



Newsletter

May 2018

Industry Spotlight: Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA)

YPT-Austin got an all-access tour and some great professional advice

By Emily Weigand and Dan Malsom

YPT was treated to a tour of the CTRMA Traffic Management Facility along TX-183A in January. We saw the main room where multiple televisions clutter a wall with live toll road footage from 1080p cameras that monitor the MoPac toll lanes. We also learned about the algorithm that calculates variable toll pricing for CTRMA and the software used to monitor speed and traffic on its roads. As a final thrill, we were taken onto the open-air catwalk stretching across the multiple toll lanes, where we were shown the design elements that go into the toll gantries along the corridor. Thanks to our CTRMA tour guides, Fabiola Newman and Greg Mack!

As a follow-up to the January facility tour, YPT held its spring roundtable at the CTRMA offices. Staff members Dee Anne Heath, Director of External Affairs and Media Relations, and Justin Word, Director of Engineering, discussed the roles of engineering and communications in their lines of work with more than 35 YPT members over lunch.

Dee Anne shared many of the challenges that CTRMA faces when trying to communicate complicated engineering ideas to decision makers and the public. She shared examples about the focus group research and media campaigns that CTRMA developed ahead of the opening of new managed toll lanes along MoPac. Afterwards, Justin gave his perspective on the importance of communication in his career, and he shared tips about how to improve communication skills and to better understand the audiences that engineers often must present to.



YPT-Austin members wandering the CTRMA catwalk



Attendees at the January CTRMA facility tour



Lunch at the engineering communications spring roundtable



Celebrating Good Times: Holiday Bowling and Winter Trivia

From ugly sweaters at Dart Bowl to a National Engineers Week test of wits

By Sam Lundquist

In February, YPT-Austin joined forces with ASCE YMF, WEAT YP, EWRI, TAWWA, and TSPE YP to host a colossal networking and trivia happy hour event in celebration of Engineers Week. We had over 120 engineers, planners, and engineering enthusiasts attend our second annual version of this event. If you stayed late enough, you got to witness our very own Deputy Chair, Dan Malsom, bust out his best Vanilla Ice dance moves to ensure a tie breaking victory.



By Katrina Lack

In December 2017, YPT celebrated the Holiday season with a tacky-sweater bowling party at Dart Bowl. Party-goers participated in a tacky sweater contest and two of our members got to go home with gift cards as their prize! The night ended with a contest of acrobatics and dexterity in the famous Dart Bowl Laser Maze.

Get to Know a Member – Tyler Mitchell (Kimley-Horn)



Q: Tell us about yourself!

A: I grew up here in Austin, Texas but decided that I wanted to attend Texas A&M University where I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. Afterwards, I moved back to Austin to begin working with the roadway group at Kimley-Horn. Thus far I have had the opportunity to work on multiple projects ranging from ADA/pedestrian improvements, to turn lanes, on-off bridges, and roadway aspects on land development projects.

Q: What inspired you to pursue a career in transportation?

A: At first I didn't necessarily know I wanted to do transportation, just something related to civil engineering. I ended up getting three internships at TxDOT in three different departments which helped direct me into the transportation side of civil engineering. After those three summers, I realized I enjoyed the design aspect of those internships and choose to focus on applying for jobs which would allow me to continue that passion.

Q: What has been your favorite YPT event?

A: I enjoyed our lunch with CTRMA back in April. It was interesting to see how they operate, interact with

Austin residents, and their plans for future transportation work in the Austin area.

Q: What's been your favorite project to work on?

A: My role on our ADA pedestrian project for the TxDOT San Antonio district was my favorite project. This was because I was a big part of this project from start to finish, and was able to see it through to the end. It allowed me to see how we interact with our clients and serve them well through every step of the process.

Q: What's the biggest challenge you have faced as a young professional in transportation?

A: The biggest challenge I've faced is knowing where to find information regarding a project, or design, or a city-specific standard. Several projects I've worked on have required external information that I either don't know, don't have, or don't know where to find it. I've had to learn how to reach out to coworkers within the office, and within the company to find this information and be able to pull what's necessary into the project.

Q: What do you like to do for fun in Austin?

A: I enjoy playing disc golf, foot golf, and real golf in and around the Austin area with friends and coworkers. I also like to frequent lesser-known comedy shows around Austin during the work week. It allows me to take my mind off work and not think about what needs to be done the next day.

Q: If you could learn to drive/operate any type of transporting vehicle, which would you choose?

A: I think learning to fly a helicopter would be awesome. The reason is because not as many people know how to fly them versus planes, and you can land them in more locations than a plane...like on a private yacht or on top of a building.

Thanks to Tyler for being a valuable member of YPT-Austin!

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