What to Focus on in 2011: Effective Planning, Maximizing Funding Resources and Sustainability

Increased Challenges, New Opportunities
Last December, the first data published from the 2010 Census illustrated significant population increases in many communities and regions across the U.S. This increased population growth leaves many municipalities facing greater challenges in developing and determining which projects are necessary to support their communities. While these challenges can be difficult, they also present new opportunities to produce transportation infrastructure projects that are viable and valuable in supporting current and future populations.

In recognition of these opportunities, Freese and Nichols, Inc. (FNI) has chosen three key issues to address and discuss with our On Course readers in 2011: effective planning, maximizing funding resources and sustainability. We believe that keeping these issues front-of-mind can help guide municipalities in making sound project decisions to support their communities.

Effective Planning
In Texas alone, the 2010 Census population growth data exceeded 2005 growth projections by 2 percent (nearly 500,000 citizens). The data also showed Texas to have one of the highest population changes (the rate of change in population between decennial census years) in the U.S. Perhaps now more than ever, it is critically important for Texas municipalities to assess their long-term transportation and development plans to effectively meet their communities’ needs.

Maximizing Funding Resources
It is often beneficial to combine more than one source of funding to maximize your financial support, such as using revenue generated from user fees as the local matching dollars for a grant-funded project. Combinations such as this allow a municipality to implement a project without drawing from already-tight financial resources. Diversifying funding sources helps enable communities to continue diligent monitoring, provide regular maintenance and improve their infrastructure while weathering the storm of the current economic climate.

Sustainability
Sustainability involves taking into consideration the way projects affect our natural environments and communities on a more holistic and long-term level. Sustainable approaches are focused on minimizing impacts to the environment while maximizing the benefits of project by enhancing the way citizens live, work and play. Today’s communities, governing bodies and regulatory agencies view the effective practice of sustainability as critical in today’s transportation engineering and planning fields, and projects must meet the needs of the present without compromising future generations.

We’re Here to Help
FNI recognizes the importance of these topics to our clients, and we will be focusing on them in the remaining 2011 issues of On Course. Please see Page 2 for information on some of FNI’s key experts who will be addressing these topics in future issues.

Tricia Hatley, P.E., LEED AP
John Dewar, P.E.
2011 On Course Key Experts

The following are some of FNI’s key contributors to this year’s issues:

Edmund Haas, AICP
Edmund is an FNI Associate with 22 years of consulting experience in transportation and urban planning for the public and private sectors. His urban planning experience involves the preparation of policy-oriented comprehensive development and growth strategy plans. His transportation planning experience includes community thoroughfare planning, corridor planning, major investment studies and draft environmental impact statements, roadway impact fee systems, geographic information systems applications and associated demographic and spatial analyses, traffic impact studies, site access, design and circulation studies, and parking demand studies.

Kevin St. Jacques, P.E., P.T.O.E.
Kevin is an FNI Associate with 26 years of transportation experience in planning, design and project management throughout Texas and Oklahoma. A senior transportation engineer and project manager, Kevin has managed multi-phase, multi-discipline projects, including traffic services for TxDOT’s Dallas and Fort Worth Districts and planning studies such as the Truck Lane Pilot Study for NCTCOG on sections of I.H. 20 and I.H. 30. His work in Houston includes traffic engineering for Houston METRO and the Houston Bikeway Program, with more than 300 miles of trails and street modifications to accommodate bicycling and pedestrian mobility and safety.

Stanford Lynch, P.E.
Stan is a FNI Associate with 34 years of experience in public/private development, planning, design, implementation and management. He has a solid background in engineering design and a practical but innovative approach to development, policy analysis, funding support and building productive collaborations for regional projects. Stan has been instrumental in developing several significant projects in North Texas, including the 12,500-acre Las Colinas in Irving. He specializes in long-range planning and budgeting, including Major Investment Studies; transportation corridor studies; and planning, design and construction for transportation infrastructure.

Mikel Wilkins, P.E., LEED AP
Mikel is an FNI Associate and one of Texas’ first Professional Engineers to become a LEED-Accredited Professional. He serves as leader of FNI’s in-house Sustainable Design Technical Excellence Program. An advocate for best management practices, he understands the sustainability goals of Texas municipalities and how they fit into the design process. He is familiar with LEED-certified design criteria and the performance benchmarks required for LEED certification. Mikel has 16 years of project experience in storm drainage, and roadway and utilities design for municipal, commercial and residential developments in Texas and North Carolina.

