Northeastern District Administrator

Michael P. O’Rourke, P.E., PTOE (F)
Senior Traffic Engineer
Frederick P. Clark Associates

Education
Bachelor’s in Civil Engineering, Manhattan College
Master’s in Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering, Polytechnic University

Professional Affiliations
American Society of Civil Engineers
Transportation Research Board
Highway Capacity Committee
Unsignalized Intersection Subcommittee
User Liaison Subcommittee

ITE Awards
Ivor S. Wisepart Engineer of the Year Award
Harvey Boutwell Distinguished Service Award

In celebration of its 90th anniversary, ITE is recognizing each of its District Administrators throughout the year in a series of profiles in ITE Journal. Each month, this column will also feature historical facts and figures on the various Districts, including important dates and people throughout their history to present day.

As Northeastern District Administrator since 2014, Michael P. O’Rourke, P.E., PTOE (F) admits he has big shoes to fill. “I am the fourth administrator for the Northeastern District—what used to be District One,” O’Rourke tells ITE Journal. “It turns out that the District One Board actually created the position of District Administrator back in 1988.”

Past administrators in the Northeastern District include Harvey Boutwell, P.E. (F) (deceased) who initially came up with the idea for the District Administrator role, as well as Alan Gonseth, P.E. (F) and Steve Gayle, PTP (F), both past presidents of ITE.

In his role, O’Rourke acts as an advisor of sorts, making himself available at District meetings and activities throughout the year to help answer any questions. “We’re essentially the corporate memory,” he says of ITE District Administrators. “Even if I don’t know the answer, I know the people to call to get that information.”

In addition to providing his advice and counsel, O’Rourke also helps take care of District financial matters, signing checks and preparing budgets. Lately, he has also been keeping track of the new District, Section, and Chapter charters and bylaws, which are being implemented as part of the ONE ITE initiative. “I’m not the referee, but I’m the person who informs because I have those documents,” he says. “Certainly the board does as well, but I make sure I walk around at the meetings, just in case someone asks, ‘Hey can we do this?’”

As District Administrator, O’Rourke also oversees District operations at a board governance level. “It’s been the goal of certainly not only the District Administrators but also the elected leadership to keep all three Sections involved as equally as possible,” he says.

The District is comprised of the Metropolitan Section of New York/New Jersey, the New England Section, and the New York Upstate Section. Though the number of members varies widely among Sections, the Northeastern District ensures fairness in its elections by giving each Section equal representation.

“Demographically, the New England section and the MET Section are approximately equal in size, and far outweigh in terms of population to the Upstate Section. So if we were just to go by ‘popular vote,’ there is at least the chance that we wouldn’t have representation from the Upstate Section, and we don’t want that,” O’Rourke says. With three elected representatives on the District Board, each Section is represented as either secretary/treasurer, vice president, or president. When a president rotates off the Board, that Section gets to elect the new secretary/treasurer.

“Harvey started working on this concept, which Alan continued, and Steve and I have also worked to keep the Sections involved,” he says.
O’Rourke has been a member of ITE since the mid-1970s when he began as a student member, and has been a Fellow for more than 20 years. He has served in a number of leadership positions in the MET Section, and worked his way through all board roles at the District level.

When asked what stands out to him as the value of being an ITE member, O’Rourke recalls the numerous times that networking—formal or informal—help someone land a new career opportunity. He adds his two latest professional roles were from ITE connections. “It’s helped me as well, both professionally in terms of positioning, and also technically.”

O’Rourke says he enjoys helping people get plugged in to ITE at the local level—especially at District and Section meetings, as not everyone can make the trip to the Annual Meeting. “It’s a great opportunity not only to meet District leadership, but the International leadership very much does try to visit,” he says. “Someone from International almost always makes their way to the meeting, and it’s a great way to get someone with five years’ experience to suddenly say, ‘I just met the Executive Director of ITE!’”

Over the years, O’Rourke has personally drawn on help from ITE leaders at every level, and says that’s partly why he’s now giving back as a District Administrator. “Years ago, I had a question about Trip Generation. Randy McCourt basically put everything aside a week before what was the latest version of the manual going to print, and helped me out,” he says. “You get that kind of help, and you really do want to pass it on. Somebody helped me—so if I get a phone call or if I get an email, I want to do something.”