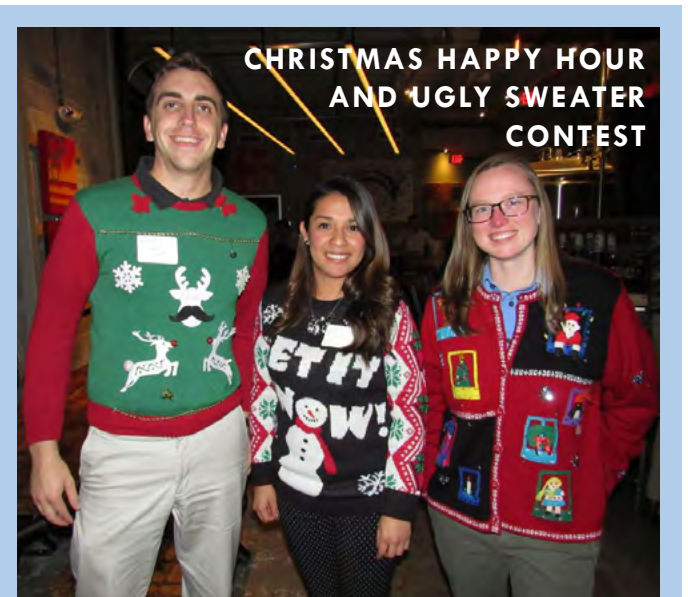
## OCTOBER ROUND TABLE | JOHN-MICHAEL CORTEZ ON AUSTIN'S 2016 MOBILITY BOND

This past October John-Michael Cortez, Austin Mayor Adler's Chief of Staff, spoke to YPT-Austin at the University of Texas Center for Transportation Research about Austin's historic 2016 mobility bond and the Mayor's transportation vision. YPT-Austin members packed the room as Mr. Cortez provided details on what the bond package would include and described the potential impacts to local transportation professionals if the bond passed. Mr. Cortez also encouraged the group in attendance to go out and show support for the bond as transportation professionals. He noted that it was the Mayor's intention to "be bold" in regards to transportation investment and push to address mobility – one of Austin's biggest issues.

Less than a month later, Austin citizens voted to approve the \$720 million bond, with over half that amount going towards corridor plans. In December, Austin City Council approved \$28 million in funding to begin work on the corridor improvements and local mobility projects such as sidewalks and bikeways.



## YPT-AUSTIN EVENTS



## MEMBER HIGHLIGHT | Dan Hennessey - Big Red Dog



### **Tell us a bit about yourself.**

I was born and raised in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. I went to The Ohio State University and studied civil engineering and economics before going to graduate school at the University of

California, Berkeley to study transportation engineering. I worked in the San Francisco Bay Area for about eight years at Fehr & Peers, a consulting firm that specializes in providing transportation planning and engineering services to public and private sector clients.

I moved to Austin in June to help start a transportation planning and traffic engineering service line at BIG RED DOG. My responsibilities include pursuing project work, managing clients and projects, providing training and mentoring to our staff, overseeing the operations and financial status of our group, and recruiting new staff as we continue to grow.

### **What have been the biggest challenges you've faced starting a new practice? And what are the lessons you've learned from facing those challenges?**

With respect to the practice, I struggled a lot with where to start. Establishing a client base, finding the right people to hire, and determining how to organize our group administratively were all significant challenges. I learned quickly that there was no set way to do anything, and that I should not waste time on tasks that were not directly helping me; there was no reason to do anything the exact way I was taught or how I thought it "should be done." In the same vein, I have to keep reminding myself about what I do not know and not to think I need to have all the answers now.

As potentially a new face in a new place, I asked a lot of questions when I initially started talking about this opportunity. Out of those discussions came a lot of ideas about strategies to bring to the Austin market that I thought would be beneficial. Particularly coming from a nationally respected firm and from the Bay Area, I thought it would be easier to incorporate those ideas into a new market. The biggest challenge has without question been introducing those strategies while also crafting a message that sells everyone (clients, reviewing jurisdictions, and the public, among others) to their benefits.

### **For aspiring YPs, what advice do you have for those looking to move up or take that next step in the transportation industry?**

Two pieces of advice, and they might seem contradictory, but I think they are both important:

1. Say 'yes' – if moving up or taking the next step for you is a priority, volunteer for tasks you do not know how to do, and trust yourself to find the resources to get it done. Throughout my career, I have found opportunities to continue to expand my skillset and my network, and while I have always been upfront about my lack of experience in a particular area, responding to these challenges have yielded a much larger range of choices for my own career. Keep your eyes up and ears open.

2. Be patient – I wish I had had this advice earlier in my career. Whatever you envision for your career, it does not have to happen for you all at once, and there is no timeline on success and visions can change. Careers are a marathon, not a sprint, and priorities change throughout. There will be years where focusing on your career and committing to that makes sense, and there will be times when family, other interests, or being a 20-something is the priority. I wish I had that long-term view earlier in my career.

### **What have you enjoyed the most about your new position and moving to Austin?**

Regarding my new position, I have enjoyed the freedom to shape this group into what I envision it can be. It's freeing to have no specific expectation from your firm and figure out how to make it work. BIG RED DOG has been great to me; they have provided any support I have asked for and some other support I did not know I needed. Their deep bench of development clients and public sector contacts gave me a great head start and provided a stellar reputation on which to start our practice.

Is it a cop out to say the thing I have enjoyed most about moving to Austin is Torchy's? I have also appreciated meeting the people of Austin, people from many places with diverse backgrounds and positive attitudes. Growing up in the Midwest and spending almost ten years in the Bay Area had me interacting with a variety of people – I love the mix I have found in Austin.

## NEW FACES FOR 2017

2016 was a great year for YPT-Austin, as we grew to over 70 contributing members – becoming the largest YPT chapter in Texas. A big thanks to all of our amazing members and especially to our outgoing officers. Their hard work is what allows YPT-Austin to be one of the most active and engaging transportation organizations in the region. YPT-Austin would also like to recognize our former Chair Nick Wood, who has been a part of YPT-Austin since its founding and has helped shape the organization into what it is today. With that being said, there are a few new faces on the board for this year, and we hope to continue growing the organization and expanding opportunities for local transportation professionals to network and develop.

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