Key Contacts

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2010: The Highlights

Following are some key highlights from our past year:

2010 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
FNI became the first engineering and architectural firm ever to receive this award and one of seven businesses to be recognized in 2010, one of three recognized in the small business category.

Fort Worth Unveils FNI’s Design for Trinity Uptown’s Three Bridges
Fort Worth released FNI’s final design concepts for three new bridges intended to serve as a stylish entrance into Trinity Uptown – the new, urban waterfront community planned for just north of downtown Fort Worth.

FNI Selected for Segment 2 of NTTA’s S.H. 121/ Southwest Parkway Project in Fort Worth
FNI was selected as part of the Lamb-Star Engineering team by the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) for Segment 2 of S.H. 121/Southwest Parkway in Fort Worth.

WTS Employer of the Year
FNI was named Employer of the Year by the Dallas/Fort Worth chapter of the Women’s Transportation Seminar.

FNI Selected to Lead DFW International Airport Terminal Renewal and Improvement Program
FNI was selected to serve as Program Manager for this $1.74-billion program focused on upgrading Terminals A, B, C and E at DFW International Airport.

Burleson Comprehensive Plan and S.H. 174 Corridor Plan Receive 2010 APA Project Planning Award
FNI received this award from the Midwest Section of the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) for the Imagine Burleson: Roadmap to 2030 comprehensive plan, which included a corridor plan for the City’s S.H. 174.

Construction Nearing Completion on Innovative Bee Cave Parkway/Freitag Creek Crossing
Construction on FNI’s innovatively-designed two-span pedestrian crossing under Bee Cave Parkway is nearing completion. The project’s minimal footprint allowed construction under a Nationwide 404 Permit without triggering a USACE notification requirement, resulting in substantial cost and time savings.

Texas Construction Top 10 Design Firms
FNI ranked #9 on Texas Construction magazine’s 2010 list of Top 10 Design Firms.
Merritt Road Green Thoroughfare Design, City of Rowlett

FNI’s design improvements for Merritt Road in Rowlett incorporate sustainable principles to meet today’s needs without compromising the needs of future generations. The City desires to create a roadway that sets the standard for sustainable development in the North Shore District of the City. The project, which includes paving and intersection improvements along with water, sewer and drainage design, focuses on creating an environmentally-friendly, economically-feasible and socially-acceptable solution for the City of Rowlett. In our design process for Merritt Road, we explored sustainable principles such as bioretention areas/enhanced dry swale in the median, solar-powered street lighting, low water use for landscaping in the right-of-way, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly enhancements, regional detention facilities, and recycled materials in the pavement section and trench backfill. The City elected to adopt several of these principles into the roadway design and is currently finalizing their decision on which principles to implement, according to available funding. Along with the benefits of improved air and water quality, the project design also boasts improved performance and reduced lifecycle and maintenance costs through design solutions such as improved pavement design and elimination of sod in the medians for less mowing and irrigation.

Project Spotlight

Wendy Shabay, AICP, Asso. AIA

Ms. Shabay is an award-winning urban designer and Associate with FNI. She offers 18 years of extensive experience in the fields of planning, architecture and urban design, with expertise in all project phases from conception to construction. She has experience in higher education master planning, programming, data gathering, public participation, stakeholder involvement, graphic design, conceptual/schematic design, project management, funding and implementation. Ms. Shabay was awarded the Young Professional of the Year for 2004 by the American Institute of Architects in Fort Worth and honored with the Forty Under Forty award by the Fort Worth Business Press recognizing 40 of the biggest rising stars in the world of Fort Worth business. She is an active member of the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Architects. Additionally, she serves on the board of Southeast Forth Worth, Inc., Northeast Leadership Forum and she is Secretary of the State of Texas Board of the American Planning Associations.

Contact Information

Please feel free to contact Wendy at:
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Some of Wendy’s Work Includes:

» U.S. 180 Corridor Plan for Weatherford
» I.H. 35 Corridor Plan for Red Oak
» S.H. 174 Corridor Plan for Burleson*
» S.H. 377 Corridor Plan for Keller
» Urban Villages Master Plan for Southeast Fort Worth*
» Downtown Vision Plan for Red Oak
» Area Development Plans for UT Tyler and Central Texas College
» Downtown Plan for Wichita Falls
» Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinance for DeSoto
» Magnolia Urban Village Pedestrian and Streetscape Project for Fort Worth

*Award-winning projects