

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 2018 a great year for YPT-Austin.

## ROUND TABLE RECAP

YPT-Austin hosts several round table events each year where guest speakers present on the latest hot topics or interesting issues in the transportation world. We had some great speakers this year and would like to give them all a big thank you for providing their insight and knowledge. We would also like to thank everybody who helped make these happen. Below is a recap of this year's round table series.

### TEXAS BULLET TRAIN WITH TEXAS CENTRAL PARTNERS

Texas Central Partners' Managing Director of External Affairs, Holly Reed, spoke to YPT-Austin about the ongoing high-speed rail corridor project which plans to connect Houston and Dallas/Fort Worth with a 240-mile rail line capable of completing the trip in less than 90 minutes. The first of its kind in the United States, this rail system can reach up to 205 mph and is expected to run every 30 minutes during peak hours. Outside of the amazing features of the rail line, Holly also talked about how this project could change the landscape of the transportation industry in the United States and how it will impact our jobs as young transportation professionals.



### ANTICIPATING A WORLD OF SHARED AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES WITH DR. KARA KOCKELMAN

For our last round table of the year, UT Austin's Dr. Kara Kockelman presented her research on shared autonomous vehicles and their anticipated impacts. Dr. Kockelman discussed some of the estimated benefits (e.g. individual cost savings of up to \$5,000 a year) of this emerging technology and described how these benefits may change under different scenarios where there is more ride-sharing and a smaller, more fuel efficient (or electric) fleet of vehicles. Her research also noted potential adverse effects such as a rise in VMT and potential for more sprawling development. Ultimately, Dr. Kockelman's presentation prepared those in attendance to better anticipate the coming changes associated with autonomous vehicles and to start thinking about how we, as transportation professionals, can address these impacts in our transportation policies and planning tools.



## CITY OF AUSTIN TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CENTER TOUR

Earlier this year, YPT-Austin was granted three private behind-the-scenes tours of the Austin Traffic Management Center by YPT's own Robin Osborne. During the tour, YPT members from all across North America (shout out to YPT-Toronto and YPT-Houston) got to see the infamous control center where the City monitors and adjusts (in real time) signal phasing of key Austin intersections. YPT members also got an in-depth look into signal cabinet functionality and the City's signal infrastructure maintenance and sign printing shop. While not a typical round table setting, Robin's knowledge and enthusiasm gave us one of the most interesting and informative events of the year.



### TMC Fun Fact

The TMC monitors and manages 1,000 traffic signals and 58 pedestrian beacons, with access to 357 traffic cameras that rotate between 16 positions on the video wall (which they have had access to since 2000). The TMC is staffed 87 hours per week plus hundreds of additional hours for special events. And after all that, **they have still never witnessed a crash in real time on their cameras!**

## NEW FACES FOR 2018

YPT-Austin would like to congratulate and welcome the new Board of Directors for the upcoming year: Dan Malsom (Deputy Chair), Emily Weigand (Admin and Programs), and Katrina Lack (Communications and Membership). We are excited to have them aboard and know they will do a great job improving the organization and providing more exciting opportunities for all of our members and friends. We are also excited that Sam Lundquist and Ryan Lohmann are staying on board another year in their positions as Chair and Treasurer.



**Dan Malsom | Deputy Chair**



**Emily Weigand | Vice Chair of Administration & Programs**



**Katrina Lack | Vice Chair of Communications & Membership**

## MEMBER HIGHLIGHT | Clayton McNeal- AECOM



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

I am originally from Ft. Worth, Texas and have had the pleasure to live in the Lone Star State for most of my life. I attended Texas A&M University Galveston and received a Bachelor's degree in Ocean and Coastal Systems Engineering.

I moved to Austin in January 2017 to begin my position as a Transportation Engineer-In-Training with the highway and bridge department at AECOM. So far, some of my responsibilities have included CADD production, traffic control design, field inspections, and roadway design. More of my professional interests include sustainable transportation, drainage engineering, and geotechnical engineering.

### **What inspired you to pursue a career in transportation?**

After deciding not to pursue a job in the oil and gas industry, I quickly became interested in transportation and the fact that I can see the results of my work every day as I commute through the city. It is extremely fulfilling to help connect the citizens of such a rich and thriving city as Austin, Texas.

I imagine that in some way, transportation is a worldwide necessity and this provides endless possibilities for my career. As cities continue to grow, the need for infrastructure improvements will always follow in suit. I am thankful for YPT for helping me grow my network in the transportation industry and meet other young professionals outside of the engineering community such as planners and traffic specialists.

### **What is your favorite project you have worked on so far? Tell us about the project and your experiences.**

I am currently working on the newly announced \$8.1 billion I-35 Capital Expressway project through central Austin from Round Rock to Buda. It will involve adding free lanes and two variable toll lanes in each direction, similar to MoPac. Due to tight right-of-way restrictions through a large portion of central Austin, TxDOT is proposing to "cut and cover" the express lanes and some main lanes two levels below existing ground in some areas.

My role so far has been to coordinate with the three project development engineering groups who are developing the complex new express lane designs. One of the biggest challenges I have faced is maintaining means of consistency between the three different engineering groups. I have quickly learned the value of planning and scheduling far in advance and have adapted to a much faster paced workflow than I am used to.

### **As an EIT, what's the biggest challenge you've faced and what is the best lesson you've learned so far in the early part of your transportation career?**

Time management has definitely been my biggest challenge in terms of anticipating how much time is needed to produce work and juggling time between various projects. I have learned the importance of prioritizing assignments and using my time as efficiently as possible. There seems to always be a fine balance between quality of work and turn-around time. As an engineer, it is sometimes hard to sacrifice a level of quality to meet a deadline. I have been fortunate enough to be surrounded by others who are extremely experienced and I have benefited from their mentorship and coaching.

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

I have always enjoyed water-related activities such as scuba diving, wind surfing, boating, and especially cliff-diving. Some favorite scuba destinations include Key Largo, Cozumel, Blue Grotto in Florida, and Morrison Springs in Louisiana. I am always finding new things to do in Austin and don't think I will run out for some time. I also enjoy frying/boiling Cajun-style seafood such as shrimp and crawfish and have been known to fry a whole turkey or two for the holidays.



Sounds like Clayton will be hosting our holiday event!

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