Great Lakes District Administrator

Patrick O’Connor, P.E., PTOE (M)  
Project Manager,  
American Structurepoint, Inc.

Education  
Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering,  
Purdue University

Professional Affiliations/Certifications  
A member of IMSA, he also holds the Traffic Signal Level 3 Senior Field Technician certification.

Awards  
Patrick was awarded Young Engineer of the Year in 2011 by ITE’s Florida Section. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to the Section and to the transportation profession.

ITE Service  
Great Lakes District Administrator  
2020 Midwest + Great Lakes Joint Annual Meeting Local Arrangements Committee  
“New” Great Lakes Transition Team  
In celebration of its 90th anniversary, ITE is recognizing each of its District Administrators throughout the year in a series of profiles. Each month this column will also feature historical facts and figures on the various Districts, including important dates and people throughout their history.

Since graduating from Purdue in 2002, Patrick O’Connor, P.E., PTOE (M) has lived and worked in Dallas, TX, USA and Tampa, FL, USA. When his wife, Alicia, had the opportunity to move to Indianapolis, IN, USA a few years ago, Patrick was thrilled to be going “back home again” and is currently a project manager for American Structurepoint, Inc., specializing in traffic operations.

O’Connor was appointed to the role of ITE Great Lakes District Administrator (DA) in 2015 by Hardik Shah (M) who was serving as the Great Lakes District Chair and International Director at the time. He succeeded fellow Indiana Section member Tony Jones (M).

“My path isn’t unlike that of many of my colleagues,” O’Connor says. “I was good in math and science, and took an Engineering 101 class where different professionals came in each week and talked about the kind of engineering they did. I thought I might like civil engineering if I could be outside and around construction. After my sophomore year I interned at—a basically—a one-man shop, and that’s where I got my real education—baptism by fire, as they say. And I realized that I really did want to be an engineer—dirt and water don’t interest me, but if I can be around cars, I am happy.”

Since graduation, O’Connor has served various client types throughout a wide range of specialties as the market and his job required. “The latter portion of my career I have focused on traffic operations where I really enjoy problem solving in real time,” he says. “There is nothing like an upset motorist honking and sharing their sometimes-explicit thoughts with you while fine-tuning signal timings in a cabinet to motivate you to find a safe solution!”

O’Connor’s role as District Administrator (DA) is different from the other DAs throughout ITE. Great Lakes’ District leadership is “lean and mean” as they do not have elected officers. The District board is comprised of current elected Section presidents and past presidents who, in addition to their Section duties, also serve on the District board. Furthermore, Scott Knebel (M) is the only International Director that also serves as International District Director/Chair, keeping him extremely busy with his ITE responsibilities. O’Connor says he spends a lot of time communicating with Board/Section leadership and committee chairs. “At the end of the day our current structure gives us a lot of freedom of movement to get things done and serve our members and District efficiently,” he notes.

Patrick shares a Great Lakes District update at the February Indiana Section Technical Lunch at the Rathskeller Restaurant in Indianapolis, IN.
O’Connor joined ITE as young member in 2004 and was active in the Dallas Section of Texas ITE. He says that staying active in ITE truly yields great benefits and, although he’s moved multiple times, the friendships and professional contacts he’s developed over the years through ITE are still dynamic and growing. Additionally, serving the Tampa Bay Chapter as Board President was a great opportunity for exposure to the full gamut of leadership within ITE, from interactions with our members to working and being involved with the District leadership.

“Become active! You’ll never be turned away, as we always need help,” he offers as advice to ITE members looking to become more involved. “If you see an opportunity to contribute or where you could benefit, speak up. There is never the right time, or the right amount of experience before being comfortable raising your hand to volunteer. Take the smallest opportunity to dip your toe in, or jump in with both feet.”

He adds, “As long as you are willing to listen, take direction and ask for help, you will be successful and benefit ITE. Also, take advantage of the ITE Young Member discounted dues if your company or agency doesn’t support you—it’s worth the investment in yourself.”

Did You Know?

- The Great Lakes District Board is comprised of two officers from each of the three Sections’ leadership (president and past president) for a two-year term plus the District Chair and International Director, a position filled by an individual for a three-year term (it rotates amongst the three sections). As they transition to the “new” Great Lakes District, they will adopt a more typical structure.
- Traffic Bowl is Serious Business! Great Lakes Traffic Bowl stats:
  - Ten years of District Traffic Bowls in eight different cities: Indianapolis, IN; Columbus, OH; Lexington, KY; Grand Rapids, MI; Dayton, OH; Chicago, IL; Ann Arbor, MI; and Ft. Wayne, IN.
  - Four winning schools (Purdue, Ohio State University, Wayne State, and Trine University)
  - Four schools represented at the international level (Purdue, Western Michigan University, Wayne State, and Trine)
  - Purdue has won the event 7 times, including 5 consecutive wins (2014-2018)
  - Eight different schools have participated

Historical Perspective

- The Ohio Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers was founded in 1956 with 11 charter members.
- Paul Robinette was a charter member of the Ohio Section, and became City Traffic Engineer of Toledo, OH in 1936. He is believed to be the first person to hold that title in an Ohio city.
- Roger L. Morrison, the fourth president of ITE, was a native of Illinois. He became an associate professor and the professor of highway engineering and transportation at the University of Michigan in 1924. At the time of his election, he was the first mid-westerner to serve as President of ITE. He was also a founder of ITE in 1930 and a vice president for two years, 1934 to 1936. He was a director from 1931 to 1933. He was named an ITE Honorary Member posthumously in 1952.